

'Words are bandied about but what do they mean?'

*An exploration of the meaning of the pedagogical
term "project" in historical and
contemporary contexts*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of the West of
England, Bristol for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2014

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Abstract

Words are bandied about but what do they mean?’An exploration of the meaning of the pedagogical term “project” within historical and contemporary contexts

This thesis explores the pedagogical practices signified by the pedagogical term ‘project;’ which have traditionally been associated with enquiry based progressive ways of working with young children aimed at facilitating levels of both child and teacher autonomy (Hadow, 1931, Plowden 1967, Rinaldi, 2006). There is an early focus upon historical project constructions bounded by the Hadow reports starting in 1921 to a key Estyn document of 1999, the year of Welsh devolution. This diachronic lens tracks the trajectory of understanding associated with ‘projects’ through an analysis of documentary evidence and is later drawn upon in the empirical study. A central aim is to make visible the perceived role of the practitioner and associated pedagogical practices utilised within ‘projects’ at different points in history; in so doing it also aims to illuminate the unstable and context laden nature of pedagogical terminology in circulation.

The core of the study is the empirical focus – an embedded case study (Yin, 2009) which explored contemporary project interpretations within one Welsh local authority, as a ‘new’ (DCELLS, 2008a) and ‘radical’ (Maynard *et al.*, 2012) early years curriculum, the Foundation Phase was introduced. Participants were located within the same ecological frame, sharing minimal dissimilarity: bounded within a specific geographical location (a five mile radius); a particular curriculum (the Foundation Phase) and at an explicit point in history. A central aim was to consider understandings of the role of the adult and associated pedagogical practices within contemporary project constructions and in so doing to further consider interpretations of the new Foundation Phase Curriculum, in which particular constructions were situated.

The study was underpinned by a constructionist position with the research process viewed as dialogic and subjective in nature (Steer, 1991). Teachers were observed; exemplar documentary evidence collected and follow-up interviews used in a collaborative cycle of ‘meaning making.’ Bernsteinian notions of pedagogy and framing were utilised as analytical tools aimed at exploring how

projects were interpreted, whilst Foucauldian notions of discourses were utilised to explain why projects may have been viewed in particular ways. Pedagogical practices associated with three broad project categories were made visible through analysis.

Findings indicate that there were noteworthy differences particularly in relation to the varying levels of autonomy offered to the child and the associated positions adopted by the teacher. Whilst teachers used a range of progressive language such as ‘child initiated,’ the practices noted were often constraining and resonated with a discourse of regulatory modernity (Moss, 2007) as participants succumbed to the ‘regulatory gaze’ (Osbourne, 2006). Since participants were identified because of their contextual similarities, differences in ‘project’ interpretations were deemed to be illustrative of the complex nature of the meaning making process and it is subsequently theorised that pedagogical terms are both context and value laden.

This research may be significant within the Welsh context where the 'Foundation Phase' attempts to balance teacher and child agency but at the same time still retains a focus upon pre-specified outcomes. These findings may subsequently have implications for the policy to practice trajectory.

Acknowledgements

This journey would not have been possible without the support of so many people. Sincere thanks go to my patient and knowledgeable supervisors Jane Andrews and Penelope Harnett who have helped me to unravel and make sense of my thinking which has often been like a ‘tangle of spaghetti!’

I would like to express my gratitude to my ECS team and Education colleagues with special thanks to Jo Barkham, Helen Butcher, Helen Bovill, Liz Newman and Sue Norman who have given their time to read drafts and to discuss my developing ideas with me. A big thank you to Nick Wenham and Martin Ashley who have often gone beyond the call of duty!

Sincere thanks to my family, who have continued to be there for me throughout this PhD process - Thank you for always believing in me Mum, Sian, Scott and Dad.

My greatest gratitude though is reserved for my ever supportive partner Mark and my wonderful marvels Freya and Sofia.

**In memory of Mrs Margaret Lloyd,
Classicist and Pedagogue**

**“I’m very much afraid I didn’t mean anything but nonsense.
Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them;
so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means. So,
whatever good meanings are in the book, I’m glad to accept as the meaning.”
(Carroll 2004, no page)**

See Collingwood, S. (2004) *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*, in which Carroll explains the meaning behind the poem "The Hunting of the Snark"

A note to the reader

Each chapter of this thesis begins with a quotation and image from the works of Lewis Carroll.

Whilst recognising that this might be unconventional within a doctoral thesis I have been drawn to the work of Carroll, finding it useful in the development of my own thinking and theorising. This is because in line with post structural thinking, Carroll problematises the meaning of terms and the uncritical connection between signifier and signified. Instead, words and their associated meanings are viewed as temporal and context laden and ‘meaning making’ positioned as a process of social *construction*.

I also relate my own PhD journey to that of Alice in Wonderland. A journey of twists and turns, of rabbit holes, changing positions and revelations.

Chapter One

‘Words are bandied about but what do they mean?’

I maintain that any writer of a book is fully authorised in attaching any meaning he likes to a word or phrase he intends to use.



If I find an author saying, at the beginning of his book,
"Let it be understood that by the word 'black'
I shall always mean 'white,' and by the word 'white'
I shall always mean 'black,'"
I meekly accept his ruling, however injudicious I think it.

(Carroll, 1977 p. 232)

1.1 Beginnings.....

This thesis explores how the pedagogical term ‘project’ has been interpreted historically (see Chapter Five) and is understood contemporarily within the context of Foundation Phase settings within close geographical proximity within one Welsh Local Authority.

This research is deemed as timely since, to date there has been limited other critical examination of ‘projects’ within the context of early years provision. This is perceived as important since this thesis will argue that different project constructions are underpinned by different epistemological assumptions and associated pedagogical practices. This has consequential implications for the positions offered to teachers in their professional roles and subsequently the pedagogical practices offered to young children in the name of learning. This study also enabled a consideration to be made of current understandings of pedagogy as the Foundation Phase was implemented in Wales.

1.2 A personal statement

My experience of working at a Reggio inspired school (see p. 5 and Chapter five, sections 5.16-5.20) in Asia accompanied with subsequent reading, research, and reflection has had a profound impact upon how I ‘understand’ and ‘know’ the world. Subsequently, this thesis has been influenced by a Reggio Emilian perspective, embracing an ‘open theory’ in an ever continuous process of evolving and change, always ‘becoming’. The process of knowledge construction is viewed as akin to ‘a tangle of spaghetti’ (Malaguzzi, no date, in Dahlberg and Moss, 2006 p. 7); rather than being linear and hierarchical in nature, ideas and thoughts are constructed through a process of interpretation ‘shooting off’ in directions dependent upon the previous experiences, thoughts and values of the ‘interpreter.’ As Rinaldi says:

Learning does not proceed in a linear way, determined and deterministic, by progressive and predictable stages, but rather is constructed through contemporaneous advances, standstills, and “retreats” that take many directions (2006, p. 131).

These advances and retreats, indeed these ‘interpretations’ never stand on neutral ground, instead they are read through multiple lenses, through the essence of who we are, of who we have become, who we are becoming. My argument here is that knowledge construction is ultimately tied up with how the individual ‘sees’ the world, but individual constructions are nevertheless shaped, governed and controlled by contextual factors and discourses including culture, history and politics (Steedman, 1991). In other words individual constructions are constructed

within *particular* contexts. How I read the world (and subsequently the way that I view my data), has been shaped by my own experiences, my own consequential subjectivity and the different and sometimes contradictory positions that this offers. As Lather has argued:

We are seen to live in webs of multiple representations of class, race, gender, language and social relations; meanings vary even within one individual. Self identity is constituted and reconstituted relationally, its boundaries remapped and negotiated (Lather, 1991, p. 101)

This perspective embraces a range of post foundational discourses (Ninnes and Mehta, 2004), including postmodernism, poststructuralism and socio constructionist theorising (Moss, 2007) in which knowledge is viewed as tentative and evolving, (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999), rejecting a positivist position in which an absolute truth can be accessed, ‘read’ and measured (Malaguzzi, 1993). There is no ultimate reality to be read or truth to be located and documented (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005, Rinaldi, 2006, 2012); only shades of grey, multiple interpretations of the same phenomena (Nietzsche, 1882, 1886).

Whilst taking this stance I acknowledge that from a Reggio perspective this is only one of many ways of seeing the world, and as such is temporal and never fixed. A conscious choice has been made to adopt this frame as my way of seeing and making sense of the world at *this* point in time - as my current ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1980). In so doing I take ownership by acknowledging that this is *my* interpretation of a Reggio Emilian perspective but as Rinaldi (2006) has said, ‘Reggio itself is an interpretation of Reggio’ (p. 197). In so doing it is further accepted that this research may:

do violence to certain thinkers by integrating their thought into a theoretical formation that some of them might have found quite alien (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 29)

1.3 ME- Who am I?

(I wonder if I’ve changed in the night. Let me think. Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is ‘Who in the world am I?’ Ah, that’s the great puzzle (Carroll, 2013, no page).

I position myself within this thesis as a caucasian, English speaking, Welsh female, with a working class catholic background operating within the confines of multiple conflicting and contradictory identities which come to the fore at different times: A mother, daughter, sister, partner, teacher, a thinker – these positions are ultimately interconnected through a complex system of overlapping relationships which are temporal and ever evolving - the way I ‘see’ and ‘understand’ the world has been shaped by my experiences in these different positions.

Growing up in an area perceived as being socio-economically disadvantaged, our family seemed rather different to those of my friends. My mother was from an average working class background and had married at a young age, however she was very politically active with a strong sense of community; there were miners’ strike marches, regular visits from members of the Communist party and blockades at Tesco for selling South African goods. There were also annual holidays abroad, ‘foreign’ meals at home, planning of local carnivals, outings and discussions, there were constant opportunities to question, to critically engage, to debate and dispute.

My school life was not like this, particularly at secondary school and although I was known by the majority of teachers as being ‘very sensible,’ I was also viewed by others as being ‘difficult,’ of asking too many questions and of not always being accepting of the answer that I had been given. Mrs Lloyd, the Classics teacher was an exception to the rule, in her classes we debated, we questioned, we argued, we were researchful protagonists; we were treated as competent and our views were taken seriously. Our thinking was valued, we were citizens; we owned our understanding. School years were followed by time as an undergraduate reading Ancient History and Classical literature in which I deconstructed, debated and argued to my heart’s content.

On becoming a teacher in 1994 I vowed that this was the type of teacher that I would become, I was going to have a classroom where children could work on problems together, where they would gain a *real* understanding of the matter at hand which considered what their interests and questions were; a dialogic

environment where they felt a sense of value and where a sense of identity flourished, no matter where they came from. On reflection, I am not entirely convinced that this was always (or even often!) the case. My first school planned the curriculum through predefined topics, a spider web of 'People Who Help Us,' with activities mapped out under 'areas of learning' at the beginning of each term detailing the content that all children should 'know' by the end of the year. These reception children were assessed through the LEA's Baseline assessment; this would enable an evaluation to be made at the end of the key stage of the 'value-added learning' which had taken place. It was a happy school and yet in my second year of teaching a reception child asked 'Miss, why are we learning about transport?...Cos it's boring.' I had to agree; I began to ask 'why am I teaching in this way?'

At my second school, a topic approach was also in operation but this time the planning (completed before the first term had begun) was far more detailed and linked tightly to the National Curriculum targets. I was 'put in charge' of the 'difficult' SATs class with the expectation that I would ensure that a statistical proportion of the class reached a given level, children judged and compared against each other, standard deviations, content, content, content; debates and group work were thrown out of the window. This did not feel right – this was not what I had trained for. After five years within this education system I ran for the hills – this job was not for me.

On moving to Bangkok, Thailand, I encountered a different educational viewpoint, inspired by the work in the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Both the child and teacher were understood to be 'strong' and 'competent,' possessing an innate capacity to 'co-construct' knowledge through social interaction with others. Consequently, learning experiences were offered through in-depth collaborative project work, in which children constructed their own knowledge within their social group, with teachers and the environment; this was reminiscent of my Classics lessons which had taken place over a decade earlier. Children were highly motivated and there was a context to the learning which was meaningful to the children and learning was sustained and the children were highly-motivated. The role of the teacher within this setting was that of a researcher. We analysed

audio and videotapes and held discussions with the project co-ordinator to design relevant tasks aimed at exposing students to contradictions and conflict, creating dilemmas which the group had to resolve. I acted as ‘partner, nurturer and guide’ (Edwards, 1998, p. 179) who helped to develop the children’s curiosity and extend their experiences.

Returning home from Thailand I decided that I was going to make a change to education within Wales. I was not sure how I was going to do this and wondered which aspects of Reggio inspired thinking might hold resonance with Welsh education for young children. Was it the image of the child, the pedagogical documentation, or the projects?

However when returning to Wales I was troubled by the pedagogical practices also using the term ‘project,’ embracing outcomes, concrete to abstract ways of thinking, activities preplanned weeks or months in advance - I found this situation bewildering and problematic but was not able to articulate why.

This occurred not only at a practical level as evidenced through what I thought that I was seeing in classrooms but also at an academic level (for example papers presented at the EECERA Conference 2007); there seem to be an underlying assumption that all projects were the same, that they embraced a set of unquestionable and reified ways of working with young children: ‘active’ learning; ‘integration of the curriculum;’ ‘child-initiated learning,’ and ‘experiential- learning’. This became more apparent with the onset of the Foundation Phase, where in one Local Authority, some teachers began to utilise something called ‘projects,’ and I wondered what did this term mean within *these* contexts?

In the beginning I wondered why they- the teachers- could not see what I was seeing – why were they doing ‘it’ ‘that way?’ This now seems impossibly naïve – and in this way engagement within the research process has been transformative, for I have realised that there are multiple way of seeing, or representing, of understanding and that language is unstable, fluid and context laden. Perhaps I have experienced a paradigm shift. But even as I take this position I also judge

that there must be at least a starting point for understanding key terms in play, for as Alexander has said:

If terms manifestly in need of definition (such as projects) are not in fact defined, that suggests either that everyone knows exactly what they mean, which is clearly not the case, or that in the context within such terms are used their meaning does not much matter. (Alexander, 1988, p. 150)

1.4 The Wilderness years

Whilst studying for a masters degree I began working as a supply teacher in the local area and so began a very frustrating, though valuable, experience. In one school where I spent a term I tried to implement elements of Reggio practice through the use of projects but children were sometimes confused with a slackening of the reins - this was not what teachers were supposed to do; a few behaved 'badly.' Some of the teaching staff were very dismissive, 'that might be ok for middle class children in Italy but not for these kids. These kids need structure, discipline, do you know the sorts of homes that these kids come from?' I felt a sense of powerlessness, a sense of struggle, conflict between what I believed was right and what I was being told to do. No dialogue, no democracy. No voice for me, no voice for the children.

Simultaneously Welsh LEA's were grappling with how to implement the new Foundation Phase which was claimed to be process led and in which the thinking child was highlighted. Reggio Emilian pedagogy was named explicitly within documentation as exemplary practice (NAfW, 2003a). 'Doing Reggio' became fashionable. I was approached by an LEA adviser and asked to engage staff and children with Reggio inspired projects within a local school working with two reception classes, two teachers, and three assistants. Surely *this* was my chance? I was timetabled for one afternoon a week; I planned opportunities to observe and to document children, their interests, their questions and hoped that we would be able to work as a team reflecting upon what the documentation might be making visible to us and to plan future learning opportunities. The teachers were warm, supportive and nurturing with the children but also complained that they were too busy with *the* curriculum. They did not have time to observe children, to consider what their fascinations might be, to hypothesise what multiple meanings may be

located in representations and above all to reflect. Instead I worked alone with the children on ‘projects,’ whilst the teachers worked on predetermined activities once again planned though topics.

This was also accompanied by pressure to ensure that I was giving the authority value for money ‘What’ I was asked ‘would be the finished artefact, perhaps a sculpture, or statue, a mosaic?’ I explained that a Reggio perspective valued the *process* of learning rather than a final destination but there was a clear necessity to know what the finished artefact would be. This became a critical incident for me and I began to reflect and analyse how the term project has been considered and interpreted – why were these interpretations different? What were the consequences of the different interpretations in terms of how they positioned the teachers and what it meant to ‘teach’? Was the language significant or was this merely semantics - If you changed the terms in play did this also change the meaning and the pedagogical practices signified?

1.5 In search of the logic of the discourse

My thesis will argue that finding universal and incontestable definitions is impossible since ‘they embody values which themselves are contestable within society’ (Pring, 2004, p.10). My research acknowledged Pring’s viewpoint and attempted to make sense of the various ‘Different ways of understandings which are brought together under... (a) label’ (p.10). In so doing, I examined the pedagogical practices associated with the term ‘project’ and the discourses which appeared to underpin different constructions, whilst considering the subsequent consequences for educators. My research aimed to attend to the ‘logic of the discourse [...] the rules implicit in the use of particular words and those to which they are logically related’ (Pring, 2004, p.11). I considered, ‘what is the ‘logic of the discourse’ witnessed in the different ways that the term ‘project’ has been interpreted historically (chapter five) and currently by research participants within one Welsh Local Authority? In doing so it also became possible to consider pedagogy related to the Foundation Phase, since it was within this new curriculum that these project constructions were situated.

Whilst acknowledging the complexity of understanding key terms in play, of reading ‘primary speak’ (Alexander, 1988) it is hoped that that my thesis will shed light on some of the defining principles which projects might share and in doing so draw out the subsequent positions offered to educators within these different constructs. In this way it offers a unique contribution to the field of early years education.

Stephen (2010) has maintained that it is important to examine the pedagogical understandings of teachers since:

pedagogical understandings make a difference to practice and therefore to children’s experiences, but if these understandings remain tacit they can inhibit the development and adoption of new approaches. (p.27)

1.6 Aim of the study

The central aim of this thesis is to explore the pedagogical practices associated with ‘projects’ both historically and within the current context of Welsh Foundation Phase classrooms for children between the ages of three and seven.

There is a particular focus upon how different constructions impact upon the subjectivity of the teacher and the consequential pedagogy offered to children in the name of learning. This aim is met through consideration of the following questions:

Research Questions:

1. How have projects been constructed historically by policy makers, academics and teachers?
2. *How* was the term ‘project’ constructed more contemporarily within the bounded case of Foundation Phase settings within one Welsh Local Authority?
3. *Why* were projects constructed in particular ways? What were the main discourses which appeared to underpin different project constructions?
4. What were the implications for how teachers were positioned within different project constructions?
5. What was the connection between the pedagogical terminology and the pedagogical practices which terminology signified?

1.7 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two offers a theoretical foundation for this thesis, rooted in a Reggio discourse which is underpinned by a subjective epistemological stance in which uncertainty is valued (Rinaldi, 2006; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007). As a consequence a post foundational position is adopted (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, Steedman, 1991) as a way of seeing, reading and making sense of the world in which we are situated. Since language is viewed as provisional and context laden, Reggio pedagogical documentation is introduced and key Foucauldian ideas in relation to discourse and technologies of normalisation are drawn upon in order to both frame and analyse data.

Chapter three examines literature deemed fundamental to this study. It argues that pedagogical practices are not value neutral but are underpinned by particular theories and philosophies at particular points in time. Significant informants to early years pedagogy are explored since it is within this context that projects are presented. At the same time it is argued that many of the key themes cited by the early years literature (child-centred, play-based, active-learning etc.) are ambiguous and contested. This adds to ‘conceptual confusion’ in terms of the pedagogical practices deemed as ‘appropriate’ within the early years classroom consequentially impacting upon how the teacher is positioned. The latter half of the chapter explores the policy context post 1988. A central argument is that as policy discourses have gained strength they have influenced pedagogical practices and there has been an erosion of teacher autonomy in terms of pedagogical choices. The research literature explored also indicates a gap between rhetoric and practice, and a further tension between personal and official epistemological positions.

Chapter Four introduces the Foundation Phase since it is within this context that participants are situated. It argues that there is an inherent tension between the aims of the Foundation Phase and a continued reliance upon targets as a marker of success.

Chapter Five presents a diachronic lens (Thomas, 2011a) which tracks the changing pedagogical practices associated with historical project constructions with a focus upon Hadow (1931) Plowden (1967) and Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, 2006, Forman and Fyfe, 2012). Key discourses are drawn out and explored. I argue that these are reflective of particular zeitgeists set within particular historical contexts which have implications for the positions offered to both the child and teacher. Whilst there are nuances between these project constructions, there are also some shared elements: stemming from a progressive position, projects are viewed as a ‘freer’ way of working than traditional didactic pedagogy. The projects presented facilitate a level of both teacher and child agency and are often *enquiry* based. I also note how over time the terms project and topic have become synonymous whilst the central element of enquiry has been eroded. This point is indicative of the instability of (pedagogical) language.

Chapter Six outlines the methodology and methods of this thesis. Close links are made with the theoretical position explored within Chapter Two. The research process is presented as dialogic and flexible in nature.

Chapter Seven acts as a bridge between the literature and data chapters and introduces the process through which three broad categories of project constructions were categorised, detailed within the preceding three chapters.

In chapters eight to ten I offer a report of the data, analysis and theorising in relation to the empirical part of this study. These chapters aim to present current interpretations of project pedagogy within particular settings within close geographical proximity within one Welsh Local Authority. The analysis reveals the significance of the perceived role of the teacher upon pedagogical practices.

Chapter Eight introduces the First Category of projects identified through an analysis of data. I argue that my empirical data concurs with the debates set out in Chapter Five in that the terms ‘project’ and ‘topic’ have become entangled over time and that the central emphasis upon enquiry and ‘problem solving’ has been eroded and replaced with a greater focus upon targets, outcomes and accountability. Enquiry based interests have been substituted for more general interests which are only considered if they are associated in some way with a pre-

specified agenda. A further argument is that these changes are indicative of the discourses in circulation in relation to the aims of education and a simultaneous erosion of teacher autonomy.

Chapter Nine moves on to introduce the data from the Category Two projects in which projects were perceived as a tool for meeting predetermined objectives through 'creative' activities. A central argument of this chapter is that that whilst 'creativity' is proposed to be pivotal to this construction this is interjected by a discourse of regulatory modernity (Moss, 2007) in which outcomes, targets and accountability are foregrounded. The dominance of this second discourse leads to a desire to erase any uncertainty and risk, through tightly planned activities. This consequently destabilises the creative process and shapes the pedagogical practices offered under the project umbrella and the role that the teacher assumes within this.

Chapter Ten introduces the data from the third project category noted within this research study, 'Projects begin by following the observed interests of children.' This chapter argues that within this construction projects were initiated by the child, and it consequently differs in significant ways from the other two categories. The learning process is presented as a dialogical and collaborative endeavour. Whilst participants are committed to this way of working, at the same time they express concerns in relation to the tension between personal and an official epistemological stance and the external pressures of accountability, audit and parental concern. They maintain that they are 'freer' to work in this way because of their position in standalone nursery settings which are not attached to primary schools. At the same time stand alone nurseries across Wales are in the process of being closed under Welsh Assembly policy directives.

Chapter Eleven draws conclusions from the data by returning to the research questions. I theorise that the different interpretations of the term project noted within my study have implications for the role assumed by the teacher, the pedagogical practices deemed appropriate and the consequential agency of the child. These findings are indicative of the instability of (pedagogical) language and have implications for the policy to practice trajectory. This finding has

explicit implications for policy and the educational training for early years professionals: From this position I argue that there is a necessity for settings and Local Authorities to have more complex strategies in place to enable educators to come to a shared understanding of the key terms in circulation. From a socio constructionist stance this can only be achieved through dialogical, *critical* and collaborative ways of working.

The concluding chapter also notes how these different project constructions occur within the same bounded case sharing a geographical, historical and policy boundary within the confines of the *same* curriculum. This suggests that there may be some ambiguity in relation to the Foundation Phase particularly in relation to how the teacher is positioned and the associated levels of child autonomy facilitated. Further I argue that the lack of emphasis upon enquiry within projects is viewed as problematic given the significance placed upon the nurturing of thinking skills within Welsh documentation (see Chapter Four).

Chapter Two

Exploring the theoretical informants

If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is, because everything would be what it isn't.



**And contrary wise, what is, it wouldn't be.
And what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?**

(Carroll, 2013, no page)

In order to locate this research within particular ontological and epistemological frames, this theoretical chapter begins by identifying and discussing some of the perceived key theoretical informants of this thesis. The generation of knowledge is presented as a social construction and language and the production of meaning as instable and context laden. These debates are significant to my own research study since a central aim was to make sense of the pedagogical term ‘project,’ (historically and contemporarily) in other words I was in search of ‘the logic of the discourse[...]the rules implicit in the use of particular words and those to which they are logically related’ (Pring, 2004, p. 11; see Chapter One). That being said, I had not originally perceived a necessity to explore literature

stemming from the field of linguistics; this thesis was about pedagogy and *not* language.

An exploration of Reggio as an ‘open theory’ is considered accompanied with an examination of post foundational thinking with which Reggio pedagogy and my thesis broadly resonate. Drawing from some of these theoretical ideas, the latter part of this chapter outlines some key conceptual tools which are utilised for making sense of *why* ‘projects’ are interpreted within particular ways within the empirical part of this thesis. This begins by considering Foucauldian, regimes of truth and dominant discourses before moving on to explore Reggio Emilian pedagogical documentation. This theoretical and conceptual chapter is deemed fundamental to this research, underpinning my thinking and modes of analysis throughout. As such a conscious decision has been made in placing these theories and concepts within an early chapter.

2.1 Post Foundational Positions: the meaning of words

The theoretical orientation(s) inherent within this thesis are rooted in a post foundational paradigmatic position (Ninnes and Mehta, 2004), which Moss (2007) has argued also underpins Reggio Emilian pedagogical practices. However, deciding upon this perspective caused significant anguish and for a long time I remained unclear how to ‘name’ my own stance. This may have been because I felt as if I had my feet in multiple camps since I borrowed thinking from postmodernism (e.g. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; Rinaldi, 2006, Gandini, 2012) post structuralism (e.g. MacNaughton, 2005) and socio-constructionist literatures (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Steedman, 1991; Steier, 1991) and also from different disciplines including education, sociology, philosophy and linguistics. It was not always clear to me where one ended and the next began, and there seemed to be significant overlaps between them. The fact that these literatures could also have been attributed to multiple positions is illustrative of this issue. Postmodernism and poststructuralist in particular often appeared to be conflated with each other and I found disentangling them problematic. Lather (1991) presented one possible means of unravelling the terms arguing that postmodernism is ‘the code name for the crisis of confidence in western

conceptual systems... borne out of our sense of the limits of Enlightenment rationality,' whereas poststructuralism is 'the working out of academic theory within the culture of postmodernism' (p. 4). At the same time Schrift (1995) had also argued that 'poststructuralism' itself was not a coherent theory but rather 'a loose association of thinkers who draw from several shared sources' (p. 6). A similar analysis was also made of post modernism, described not as a 'fixed and systematic 'thing' but rather as a 'loose umbrella term under whose broad cover can be encompassed at one and the same time as a condition, a set of practices, a 'cultural discourse', an attitude and a mode of analysis'(Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 7).

One way around this dilemma was to consider the similarities between them, since I reasoned this had been why I had been drawn to them initially. The work of Ninnes and Mehta (2004) was particularly useful since they argued that 'post' paradigms (e.g. postmodernism, post structuralism, post colonialism, post feminism) all might come under a post foundational umbrella since they share a broad set of characteristics which problematise the central principles of what Moss (2007) has called 'regulatory modernity.'

Moss (2007) has argued that theories which fall under a post foundational umbrella see the social world(s) in which we operate as complex and contradictory since the production of knowledge is viewed as a social process. As a consequence, rather than there being an objective truth to be measured emphasis is instead placed upon on the generation of meanings as *social constructions* which are subjective and context dependent (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). As Dahlberg, Moss and Pence have argued:

The world is always *our* world, understood or constructed by ourselves, not in isolation but as part of a community of agents, and through our active interaction and participation with other people in that community. (1999, p. 23, original emphasis)

From this position universal truths are questioned and there is a greater emphasis placed upon language as a fundamental device through which our social worlds are explained and theorised (Pring 2004). At the same time language and

meaning are viewed as provisional and temporal dependent upon contextual and historical factors.

Whilst structural linguists claim that language systems *construct* meanings (see for example Saussure, 2006), post structural scholars maintain that the links between the signifier (the spoken or written word) and signified (what the spoken or written word represents) are not fixed and static. As Derrida has argued:

beliefs, and practices [...] do not have definable meanings and determinable missions [...] What is really going on in things, what is really happening, is always to come. Every time you try to stabilize the meaning of a thing, to fix it in its missionary position, the thing itself, if there is anything at all to it, slips away. (1997, p. 31)

In other words language is viewed as a social convention and not a 'true' representation of any fixed reality. This is because from this position meanings are understood as semiotic chains: a set of connections linked back to the past and into the future, 'never static, univocal, or final...(but) always generative of other meanings (Malaguzzi, 1998, p .81). As Manning, (1998) has argued, 'We live in, and in a sense we are, a compilation of semiotic systems that channel, exchange and constantly produce negotiated and negotiable meanings' (1998, p. 162).

MacNaughton (2005) has hypothesised that meanings are 'networked': how we make sense of terms in the present are dependent upon how they have been encountered in the past. While terms may have a shared 'cultural trace,' at an individual level we may have met these terms in different ways which will impact upon subsequent readings. She has clarified this through the use of the word 'dog.' If we herald from a similar cultural perspective, we may share a broad understanding of the term. However at an individual level we may have met the term in the context of a dog being a family pet or on the contrary as a ferocious beast. How we 'read' and make sense of terms will subsequently be dependent upon prior encounters which leave a trace (Derrida, 1997) in relation to how we construct understandings when we next meet the term (and into the future and so on). Consequently, 'meanings can shift depending on where the traces lead us and what uses the word has had before.' (MacNaughton, p. 89).

In a similar way Bakhtin has theorised these complexities through his concept of the ‘utterance’ (1994) defined as ‘any unit of language, from a single word to an entire text’ (p. 251). For Bakhtin, the utterance is not viewed as merely a linguistic concept but rather as a ‘communicative encounter’ which emerges in a particular historical context through an interactive dialogic process between a ‘speaker’ and a ‘listener’ (Whooley, 2005). As such the utterance is impregnated with its own history, situated within a sequence of prior communication (Danow, 1991); this prehistory will need to be considered when attempting to interpret and thus make meaning of a particular utterance at a given moment in time. Although the utterance itself is only a moment in the continuous process of communication, it is a moment saturated with ideological relevance (Whooley, *ibid.*, p. 12). Supporting the theorising of MacNaughton (2005), from a Bakhtinian perspective, all such utterances are situated within (and saturated by) particular contextual factors. Danow (1991) has proposed that dialogic interactions are based upon a struggle for meaning describing this as a ‘conflict’ an ‘ideological war.’(p. 29). My argument here is that language *constructs* meanings produced through social and shared construction which are contextually bound. As MacNaughton (2005) has eloquently proposed:

Meaning [...] is our shared understandings of what a particular sign signifies in a language that makes language work for us[...] Meaning is not fixed in specific words and images; it is generated in how we historically and thus politically link signs and meanings. (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 80, p. 88)

Building upon these arguments, Steedman, a socio constructionist has also maintained that ‘Meaning is (not) lying around in nature waiting to be scooped up by the senses; rather it is *constructed*’ (1991, p. 54 original emphasis). These constructions are dependent upon what he has called ‘acts of interpretation,’ which are underpinned by previous acts of interpretation rooted in historical ‘traditions’ of interpretation. He has maintained that:

Since meaning ascription occurs only in acts of interpretation, and since individual persons who make such interpretations come to them constituted with very different contexts or interpretations available to them, there can be no single objective (or perhaps superpersonal) truth (Steedman, 1991, p. 55)

He has consequently suggested that we should take a ‘stereoscopic account’ of the meaning making process with a focus on both the individual context of interpretations and the social context in which the individual is located. This is one of the reasons why I was drawn to the notion of Foucauldian discourses, (outlined later on within this chapter) since I felt that this would enable a consideration of the messages circulating within the social context to be explored whilst also focussing upon individual participants within particular environments.

Resonating with the debates outlined thus far, from a Reggio perspective the construction of knowledge is also viewed as tentative, always evolving and never static. In line with the argument presented, our meaning making sensibilities are influenced by experiences: as we encounter new experiences our web of reference is extended and thus further influences how we ‘see,’ understand and ‘read’ the world. These experiences often involve other people or other social aspects of human existence (media influences for example) and as such this process of ‘coming to know’ is viewed as a social construction.

As Rinaldi (2006) states, learning is:

a process of construction, in which each individual constructs for himself the reasons, the ‘whys’, the meaning of things, others, nature, events, reality and life. The learning process is certainly individual, but because the reasons, explanations, interpretations, and meaning of others are indispensable for our knowledge building, it is also a process of relations – a process of social construction. We thus consider knowledge to be a process of construction by the individual in relation with others, a true act of co-construction. (p. 125)

My argument here is that whilst meaning is constructed at the level of the individual – our meaning making capacity is heavily influenced by our prior and current social interactions with the world in which we are situated. In other words these experiences act as ‘frameworks’ for making sense of social situations, impacting not only upon how we think we should behave but also upon how we make judgments in terms of right and wrong, and what is deemed acceptable or improper.

2.2 Reggio pedagogy as an ‘open’ theory

Stemming from a post foundational position, Reggio pedagogues have made a conscious decision to turn away from a rationalised ‘tidy’ modernist way of seeing the world. Recognition of the complexity and the subjectivity of meaning

making have led Reggio pedagogues to adopt a reflexive way of working built on a critical and ‘open theory[...]nourished through practice made visible, examined, interpreted, and discussed using the documentation that we produce.’ (Rinaldi, 2006, pp. 56-57). Malaguzzi (1998) has argued that:

a unifying theory of education that sums up all the phenomena of educating does not (and never will) exist. However, we do indeed have a solid core in our approach in RE that comes directly from the theories and experiences of active education and finds realisation in particular images of the child, teacher, school family and community. Together these produce a culture and society that connect, actively and creatively, both individual and social growth. (pp 84-85)

Underpinning a Reggio frame adopted (and adapted) within this research then is a view that the generation and application of theory are provisional and organic, subject to change and continual modification through a critically reflective process seen in pedagogical documentation (see section 2.4). Reggio pedagogues continually study, interpret and reinterpret a range of different post foundational theories from a range of disciplines. These are reflected upon in relation to the practices witnessed within the schools in order to create (and recreate) their own meanings in relation to the teaching and learning process. At the same time practice is reflected upon through documentation (see section 2.4) in order to further generate theory. In this way there is a bi-directionality and mutuality in terms of the relationship between the theoretical interpretations and reflections upon interpretations of children’s learning documented. This has been described as ‘a marriage of intentions’ (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 56) in which:

The traditional relationship between theory and practice, which designates practice as a consequence of theory, is redefined and, therefore, surpassed. Theory and practice are placed in a relationship of reciprocity, but one in which, to a certain extent, practice takes precedence over theory. (ibid.)

This use of theory has been described as ‘going beyond’ (Dahlberg and Moss, 2006, p.7) leading to:

a clear and open theoretical conception that guarantees coherence in our choices, practical applications, and continuing professional growth. (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 68).

This ‘openness’ has led to Reggio ideology being associated with a range of theoretical perspectives including socio-constructivism (Edwards, 2003), cultural

activity theory (New, 2007) and socio-constructionism (Dahlberg *et al.*, 1999). Holding congruence with an epistemological view that sees knowledge as provisional it has also led to Reggio pedagogues themselves to reinterpret, reframe and rename their practice from socio-constructivism (Rinaldi, 1993, 1998) to socio constructionism (Rinaldi, 2006). This is significant because it demonstrates first the concept of utilising an ‘open theoretical’ position; second that any theory is also provisional and third is indicative of the instability of the language in use.

In summary this section has explored the instability of language and theory consequently challenging the notion that meanings can be fixed and static. This conjecture is useful in relation to my own research since a central aim was to make sense of the different interpretations of the pedagogical term ‘project’ both historically and at the present time within *particular* contexts. As Chapter Five will argue, this fluidity of meaning can be seen in relation to how the term ‘project’ has been constructed across time and place within the literature and later, in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten within my own data. The instability of language may also have been part of the reason why I found pinning down a term to explain my own position so problematic!

This theorising forms the backdrop to the introduction of some Foucauldian ideas which I encountered through engagement with post foundational literatures (for example Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; MacNaughton, 2005). I became interested in utilising some of this thinking, (particularly the Foucauldian notion of discourse) since it offered a way of tentatively explaining *why* my participants were constructing projects in particular ways, conceivably shedding light on their ‘acts of interpretation’ (see earlier section from Steedman, 1991). Foucauldian tools were deemed appropriate as they are also congruent with post foundational ontological and epistemological positions in which:

There is a rejection of universal and transcendental foundations of knowledge and thought, and a heightened awareness of the significance of language, discourse, and socio-cultural locatedness in the making of any knowledge claim [...] all knowledge is contextual, historical, and discursive. (Usher and Edwards, 1994, pp 10, 24)

I do not aim to critique Foucauldian theorising in detail here but rather aspire to introduce the ‘tools’ which I later draw upon to make sense of my data. In other words whilst Bernsteinian concepts (see 3:2) were viewed as valuable in considering *how* projects were constructed within my study, Foucauldian thinking was deemed useful in considering the *whys* and *wherefores*.

This next section opens with a discussion of ‘discourse’ and leads to the introduction of other theoretical Foucauldian concepts, in particular ‘regimes of truth’ and ‘technologies of normalisation.’

2.3 Introducing some Foucauldian ‘tools’

Knowledge is seen as inscribed in power relations, which determine what is considered as truth or falsity; in short, knowledge is the effect of power and cannot be separated from power. In a socially constructed world, there can be no external position of certainty, no universal understanding that is beyond history or society. (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999, p. 24)

According to Foucault (1980) each society embraces a ‘general politics’ of truth which is manifested through a number of mechanisms; these include the discourses which are accepted as ‘truth,’ at any given time within a society, the instruments which facilitate judgments to be made in relation to what is deemed to be ‘true’ and the status of those who are charged with determining such judgments.

Key to this theorising is the Foucauldian concept of ‘discourses,’ viewed as an invisible conceptual frame, a retaining boundary which both construct and govern the ways in which we describe, think about and consequently operate within specific realms (Hall, 2001). ‘Discourse’ is used to ‘make sense’ of a social situation, defining what should and should not happen, categorising behaviours which are deemed desirable or otherwise (MacNaughton, 2005). Each discourse has a particular value system, related terminology and associated constructs and operates within specific geographical, cultural, political and historical frames (Danaher, Shirato, & Webb, 2000). In other words ‘discourse’ is constructed as a particular framework –a way of understanding, explaining and justifying a standpoint often through a particular set of associated language and practices (Foucault, 1972; Burnam, 2008). In line with a position that views language as

unstable and context laden, Foucault (1972) has demonstrated that discourses are also historically and socially *constructed*. Further, any discourse in circulation will be underpinned by a particular set of paradigmatic values and assumptions (Moss, 2007). Consequently any particular ‘truth’ is value laden being dependent upon the social imperatives of a society or institution at a particular point in time; in this way discourses sanction what is ‘normal’ operating as an indisputable truth not only shaping the language we use to describe certain phenomena (Burman, 2008) the way we think in relation to the said phenomena but further act as a restraining mechanism, restricting us from operating and thinking about alternative modes of being (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; Blaise, 2005; MacNaughton, 2005).

Discourses thus regulate our knowledge of the world and what we perceive as important; Foucault describes this as ‘disciplinary power[...]exercised rather than possessed’ (1977, p. 26). ‘Disciplinary power’ is both pervasive and invisible as it forces us into a ‘normalised’ way of seeing the world and thus sanctions our behaviour and thoughts towards a given ‘truth.’ In this way we govern our own thinking towards what, within the regime of truth, is viewed as the ‘correct’ way of behaving and behaviour or ways of thinking which fall outside of this norm are demonised and ostracised. In so doing disciplinary power shapes our behaviour even though we may not be conscious of this process (Ransom, 1998).

Consequently power and knowledge are not viewed as separate entities but rather as being in an intimate and mutually dependant union (Gore, 1993).

Foucault has also questioned how particular discourses shape the human subject (McHoul & Grace, 1993; Weedon, 2007). From this position ‘regimes of truth,’ are deemed as important, acting as a regulatory framework governing our thoughts and actions towards what is perceived as the ‘correct’ and ‘desirable’ way of ‘being’ within a specific context and as such they further shape how we ‘read’ and ‘act’ and conform within situations. Regimes of truth are impregnated with the dominant discourses of the day which can change over time. These regimes operate as a frame of reference impacting upon our ‘acts of

interpretation' (Steedman, 1991, see section 2.1) ultimately shaping how we make meaning; as Foucault has argued:

Each society has its regime of 'truth, 'its general politics' of truth; that is the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980, p. 131)

Kenway (1990) has discussed how regimes of truth are privileged through a range of 'normalising technologies' which attempt to identify deviations from the accepted norm, these 'micropractices,' (Gore, 1998), include 'surveillance,' 'normalisation,' 'exclusion,' and 'classification.' In order to elucidate his concept of surveillance Foucault utilised the analogy of the 'panoptic' (1977, p. 202). This metaphor stemmed from the panoptic tower at the centre of prisons from which it was possible for warders to observe individual cells. Prisoners would be unaware if they were being observed at any given time and consequently behaved as if they were under constant scrutiny, in other words they succumbed to the 'regulatory gaze' (Osgood, 2006), modifying their behaviour and in so doing surrendered to self-surveillance. Thus through surveillance (and self-surveillance) behaviour was controlled and shaped.

It could be argued that these technologies of normalisation can be seen within the context of the Foundation Phase. For example teachers may feel that they are under constant 'surveillance' since they are working within the ESTYN inspection framework which identifies what is correct and acceptable; as Chapter Four will argue specific targets in terms of numeracy and literacy have been outlined which teachers should ensure that all 'normal' seven year olds will reach, children (and therefore schools and teachers) who fall outside of this 'normal' range will be subject to further scrutiny. These govern our practices towards predefined desirable 'norms' and include different classifications and categories (for example what is appropriate within projects). These power mechanisms are not only used to judge and describe practice but ultimately shape thinking and action at both the level of the individual subject and further more at the level of a population (for example teachers of young children) as a collective body. Classifications thus act

as a governing framework in which we manage our own behaviour and actions and that of others towards an expected norm, As Dahlberg *et al.* have proposed:

Discourses are [...] not just linguistic, but are expressed and produced in our actions and practices [...] All bear meanings, in the same way as language. (Dahlberg *et al.*, 1999, p. 31).

Through exploring the discourses which appear to resonate with the different project constructions outlined within Chapters Five, Eight, Nine and Ten, it becomes possible to consider the perceived imperatives underpinning the pedagogical practices associated with different project constructions within particular contexts. This is because from this position:

All pedagogical activity can be seen as a social construction by human agents, in which the child, the pedagogue and the whole milieu of the early childhood institution are understood as socially constituted through language (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999, p. 144).

This section has explored the Foucauldian notion of discourses since this offers a tentative way of explaining some of the thinking *behind* the project constructions outlined within Chapters Five, Eight, Nine and Ten. The next section now moves on to explore the concept of Reggio Emilian pedagogical documentation (PD). This is important since I attempt to use this as a process to make sense and meaning from my data. Whilst the methodology chapter outlines the particulars of PD as a research tool within my study, the aim of the next section is to explore this at a theoretical level whilst justifying this choice.

2.4 Reggio Emilian pedagogical documentation

Close links have been made between a Foucauldian way of seeing the world and a Reggio Emilian position since they both perceive knowledge and meaning to be social constructions (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999). From a Reggio stance (rooted in post foundational thinking), the process of pedagogical documentation is viewed as a useful tool of ‘meaning making,’ (Vecchi, 2010), not as a tool for pinning down a definitive ‘truth,’ since a ‘truth’ is not perceived to exist.

Instead, pedagogical documentation is understood as a *reflective* and *reflexive* dialogic process which values subjectivity and intersubjectivity as central principles.

To dialogue in this way requires an emphasis upon ‘listening’ (and reflection upon listening, Freire, 1993), with ‘listening’ understood as:

An analysis of communication itself [...] a struggle to understand, where speakers constructively confront each other, experience conflict, and seek footing in a constant shift of perspectives (Foreman and Fyfe, 1998, p. 241) This involves ‘interpretation, giving meaning to the message and value to those who offer it’ (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 65). As Rinaldi (2001) has argued, ‘Documentation not only lends itself to interpretation but it is itself interpretation’ (p. 86).

Pedagogical documentation then is the *process* through which groups of teachers critically reflect upon collected documents including observations, transcripts of dialogues, videos of play and children’s drawing and other representations (Giudici, 2001). The analysis of these ‘data’ attempt to *co-construct* and re-construct a shared testimony of the learning journey, and in so doing to formulate a theory of the thinking of children (Foreman, 2001; Giudici *et al.*, 2001). This enables teachers to plan for future ‘provocations’ or ‘possibilities’ which may deepen the children’s thinking (Forman and Fyfe, 1998). In this way documents are deconstructed through a collaborative interrogation of the different (symbolic) languages utilised by children in the search for multiple meanings (Vecchi, 1998; Forman and Fyfe, 2012).

During the process of documentation alternative possibilities and meanings are considered as teachers justify their own interpretations of ‘data’ through a dialogic process. This often involves a ‘conflict of ideas and argumentation,’ between teachers ‘not a cosy search for consensus’ (Dahlberg and Moss, 2006, p. 16). These documents are viewed as, ‘partial findings, subjective interpretations which, in turn must be re-interpreted and discussed with others.’ (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 57). This is exemplified by Forman, (1995) who in discussing the reflection upon photographs within the process of pedagogical documentation has argued that, ‘the photograph should be treated as a door to enter a world of possible events, not as a window that pictures a single time and place (Forman, 1995, p. 175).

The content of this process is displayed with the inclusion of the pedagogues' own thinking. Rinaldi has rationalised this way of working arguing that:

the value of subjectivity also means that the subject must take responsibility for her or his point of view; there can be no hiding behind an assumed scientific objectivity or criteria offered by experts. (2006, p. 16)

Consequentially, whilst making visible the possible theorising of children, the process of pedagogical documentation also supports the creation of a culture of collaborative in-depth critical reflection (Rinaldi, 2001; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007, Rinaldi, 2012) in which reflexivity is highlighted. As Carr and Kemmis (1986) have argued:

Creating a culture of critical reflection enhances our educational potential, and provides practitioners with opportunities to deconstruct conventional [...] practices.' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 33)

From this position the process of pedagogical documentation cannot be value neutral since it is always based upon selection: What is documented (and also not documented) is viewed as one option amongst many, since 'there is never a single story' (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999, p. 147). This selection is based around personal and group 'tacit conventions, classifications and categories' (ibid.). In other words the choices made when documenting children's learning can be viewed as 'act of interpretation' (Steedman, 1991) inscribed in the history of the interpreter. In the same way in my study on constructions of projects I must also acknowledge that what I choose to document is also a choice amongst other possible options. These visible traces of documentation act as:

Mirrors of our knowledge, in which we see our own ideas and images reflected, but in which we can also find other and different images with which to engage in dialogue. (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 57-58)

In other words the use of pedagogical documentation can be viewed as a tool of reflexivity. Indeed reflexivity is deemed fundamental to post foundational ways of working including socio constructionist research (Steier, 1991; Steedmen, 1991, Gergen and Gergen, 1991). This is because from this position, the process of research is also understood as a social construction of, 'a world or worlds, with the researchers included in, rather than outside, the body of their research' (Steier, 1991, p.2) and the 'knowing process' (is viewed) as embedded in a reflexive loop

that includes the inquirer who is at once an active observer' (Steier, 1991, p. 163). Consequentially, it becomes necessary to consider how personal understandings and associated constructions have shaped the subjectivity of the researcher who is *part* of the research process (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1983). From this position Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999, 2007) have argued that:

documentation can be seen as a narrative of self-reflexivity – a self-reflexivity through which self definition is constructed (Through the process of pedagogical documentation). The awareness that we are not representing reality, that we are making choices in relation to inscribed dominant discourses, makes it easier to critically analyse the constructed character of our documentation (1999, p.142)

Mead (1962, cited in Steier, 1991, p.2) has referred to the reflexive process as 'bending back on itself,' through an ongoing reflective cycle. It has also been proposed that the self bent back upon may not be the same self that was previously left behind (Mead, 1962) - engagement within the research process may have led to changes in the thinking of the researcher and research participants.

This reflexive process has been described as a spiral which allows for the unearthing of multiple perspectives whilst acknowledging the possible changes in the self due to engagements within this reflective process (Gergen and Gergen, 1991; Schon, 1991).

For the socio constructionist researcher tools which enable reflexivity to be 'taken seriously' are therefore fundamental (Steier, 1991, p.2). As Steier has argued:

Our reflexivity [...] reveals itself as an awareness of the recognition that we allow ourselves to hear what our subjects are telling us, not only by imposing our categories on them, but by trying to see how our categories may not fit. And yet we still acknowledge that our categories may be useful for distinctions that matter to our professional colleagues. (Steier, 1991, pp. 8-9)

Dahlberg and Moss (2006, p.16) have argued that this is 'rigorous subjectivity,' not a search for a particular '*truth*' but taking responsibility for the personal *interpretations* made and justifying these through making visible our own thinking.

Rinaldi (2006) has further argued that during the process of pedagogical documentation ‘listening’ may not uncover particular answers but rather, is more likely to lead to the formulation of new questions. Consequently, using pedagogical documentation may be viewed as risky since, ‘you lose [...] the possibility of controlling the final result’ (p. 184). It has also been proposed that the use of pedagogical documentation will lead to different findings as a consequence of the personal ontological and epistemological perspectives of the researcher (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p.xii). Whilst acknowledging these ‘dangers,’ my justification for attempting to use pedagogical documentation was that it could make visible the possible regimes of truth operating within the Foundation Phase settings in relation to how projects were constructed. This could be achieved through consideration of discourses in terms of both rhetoric and practice: in other words through exploring both what participants said and also their actions within project sessions.

Pedagogical documentation was also deemed suitable since first, it would acknowledge that any interpretation on the part of the researcher / research participants was subjective in nature; second it would facilitate a level of dialogic participation and collaboration (a shift towards researching ‘with’ as opposed to researching ‘on’ participants); third, it would highlight the centrality of critical reflection through a dialogic process; fourth it would enable exploration of a range of different project interpretations underpinned by multiple view points. In summary, the use of pedagogical documentation resonated with the ontological and epistemological positions adopted and adapted within this study and outlined within this chapter.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined the theoretical stance which underpins this research, drawing upon a range of theories from post foundational positions which embrace the subjective nature of meaning making recognising that there are alternate social realities which may be valid to different participants. The position that I adopt within this thesis therefore is underpinned by a post foundational socio constructionist stance and a Foucauldian ‘tool kit’ is utilised as one of the instruments for making meaning from the data. These two sets of ideas are

related - the way the social world is constructed and understood, is ultimately constituted through the circulation of power through the dominant regimes of truth at any one time or place, these constructions 'become embodied into professional thinking and are productive of professional practice' (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000, p. 237).

From this perspective the use of pedagogical document, as a tool for making visible the project constructions of participants is justified, acknowledging the complex nature of how we see our world through 'acts of interpretation' (Steedman, 1991). I also acknowledge that my own experiences have shaped how I understand, see and 'make meaning' and as such there is a necessity to explore my own subjectivity (see 1.3).

With these ideas as a backdrop, the next chapter now moves to an exploration of the literature in relation to early childhood pedagogy. It traces how different informants (philosophical, psychological, and theoretical) have gained power over time.

Chapter Three

Early Years Pedagogy: Philosophical, Psychological and Policy Considerations

The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. "Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" he asked.



"Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

(Carroll 2013, no page)

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the study within relevant research and debates that are significant to the area. As such it might be assumed that there would be a focus specifically upon project literature. However, there is currently very limited research on projects per se particularly within the early years classroom within the United Kingdom: *Indeed, it is this very gap in the research*

literature that is perceived as problematic and which this thesis attempts to redress.

An aim of the chapter then is to examine research and literature in relation to early years pedagogy since projects are viewed as a *pedagogical approach* often aligned with ‘appropriate’ early years provision. As the chapter will discuss, stemming from a progressive position (Soler and Miller, 2003), early years pedagogy is often associated with a range of terminology such as ‘child-centred,’ ‘play-based learning,’ ‘discovery learning’ and learning as ‘integrated.’ At the same time this chapter will argue that many of the terms are viewed as contentious. The chapter begins with a discussion of the connections between curriculum and pedagogy arguing that they are both socially constructed and contextually bound. It then moves on to explore how pedagogical practices resonate with philosophical, psychological and policy discourses at different points of time arguing that these discourses may subsequently influence the role assumed by the early years teacher.

3.1 What is curriculum?

The work of curriculum theorists (Apple, 1979, 1990, 1996; Young, 1998) have highlighted the complexity of the curriculum as a concept, proposing that there is always a rationale behind the selection of particular material deemed appropriate (and the omission of other material) for inclusion (Smith and Lovat, 2003; Edwards, 2003). As Johnson has maintained:

The school curriculum goes to the heart of our conception of ourselves as a civil society. We define the values and the aspirations we hold, collectively, through our choices of what to teach our children. (2007, p.8)

From this position we cannot treat the development of any curriculum as devoid of context, as ahistorical, or apolitical but instead it must be viewed as reflective of the values and dominant discourses of particular societies at particular points in time (Young, 1998). In other words curricula development is understood as a *construct* and all curricula as value *laden* as opposed to value *neutral* (Apple, 1990; Withers and Eke, 1995; Eke and Kumar, 2008). From this perspective Canella has consequently proposed that when interpreting curriculum reforms the dominant discourses in circulation act as powerful tools, shaping teacher

subjectivity in relation to beliefs and ultimately impacting upon the selection of pedagogical practices deemed as 'legitimate' (Canella 1997, 1999). Kemmis (1995) has further argued that the introduction of new educational policies can often add to the inherent negations in education because of the competing discourses, ideologies and agendas in circulation, which shape the thinking of teachers in relation to how 'curriculum' and therefore pedagogical practices are constructed (Ball, 1994).

Researchers have theorised that pedagogical understandings in relation to curriculum models are shaped by a number of factors such as: the consensus view of the individual's community of practice (Rosaen and Schran, 1998); (the perceived) formal requirements of the curriculum (Stephen, 2010); the personal beliefs and values of the teacher (Stephen, 2010); initial and continued professional development (Stephen, 2010) and the culture of a setting in which the teacher is situated (Cottle and Alexander, 2010).

Stephen (2006) has explained the connection between curriculum and pedagogy in the following way:

curriculum is used [...] to describe a way of structuring learning experiences, an organised programme of activities [...] derived from some explicit or implicit ideological or theoretical understandings about how children learn. Pedagogy is closely related to curriculum and will be influenced by the ideas about learning that under-pin the curriculum. (p.3)

From this perspective the curriculum can be seen as an overarching framework into which 'pedagogy' sits. Like curriculum, the term pedagogy is not value neutral but reflective of particular perspectives and ways of 'seeing' and understanding. As Gore (1993) has asserted:

one could argue that the term 'pedagogy' (indeed any term) has no single meaning in and of itself [...] meaning is always struggled over and determined as it is constructed by particular discourses. (Gore, 1993, p.4)

Holding congruence with this view the British early years special interest group (BERA, 2003) maintain that:

such apparently technical terms as 'pedagogy' far from being universal and value-free reflect a diversity of perspectives and interpretations which

must be exposed before alternative practices can be investigated. (BERA, 2003, p.18)

Much of the literature on pedagogy states that it is associated with the 'craft', 'art' or 'discourse' of teaching (Alexander, 2004, McInnes *et al.* 2011), with pedagogy considered as 'any conscious action by one person designed to enhance learning in another,' (Mortimer, 1999, p.3). This suggests that pedagogy refers to the actual *physical* self contained act of teaching occurring within a particular moment in time.

However over the past decade research stemming from the field of early childhood education has presented the term in a broader sense. For example within the government sponsored research of Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, (2002) the term was used to denote both 'teaching' and the provision of 'instructive learning environments': Distinctions were made between 'pedagogical interactions' (face to face encounters) and 'pedagogical framing' which occurred 'behind the scenes' and included the provision of different materials and resources, arrangement of the environment and the establishment of daily routines, planning and assessment (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002, p. 23). Within the context of Scottish early years education, Stephen (2006, p.3) has proposed that pedagogy involves the promotion of learning through both 'direct actions' and 'indirect activities:' Direct actions are viewed as face to face interactions with children that facilitate learning and also the setting up of activities within the learning environment. Indirect actions would include 'behind the scenes' activity for example planning, observing and recording. It has also been hypothesised that there is a necessity for pedagogy to be underpinned by reflective practice (Mailhos, 1999; Moyles *et al.*, 2002) These distinctions are useful *starting points* for this particular study because they enable pedagogical practices occurring under the 'project' heading to be considered not only as-teacher child interactions but also in much broader terms.

3.2 Bernstein's classification and framing

Bernstein (1973, 1996) conceptualised different pedagogical practices through classification and framing: 'Classification' refers to the rigidity of boundaries

between subjects; where subjects are clearly delineated then the boundaries are said to be strong, where the borders of traditional subjects are less apparent and more pliable in nature then margins are judged to be weaker. 'Framing' is used to refer to the relationship between the child and educator in terms of degrees of control in relation to the pedagogical activity: Strong framing occurs when control rests with the teacher and is deemed to be weaker where the control moves towards the child. Both framing and classification are conceptualised as occurring on a continuum and are useful since they allow different types of practices to be categorised and described.

In cases where both classification and framing are judged to be 'strong', then the pedagogy is deemed to be visible. In these cases there would be more didactic and formal approaches in operation, often associated with older children. At the other end of the continuum, invisible pedagogy is conceptualised when classification and framing are weaker. Invisible pedagogy with weak framing would be traditionally associated with the practices witnessed within infant classes (Bernstein, 1975) underpinned by associated notions of 'child centredness' and 'play based learning' and draw from a developmental psychological position (see Section 3.3.2).

3.3 Pedagogical Practices within the Early Years: Influences and understandings

Both philosophical and psychological positions have traditionally been particularly influential in the shaping of early years curricula and associated pedagogical practices (Edwards, 2003). Edwards has further argued that the views encompassed within each have tended to shift over time (ibid.). These philosophical and psychological shifting influences have been tracked by a number of researchers (Blyth, 1965; Kohlberg and Mayer, 1972; Alexander, 1988; Hyun, 2000). Edwards (op.cit) has detailed how in the 1700s the epistemological view of the day was that knowledge was objective and measurable and the development of the child was thought to occur as a reaction to environmental stimulation; these positions were reflected in the curriculum approaches of the time with a consequential emphasis upon the transmission of knowledge from

educators to children. It can subsequently be argued that decisions in relation to pedagogical choices are based upon *what* might be considered worth learning within a particular context (historical, geographical) with further reference to *how* this might be learnt. In other words the *how* and the *what* of early years pedagogy resonate with the dominant learning theories and the discourses in circulation at any given time. From a Foucauldian perspective then as different theories gain influence they may become the dominant voices (See 2.3). Bredekamp *et al.*, (1992) have further theorised that this has consequences for the positions available to teachers and to the pedagogical choices which are made.

3.3.1 The Philosophical legacy

The philosophical legacy can be traced back to early ‘pioneers’ such as Rousseau (1779), Pestalozzi (1894) and Froebel (1912) Montessori (1916, 1949) and Dewey (1916, 1959). The views of the early ‘pioneers’ are reflective of a historical context often underpinned by a ‘romantic’ notion of childhood (Edwards, 2003). Rousseau believed that children were inherently ‘good’ as they had not yet been subjected to societal influences leading to ‘corruption.’ Children then were constructed as innocent and untainted and a major aim of education was to preserve this decency whilst enabling children to become democratic citizens.

Notions of ‘discovery learning;’ can also be traced back to Rousseau (1779) through his fictional character Emile who ‘discovers’ the consequences of his actions when breaking a window subsequently leading to feelings of coldness. This is underpinned by a theoretical stance to learning which advocates that children should be allowed to develop their own ideas, discovering for themselves whilst being encouraged to draw their own conclusions through a reflective process (Rousseau, 1779). For philosophers such as Rousseau, the learning process was also believed to span across a lifetime whilst also transversing traditional disciplinary boundaries. Holding congruence with Rousseau, Pestalozzi (1894) also emphasised the necessity for the child to pursue his/her own interests and to draw their own conclusions from the phenomena at hand (Pestalozzi, 1894). In terms of pedagogical practices, children needed to be offered opportunities which nurtured their own intrinsic powers of reasoning, stemming

from their own lines of enquiry whilst avoiding ready-made answers (Silber 1965, p. 140). In other words the autonomy of the child within the learning process was highlighted accompanied by associated notions of ‘freedom’ and ‘choice.’ This was advocated through the child’s desire to engage in play and playful experiences and in the case of Froebel through the use of ‘occupations.’ This view has consequences for *what* children should be taught and also for *how* learning should be presented. The role of the teacher would include the setting up of a stimulating environment aimed at motivating the child’s natural disposition to ‘discover’. From a Bernsteinian position pedagogical practices would be weakly framed with the teacher assuming the role of a ‘facilitator.’ However, this image of the child presented by the pioneers was viewed as an ‘unquestionable ‘truth’ and not as a construct located within a particular historical or social context (Walkerdine, 1983). Stephen (2006) has further made visible tensions between some of the different changing constructions of the child for example, this ‘romantic’ construction offered by the ‘pioneers’ which she has proposed is implicitly linked to ways of working with young children.

3.3.2 The Psychological legacy

Psychological theories in relation to how children learn are also implicitly interconnected with curriculum developments and associated pedagogical practices within classrooms throughout Britain. These have been heavily influenced by a Piagetian stage theory of learning (Spodek and Saracho 1999, Stephen, 2010; Stephen 2012) and associated developmental psychological discourses (e.g. Piaget, 1952, Piaget and Inhelder, 1969, Flavell, 1963). From this position, learners are believed to actively ‘construct’ knowledge through interaction with the environment, with learning occurring in specific ‘stages,’ closely related to the age and associated development of the child. Piaget theorised that knowledge was acquired through a process of assimilation and accommodation leading to a growing ability to manage complex and abstract forms of information. Consequently pedagogical practices should be ‘developmentally appropriate’ with activities and learning experiences reflective of current stages of development. In other words, young children are not believed to learn in the same way as older children; learning that focuses upon the

construction of the child's own understandings is advocated as an appropriate pedagogy rather than the teaching of facts and figures through more passive pedagogical practices (Corrie, 1999). This view is underpinned by a belief that the young child thinks in a holistic way which is not compartmentalised through discrete subject areas (see for example Dewey 1959). As a consequence the use of an integrated curriculum or cross curricula approaches are advocated (New, 1992). From a Bernsteinian perspective such practices would be deemed as weakly classified since the borders of traditional subjects have been dissolved.

However, there has been a range of critiques of Piaget's research, particularly in relation to the methodology utilised which have problematised notions of a universal staged theory of learning. Donaldson (1978) argued that children were cognitively capable of functioning at more demanding levels than outlined by Piagetian theory whilst questioning Piaget's use of language. Building on the work of Donaldson, Hughes (1978) theorised that young children possess the capacity to think in more complex ways when questions and activities are situated within meaningful contexts. At the same time DeVries (1997) has suggested that Piaget's theoretical position also recognised the potential role of others (peers and teachers) in cognitive development but that this is seldom acknowledged.

Whilst Piagetian theories have been heavily critiqued and modified, the influence of this theoretical position remains within the early years psyche, evidenced through a continued emphasis upon 'developmental stages,' the importance attached to the environment and emphasis upon encouraging children to engage in 'active exploration,' 'play,' 'discovery learning' and learning which is 'integrated.' Piagetian thinking has been called the 'bedrock of ...identity ... (for the) early years educator' (Edwards, 2005, p.134). The century long dominance of a developmental theoretical discourse has also been outlined by a number of early years researchers (see for example Ryan and Ochsner, 1999; Hatch *et al.*, 2002) who have concluded that it has become a 'taken-for-granted' and 'reified' informant to ways of working with young children.

This Piagetian position is aligned with an early years pedagogical stance and strongly associated with a discourse of 'child centredness,' and associated rhetoric

of ‘child led learning,’ ‘child initiated learning’ and ‘learning through play’ (Wood, 2014). At the same time, the work of Chung and Walsh (2000) has queried notions of ‘child centeredness.’ Their review of a wide range of contemporary early childhood literature found that there were over forty different meanings in use for the term, including following the interests of children and allowing children some participation within decision making with varying levels of child autonomy. Indeed, notions of child-centred pedagogy have been particularly heavily critiqued (see for example Dearden, Peters and Hirst, 1972). Galton (1987) has criticised a focus upon the interests of children as being unrealistic whilst Kogan (1987) has questioned a construction of children underpinned by an innate disposition to display curiosity on which notions of child-centred-ness appear to be based. Soler and Miller (2003) have outlined how ‘child-centred’ has been appropriated by different groups serving different purposes over time, whilst Morrison’s critique of notions of ‘child-centred’ found that the term was used to describe a variety of different practices including on the one hand curricula chosen completely by the child and on the other ‘discovery’ pedagogies which were predetermined by predefined content. (Morrison, 1989). Further he has argued that there is a ‘weakness in application’ (Morrison, 1989, p. 11), as many of the ideas have remained at the level of the text book with less emphasis upon implementation in classrooms.

A lack of conceptual clarity has led to consequential attacks that child centredness is ‘woolly’ (Alexander, 1984, Alexander, 2010) and underpinned by ‘romantic’ notions of children. Morrison (1989) has also discussed what he calls a ‘false equation’ (p.12), the link between child-centredness and individualism, which is often reported as ‘individualised’ learning:

a child’s needs might be better catered for by group rather than individualised learning [...] progressive education implies collaboration amongst individuals, working in co-operation rather than competition, it does not preclude joint enterprises, indeed in its demands for flexible learning patterns it perhaps requires it. ’ (pp. 12-13)

Whilst a child centred discourse is often associated with following the interests of children, Anning (1997) has also theorised that ‘child-centred’ education within the UK has been idealised. She has argued that rather than genuinely following

the interests of children, activities before the National Curriculum were likely to stem from ‘teachery versions’ based around themes such as ‘People Who Help Us’ and ‘Animals in Spring.’ She has proposed that these are not truly reflective of a child’s developing fascinations which are often shaped by the popular culture present within their lives. Bereiter(2002) has also proposed that the interests of children are often trivialised by teachers, whilst Hedges (2010) has also made a distinction between what she sees as the enquiry based interests and play based interests of young children. She suggests that teachers often have a very ‘shallow interpretation’ of the current fixations of children and advocates a need to ‘dig deeper’ to access the rich ‘funds of knowledge’ of children (Hedges, 2011). In other words teachers need to explore the ideas and *thinking* of children at a greater depth in order to identify the current fascinations, questions and lines of enquiries that children might have. Nevertheless a child-centred discourse is consistently found to be a dominant voice justifying pedagogical practices within the early childhood community (Kwon, 2002).

Anning (1998) has also critiqued another central theme of early childhood, also stemming from a developmental psychological position (often associated with projects, see Chapter Five), that learning experiences should be ‘integrated’ or ‘cross curricula’ as opposed to being taught through discrete subject areas. She has claimed that the ‘assertion’ that utilising a cross curricula approach is ‘better’ for young children is based on little more than ‘gut feeling’ (Anning, 1998, p.308). She has argued that whilst teachers often claimed to plan in an integrated and cross-curricular manner, research evidence indicated that this was often not the case. Her research suggested that teachers in both primary schools and those working with young children, spent two thirds of their time teaching Literacy and Numeracy. In other words whilst they reported that learning was integrated for over 60 per cent of the time learning was planned through subject areas (Maths and English).

Notions of child centred-ness have also been implicitly associated with ‘play’ and learning which is described as ‘play-based’. Indeed, play is often cited as a central tool for learning within the early years of a child (Bruce, 1987, Anning, 1997). At the same time, the term ‘play’ and associated practices are also widely

contested (e.g. Bennett, Wood and Rogers, 1997; McInnes *et al.*, 2011; Hunter and Walsh 2014). Research studies have consistently been used to argue that there is a gap between rhetoric and practice (BERA, Early Years SIG, 2003, p.14)

This 'gap' may stem from what McAuley and Jackson (1992) have called 'conceptual confusion.' Siraj- Blatchford (1999) has maintained that 'pedagogic confusion' leads to direct teaching as a default position adding that:

If pedagogic confusion is such a common response to curriculum change then[...]we need to provide pedagogical guidance alongside curriculum initiatives. (p.23)

In summary, from the literature outlined thus far, it can be argued that notions of 'child-centeredness' and seemingly associated pedagogies (for example learning as 'integrated,' the centrality of play) are highly contestable and have been 'reified.' In other words they may have become a set of taken for granted *uncritical* assumptions enshrined within the early years philosophical and psychological legacies.

3.3.3 Socio Cultural Theory

In recent decades there has been a shift towards socio cultural theories of learning based upon Vygotskian and neo-Vygotskian thinking (see for example Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch 1985; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976; Tharp and Gallimore 1991; Mercer, 1994 ; Rogoff, 1998; Fler, 2002; Edwards, 2005) Underpinning these positions is a vision of the capable learner possessing the ability to construct his or her own knowledge. Learning is perceived as an active and interactive activity occurring through a process of 'co-construction' with others. As the BERA Early Years Special Interest Group state:

It is generally accepted today that children's learning is active, self regulating, constructive in problem situations and, is related to existing knowledge as they act upon their environment.' (BERA, EY SIG, 2003, p.7)

From this stance the role of other people is emphasised in supporting the learner in mediating learning experiences. Vygotsky (1962) emphasised the significance

of the role of the adult in the growth of the child's intellectual development, outlining the concept of the zone of proximal development: this theory holds that a child is able to complete tasks and solve intellectual problems with the help of 'knowledgeable others' which may be outside of his or her ability when working independently and the development of intellectual capacity is viewed as a by product of social interaction. In other words socio cultural theory highlights the centrality of dialogic and collaborative ways of working both as tools for social *and* cognitive development.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) have described the adult's role as 'scaffolding,' a child's learning - supporting the child through a joint activity until the child can operate independently at that level. More recently Jordon (2009) has offered a useful distinction between scaffolding and co-construction; scaffolding is described as occurring when the more knowledgeable other has a predefined learning objective for the learner and scaffolds the novice towards this. On the other hand during co-construction there is more emphasis upon shared meaning making between participants, including the teacher. This means that there is no pre-specified outcome and the child is able to direct the learning which is likely to involve more higher order thinking than in scaffolded activities (Jordon, 2009, p. 50).

Building upon the work of Vygotsky, neo- Vygotskians have highlighted the significance of cultural variations in the learning process (Rogoff, 1994). Mercer (1994) has argued that the essence of this position is that learning is viewed as a social (as opposed to an individual) process, with 'understandings...constructed in culturally-formed settings... saturated by culture' (p. 93) Rogoff (1994) has proposed that children often learn through 'guided participation' in which an adult supports a child through 'co-construction.' She has further argued that these interactions will also be open to cultural variations which are shaped by the cultural imperatives of different societies.

Whilst a Piagetian position would claim that language is reflective of our current level of cognition, a socio cultural stance would maintain that language actually *shapes* our thought processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Drawing on this argument, it has

been theorised that the learning process is dialogic in nature (see for example Wells 1999 and Alexander, 2004): an interactive process of co-construction in which language is highlighted as a tool for cognitive development. An element of enquiry is viewed as essential through open ended collaborative activities (Alexander, 2004).

3.4 Creativity and Thinking

Underpinned by this set of socio cultural theoretical assumptions, there has also been a move towards the promotion of ‘thinking skills’ (Grainger and Barnes, 2006; Craft *et al.*, 2013) and ‘creativity’ within the fields of early years and primary education (Duffy, 2006). From this perspective, creativity is not viewed as being bound to particular subject areas traditionally associated with the arts (such as art, dance and drama) but rather as a way of *thinking* in which there is a foregrounding of critical reflection (Craft, 2001; Craft *et al.*, 2013, Cooper 2013). In other words, creativity is not perceived as a way of producing or *reproducing* a completed product artistic or otherwise, (although this may happen), but rather as an ongoing dialogic process involving the ‘serious play of ideas and possibilities’ (Grainger and Barnes, 2006, p.2). As in the pedagogical practices of Reggio Emilia (see 5.19) traditional artist genres remain useful in the potential they offer to nurture the creative processes since they can enable children to express feelings and ideas in non verbal ways; exploration and representation of ideas through multiple media are also believed to enrich and deepen the thought process.

Craft (2001, 2002) has made a distinction between what she has termed ‘Big C’ and ‘Little C’ creativity: Big C creativity would involve wholesale theoretical/societal shifts in understanding (for example the theories of Einstein), whilst little C creativity focuses upon the processes by which an individual person (or child) is able to think and represent in a way that is original for them. Moyles *et al.* have maintained that all human beings possess an ability for Little C creativity underpinned by a capacity to ‘route-find in life, take action and to evaluate what is effective or successful’ (Moyles, 2002, foreword). Consequently it can be argued that all children should be offered pedagogical experiences which enable individual creative potential to flourish. At the same time it has also been

proposed that many of the pedagogical activities offered to young children in the name of ‘art’ and ‘creativity’ are unstimulating and tedious (Duffy, 2006).

Stemming from the fields of primary and early years education, the research of Craft and colleagues (see for example Craft, 2000, 2001, Craft and Jeffrey, 2004) has hypothesised that the ‘engine’ to creativity is the concept of ‘possibility thinking’ an attitude of mind which underpins all domains of knowledge. They suggest that possibility thinking marks a move in focus from ‘*what is this and what does it do?*’ to ‘*What can I do with this?*’ (Craft, *et al.*, 2007, p2), with the latter relating specifically to the identification, honing and solving of problems (Jeffrey and Craft, 2004; Jeffrey, 2005). Whilst ‘possibility thinking’ may involve both convergent and divergent thinking (Torrance, 1966), there will often be a focus upon the latter with limited emphasis upon finding a pre-specified answer (Craft *et al.* 2012). In other words, during the process of possibility thinking, ideas often diverge out from a central question rather than radiating inwards (Craft *et al.* 2013).

Resonating with a socio cultural position, Grainger and Barnes (2006) have proposed that foregrounding creativity within a classroom will therefore often involve educators and children working collaboratively:

outside the boundaries of predictability[...] (in) a climate of enquiry, of ideas and of sensible risk-taking,’ (p.2).

Subsequently, the process of creativity is viewed as uncertain, unpredictable and risky in nature (NACCCE, 1999; Cremin, *et al.*, 2006; Cooper, 2013); a journey without a pre-specified destination akin to a Reggio project (see Chapter Five). From this perspective then, risk taking becomes an integral element of the creative process with a necessity for the teacher to possess a capacity to endure uncertainty and the unknown (Claxton, 1998). This position holds congruence with a growing consensus from the early years community in relation to the pedagogical practices which are believed to foster creativity/possibility thinking. These include:

- posing questions; (QCA, 2005)

- standing back, listening to and noticing the child's engagement within an activity; (Cremin, Burnard and Craft 2006, Craft *et al.* 2012 ; Craft *et al.* 2013)
- creating time and space for exploration and experimentation.(Cremin, Burnard and Craft, 2006)
- making connections; being imaginative; (Duffy, 1998; 2005; QCA, 2005)
- engaging in critical reflection (QCA, 2005; Chappell *et al.*, 2008).
- setting up pedagogical activities in which children are able to make their own choices and follow their own direction; (Cremin, Burnard and Craft, 2006; Craft *et al.*, 2012)

Many of these proposals resonate with the key tenets of historical projects (outlined within Chapter Five), for example, creativity is believed to flourish in settings where there is a climate of enquiry in which children (and adults) are encouraged to take ownership of ideas (and learning) and have sufficient opportunities to engage within a dialogic process of critical reflection. This means that child (and teacher) agency is prioritised and there is a consequential need for flexibility in terms of the direction of activities. As a result, tightly planned pedagogical activities without room for flexibility are deemed inappropriate since there needs to be 'space' for possibility thinking to occur.

A necessity to adopt an 'inclusive approach to pedagogy', in which control is passed back to the learner and 'a co-participative process' has been consequently advocated (Jeffrey and Craft 2004; Craft *et al.*, 2012). Cremin, Burnard and Craft, (2006) have proposed that such a pedagogical approach has resonances with more 'invisible pedagogy' (Bernstein, 1977), in which 'framing' is weaker and control of activities has moved towards the child. In such cases there is a limited focus upon children arriving at a specific answer with pedagogical practices aiming to nurture and develop the child's own belief in themselves as a 'thinker'.

This stance is underpinned by a strong construction of the child who is believed to possess the ability to theorise and think independently which is mirrored with a strong construction of the teacher, possessing the ability to harness and navigate

the child's creative potential as a thinker. Tight frameworks which aim at controlling the child/teacher/learning process are therefore not viewed as necessary since there is an implicit culture of trust.

3.5 Changing Role of the teacher?

Drawing on both philosophical and psychological thinking, the long-established perception of the British early years educator is that of an adviser and facilitator (Curtis, 1998; Darling, 1994), an 'arranger of the environment,' as opposed to an instructor (Kwon, 2002). A pervasive theme stemming from the philosophical legacy then was that the adult should not be intrusive but rather allow the child to 'discover' (Kwon, 2002). In terms of pedagogical practices this means that the teacher would need to observe children's interests and then arrange the environment to reflect these and to plan particular activities in which interests are acknowledged. This construction of the teacher has been heavily critiqued, for example Peters (1968) has argued that rather than waiting for the child to 'discover,' a teacher should utilise a range of different approaches which would be dependent upon the situation. These might include explaining, demonstrating, correcting or asking leading questions.

Kwon (2002) has outlined how socio-cultural theories (see 3.2.3) have impacted upon the perceived role of the early years educator, who is presented as both co-constructing knowledge with children and also 'scaffolding' children's learning through problem solving experiences (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) whilst extending, consolidating or confronting children's current theories and metacognitive processes (Maynard and Chicken 2010). From this perspective there is more emphasis upon interaction between the child and adult than from a Piagetian perspective in which the teacher is viewed as 'an arranger of the environment.'

Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, (2002) have argued that learning takes place through a process of 'reflexive co-construction' in which both the child and adult are involved (p.10) . From this position, a pivotal role of the practitioner occurs

through adult-child interactions which involve ‘sustained shared thinking’ (SST) defined as:

An episode in which two or more individuals “work together” in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend. (2002, p. 8)

Drawing upon both Piagetian and (neo)Vygotskian positions, government sponsored research within the English context has maintained that the most ‘effective’ settings balance ‘teacher-directed’ and ‘child initiated’ pedagogies (Moyley *et al.*, 2002; Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002). This would be in line with a mid way point between a tightly and loosely framed pedagogical stance (Bernstein, 1975). From a similar position McInnes, *et al.*, (2011) have proposed that where pedagogical interactions are most successful in promoting thinking that they should include elements of problem solving, be dialogic in nature and be open enough to allow for a range of possible directions. In other words children should have some opportunities to exercise levels of autonomy within a stimulating environment whilst educators support the learning taking place (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002, p.12). At the same time, Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, (2002) reported that whilst engaging with episodes of sustained shared thinking should be viewed as a central role for the early year educator it was very rarely observed (p.11). Drawing on the work of neo-Vygotskians (Rogoff 2003, and Fleer,2006), Wood (2007a) has argued that shifts in theory continue to be extremely challenging for the early childhood community given that they problematise long-established thinking in relation to child centredness since:

The child is not seen as the ‘individually developing child,’ but rather as a competent social actor, within a complex network of social and cultural influences (p. 126)

Thus far the chapter has argued that early years pedagogy may be underpinned by common early childhood themes (McLean, 1992; Cannella, 1997). These have been highlighted by Stephen (2006), and draw upon the previous reviews of other authorities (notably BERA, 2003; Mitchell and Wild, 2004 and Davies, 2005), seven main themes in relation to early childhood education and associated

pedagogies are outlined (see Stephen, 2006, p.7): First there has been a focus on individual development; second the learning process is viewed as co-constructed between adults underpinned by a third theme, a construction of the child as a competent learner; fourth, emphasis is placed upon child initiated and not adult initiated experiences; fifth, importance is placed upon listening and respecting children and their choices; sixth learning is believed to be shaped by contextual factors and seventh, the importance of play is highlighted as a vehicle for learning. Many of these themes can be seen as interrelated to each other (competent child, co-construction of learning, listening and respecting of children's choices) and it can be argued, are indicative of a move towards a socio cultural theoretical position.

At the same time research has consistently suggested that the traditions of the early childhood community have not always stood up to either theoretical or empirical scrutiny (see for example Bennett, Wood and Rogers, 1997; Wood and Bennett 2001; Stephen, 2010; Stephen, 2012). In other words, whilst early childhood education is 'strong on ideals and aspirations' it is at the same time 'weaker on empirical evidence about teaching and learning' (Wood, 2004 p.362). Whilst socio cultural theories of learning have led to a more 'active' role for the practitioner in supporting the strong and capable child, at the same time it has also been argued that many of the key themes cited by the early years literature are ambiguous and contested. This adds to 'conceptual confusion' in terms of the pedagogical practices deemed as 'appropriate' within the early years classroom consequentially impacting upon how the teacher is positioned. *This is deemed significant to this study because it is within these debates that the term 'project' and associated pedagogical practices (direct activities and indirect actions, Stephen, 2006) are constructed.*

The next part of the chapter now moves on to discuss how policy drives post 1988, have impacted upon early years pedagogy and the subsequent positions adopted by teachers. These debates are viewed as important since they lay the foundations for the contemporary project constructions explored within the embedded case study and outlined within chapters eight, nine and ten.

3.6 The Development of a Statutory Curriculum for Young Children

Until relatively recently early years teachers had a great deal of autonomy in terms of what they did within classrooms and there was no formal statutory curriculum. Whilst the Plowden Report (PR) of 1967 did not implement a *statutory* curriculum and was not aimed at ‘early years’ children specifically, it was seminal in the legitimisation of pedagogical practices within early years settings and the subsequent positions offered to teachers. Wood (2007) has argued that the report was particularly significant to the provision offered to early years children since it:

reified developmental theories, and child-centred approaches to learning through discovery, exploration and play, and to planning the curriculum around children’s needs and interests (Wood, 2007a, p. 119)

In other words, it advocated many of the themes explored within the first half of this chapter. The pedagogical practices associated with the PR were sharply attacked notably in the Black Papers of 1969 (Cox and Dyson, 1969; Cox, 1969) which offered almost total condemnation of the ‘wild progressives’ who were believed to be taking over primary classrooms on a wide scale. The ‘Plowden Revolution’ (Tann, 1988, p.11) was allowing ‘radicals’ to take over the education system, with a lack of structure, discipline and the lowering of ‘standards’. The DES Report of 1978 suggested that many schools were using an integrated approach to the planning and delivery of the curriculum, whilst the ORACLE research (Simon and Galton, 1975) from the same era found that claims relating to the ‘wild’ nature of so called progressive education had been hugely exaggerated (Galton *et al.*, 1980; Bennett *et al.*, 1984). Never-the-less it was also noted that interpretations of ‘integrated learning’ witnessed through projects and topics within some settings had, indeed, led to a lowering of ‘standards’ (DES, 1975, 1978, Lawson, 1979).

From 1967 to 1976 there was an absence of government intervention in relation to the school curriculum and associated pedagogical practices (Alexander, 2010). This changed with the William Tyndall scandal starting in 1974. The catalyst of this situation began when the newly appointed head teacher and ‘a strong-minded’ deputy ‘with radical views’, (Haigh, 2006) began to run a ‘progressive’ system

based around team-teaching which aimed to give children choice and freedom in relation to their learning (Haigh, op. cit.). Some teachers and many parents did not agree with the new system viewing this as anarchic and chaotic. The Local Education Authority was called in and the media used this to evidence further the decline in the schooling system, calling for ‘back to basics’ and a move away from ‘trendy’ methods based around project and topic work.

The subsequent Ruskin speech of James Callaghan in 1976 called further into question:

the new informal methods of teaching, which seem to produce excellent results when they are in well-qualified hands but are much more dubious when they are not (Haigh, 2006).

Significantly Callaghan also proposed that it was not only teachers but also government and industry which, ‘ha(d) an important part to play in formulating and expressing the purpose of education and the standards that we need.’ (Alexander, 2010). This speech is noteworthy since it signified a change in direction in relation to teacher autonomy and pedagogical practices. The teacher was no longer to be trusted with the formulation of the curriculum.

By the late 80s there was a move towards ‘standardisation’ in terms of educational practices. This stemmed from government directives witnessed both in the UK and within the context of the USA. This political climate led to the establishment of the National Curriculum (NC) and assessment system for children from five to sixteen under the guise of the Education Reform Act of 1988, overseen by the right wing Conservative government of the time. This move towards ‘back to basics’ was mirrored by other first world economies with the aim of raising ‘standards’ in subjects deemed essential for the growth of market economies (Soler and Miller, 2003). As such this was reflective of a particular zeitgeist. Now the child was removed from the centre of the education system and replaced by subjects (Alexander *et al.*, 1992); educational terminology changed with standards’ ‘outcomes’, ‘accountability’ being added to teacher vocabulary.

3.7 1988 A water shed: The Introduction of the National Curriculum

The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 outlined *what* children between the ages of 5- 16 should learn, highlighting subject knowledge. The curriculum for primary school children between the ages of five and eleven was now to be structured around subjects. Maths, English and Science were identified as core subjects, ‘the basics,’ and a range of other subjects were acknowledged as Foundation subjects. This was viewed as problematic by members of the early childhood community: who were concerned that a focus upon subject knowledge and targets did not place the child ‘first’ and would lead to a ‘head-on clash with the traditions of early childhood education’ (Blenkin & Kelly, 1994, p. 37). From a Bernsteinian perspective this marked a shift towards more visible types of pedagogy in which control for learning lay with the teacher planned around traditional subject areas.

Prior to the implementation of the National Curriculum, the Education Minister of the time, was at pains to stress that teachers would still hold responsibility for pedagogical choices in terms of *how* to teach:

We shall not be telling schools how to organise the school day. It is the end results that matters, not the means of getting there[...]They may get there by *project work or integrated studies* [...]we are not trying to suppress *project work or eliminate themes*. (Baker, 1987, emphasis added).

Whilst these comments indicate that the teacher would still have autonomy in terms of the pedagogic practices utilised, it was also indicative of the prevalence of project work at the time. Further notions of project work appear to have been interconnected with integrated studies and thematic ways of structuring learning. From a Bernsteinian perspective then the practices described appeared to have been loosely classified since learning was not planned around subject areas.

Three years later a speech by the new chairman of the National Curriculum Council indicated a shift in this thinking:

How can we introduce the subject by subject approach to the National Curriculum[...] when we are faced with the traditional approach to teaching in primaries of single class teachers and topic work? Now what we have to look at is does the approach deliver the requirements and the

objectives of the national curriculum? (David Pascall, 1991, cited in Gorwood, 1991)

This suggests that ‘topic work’ was a pedagogical approach at the time and resonating with ‘project’ work (see Chapter Five) was associated with weakly classified practices; further these practices were to be treated with suspicion. In an article in *The Times*, Tyler remarked that Pascal’s speech signalled a move to ‘Strike at the heart of current teaching through *play and projects*’ (Tyler, 1991, emphasis added). In other words these ways of working with children were deemed as inefficient and a move to more didactic tightly framed pedagogy placed on the agenda.

Whilst the National Curriculum did not legislate for children between the ages of three and five, Anning (1998) also highlighted how early years pedagogical practices and principles were portrayed in a similar derisory vein. Quotations from senior policy makers released to the media at the time of the National Curriculum describe project work as: ‘At worst it turns the primary school into play groups where there is much happiness and painting, but very little learning.’ Whilst child centred education is also remonstrated, ‘at its weakest there is a lot of sticking together of egg boxes and playing in the sand’ (Anning, 1998, p. 302). This is indicative of two points; primarily the comments suggest that projects and an associated discourse of child centred-ness were in circulation and secondly that they were perceived by policy makers in negative terms.

In a drive to raise ‘standards,’ Standard Attainment Tests were also introduced within the primary school for children aged seven and eleven in English and Mathematics; these results were to be published annually in league tables. This would give parents ‘choice’ and the ability to compare how schools were ‘performing.’ More emphasis was now also to be placed upon school inspections used to judge and compare the success (or otherwise) of particular teachers, schools and Local Authorities.

During this era, the early years Rumbold Report of 1990 (DES, 1990) argued that teachers within the early years sector ‘should guard against’ demands to focus on specific targets and didactic teaching methods. (p. 14). As later sections will demonstrate, these comments proved to be prophetic.

Continued concerns in relation to primary pedagogy propelled, Kenneth Baker to commission a report into current primary practices. Written in a month and known as the 'Three Wise Men Report,' (Alexander, Rose and Woodhead, 1992) this added a nail in the coffin to 'integrated learning' and 'child-centred' approaches. A balance of teaching methods including whole class, group and individual work was advocated and criticism levelled at the polarisation of thinking with regards to an 'either/or' stance to pedagogy. At the same time it was also critical of a heavy emphasis upon 'child initiated' learning and raised concerns that some children were receiving inadequate amounts of teaching in certain curricula areas. The report argued that this was due to 'highly questionable dogmas' adding that 'resistance to subjects at the primary level is no longer tenable'. (Alexander, Rose and Woodhead, 1992, para. 3.2). This report was used by the Right wing to lend weight to an emphasis upon 'outcomes' and 'whole class teaching' highlighted by the media and a necessity to 'go back to basics'. The Three Wise Men Report (1992) also indicated a shift in thinking with regards to child development; a move from a Piagetian lens in which a child's readiness to engage with particular learning was viewed as important towards a (neo)Vygotskian construction of learning which views 'education as acceleration- advancing children rather waiting until they are ready for the next stage' (Hofkins, 2002). This point also signifies how discourses become interconnected, in this case the psychological position with the political.

3.8 What was happening in the early years?

1996 saw the implementation of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education (SCAA, 1996) and within the context of England the subsequent Early Learning Goals (QCA, 2000). This document set out six curriculum areas; Language and Literacy; Mathematics, Personal and Social Development; Knowledge and Understanding of the World and Creative Development and further associated learning outcomes indicative of what children should obtain before entering Key Stage One at the age of five. These outcomes were linked to the National Curriculum level descriptors for Key Stage One children. This was indicative of a perception of early years provision as preparatory stage for formal schooling. The research of Wood & Bennett (1999)

expressed concerns in relation to the Desirable Outcomes (SCAA, 1996) for young children. They reported a shift in emphasis towards achieving outcomes at the expense of the learning process: In other words a shift from a learner centred to a subject centred approach, from a weakly classified to a strongly classified position. This was manifested through the use of more didactic methods, more use of work sheets and less emphasis upon child initiated learning. In other words, from a Bernsteinian perspective, a shift from a loosely to more tightly framed position. This research made visible a tension between the theoretical underpinning of traditional early years pedagogy and the policy discourses in circulation (Wood, 2004).

1996 also saw the introduction of the Conservative Government's nursery voucher scheme which entitled parents to £1,100 per child for four year olds to spend at a pre-school establishment of their choice. However in order to be eligible to accept vouchers, it was necessary for settings to prove that they were moving towards the use of the 'Desirable Outcomes'. This was a defining moment for the early years pedagogy within England and Wales – a political move to govern the *what* and the *how* of teaching the youngest children thus legitimising the type of knowledge deemed appropriate and the pedagogical practices in play; emphasis was placed upon literacy, numeracy, personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding (SCAA, 1996). In 1997 Baseline assessments were also introduced: four year old children just entering school were now tested in order to measure their 'value added' knowledge at the age of seven.

The voucher scheme was never to materialise as the incoming Labour Government of 1997 abolished this almost immediately. They pledged to raise standards in early years education through increased government funding given directly to institutions. Part time places would be offered to all four year olds and in some places also to three year olds. However, as with the outgoing Conservative government, a prerequisite of such funding was positive educational inspections based upon the Desirable Outcomes and later in England on the Early Learning Goals. (QCA, 2000). These policies outlined the learning experiences which young children should be offered in terms of 'areas of learning' and whilst

these were not strictly compartmentalised into specific subjects, disciplines which were thought to be similar in nature were grouped together under six headings (see Table 4.1). In summary it could be argued that the ‘micro practices’ put in to place to ‘measure’ success became instrumental in shaping pedagogy through policing what was deemed as acceptable practice (Gore, 1998).

1998 and 1999 saw the introduction of the National literacy (NLS) and Numeracy Strategies (NNS) and accompanying ‘targets’ which the incoming Labour government introduced. These documents now outlined not only *what* should be taught at a given point in time but also *how* this should be taught. As Hofkins (2002) has argued:

If pedagogy were centre stage, New Labour wanted to direct it. With the national literacy and numeracy strategies came instructions on how to teach, on which teachers then felt judged during Office for Standards in Education inspections (Hofkins, 2002)

A major concern for early years practitioners at this time was that pedagogical approaches outlined were the same for four year olds to eleven year olds with no differentiation in terms of pedagogy (Wood, 2004). These documents were also based upon particular constructions of ‘effective’ pedagogy (Wood, 2004) with a focus upon ‘pace,’ focused teaching objectives and whole class and group work. Wood (2007b) has argued that a focus upon particular content and skills has consequences for how early childhood pedagogy and curriculum are constructed at a conceptual level and that this runs counter to earlier child-centred discourses where content was under-emphasised. It could be argued that there were tensions between shifts in policy and the theoretical underpinning of early childhood education (Wood and Bennett, 1999). This lends weight to the argument that pedagogy like curriculum is not value neutral but reflective of particular dominant discourses in circulation (Ball, 1994; Kemmis, 1995, Eke and Kumar, 2008). With these debates as a backdrop, the next section now moves on to explore research studies which examine the impact of policy shifts upon pedagogical practices.

3.9 What was the impact of policy upon early years pedagogy? A review of research studies post National Curriculum

Post National Curriculum, there were a number of key research studies which attempted to explore the impact of policy discourses upon pedagogical practices. Part of the influential PACE project (see for example Pollard *et al.*, 1994) documented shifts in Key Stage One (ages 5-7) teachers' classroom organisational patterns following the National Curriculum's introduction. This research study reported that between 1991 and 1992 there was a decline in the number of teachers claiming to utilise child-centred/informal pedagogies from 22.7 to 16.1% and an increase of 5.7 to 10.8% of teachers claiming to be using more formal direct pedagogical approaches. This suggests that from a Bernsteinian perspective practices were becoming more tightly framed with less autonomy for the child. During this time frame there was also a significant drop in reference to the integrated day (29 to 8%) and an associated increase in references to whole class teaching (4 to 29%). Teachers reported 'tightening their classroom control and ... providing more direction to children's activities' (Pollard *et al.*, 1994, p. 154). Participants argued that this was necessary first to fulfil the demands of the National Curriculum; second to ensure that pre-specified content was covered and third to ensure that children would be able to pass the Standard Attainment Tasks at the end of Key Stages one.

Studies also highlighted the impact of policy discourses upon pedagogical practices within the early years (3-5) post National Curriculum (e.g. Wood, Bennett and Rogers, 1997; Wood and Bennett, 1997; Wood and Bennett, 2001; Aubrey, 2002; Adams *et al.* 2004). For example, within the study of Wood and Bennett (1997) early years teachers reported that a perceived necessity to ensure that content was covered had led to limited time to make the observations deemed necessary in order to ascertain the interests of children (traditionally associated with early years pedagogy). Further, time spent on teacher-led activities left little space for adults to interact with children in meaningful ways and there was also a perceived pressure from parents and other staff members to produce 'work' which was often viewed as meeting a particular outcome or producing a product as opposed to valuing play based pedagogy as a process. Despite the fact that

educators said that they valued ‘play based pedagogies,’ a major challenge reported was the difficulty in evidencing learning through play based ways of working. These findings were also indicative of dissonance between personal and official epistemological positions.

A reoccurring theme within these studies was also a perceived gap between rhetoric and practice. Indicative of this issue was the work of Aubrey (2004) which examined research studies with a focus upon pedagogy within early years settings (e.g. Bennett and Kell, 1989; Pascal, 1990; Cleave and Brown, 1991; West and Varlaam, 1990). Whilst in each study practitioners claimed that pedagogy was ‘activity –based’ or ‘play based’ this was rarely the case. This led Aubrey to argue that:

whilst teachers recognise and report the value and benefits of young children’s activity- based learning, the gap between the reported and actual practice is significant. (Aubrey, 2004, p. 637)

Wood and Bennett (2001) also carried out research between 1999-2000 which explored the impact of national policies on teachers’ thinking and pedagogical practices with a focus on progression and continuity from pre-school to Key Stage One. Nursery teachers (working with 3–4-year-old children) within this study were able to maintain a learner-centred pedagogy in which the interests of children were foregrounded. However, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies made this very challenging for Reception teachers who reported ‘downward pressure’ to prepare children for Key Stage One. This led to a shift towards more visible tightly framed pedagogical approaches with a consequential increase in teacher directed activities. This became more noticeable as the age of the children increased across Key Stage One. There was a decreasing emphasis upon the *process* of learning and a corresponding increased importance upon the accumulation of specific content knowledge through direct teaching methods. In other words the starting point for learning opportunities was a list of knowledge needed to be acquired by the end of the year, underpinned by a deficient model of the learner. This led Wood to claim that there were ‘tensions (between) curriculum-centred and learner- centred models’ (Wood, 2004, p. 370), whilst

Aubrey (2002) proposed that early years was the site for at least two competing discourses on the one hand a governmental agenda which prioritised raising standards through didactic approaches and on the other hand practitioners and policy makers who 'adhered to the notion of a distinct pedagogy, practices and ways of understanding young children, as well as a distinct set of purposes for early childhood institutions' (p.637)

This range of studies indicated that pressure to ensure that children reached targets at the age of seven ultimately led to a 'top down' effect as practices traditionally associated with older children were pushed down into earlier years in order to ensure coverage of assessed content and to meet end of key stage targets (see also Blenkin and Kelly, 1994; Moss and Penn, 1996). This was also reported to be the case within the context of Western Australia where it has been argued that traditionally 'primary' pedagogies have been 'pushed -down' into classes for young children (Corrie and Barrett- Pugh, 1997; Corrie, 1999; Stamopoulos, 2003); and in the context of the USA (Shepard and Smith, 1988; Walsh, 1989, Stipek and Byler, 1997). My argument here is that 'top down' pressure may have led to more visible forms of tightly framed pedagogy within settings for young children with the dominant policy discourses in circulation consequently leading to an erosion of teacher autonomy and subsequent decline in child agency. This range of policies then may have led to a reconstruction of the teacher, now positioned as a 'technician' as Morrison (1989) argued at the time:

through teacher proof packaged curriculum teachers are being deskilled to become agents, passive technicians, recipients of decisions and curriculum planning made on their behalf- the conception and execution, so familiar to industry, is being taken on their behalf. (p.6)

These comments further suggest that shifts may have been underpinned by a 'tidied up' and instrumental view of the teaching and learning process, akin to a 'banking concept' (Freire, 1993), in which 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (p 53).

My argument here is that this historical era marked a shift from philosophical and psychological discourses as key informants to early years pedagogy towards

policy discourses as dominant drivers. Moss (2007) has consequently argued that early years pedagogy has succumbed to a discourse of ‘technical rationality.’

The research findings explored thus far concur with more recent research within the Scottish context where there has been a policy move towards ‘active learning’ (Scottish Executive 2007) (see Stephen *et al.* 2009; Stephen *et al.* 2010; and Martlew, *et al.* 2011). Martlew *et al.* (2011) explored constructions of active learning within six classrooms for children between the ages of four and a half and five and half years of age. During interviews practitioners supported a policy shift towards ‘active learning’, arguing that learning should be ‘meaningful’ and draw on the interests of children. However, during observations it was noted that there was very little activity which could be described as child initiated with the majority of tasks being either directed or at least initiated by the teacher. Lessons often started with whole class sessions and children were subsequently directed to particular activities by the teacher. In five of the six classrooms children were rarely offered choice or offered activities which facilitated ‘any degree of personalisation’ (Martlew, *et al.*, 2011, p. 78). Children had no opportunity for making autonomous decisions throughout the day in terms of what they were doing, the order in which to do this, or in terms of the time they spent on different activities. They were usually grouped together and could only move on to the next task when the teacher said so. Five of the classes operated a ‘rotation system’ in which groups of children rotated around preplanned activities when the teacher told them to do so.

At the same time there were variations between both open and closed activities; didactic episodes; recording via pencil and paper; story writing; computer activities and imaginative play (*ibid.*). In other words there were different interpretations of pedagogical practices described under the ‘active learning’ umbrella. This study also highlighted a gap between rhetoric and practice and led Stephen (2010) to argue that whilst there may be a common ‘pedagogical rhetoric’(p.25) often shared by both policymakers and practitioners that this does not translate into the pedagogical practices offered to young children in the name of ‘learning.’ Drawing on these data, the research team theorised that a difficulty

in moving towards a pedagogy based upon ‘active learning’ was that it required teachers to:

Create an appropriate learning context that allows them to follow children’s interests based upon prior knowledge. This type of approach presents difficulties for those teachers who are used to a more rigid curricula structure and who have concerns over accountability and attainment targets. (Martlew, *et. al.*, 2011, p80)

There have also been a number of recent studies within the context of English early years provision which are also relevant to my own study. For example the research of McInnes and colleagues (2011), situated within two English Foundation Stage classes, explored links between practitioners’ observed pedagogical practices and stated pedagogical understandings.

They reported that in the first setting a range of adult-led and child-led activities were planned for, with practitioners interacting across both types. Irrespective of whether activities were adult or child led; children were encouraged to exercise their own autonomy. This led the researchers to categorise practices as ‘mixed framing’ since they were a combination of both strong and weak. They proposed that in this particular setting, participants appeared to have a theoretical understanding of (play based) pedagogy.

In the second setting, adults usually participated in adult-led activities and children were left to pursue child-led activities with limited adult interaction. In other words pedagogy was strongly framed and learning opportunities controlled tightly by the adult. They argued that this may have been because a clear understanding of pedagogy did not appear to be fully developed:

a lack of understanding of play (based pedagogy), combined with a mistrust of child-led activities and reluctance to give children choice and control, results in an overreliance on adult-led activities with adults having control and choice (McInnes *et al.*, 2011, p. 123).

Their findings suggest that different pedagogical understandings impact upon the role adopted by the teacher.

The research of Cottle and Alexander (2012) explored constructions of practitioners in relation to ‘quality’ within eighteen English early years settings.

A re-occurring theme was practitioners' belief that an appropriate pedagogy should stem from the interests of children (Cottle and Alexander, 2012). Consequently, participants described their roles as 'observers of interests' and as 'scaffolders' of 'child initiated' learning. However, the research found that such pedagogy was very rarely observed. For example whilst fifty two episodes of 'sustained shared thinking' (SST) (Sylva et al., 2004) were noted, most interactions (298) were deemed to be 'managerial' such as 'do your coat up'. From a Bernsteinian perspective then practices were more visible than the dialogues of participants indicated. This led the researchers to theorise that there was a consistent disconnect between the rhetoric of practitioners and observed pedagogical practices.

They further reported that only two of the SST interactions took place within school-based settings as opposed to fifty occurrences within Children's Centres or stand alone nurseries. In addition they noted there was more likelihood that the interests of children might be considered seriously within children centres and stand alone nurseries when compared to school settings. This may have been because participants outside of school settings felt less pressure to ensure that specific targets were met at the end of Key Stage One. In other words they may have been less susceptible to shape practice towards a discourse of technical rationality (Moss, 2007) than participants in school based Foundation Stage Units who were more vulnerable to the demands from Key Stage One colleagues to focus upon predefined targets.

This research again suggested that in some cases there was a tension between a personal and official epistemological stance. Other tensions were made visible particularly in relation to the role of the teacher and associated levels of child autonomy. Drawing on these research findings Cottle and Alexander (2012) suggest that understandings of 'quality' (and subsequently pedagogy) are shaped by the policy discourses in circulation, by contextual factors and further by both the personal and professional biographies of participants.

These research findings indicate that since 1988 both curricula and associated pedagogies have been shaped by socio-political perspectives, with increasing

pressure to teach the ‘basics’ (Stephen, 2006). In other words, there appears to have been a shift in thinking in relation to what is deemed as ‘appropriate’ pedagogy with the *mechanisms* to measure policy drives shaping practice (Wood, 2007): a shift from child initiated activities towards a teacher led focus; from learner centred to curriculum centred (Wood, 2004). From a similar position Ball (1999) has argued that changes in pedagogy may have been a result of a ‘policy panopticon,’ as teachers shaped their pedagogy to conform to the ‘*regulatory gaze*’ (Osgood, 2006, p.5).

3.10 Summary

This chapter began by proposing that pedagogical practices are not value neutral but draw upon different discourses at different points in time (Edwards, 2003). These discourses have implications for how the child and teacher are constructed and the pedagogical practices deemed appropriate and in the field of early years education have traditionally stemmed from philosophical and psychological perspectives (Wood and Bennett, 1997 and Moyles *et al.*, 2002; Maynard and Chicken, 2010). The research literature reviewed in the second half of this chapter suggests a shift in thinking in relation to what may constitute appropriate ways of working with young children post National Curriculum indicating that pedagogy has been influenced by policy discourses. Simultaneously teachers have often expressed concerns in relation to the appropriateness of pedagogical practices for younger children (PACE, 1994; Wood and Bennett, 2000; Wood and Bennett 2001) as they are compelled to steer an increasingly prescriptive policy agenda. This subsequently causes personal conflict as they unite their own professional beliefs with often contradictory government discourses (Wood, 2004). These debates are deemed highly significant as they form part of the backdrop to my own study which aims to trace the trajectory of understanding(s) of the term ‘project’ both historically (Chapter Five) and within the contemporary Welsh educational climate (chapters eight, nine and ten) . Consequently within the next chapter there is a particular focus upon the Welsh context since this is the geographical and policy location of my own research.

Chapter Four

The Study Context:

The Foundation Phase in Wales

"I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."



"I don't see," said the Caterpillar

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied, very politely, "for I can't understand it myself, to begin with." (Carroll, 2013, no page)

The last chapter outlined philosophical, theoretical and policy discourses which may have impacted upon constructions of early childhood pedagogy and the associated positions adopted by the teacher. It argued that different ways of working with young children have emerged which resonate with the different discourses in circulation at particular points in time. I deemed this to be important since these debates provide the backdrop to my exploration of historical and contemporary understandings of the pedagogical term 'project'. This short chapter now aims to contextualise my own research study within the Foundation Phase, a new curriculum within Wales at the beginning of the new millennium. At the same time I must stress that the conception of the new curriculum did not

occur in a vacuum but rather drew on the overlapping debates and discourses presented within the previous chapter.

4.1 The Foundation Phase

In 1999 following devolution, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) was inaugurated making an early pledge to change the education system within Wales. This marked a seminal point in history in relation to education provision for Welsh children which had traditionally been intertwined with English policy trajectories. The new curriculum would incorporate children within the previous early years phase (three- to- five) and children who had formerly been situated within Key Stage One classes (five-to-seven) with early years reconstructed as three until seven. The desire to create a distinctive education policy was already indicated by the fact that the NLS and NNS were not promoted within a Welsh context as they were in England, secondly by the fact that Primary School league tables were never introduced and finally that national tests for seven year olds were abolished in 2002.

A range of Welsh Government scoping and consultative documents were produced (e.g. Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999; Pre-16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee, 2000). Drawing upon consultation and Estyn Reports (and with the research evidence presented at the end of the last chapter as a backdrop), ‘The Learning Country: The Foundation Phase -3 to 7 years (NAfW, 2003a) set out ‘shortcomings’ in relation to education. This document argued that pedagogical practices for young children had become too ‘formal’ with criticism including: too much emphasis upon sedentary activities; more ‘good’ and ‘very good’ work in nursery schools/units as opposed to reception classes and too little emphasis placed upon developing children’s creative expression and limited opportunities for discussion.

The documents that followed appeared to be underpinned by an eclectic mix of constructivist, developmental and socio cultural positions (see previous chapter). For example, drawing from a constructivist stance, it was reasoned that there should be emphasis upon ‘exploration, problem-solving, active involvement’ and

‘child-centred’ learning (e.g. NAFW, 2003a, p.5); ‘Play’ was continually presented as a central tool in learning (e.g. ACCAC, 2004; DCELLS, 2008a; DCELLS 2008b, DCELLS 2008c), a process which should be viewed as ‘active and experiential’ (e.g. DCELLS 2008b , 2008c; ESTYN, 2010, p.1). At the same time a developmental position was inherent, any curriculum should be ‘appropriate’, ‘developmental,’ and in harmony with the child’s particular interests and needs.’ (NAFW 2001b, p. 10); children were described as learning at an ‘individual pace’ (DCELLS, 2008a, p. 5). It was proposed that separating learning ‘artificially’ into subject areas should be avoided since ‘young children... do not compartmentalise their learning and understanding into curriculum areas’ (2008b, p. 5). Consequently it was reasoned that planning might take:

a thematic approach across all Areas of Learning. Children’s ideas can be included when planning *topics/projects*, for example, by involving them in discussion and mind mapping. A theme or topic that interests the children will enable them to develop understanding through learning experiences that are meaningful to them’. (DCELLS, 2008b, p.13, emphasis added)

Resonating with a socio cultural position it was further elucidated that the curriculum should help children to view themselves as ‘lifelong learners’ (NAFW, 2001, p.23; NAFW, 2003a, p.9) whilst strengthening their disposition to do so (NAFW, 2003a, p.10); it was also argued that children would need experiences in which they were encouraged to make independent decisions (NAFW, 2003a, p.10) and have opportunities in which to develop thinking (NAFW, 2003a, p.9). In other words there was an explicit obligation for practitioners to support ‘child-initiated’ pedagogical activities which would facilitate a level of child autonomy.

Drawing explicitly on a socio cultural position (DCELLS, 2008b), further emphasis was placed upon the need for opportunities for sustained shared thinking and open ended questioning in which problem solving, collaboration and enquiry were highlighted (ibid.). The centrality of ‘thinking’ within the new curriculum was later reiterated by the Welsh Government in the ‘Learning and Teaching Pedagogy’ document:

By engaging in a dialogue with a child, encouraging the child to talk about his/her interests and asking open-ended questions, a practitioner can support and extend the child's thinking[...] Sustained shared thinking describes the process where practitioner and child act as co-constructors in learning, both contributing to solving a problem. (DCELLS, 2008b, p.35)

Children learn through first hand experiential activities (in which they) practise and consolidate their learning, play with ideas, experiment, take risk, solve problems, and make decisions individually, in small and in large groups. (DCELLS, 2008b, p.4)

A focus upon 'thinking' was also noticeable within accompanying Welsh Government documentation and deemed essential in an ever increasing technological world (WAG, 2010a, p.2). These 'thinking' documents (e.g. WAG, 2010a; 2010b; ESTYN, 2011) highlighted first metacognition, dialogue and reflection as central to the thinking process; second that children should be given a level of 'ownership' in relation to their learning (ESTYN, 2011); third that children's interests should be recognised; fourth that learning contexts should involve a level of enquiry and problem solving (ESTYN, 2011) and fifth that learning should involve collaborative group work centred around co-construction (ibid.). This rhetoric had a subsequent consequence upon the position assumed by the teacher:

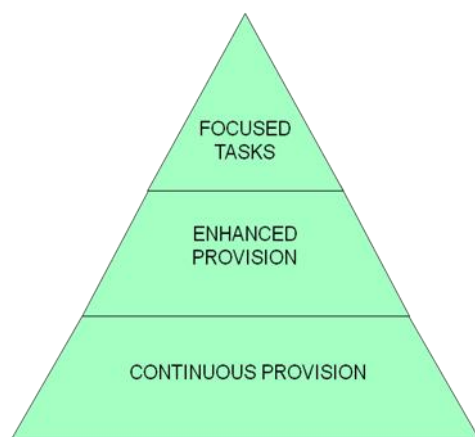
In the best (thinking) lessons, teachers[...] facilitate, rather than direct, learning. They speak less and allow increased dialogue with pupils in group and whole-class situations. There is a greater focus on open questioning and on encouraging in-depth answers. This stimulates pupils' thinking, leads them to be more engaged, and can help to develop the higher-order thinking skills involved in critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving. (ESTYN, 2011, p.2)

4:2 The role of the teacher

At the same time the Foundation Phase documentation advocated a 'balance' between teacher directed and child initiated activities (DCELLS 2008b, p.10) The planning for experiential learning training pack (DCELLS, 2007, p. 9) outlined three modes of structuring the curriculum in order to achieve this 'balance.' Continuous provision (CP) would comprise of activities which would be a consistent feature of the environment allowing children to consolidate skills and

conceptual understanding through engagement with playful experiences. This provision would offer practitioners the opportunity to observe children engaging in self directed activities (p. 58) and would need to be planned with children around *their* observed interests (DCELLS, 2007; Johnstone and Roberts, 2008). The second mode was described as ‘enhanced provision’ (EP) which would be set up by practitioners in order to ‘enhance, enrich and extend children’s learning,’ (DCELLS, 2007, p.10) within the continuous provision through ‘adding resources’ in order to ‘to move the learning forward.’ Finally ‘focused tasks’ (FT) were described as ‘practitioner led’ or direct teaching (NAFW, 2008b, p. 23; Johnstone and Roberts, 2008) activities used to teach new skills such as number concepts or letter recognition (Johnstone and Roberts, 2008). Drawing on an analysis of Foundation Phase documentation Maynard *et al.* (2012) argued that continuous provision could be implicitly linked to child- initiated activities; enhanced continuous provision to teacher- initiated tasks and focused tasks to teacher directed activities. The experiential learning training pack conceptualised the different provision as a triangle (DCELLS, 2007 p.9) with the continuous provision at the triangle base, occupying the greatest space. This indicated that there was an expectation for most learning to stem from the continuous provision - in other words children would spend the majority of their time involved in child- initiated activities in which they would exercise levels of autonomy.

Figure 4:1 Types of provision within the Foundation Phase



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Simultaneously the teacher was described as a ‘scaffolder’ (DCELLS, 2008b) and a ‘facilitator of learning:’

responding to the needs of individuals, willing to learn alongside the children[...] continually reflecting on and improving practice in the light of research. (DCELLS, 2008b, p. 26)

Other indicative roles included the promotion of ‘shared and sustained thinking’ (DCELLS, 2008b, p.6) with a proposed necessity to ‘intervene sensitively,’ in order to extend and challenge the problem solving capabilities of children and to acknowledging when to ‘allow the children to come to satisfactory conclusions on their own’. (DCELLS, 2008c, p.39; DCELLS, 2008c, p. 22). In other words there were resonances with the socio cultural construction of the teacher outlined within the previous chapter *across* the different types of provision. My argument here is that whilst teachers may be involved in focused tasks associated with direct teaching there still appeared to be an assumption that these episodes would not be totally didactic. On the other hand, whilst children may be engaged in child initiated tasks (during continuous provision) there was still an expectation that adults would be interacting with them in order to promote thinking and problem solving.

The Foundation Phase curriculum was therefore viewed as a ‘new’ (DCELLS, 2008a) and ‘radical’ way of constructing teaching and learning (Maynard *et al.*, 2012) with the ‘Framework for Children’s Learning for 3-7 year olds in Wales (January 2008) outlining the new curriculum in detail. It was therefore surprising that this document relied heavily upon the earlier English Desirable Outcomes (SCAA, 1996) document, setting out the curriculum under seven areas of learning as opposed to six by adding ‘Welsh Language Development’ (see Table 4.1). Most of the areas of learning remained the same, although two of the areas were rephrased; ‘Communication, Language, and Literacy’ became ‘Language, Literacy and Communication Skills’ (LLCS) whilst ‘Personal, Social, and Emotional Development’ (SCAA, 1996) became ‘Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity’ (WAG, 2008a).

At the same time the subsequent Framework (WAG 2008a) also highlighted the expected standards of children’s performance in terms of outcomes for each Area

of Learning. These incorporated the Baseline Assessment Scales already in use and the English national curriculum level descriptors (WAG, 2008, p. 43) split into six different levels (Table 4:2). At the end of the Phase there is a statutory requirement that children will be assessed against the outcomes for each of the seven areas of learning (Table 4.1) and that these will be reported to the Local Authority.

Table 4.1: A Comparison of Learning Areas of Desirable Outcomes, Early Learning Goals and the Foundation Phase

Age	Desirable Outcomes (1996)	Early Learning Goals (1999)	Foundation Phase Wales (2008)
	For 3- to 4-year-olds	Foundation Stage: From 3 to 5 (beginning of nursery - end of Reception)	For 3-to-7-year-olds
Learning area	1. Personal and Social Development	Personal, Social, and Emotional Development	Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
	2. Language and Literacy	Communication, language, and Literacy	Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
	3. Mathematics	Mathematical Development	Mathematical Development
	4. Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Knowledge and Understanding of the World
	5. Physical Development	Physical Development	Physical Development
	6. Creative Development	Creative Development	Creative Development
			7. Welsh

*Source: SCAA (1996) and QCA (1999) NAFW (2008)

This was also unanticipated for a number of reasons: the Welsh Assembly Government drew upon a number of global examples of ‘good practice’ to inform the new curriculum for young children. These included early years’ pedagogy in

Scandinavia, New Zealand and Reggio Emilia (NAfW, 2003a). In each of these comparative cases no reference was made to any pre-specified outcomes which children had to achieve at a given age. Rather, the process of learning was stressed and the child viewed as an autonomous actor in the construction of knowledge. In other words, this is a dichotomy: the rationale for the new curriculum was a move away from an outcomes orientated agenda but at the same time the criteria for success is judged by the outcomes that children achieve, still linked to the National Curriculum it purported to move away from.

Table 4.2: Correspondence of FP outcomes with NC levels

Foundation Phase	National Curriculum (NC) Level
FP Outcome 4	NC Level 1
FP Outcome 5	NC Level 2
FP Outcome 6	NC Level 3

This possible tension was also made apparent through an exploration of case studies included within the Learning and Teaching Pedagogy document (DCELLS, 2008b) which also highlighted the process of learning, describing this as a ‘journey:’

As we move towards a *problem-solving* approach to all learning and develop children’s skills, we need to step back[...]Remember we are not working towards helping them achieve an end result but towards going on a learning journey with us[...]Don’t let us get so preoccupied with the activities that we overlook the needs of the child with whom we are working [...]We take children to the starting line – they take us to the finishing line.’ It is not a race, it is a journey. It is a process. (p. 27)

These case studies under play the need to arrive at a specific target whilst highlighting the importance of the process of learning. There is also an emphasis placed upon problem solving and enquiry based learning (resonating with the project constructions detailed within the next chapter).

4.3 Government Sponsored Foundation Phase Studies

A pilot study began in 41 nursery and reception classes across the 22 local authorities. The Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the

Foundation Phase (MEEIFP, Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, November, 2005; February 2006), was a two year evaluation of the implementation of the Foundation Phase funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, (2006) argued that 'Best practice' within FP classrooms would 'move away from over-formal practice in the basics towards more experiential, child centred and adult guided, play based practice' (p.9) whilst reiterating a necessity for adults to 'scaffold,' guide and support 'children's thinking' (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, December 2006, p.7-8).

They reported that whilst 95% of 'stakeholders' were in support of a greater emphasis on 'active learning' (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2006) almost half of all practitioners stated that the draft framework (ACCAC, 2004) had not changed their practice since it was very similar to the 'Desirable Outcomes' (ACCAC, 2000) document already in circulation. This indicated that practitioners did not perceive a need to change what they were doing and that in some settings there may still have been emphasis on a more formal outcomes-driven approach to learning.

Yet, at the same time, a decrease in interactions between staff and children within some settings was also reported. This was argued to have negative consequences in terms of children's opportunities to learn. This may have been based upon the practitioners' belief that during continuous provision children should be allowed to 'discover' for themselves stemming from a traditional 'standing back' and watch early years approach (See Chapter Three, 3.3.1 and 3.3.2). This evidence suggested that practitioners were uncertain of what their role should be when balancing adult and child initiated learning and may have highlighted a tension between interpretations of Piagetian and Vygotskian theoretical positions. Siraj-Blatchford consequently theorised that teachers were receiving 'mixed messages' and that more support was needed to ensure that they understood 'the FP curriculum and its associated pedagogy and practice' (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* December 2006, p. 6). In terms of the role of the teacher they repeated that:

(Practitioners should) maintain a play based and experiential pedagogy whilst giving sufficient emphasis to activities that involve adult guided play and learning and interaction with appropriate challenge. (p. 16.)

More recently a further three year evaluation of the Foundation Phase (2011-2014) was commissioned by the Welsh Government led by the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD). In the First Report Maynard *et al.*, (2012) questioned the meaning of key terminology (for example ‘active learning;’ ‘child initiated;’ and ‘practitioner-directed’ (para 19, p. vi, para 44, p. xii) and suggested that practitioners needed clearer guidance. They also argued that there was a need for further research to explore how practitioners were responding to the ‘conflicting demands’ of:

a play-based pedagogy, which is underpinned by a strongly developmental approach[...] with a detailed statutory curriculum in which expectations in relation to outcomes essentially remain unchanged’ (para, 44, p. xii)

Whilst my own study focused upon pedagogical understandings of the term ‘project’ (rather than the Foundation Phase *per se*), it may also shed some light on this question since it was located within Foundation Phase classrooms at the time when this new curriculum was being implemented.

4.4 Other research within Foundation Phase classrooms

To date there has been limited research in relation to pedagogy within the Welsh Context with the exception of Maynard and colleagues. For example Maynard, Waters and Clement (2013) explored the impact of the ‘outdoors’ upon pedagogical practices within Foundation Phase classrooms based around ‘Reggio inspired projects’ within indoor and outdoor environments. ‘Projects’ were associated with what Foundation Phase documentation refers to as ‘child-initiated’ activities, originating from children’s observed interests (DCELLS 2008b). Research methods included interviews and observations with eight FP teachers. Whilst there were indications that teachers may adopt more child-initiated approaches (which they loosely aligned with projects) within the outdoor environment when compared with classroom practices, there was also evidence to suggest that child-initiated approaches (linked to projects) were viewed as challenging. As in the pilot study (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2006), educators were unsure of what their role within a child-initiated approach should be. Teachers said that they did not want to ‘take over’ and many of their observations were described as ‘fairly routine,’ of ‘low cognitive challenge’ with open questioning

‘lacking in purpose and direction’ (Maynard, Waters, and Clement 2013).

Observations signified that 87 per cent of activities were initiated by the teachers who tended to identify specific ‘outcomes’ for activities in advance. In other words, ‘real work’ was believed to occur within classrooms based around subject focussed pedagogical practices (Maynard, Waters, and Clement 2013).

These findings were congruent with a previous research study (Maynard and Chicken, 2010) part of which documented the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers. The research study aimed to support teachers’ explorations of child initiated learning through a collaborative action research approach. Following on from university based seminars and workshops, the seven teachers were asked to explore child initiated ways of working through the use of Reggio inspired projects. Teachers interpreted projects as teacher-initiated and teacher-led themes (mini-beasts, farm animals, growing). They found the concept of projects emerging from the questions and fascinations of children challenging and found it necessary to pre-plan activities ‘in case the children did not come up with anything’ (p.35). In cases where teachers attempted to engage with ‘projects’ akin to Reggio (see 5.16-5.19), they maintained that it was difficult to clarify, extend or consolidate the thinking of children because this was very time consuming and further it was difficult to measure the factual knowledge which children had gained. One participant noted that whilst she wanted to ‘let go’ she also found this difficult because of a perceived need to ‘deliver’ content. Another particularly enthusiastic participant reflected that it was ‘so easy to slip back into thinking about children’s activities in terms of targets and outcomes’ (2010, p.35). She gave the example of a class visit to the beach where the primary aim was to build sand and shell sculptures. One child kept breaking away from the group and the teacher became increasingly irritated when other children began to gather around him. The teacher stopped what she was doing and asked the boy to explain his actions. He explained that he had found a hole and was thinking about several questions, for example:

‘What would happen to this water if he dug the hole deeper?’‘Would sea creatures swim into his hole then?’ (2010, p.35). This had prompted personal reflection; she felt that she had missed an opportunity to follow a child initiated

line of enquiry because she felt a perceived pressure to ensure that all the pre-planned targets for this term had been covered. At the same time she worried that projects were ‘slow moving’ and that she could not predict subject knowledge which might be covered. She described this as ‘*the dilemma*’. Whilst some teachers felt that engagement within the research study had led to a shift in their construction of children within their class, this was countered with a perceived tension to ensure that external targets were met.

These studies (Maynard and Chicken 2010; Maynard, Waters, and Clement 2013) indicate that shifting from a ‘subject-centred’ approach may be challenging for teachers particularly when the Foundation Phase Framework includes prescribed learning outcomes which practitioners feel a perceived necessity to meet.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced the context of the research study - the Foundation Phase in Wales. It has proposed that the Foundation Phase appears to draw on some of the philosophical and psychological discourses introduced in Chapter Three and appears to advocate a balance between child and teacher initiated activities indicative of a Bernsteinian mixed framing perspective. Welsh documents also highlight the significance of nurturing problem solving and thinking skills within the curriculum (e.g. Estyn, 2011). At the same time, the small number of research studies currently available suggest that post 1988 policy discourses still appear to be influential in terms of how teachers view their roles. Consequently children have limited autonomy in relation to the direction of *their* learning. The dichotomy here is that the inception of the Foundation Phase was rooted in the perceived over formalisation of pedagogy for young children outlined at the end of the previous chapter. It is within this context that teachers within my study constructed projects as a way of meeting the aims of Foundation Phase documentation. The next chapter now moves on to explore how projects have been constructed historically.

Chapter Five
Exploring Historical Project
Constructions

Alice: I don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it.'

[...]



King: 'If there's no meaning in it,' said the King, 'that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any. And yet I don't know[...] I seem to see some meaning[...] after all'.

(Carroll, 2013, no page)

Chapter Three has discussed how there have been at least three key informants shaping how early childhood pedagogy is constructed including philosophical, psychological and policy discourses. With these discourses providing a backdrop, this chapter now focuses in on how projects as a pedagogical tool have been interpreted in different ways and at different points in time with the aim of tracing a diachronic trajectory of project understandings. Whilst acknowledging that there

have been a number of influential project constructions which might have been analysed (notably Kilpatrick, 1918; Dewey, 1938 and Katz and Chard, 1989), within this chapter there is a focus upon pedagogy associated with the projects of Hadow (1931, 1933), Plowden (1967) and Reggio Emilia. The rationale for this decision is that these have been influential within British policy documentation (see for example Hadow, 1931, 1933; CACE, 1967; NAFW, 2003a).

This historical analysis is fundamental to my study since I draw upon these arguments to make sense of my own empirical data in relation to contemporary project constructions presented in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten. Whilst some nuances are noted, at the same time I argue that there are some consistent features implicit across the different projects presented; first there is an assumption that children (and teachers) are offered levels of autonomy in terms of the direction of learning; second there is usually a focus upon enquiry and problem solving and third there is often emphasis upon collaborative group work.

This chapter also argues that over time the term 'project' has been usurped by 'topic' and the main features of projects (see above) have been eroded leaving only a trace of the earlier constructions. Topics are presented as a planning tool aimed at enabling pre-specified targets to be met and denote a different set of pedagogical practices in which the child possesses limited autonomy. This may be because the term 'topic' resonates with a different set of dominant discourses holding congruence with a discourse of technical rationality (Moss, 2007). This chapter is presented in a chronological order beginning with the projects of the Hadow Reports in the 1920s, at the same time I would maintain that many of the ideas inherent within the different constructions may overlap.

5.1 The curriculum as freedom

The six Hadow Reports (1923-1933) were located within an historical period of British history distinguished by social, political and economic change on an enormous scale. Following the horrors of WWI there was a shared desire that conflict on this scale should never be repeated (Cruttwell, 1934) leading to a collectivist zeitgeist and a democratic spirit of 'pulling together.' This sentiment is echoed explicitly within many parts of the documents (1923, 1926, 1931):

A good school[...] is not a place of compulsory instruction, but a community of old and young, engaged in learning by cooperative experiment. (Hadow Report, 1931: Introduction)

The Hadow Committee was appointed by the government as a *consultative* group tasked with consideration of the construction of a relevant curriculum ‘for all.’

The curriculum was now to be considered in much broader terms than a structure for imparting different discipline-based knowledge (1931, Ch.7, para 73). The complexity of curriculum planning was highlighted within the document of 1926; it was assumed that each school would encompass a wide range of ‘types of mind’ and ‘conditions of environment’ (Hadow, 1926, para. 103). Consequently ‘uniform schemes of instruction are out of the question if the best that is in the children is to be brought out’. (ibid.). In other words, significance was again placed upon contextual factors; differences in children and variations in environmental factors within particular schools would ultimately shape the curriculum and associated pedagogical practices utilised. Accordingly the use of any standardised way of working with *all* children in *every* context was contested.

The 1931 Report argued that there needed to be more emphasis upon ‘experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored’ (para. 75). In other words a focus upon pedagogical practices was highlighted since both ‘*what*’ should be learnt and further ‘*how*’ such knowledge should be acquired was noted.

The new curriculum was described as ‘a relaxation of requirements, and an increase of freedom of choice’, (Hadow, 1923, p.xiv). In this way there appeared to be a ‘loosening of the reins’ for teachers towards less prescriptive ways of working embracing both experimentation and freedom of choice (Hadow Reports 1931, 1933). Further, the reports maintained that if educators were permitted this autonomy then ‘a time of progressive experiment’ (ibid.) would follow. Such ‘freedom’ appeared to be linked with opportunities for both children and teachers to exercise autonomy through making choices:

Let boys and girls have a large *choice* of subjects, and teachers a wide latitude in directing the *choice* of subject[...] both (boys and girls) should be *free* to find and to follow their tastes [...] teachers of both should be

free to aid and guide the development of their pupils. (1923, p.xiv, emphasis added)

This marked a shift away from a curriculum planned around tightly defined bodies of knowledge (bounded through subjects) in which predefined outcomes were known in advance (see also 1923, 1926). From a Bernsteinian perspective this marked a shift from tightly classified to more loosely classified ways of working.

5.2 Hadow Projects

It is within this context that ‘projects’ were introduced as a *freer* way of working for children between the ages of seven and eleven; (Hadow, 1931, 1933). Drawing heavily upon the agricultural methods of William Cobbett in the USA, the 1931 report outlined how projects would originate from the questions of children encountered within their own environment:

It is the method which an inquisitive boy is driven to follow, when he wants to find out how a steam engine or an electric bell works. [...] In all such instances the inquirer sets out ignorant of the scientific or mathematical principles, but keen to solve a problem that appeals to him: and the satisfaction of his desire is made to depend upon his discovering and learning the principles involved. (1931, Ch. 7, para 84)

Whilst the Hadow examples drew from a range of disciplines (for example maths, science, economic history; 1931, Ch. 7, para 84) the investigative nature of projects was a constant (for example how a steam engine operates, how an electric bells works and an investigation of ‘the old village fair,’ (Hadow, 1931, Ch. 7, para 84). In other words enquiry, and problem solving were viewed as central tenets as children searched for answers to *their* lines of enquiry. In the 1931 document projects were described as:

One may[...] take up the question of the various ways in which food and other goods find their way into a given city. The pursuit of such an inquiry may first direct the attention of the young researchers to the different modes of transport, by rail, road and now by air, and bring up for solution problems concerning the draught of barges, the way in which the railway engine and the petrol engine do their work, and how aeroplanes can remain in the air. (Hadow, 1931, Ch. 7, para 84)

This suggests that projects would have both *begun* and have been sustained *by* reflection upon the questions of children with these lines of enquiry steering the

project course. This evidence signifies that from a Bernsteinian perspective pedagogy was loosely framed with the child possessing a great deal of autonomy in navigating the project route.

The activities described within project sessions appear to have been dependent upon the children involved and the types of questions raised (ibid.). In other examples children are described as being involved in model making and drawing, using reference books or mathematical calculations depending upon their own 'special gifts,' (Ch 7, para 84). These descriptions indicate that children might have been involved in a variety of activities and utilised a range of different research methods to record and represent projects dependent upon the preferences of children.

The examples described thus far also may signify an epistemological assumption, that knowledge was quantifiable. My rationale for this claim is that all of the examples were situated within the 'real world' (for example how a bell works, how food arrives at a city), and there was a likely expectation that a factual (as opposed to fantastical) answer could be found. This is deemed significant in light of the projects of Reggio Emilia discussed later in this chapter (and to which many of my participants refer), since knowledge construction is viewed as more tentative.

Whilst these project examples drew from different subject areas, the 1931 Report also warned against 'dragging in' disciplines where they may not occur naturally for example 'aesthetic subjects,' such as music, drawing and drama which would 'of their own nature, lie outside... the scope' of a project (1931, Ch. 7, para 84). The inclusion of any particular subject area then would be dependent upon the nature of a particular exploration and the rationale was *not* to utilise a project as a central theme in order to cover all aspects of a given curriculum. This also suggests that art based subjects were not believed to lead naturally to an appropriate project context. *I would like to draw the reader's attention to this point for two reasons; first this view is markedly different to the Reggio project construction recounted in the latter part of this chapter in which art based media*

are seen as pivotal (see 5.19) and second because it resonates with the views expressed by some of my participants explored within Chapter Eight (see 8.4).

In relation to classroom organisation, the project examples offered (see sections above) involve both the independent exploration of individual children and groups who were interested in exploring similar questions together:

all of whom would find they had something to learn from the work of their fellows. (Ch.7, para 84).

This appears to resonate with a democratic discourse; children were to be offered collaborative learning experiences in which they all had something to offer. In line with the language in circulation at the time, there was anticipation that during these periods both ‘*bright*’ and ‘*dull*’ pupils would learn from each other (Hadow, 1931, Ch. 7, para 84). This point is not elaborated upon in any depth; however it suggests a perception that the social group could play a part in the learning processes of other group members. The make-up of groups would also have been dependent upon the interest demonstrated by different children during various project explorations and again appears indicative of high levels of child autonomy in relation to involvement in different project areas.

5.3 Interpretations of Hadow projects

The Reports further highlighted that projects were not a ‘fixed method’ and that there would be various interpretations which would fall under the project aegis; projects in a ‘*simplest form*’ (1931, Ch. 7, para 84) were described as:

a method (which) would be compatible with teaching within the traditional subject divisions, and implies *merely* that the teaching, instead of consisting of imparting knowledge of a subject in logical order, takes the form of raising a succession of problems interesting to the pupils and *leading them to reach*, in the solution of these problems, the knowledge or principles which the teacher wishes them to learn (1931, Ch. 7, para 84, emphasis added)

This is deemed significant for a number of reasons; first the perception that ‘projects’ would be interpreted in different ways is indicative of a subjective epistemological position; second it implies that a difference between interpretations would be in where the decision to initiate a particular project area

lay, in this second construction the decision would lie in the hands of the teacher, based around subject areas and aimed at enabling children to achieve a pre-specified answer; third the use of the term ‘merely’ indicates that for Hadow this construction was possibly inferior to the first construction offered; finally it suggests that the earlier project construction presented were more likely to cross traditional subject boundaries.

From a Bernsteinian perspective the second interpretation would have been likely to have been underpinned by more visible pedagogical practices since control of the project direction rested with the teacher planned around traditional subject areas. Predetermined content was imparted through *problem solving* activities pre-planned by the teacher; the role of the teacher would be to raise questions in order to facilitate children to arrive at specific given answers. Whilst on the one hand children were given the experience of actively constructing their own understanding through engagement in different enquiries, the direction and content may have limited relevance to their interests. As such the different Hadow constructions are reminiscent of the later critique of interpretations of ‘child-centred’ pedagogy reported in chapter three which found a spectrum of practices ranging from curricula chosen completely by the child to ‘discovery’ pedagogies with predetermined content (Morrison, 1989). In summary, this interpretation focused upon arriving at an end product and the final destination would have been known before the project began. At the same time the continued focus upon exploration and investigations is also significant, particularly in relation to the project constructions presented within the data chapters.

Hadow also introduced a further project interpretation, ‘In its broader use’ the project would ‘aim at reproducing as nearly as school conditions permit, the sort of teaching in which Cobbett believed’. (Hadow, Ch. 7, para 84). In this way the different project constructions outlined by Hadow may be understood as appearing on a continuum in relation to the levels of autonomy of the child and associated role of the teacher.

This section has introduced the main aspects of the projects proposed within the Hadow Reports, including the emphasis upon enquiry, levels of autonomy on the

part of both the teacher and child and the role of group work. The next section moves on to explore *why* projects may have been constructed in this way through consideration of resonating discourses.

5.4 The child as: an ‘active agent,’ developing through biological stages

There is an abundance of evidence throughout the Reports that the psychological theories *of the day* were drawn upon (for example 1933, Ch. 33, para 52; 1931, Ch. 7, para 74). Consequently, the picture offered of the child appears to resonate with at least two overlapping discourses– constructivism and developmental psychology (see Chapter Three, 3.3.2). From a constructivist position the learner is constructed as an ‘active agent’ a curious and self motivated individual who through engagement in the problems at hand constructs his or her own knowledge:

One of the most striking discoveries of recent psychology is that the normal child will learn spontaneously a large number of things which it was formerly considered necessary to teach him deliberately. (1933, Ch. 33, para 52)

This viewpoint is cross fertilised with a vision of the child as ‘developing’ through a set of predetermined biological stages akin to Piagetian and Gisellian theorising. This staged theory of learning is outlined within the documents of both 1931 (7-11) and 1933 (birth to seven):

Psychologists (have) recognised that the new born child was already equipped with certain inherited tendencies[...] their emergence is merely deferred. They ripen spontaneously, though after some delay. (1933, Ch. 33, para 52)

life is a process of growth in which there are successive stages, each with its own specific character and needs. (1931, Ch. 7, para 74)

In line with this theorising, Hadow argued that children below the age of seven would need learning experiences which would lead them to ‘discover’ within their environment This had consequences for the role of the teacher who should provide an ‘instructive environment ’(1933, p. xviii).

Whilst children between the ages of seven and eleven were believed to have developed, younger children were also not yet able to think in a systematic way

(see for example, Hadow, 1933, chapter 33, para 52). As a result, teaching through discrete subject disciplines was no longer perceived as an appropriate context for learning (1931, Ch. 7, para 83) and children should not be exposed to 'inert ideas...which at the time when they are imparted have no bearing upon a child's natural activities of body or mind.' (1931, Chapter 7, para. 74). This theorising also underpins the proposed shift from decontextualised subject based pedagogy for children between the ages of 7 and 11 towards projects viewed as 'a different method of approach to (traditional) subjects (Ch. 7, para 83), an 'enlightened form...of teaching practice' (Ch. 7,para. 86). Older children (above eleven) should have developed more advanced cognitive strategies and would be able to process decontextualised and abstract information (op. cit.). Thus as a child progressed through their school years there would be a gradual shift towards more 'formal' subject based teaching methodologies (1931, Ch.7, para 83).

5.5 The teacher as: a reflective and autonomous being

Resonating with a discourse of freedom and democracy, the Hadow Reports present a strong and autonomous construction of the teacher, arguing that without having the 'freedom in planning and arranging her work...', there is an 'ever present danger of a lapse into mechanical routine' (1933, p. 105). The significance of the role of the teacher in ensuring that any new curriculum is successful is highlighted: It is ultimately the vision and courage of educators which will steer ways of working with children in this new educational era (1923, p.xiv).

Thus Hadow presents a vision of the educator not as a technician following a pre-prescribed curriculum but as a reflective and resourceful practitioner who has to constantly consider what and how *particular* groups of children should learn. Accordingly the way that projects are constructed and understood are ultimately believed to be idiosyncratic:

the teacher's method must ultimately be personal to the teacher, a quintessence of formal plans and methods. He may adopt the project plan as incidental to his practice, or even make it, as Cobbett desired, fundamental. (1931, Ch.7, para 86)

This point is important to my thesis for a number of reasons: First this highlights the significance of both previous personal and professional experience when interpreting projects, based upon an assumption that teachers *will* interpret projects in a personal way and further that it is inevitable to do so. In other words there is an epistemological assumption that there are multiple ways of seeing the same phenomena (possibly in line with a constructionist discourse, see Chapter Two). Secondly, teacher autonomy is advocated and the importance of practitioner reflection is stressed (in line with a democratic discourse). This last point is highly significant – *the teacher is not a technician but a reflective practitioner*.

5.6 The intersection of discourses = the birth of *this* project construction

In summary, the Hadow documents are infused with rhetoric associated with the zeitgeist of the time: freedom, hope and collective responsibility. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that there is some emphasis placed upon group work and learning through collaborative endeavours. The Hadow documents offer a vision of hope, a vision of what might be located firmly within a democratic value position resonating with the ideas of progressive education.

The construction of projects outlined by the Hadow document of 1931 then are presented as a progressive ‘method,’ a set of pedagogical practices which aim to facilitate inquiry based experiences in which the learner actively participates in the construction of his or her own developing knowledge, located within a context which recognises the child’s developmental stage. At the same time the knowledge constructed is viewed as quantifiable. This interpretation is shaped by the interaction of a number of discourses (for example developmental psychology, constructivism, progressive education/democracy and freedom) which subsequently lead to a set of particular constructs (for example, the child as an ‘active agent,’ the child as ‘developing’). The interaction of these constructs impact upon how the teacher and the child are positioned and further influence the choice of pedagogical practices subsequently shaping how projects are understood. For example when starting projects teachers would draw upon either the observed interests of a child/ group of children (‘active agent’), or

‘knowledge’ and ‘experiences’ which the teacher judges to be suitable (at least elements of the three discourse touched upon), whilst also considering what it is necessary and appropriate for the children to learn about at a specific point in time (developing discourse). Whilst this indicates that different discourses in circulation resonate with policy, the documents further proposed that there will be further interpretation located at the level of the individual. At times these discourses appear to be situated within different paradigmatic positions; whilst there is some evidence of postmodern theorising in that Hadow projects will ultimately be interpreted at a personal level, at other times the Reports resonate with modernist thinking (for example the stress placed upon developmental psychology as a key theoretical informant).

This section then is deemed highly significant to my thesis as it is illustrative of how there may be a range of overlapping discourses underpinning different project interpretations which have consequences for the choice of pedagogical practices, the associated role of the teachers and the levels of autonomy offered to the child.

The chapter now moves to the project constructions offered by the Plowden Report of 1967 a report which it has been argued places the child at the centre of education with the ‘saccharine’ statement (Peters, 1968) ‘At the heart of the educational process lies the child’ (Ch. 2, p. 7, Para 9). This does not aim to critique the Plowden Report in depth; rather it aspires to make sense of Plowden projects since this is pertinent to the later analysis of the projects within this study.

5.7 Plowden: Freedom of the Curriculum?

The Plowden Report (CACE, 1967) was located in a relatively prosperous post Second World War era in which Britain had enjoyed stability in terms of economic growth. Until this point many of the recommendations advocated by the Hadow committee remained largely neglected (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, para. 513, p. 190). Plowden proposed that, with the support of school inspectors, some post war classrooms ‘did much to enlarge children's experience and involve them more actively in the learning process - the main themes of the 1931 Report,’ (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, para. 513, p. 190) but that in the majority of settings

learning and teaching continued to be didactic. In 1963 the Central Advisory Council for Education in England (CACE) was set up to consider primary education and also the transition to secondary education. Within the Welsh context, a parallel Council was chaired by Professor CE Gittins charged with an identical sphere of activity. Both committees were made up of eminent academics, distinguished practitioners, child development experts and politicians. Whilst the Hadow Reports were based upon a consultative process, the report of Plowden was also based upon observations: Schools considered as exemplary were visited and these practices were subsequently described within the report (see for example CACE, 1967, Ch. 16).

Plowden argued that there had been misinterpretations in relation to the Hadow recommendations:

For a brief time 'activity' and child-centred education became dangerously fashionable and misunderstandings on the part of the camp followers endangered the progress made by the pioneers. The misunderstandings were never as widespread in the schools as might have been supposed by reading the press and certainly did not outweigh the gains (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, para 513)

Part of the rationale behind the report of 1967 then appears to have been to reconsider how 'learning' should be constructed and further the types of contexts in which such 'learning' should take place. Stress was placed upon the essential role that the teacher had in making such judgements (Plowden, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 553) and it was within the context of a necessity for a 'balance' of child and teacher agency that projects were introduced as a pedagogical tool.

5.8 Unpicking the Projects of Plowden

One of the challenges faced in relation to the Plowden Report is that no clear definition of a 'project' was ever given, although Chapter 16, paragraph 540 offers some illumination:

The idea of flexibility has found expression in a number of practices, all of them designed to make good use of the interest and curiosity of children, to minimise the notion of subject matter being rigidly compartmental[...]

The oldest of these methods is the 'project'. (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, para 540)

This description indicates that projects were understood as a 'flexible' pedagogical approach, and that (akin to Hadow) they were based on the constructivist assumption that children possess a natural disposition to display curiosity; further a move away from traditional subject boundaries towards a loosely Bernsteinian classification (1996), 'cross curricula' way of working was central. This 'cross curricula' emphasis is visible throughout the report, most notably within Chapter 16 (e.g. CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, 540; Ch. 16, para 541; CACE, 1967, Ch, 16, para 542).

The rest of Ch. 16, paragraph 540 also sheds light on how a Plowden project may have begun:

Some topic, such as 'transport' is chosen, ideally by the children, but frequently by the teacher. The topic cuts across the boundaries of subjects and is treated as its nature requires without reference to subjects as such. At its best the method leads to the use of books of reference, to individual work and to active participation in learning. (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, para 540)

This suggests that projects were perceived as the 'active' part of the curriculum - 'learning by acquaintance,' as opposed to the 'learning by description,' (Plowden, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 553). Further, it appears to indicate that projects could have been child initiated and teacher framed, or teacher initiated and child framed, although no clarification is ever offered of the rationale for choosing either a child or adult interest.

A variation on the project, the 'centre of interest' is also introduced:

It begins with a topic which is of such inherent interest and variety as to make it possible and reasonable to make much of the work of the class revolve round it for a period of a week, a month or a term or even longer [...] Much of the work may be individual, falling under broad subject headings. (Plowden, 1967, Ch. 16, para., 541).

These examples (e.g. CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, 540 and 541) shed light on initial project starting points. The project/topic/centre of interest described would have begun from either an adult or child initiated interest subsequently used to plan activities which crossed different traditional disciplines and from a Bernsteinian analysis would be weakly classified. They also may signify depletion in the prominence placed upon children's enquiries when compared to the Hadow project construction previously presented. At the same time there is ambiguity in relation to the meaning of topic/project/centre of interest which are used interchangeably throughout the Report. This point may be indicative of an underlying assumption shared by other writers (Rance, 1968; Tann, 1988) that the terms describe practices drawn from a similar pedagogical lineage resonating with child centred discourses.

Plowden includes other examples of children working under the project (?) umbrella:

a class of seven year olds notice the birds that come to the bird table outside the classroom window, they may decide, after discussion with their teacher, to make their own aviary. They will set to with a will and paint the birds in flight, make models of them in clay or papier mache, write stories and poems about them and look up reference books to find out more about their habits. Children are not assimilating inert ideas but are wholly involved in thinking, feeling and doing. The slow and the bright share a common experience and each takes from it what he can at his own level. There is no attempt to put reading and writing into separate compartments; both serve a wider purpose, and artificial barriers do not fragment the learning experience. (CACE, 1967, Ch.16, para 542)

It is unclear if these pedagogical practices refer to 'projects,' 'topics' or 'centres of interest,' however, the observed interests of children initiate a particular topic/project/centre of interest (birds) with skills based activities radiating from this central 'theme.' There is also an 'enquiry' element with a focus upon the accumulation of specific factual information, in this case the habits of birds or how to make a model.

A further example is also described in which a class of eleven year olds want to find out the area of a field, leading to different mathematical, historical and geographical explorations and co-operative work between groups of children and

staff (Ch, 16, para 542). Whilst again evidencing the conjecture that projects were perceived as a cross curricula way of working, this also signifies that, in line with a developmental staged view of learning, the different age of children would lead to the use of different types of 'projects.' For older children projects may be more enquiry-based, whilst projects/topics for younger children may be broader. This would also be in keeping with the view that projects are a flexible method (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, 540).

Projects were later used in conjunction with terms such as 'integrating the curriculum' and 'first-hand experience' (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16. para, 544), children were described using their 'boundless curiosity' to explore their natural environments wherever they might be situated since 'the weather and the stars are available to all' (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 544), teachers in urban areas were advised to use 'railways and other transport systems...local shops and factories'(CACE, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 544) whilst their rural counterparts were encouraged to take children into fields. Teachers were further advised to visit contrasting areas (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 545), in the belief that these experiences would help children to 'discover'. (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 549). These sections support the argument that projects were viewed as the 'hands-on' part of the curriculum; that they were underpinned by a constructivist view of the child and that they may have been reflective of the environment in which children were located.

The term 'discovery' was also used frequently within the report in relation to projects (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16. paras, 549-550) but at the same time Plowden maintained that learning through discovery was time-consuming and that 'time does not allow children to find their way by discovery to all that they have to learn,' (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 549). This suggests that there were time pressures upon teachers to cover given skills in a particular timeframe possibly through more didactic approaches outside of projects sessions. This theorising is supported by other parts of the report:

We endorse the trend towards individual and active learning and 'learning by acquaintance'[...] Yet we certainly do not deny the value of 'learning by description'. (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16., para, 553)

Plowden also returns to the theme of misinterpretation in relation to ‘discovery’ which she claimed, ‘has the disadvantage of comprehensiveness that it can be loosely interpreted and misunderstood’ (Ch 16., para 549), this led to a warning against ‘Free and sometimes indiscriminate use of words’ (para 550). This is reminiscent of early remarks in which Plowden had signified that ‘misinterpretation’ had been the enemy of projects as a teaching method’ (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, 540). These comments suggest possible epistemological differences between the Hadow and Plowden Reports. Whilst Hadow argued that pedagogical terms would lead to idiosyncrasies between teachers’ use of projects, Plowden appeared to want definitive definitions of terms. However, I would argue that the elusiveness of the Plowden Report in relation to these terms did little to rectify the perceived situation since as this section has argued no clear definitions are ever offered. However, it is also probable that the construction of projects described by Plowden are likely to have stemmed from the eclectic mix of interpretations which were witnessed within classrooms at the time and whilst the Hadow Report was describing ‘*what might be,*’ the Plowden Report was describing what ‘*was.*’

5.9 Constructions of the child: the child as a curious and active agent pre-programmed to develop through stages

As in the Hadow Report there appear to be at least two overlapping constructions of the child offered within the Plowden Report– the curious child born with the disposition to explore the environment in which he or she is placed; to solve problems, make judgements and utilise imagination (Ch. 16, para, 540). This child is able to construct his or her own knowledge and draws heavily from a constructivist discourse but is further juxtaposed with the developing child pre-programmed to pass through a specific biological sequence rooted in a developmental psychological discourse. Piagetian theory is linked explicitly not only with the construction of the child offered but also to the theory of learning underpinning the construction of curriculum (and therefore underpinning projects) (see for example chapter two entitled ‘*The growth of the child,*’ and also Ch. 16, paras. 518- 535). Plowden also makes explicit reference to how Piagetian

thinking had influenced the previous Hadow report of 1931 (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, para. 522).

Subsequently the child's natural predisposition to display curiosity is viewed as a rationale for utilising projects but these projects should recognise the child's current cognitive capacity and draw from the immediate world, as opposed to more abstract starting points which were assumed as being inappropriate because they would not be at the child's current cognitive stage of development:

Consequently projects aim to contextualise the learning of young children into meaningful situations for which they are deemed 'ready'; the younger child needs opportunities to engage with 'concrete situations,' (Ch 16, para 523) which are deemed as more appropriate (CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, para 521). Learning contexts therefore move from 'concrete' to 'abstract,' as the child travels through the school trajectory.

5.10 A 'child-centred' discourse - A construction of an isolated child, the Piagetian 'lone scientist'?

Whilst the Hadow Report appeared to acknowledge the role of the social group within the learning process, the Plowden Report seemed to place greater emphasis upon the learning process as an individual endeavour. Consequently the 'best' projects led to 'to individual work,' (para 540); children were portrayed investigating their own personal areas of interest or working alone attempting to find out information concerning a topic set out by the teacher. This emphasis upon the individual may have stemmed from an interpretation of child centred (as opposed to a group centred) discourse; for example where group work is advocated (see 1931, Ch. 20 for example) this is perceived as an efficient classroom management technique - individual teaching was proposed as the preferred method but this is deemed uneconomical in terms of time because, 'Only seven or eight minutes a day would be available for each child if all teaching were individual' (Ch. 20, para 754). As a consequence of time constraints Plowden argued that:

Teachers[...] have to economise by teaching together a small group of children who are roughly at the same stage. Ideally, they might be better taught individually but they gain more from a longer period of their teacher's attention, even though it is shared with others (Ch 20. para 755)

As in the Hadow report projects are loosely classified - a cross curriculum mode of presenting the curriculum. This point again is underpinned by a discourse of developmental psychology- children should not be exposed to 'inert ideas' since they are incapable of comprehending until thinking has matured. This is accompanied by the constructivist discourse that learning is more successful when the learner is 'actively' engaged within learning situations. These appear to form the central rationale for the inclusion of projects within the primary classroom and the consequential way in which projects are interpreted.

5.11 How was the teacher constructed?

The paragraph '*Curriculum as Freedom,*' argued that projects:

allow the teacher to adopt a consultative, guiding, stimulating role rather than a purely didactic one[...] as in all education, the teacher is responsible for encouraging children in enquiries which lead to discovery and for asking leading questions (Ch. 16, para. 540; Ch. 16, para. 549)

This appears indicative of an epistemological position that sees knowledge as *finite* (there is a *correct* answer). It also implies that part of the teachers' role was to help children to acquire a predefined body of knowledge, 'guiding' and steering them towards specific answers and as such resonates with the Hadowian 'simplest projects' (see section 5.3). The teacher's role then is not as passive as some critiques have suggested:

But from the start there must be teaching as well as learning; children are not 'free' to develop interests or skills of which they have no knowledge. They must have guidance from their teachers. (Ch 20, para 754)

From a Bernsteinian perspective, practices might have been weakly or strongly framed at different points in time. This description draws to mind the recent views of Alexander (2010), citing the research of Boydell (1974) and the DES (1978), which question the notions of freedom which the report advocates at least in relation to the construction of the child offered:

(Within the Plowden Report) There was a rhetoric[...]of increased freedom for children to pursue their own needs and interests, through what research there was into primary classrooms revealed in most cases either the continuance of overt teacher direction or the offer of an illusory freedom to do what teachers thought was in the children's best interests. (Alexander, 2010, p. 29)

As with Hadow there is some emphasis upon the autonomy of the teacher who 'must work intuitively and be sensitive to the ... needs of their children' (Ch. 16, para. 550) whilst using their 'intellectual scrutiny'. (Plowden, 1967, Ch. 16. para, 536), thus on the one hand teachers must exercise their agency whilst on the other they are warned against the dangers of misinterpretations. This dilemma was possibly recognised by Plowden herself on the twentieth anniversary of the original report:

Even as children differ, so do teachers. They must select those of our suggestions which their knowledge and skill enable them to put into practice in the circumstances of their own schools'. *This was possibly not emphasised sufficiently.* (Plowden, 1987, p. 120, emphasis added)

5.12 Section Summary

This section has introduced the main aspects of the projects proposed within the Plowden Report; projects are linked to discovery and child centred pedagogical practices and are viewed as the cross curricula part of the curriculum in which children have some levels of autonomy to direct their learning. At the same time, some of the examples of projects appear to be 'broader' than those of Hadow with less emphasis upon enquiry, particularly for younger children (e.g. CACE, 1967, Ch. 16, 540 and 541). There also appears to be more emphasis upon the Piagetian child (constructed as a lone scientist) with a consequential emphasis upon individual (as opposed to group) learning contexts.

I have also noted the use of different terminology not seen within the reports of Hadow (e.g. centres of interest, topics) utilised to signify pedagogical practices. This appears to suggest a shift in understanding and is indicative of the unstable nature of pedagogical terms. At the same time I have also highlighted the continuing theme of 'misinterpretation' in relation to pedagogical terms expressed throughout the Report. This is significant to my own study since there is

correlation with debates in relation to misinterpretation of Foundation Phase pedagogical terminology (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2006; Maynard *et al.*, 2012 - see Chapter Four) and it is within this context that the empirical part of my study is situated. The next section now moves on to explore the post Plowden era arguing that over time the terms project and topic became synonymous and began to denote a different set of pedagogical practices resonating with different dominant discourses.

5.13 The Pendulum swings: From the use of the term ‘Project’ to the use of the term ‘Topic’

In the aftermath of the Plowden Report the term ‘topic’ was utilised both within government reports and academic research (DES reports of 1975 and 1978, Neville and Pugh 1975, 1977 and Neville 1977) to describe cross curricula approaches to learning witnessed within primary classrooms often during the afternoons (DES, 1978). By this point in history the term ‘project’ appears to have fallen out of favour, this is evidenced through an analysis of the DES choice of vocabulary –during a discussion on the primary curriculum (DES, 1978, Ch. 5) in which the term ‘topic’ is used nineteen times whilst project is utilised on just three occasions.

During this era such Government Reports (see Chapter Three) were continually critical of the activities witnessed under the topic work umbrella (e.g. DES, 1978, 5.33, p. 49), which they suggested were both unchallenging and unstimulating, leading to a position whereby children were not making adequate academic progress. An additional conjecture was that often this was as a result of teachers lacking the necessary skills to work within a topic approach:

An examination of topic work[...] reveals it to be bland and vacuous. The traditional notion of a body of knowledge to be transmitted by the teacher has been replaced by a view which sees learning of ‘the processes’ as all important[...] It doesn’t matter what *project or topic* you do as long as it satisfies... basic criteria. Firstly it has to stem from the child’s interests or, at least, be seen to be ‘relevant’. Secondly it has to be done in a non-directed way as possible. (Lawson, 1979, p. 25, emphasis added)

Akin to my argument above (see 5.12) Lawson's description suggests that the role of the teacher within such an approach was a 'stand back and watch' Piagetian position. I would also like to draw the reader's attention to two further points; primarily, the terms 'topic' and 'project' are again used as if they were identical – this is at the end of the 1970s; secondly, there is no reference to an element of enquiry as a requirement of this method. What I am tentatively hypothesising here is that at this point in history, (late 1970s) within the context of England and Wales there is a shift in meaning from an investigative focus to a more general interest and at the same time a move from the use of 'projects' to 'topics' to describe such practices.

As Chapter Three has discussed, with the implementation of the National Curriculum in 1988 the zeitgeist changed significantly in relation to the educational landscape; policy makers made child centred discourses unfashionable whilst a subject centred agenda was highlighted. This movement in thinking was recognised by a key advocate of a topic approach, Sarah Tann, writing within the context of the UK who argued that a central concern for topic work was to unite a 1960s progressive child centred discourse based around individual needs with the accountability agenda of the 1980s (Tann, 1988, p. 19). Tann's (1988) description of topics attempted to reconcile these differences and she argued that topics embraced:

process-orientated, exploratory approach(es), which encourages active involvement by learners in defining and discovering their own knowledge (Tann, 1988, p. 5).

However, the epistemological foundations of Tann's topic construction drew heavily on previous *project* discourses based on authorities such as Dewey and Hadow. Topics were presented as a flexible approach to learning which 'draw... on children's concerns... 'control' is...shared..'... 'Learning should be negotiated and include an investigative element' and be based upon 'first-hand experiences,' (Tann, 1988, pp. 4-5). The Plowden Report (CACE, 1967) was used heavily to support Tann's views with many of the examples I have drawn upon to gauge an understanding of Plowden *projects* (paras 540, 542 – integration, 541 – context, 540 – process, inert ideas – 542) utilised by Tann to support advocacy for her

topic approach. This point may be indicative of the complex relationship between the pedagogical terms in play. Tann herself acknowledged the complexity of the relationship between these terms, suggesting that topic, project work, thematic work were:

often confused, not to mention confusing, for each of these terms have also been interpreted differently in different ways by writers. The terms have also been interpreted differently in different local authorities, by different schools and by the teachers involved. (Tann, 1988, p. 4)

Tann, (ibid) argued that ‘the high ideals of topic work have been misinterpreted and misapplied’ (1988, p. 13), a statement which is highly reminiscent of the claims of Plowden (CACE, 1967) in relation to practice which had preceded the Hadow Reports.

At the same time within the American context Lillian Katz and colleagues were advocating what they named a ‘project approach’ (Katz and Chard, 1989) which drew heavily upon developmental psychological theorising. This was offered ‘as a balance between the ‘traditional’ early years’ curriculum which they argued had placed too much emphasis upon spontaneous play and newer curriculum models believed to over-emphasise academic goals. Projects were viewed as the ‘emergent’ *part* of the curriculum in which children could exercise some autonomy in terms of directing learning (Katz and Sylva, 1998). Further, it was reasoned that during projects children could apply the knowledge learnt through more didactic ‘systematic’ instruction (Katz and Chard, 1989). Katz and colleagues provided extensive lists of when a ‘topic’ might be deemed worthy of an ‘in-depth exploration’ (Katz, 1994). These included the need to draw upon the immediate environment (Katz and Chard, 1989, 1998); opportunities for ‘first-hand direct investigation’ (Katz and Sylva, 1998); opportunities for children to apply and practice basic skills’ (Katz and Sylva, 1998); the potential contribution to later learning’ (Katz and Chard, 1989) and the need to avoid ‘fanciful topics’ such as ‘mermaids’ or ‘the Titanic’ (Katz and Chard, 1998). It was also argued that teachers would need to consider if a project area could be ‘related to curriculum goals and standards of the school or district.’ (Katz and Sylva, 1998). This latter point is significant as it may be indicative of a move

towards a discourse of technical rationality (Moss, 2007) which is not seen within the earlier projects of Hadow and Plowden.

Within the British context the continued popularity in topic work following the implementation of the National Curriculum in 1988 is evidenced by the plethora of text books available on the market to aid the primary teacher, (see for example O'Hare, 1992; Palmer and Pettitt, 1993). Topics include dinosaurs, pirates, the seaside and pets (Mudd and Mason, 1993) with books including topic webs (often linked to National Curriculum targets), ideas for activities planned under subject headings/ areas of learning, lists of resources and ideas for display included. This may be indicative of moves towards more tightly classified ways of working with children and a shift towards a target driven discourse. Topics are described as:

a way of organising learning which explores a theme through the areas of learning and experience which are clearly appropriate to it. (Arnold, 1991, p.3)

In other words topics are depicted as a means of 'delivering' the subjects underpinning the curriculum (Arnold, 1991, p.9) planned in advance in half termly units (p11), a way of attempting to control the teaching and learning process with a major aim of ensuring appropriate coverage of content across a year (p.10) . Whilst the interests of children may be taken into consideration when choosing topics, (p.9) such choices should focus upon meeting the requirements outlined under specific areas of learning or subjects (p.13). A further noteworthy point is that whilst Arnold (1991) maintains that topics might offer the potentiality for problem solving (p.7) this is not the *raison d'être*.

5.14 And so to Wales

In 1999 the year of Welsh devolution, the Welsh inspectorate ESTYN, (Summer, 1999) commissioned research into the impact of teaching through topics upon 'standards' at both Key Stage One and two. Within this document topics were defined as:

Bring(ing) together aspects of different *subjects* under a common theme such as 'Homes' or 'Transport' (1999, p.3, author's emphasis added)

This was congruent with the theorising previously outlined since topics were presented as a mechanism for integrating learning. Where topics were described as 'good quality' they were believed to be both 'motivating' whilst allowing for children to make connections between different subjects areas and consolidating and improving knowledge and skills (p.6)

Two types of topic work were outlined within the document *Broad based topics* in which subjects were linked under a particular heading (e.g. homes) and *Focused topics* which concentrated on one subject at a time (e.g. the Victorians). In line with a staged developmental discourse, broad based topics were recommended for younger children between the ages of five and seven, presumably because they were viewed as in need of having learning linked together. Whilst topics were believed to occur in settings between 20-80% of the total of the teaching time, this decreased with the age of children.

One of the main findings included a reported overall decrease in topic work between 1994-1999, whilst further highlighting how at Key Stage Two topics were now described as having a 'distinctive subject focus' (p.2). The explanation for these changes were explicitly linked to the implementation of the NC since this had led schools to reconsider methods for planning and organising teaching and learning in order to ensure that pre-specified content could be covered. Holding congruence with the Three Wise Men Report (1992, see chapter three) earlier topic approaches were deemed to be too complex consequently hampering the ability for statutory requirements to be planned for and achieved (p. 4).

As in the case of Arnold (1991) the document described how the topics witnessed were usually planned termly or half termly, often on a two year cycle and needed to be selected in order to match NC programmes of study. Clear identification of long term, medium term and short term goals would need to be evidenced. The head teacher and curriculum leaders would need to 'monitor' and 'evaluate' the topic planning of colleagues to ensure that 'statutory requirements' were met before discussing 'any issues' (p.15).

In other words these pedagogical practices appeared to be both tightly framed and tightly classified. This is not only indicative of the shift in the purpose of the

project/topic as an approach but further a change in relation to the *meaning* of pedagogical terminology. Whilst early topic constructions had used terms such as negotiated and shared control, the ESTYN document refrains from doing so whilst stating that ‘Direct teaching (should be) a strong feature’ (1999, p.6). This suggests that the discourses in play resonated with government policy subsequently impacting upon how the term ‘topic’ was understood and the pedagogical practices which the term was used to describe. In other words, the construction of topics which were presented as ‘good’ and of ‘quality’ within the document, denote a fundamental shift in the way that ‘topic’ was previously constructed as a pedagogical approach. Whilst Tann (1988) argued that central to a topic approach was an emphasis upon process and discovery, it was redefined by ESTYN as a tool in which ‘Lessons have a clear and well-understood focus on one subject at a time’ in which ‘Pupils are sets tasks which are challenging and related clearly to the objectives of the lesson (p.6) Through a set of ‘normalising technologies’ (Kenway, 1990, see Chapter Two), teachers were made aware that the success of topics were measured in terms of their ability to cover specific attainment targets and that this must be their principle *raison d’être*. Thus through a set of micro practices of power (Gore, 1998) including surveillance ‘monitoring’ by head teachers and curriculum leaders; and normalisation and exclusion (were particular topics/projects able to cover predefined targets? – if not then they fall outside the range of what is considered normal within a topic/project), this pedagogical tool had been shaped by a target driven agenda.

This section has noted a diachronic shift in the meaning of project/topic and outlined consequences for the pedagogical practices and role of the teacher. It has further argued that these moves may have been reflective of changing discourses in circulation. The next section moves on to the project constructions of the school of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The aim here is not to critique Reggio ways of working but rather to understand the pedagogical practices and associated epistemological positioning inherent within this particular project construction. This is deemed essential since many of the participants within this study claimed to draw on Reggio projects within their own ways of working (see Chapters Nine and Ten). Whilst there is an abundance of literature in relation to Reggio Emilia I

rely on key texts either authored by Reggio pedagogues or by those closely associated with them. This is because I do not wish to muddy the waters further by examining interpretations of interpretations!

5.15 Back to projects?

In the year 2000 the Welsh early years expert advisor brought the Reggio Emilian exhibition *'The Hundred Languages of Children'* to Wales for the first time (University of Wales College Cardiff). A second exhibition followed in 2005 (Swansea University). Welsh teachers attended 'Reggio' inspired workshops and an early years conference with Carlina Rinaldi, as keynote speaker. Advisors were funded to visit Reggio Emilia to attend conferences and visit schools. At the same time there was a re-emergence of the use of the term 'project' within the Local Authority in which my study is situated which corresponded with attempts to embrace Foundation Phase Guidelines (DCELLS, 2008a).

5.16 'Progettazione'

An initial difficulty when exploring a Reggio Emilian project construction is that the Italian term *'Progettazione'* is not a *literal* translation:

In Italian, the verb *progettare* has a number of meanings; to design, to plan, to devise, to project.[...] The concept of *progettazione* thus implies a more global and flexible approach in which initial hypotheses are made about classroom work (as well as about staff development and relationships with parents), but are subject to modifications and changes of direction as the actual work progresses. (Rinaldi, 2006, p.26)

In other words, this term refers to the complex relation between pedagogical documentation (see section 2.4) and the pedagogical practices witnessed under the project umbrella (Dahlberg *et al.*, 2007). Rinaldi has argued that the *choice* of the pedagogical term 'progettazione' is intentional and used to signal 'opposition' (2006, p. 26), to a 'banking concept' of education (Freire, 1970). Whilst the term 'progettazione' is viewed as a pro-ject-tion - a possibility of what *might* happen this is contrasted with planning a predetermined set of skills/ bank of knowledge which has to be acquired within a specific timeframe (Rinaldi, op.cit.). This is

significant because this resonates with the topic approach presented within earlier sections (see Sections 5.12 and 5.14). In this second scenario planning is viewed as highly structured and aims to pinpoint exactly what is to be learnt in advance, giving specific objectives for activities. This appears to be at odds to a Reggio Emilian epistemological perspective which views the process of learning as tentative and evolving and described as ‘rhizomatic,’ shooting off in different and often unpredictable directions (Dahlberg *et.al.*, 1999, 2007; Dahlberg and Moss, 2006). Consequently, Reggio epistemology has been aligned with a post foundational constructionist epistemological view (Dahlberg *et.al.*, 1999, 2007, see 2.1) since any given ‘Universal Truth’ is questioned and a predefined curriculum (where the outcomes are known in advance) is viewed as problematic. This point is significant since whilst there are some nuances between the Plowden and Hadow project constructions within this chapter, at the same time they share a theoretical position which appears to stem from developmental psychology in which the learning process is viewed as a linear trajectory.

5.17 Starting and sustaining Reggio projects

Whilst the project constructions of Plowden claimed to be *part* of the curriculum, from a Reggio perspective projects or ‘progettazione’ are viewed *as* the curriculum. As a ‘pedagogy of listening’ (Rinaldi, 2006) when starting projects, teachers ‘listen’ for a way in’ (*ibid.*); the varying and conflicting ideas and questions of children are explored and considered through the process of projected planning (also part of *progettazione*). This process is described in terms of ‘reconnaissance’ (Gandini, 2012a): Reggio pedagogues claim that whilst many routes will be discussed the final direction of the project, (or part of a project) is ultimately driven by the questions of the children (Foreman and Fyfe, 2012). It is not deemed necessary to break learning down into different subject areas and whilst the term ‘cross curricula’ is never used from a Bernsteinian position these practices would be viewed as loosely classified.

The practice of *progettazione* occurs continuously throughout the life of the project - regular meetings are held between the pedagogical team who aim to continuously reflect upon and analyse *interpretations* of children’s thinking

(Gandini 2012a); to justify the direction which the project is taking and to consider activities which attempt to extend, consolidate or confront the ideas and developing thinking of the children (Foreman and Fyfe, 2012). In this way pedagogues endeavour to formulate a theory of the child's theory (Forman, 2001). In other words the projects cannot be planned in advance and I would like to draw the reader's attention to this point since this is significant when compared to some of the examples explored within my data chapters (see chapters Eight and Nine). Instead, Rinaldi (2006, 2012) has argued that through the process of *progettazione* the curriculum 'emerges' through 'negotiation' with children and groups of teachers. Holding congruence with dialogic ways of working (Wells, 1999; Alexander, 2004), this process is viewed as a 'critical dialogue,' based on the deconstruction of discourse. As Foreman and Fyfe (1998) have argued:

Discourse connotes a deep desire to understand each others' words. Discourse is more than talking. Discourse connotes a more reflective study of what is being said, a struggle to understand, where speakers constructively confront each other, experience conflict, and seek footing in a constant shift of perspectives. (1998, p. 241).

Projects are described as beginning in a number of ways; from a children's lines of enquiry (e.g. 'Ring O Roses', Rinaldi 2005), from teacher stimuli ('The Desires of a Building,' Vecchi, 2009) or from an 'ordinary moment' (Rinaldi, 1993, 1998). The actual starting point appears to be of less significance than the perceived need for a particular 'fascination' or question to generate an 'air of expectation' which drives the project forward leading to 'an extraordinary blooming of ideas'. (Gandini, 1998, p. 91).

In order to explore key aspects of this project construction in more depth the next section now focuses upon a project entitled 'The Crowd,' (Rinaldi, 1993, 1998) which appears within the first and second editions of 'The Hundred Languages of Children).

5.18 What makes a crowd a crowd? (Rinaldi 1993, 1998, Vecchi, 2010)

A project overseen by Malaguzzi began when 4-5 year old children were given boxes in which to collect memories during the school holidays. When the children returned to the school a child, Gabriel described a memory as:

Sometimes we went to the pier. We walked through a narrow long street[...] in the evening it is full of people. There are people who go up, and people who walk down. You cannot see anything; you can only see a crowd of legs, arms, and hands. (Rinaldi 1993, p. 109).

Teachers noted that the children became animated when discussing 'the crowd' as opposed to the holiday per se. When asked what a 'crowd' was they answered:

It's a bag full of people all crowded in

It's a bunch of people all attached and close to one and another

It's a bunch of people all bunched up together just like when they go to pay taxes

Staff are described as noting an air of 'excitement and potential' (ibid.) from the children in relation to the concept of a crowd which became the foci for the project. Children represented their thinking in relation to 'crowd-ness' initially as drawings and other graphic representations. When one child depicted all of the members of the crowd facing in the same direction this led to group discussions in relation to directions, angle and perspectives. Following these conversations children drew each other from different positions and viewpoints; models of children were made and positioned in different ways in order to play with the idea of 'what makes a crowd a crowd?' There was a visit into the Town Square in which crowd images were enlarged and projected onto civic buildings, and subsequent crowd representations created in clay as a collaborative graphic piece of work (Rinaldi, op. cit.). Whilst the project led to exploration using a range of media through different 'languages,' Rinaldi maintains that this project was not about art and that the focus was at a conceptual level 'what makes a crowd a crowd?'

Examples such as this suggest that regardless of the initial stimulus, there appears to be first a willingness to explore concepts which might be considered rather abstract for young children (see for example, 'The Intelligence of a Puddle,' Vecchi, 1998); second a level of uncertainty in relation to the possible project direction (Malaguzzi, 1998); third a desire to support collaborative problem solving opportunities with the dialogue of children used to promote cognitive dissonance of the *group* (Rinaldi, 2006); fourth a lack of emphasis upon the need

to ‘cover’ pre specified subject areas/ skills/content (Rinaldi, 2006, Dahlberg *et al.*, 2007) and fifth prominence upon the use of different media as tools for both representation and the development of thinking (e.g. Ring O Roses, Rinaldi, 2005). These points are highly significant when later compared to the second and third project constructions noted within the contemporary empirical part of my study which name Reggio Emilia as an influence (see Chapters nine and ten).

5.19 Project Activities: The Role of Symbolic Representation

Indeed, across all Reggio ‘projects,’ children are encouraged to use artistic media including clay, dance, sculpture, drawing, etc, known as ‘the One Hundred Languages (Vecchi, 2010; Gandini 2012b). This is significant because as noted previously within the Hadow construction the use of traditionally art based subjects was deemed problematic. Synaesthetic activities, in which children are encouraged to represent senses such as smell, touch, hearing and sight in cross sensory ways are also utilised as a tool for exploration. In all settings artists help to support children’s thinking and expression in art studios described as a ‘laboratory’ (Gandini, 2012b). Children are encouraged to represent and revisit ideas and to reflect upon their representations and share these with the group.. Developing concepts can be revisited in different media (Kaufman, 1998) allowing children to return to their thinking in order to gain multiple perspectives of the phenomena at hand (Gandini, 2012b). This is because it is theorised that when children are asked to ‘re-present’ images to classmates and teachers that they are also ‘re-presenting’ to themselves (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 92). In this way theories are modified and thinking deepened (Edwards and Forman, 2012). In other words there is a belief that the use of different forms of media aids the child (or groups of children) in the symbolic exploration of the developing theories of the group (ibid.). Whilst Vygotsky made links between spoken language and cognition, a Reggio stance views all symbolic languages as holding the potential for ‘meaning making,’ communication and cognitive development. In other words the use of arts based media is viewed as a dialogic pedagogy. This emphasis is significant since Hadow had reported the difficulties of including artist subjects within projects (see section 5.2) and further this same argument is offered by some of the Category One participants (see Chapter Eight).

5.20 Resonating Discourses

5.20.1 The child as strong and competent

In line with a constructivist view children are perceived as active co-constructors of knowledge, possessing the capacity to construct and build theories. Drawing from a socio cultural position, children are viewed as social beings seeking out interactions with others (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10; Rinaldi, 1998) within a web of relationships including friends, teachers, family and the wider community (Spaggiari, 1993). Consequently, the learning process is not perceived as an isolated act of cognition but rather as ‘a process of social construction by the individual in relation with others’ (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 125). This is significantly different when compared to the Plowden projects in particular which focused upon knowledge construction at the level of the individual *only*. From the Reggio perspective then, the child is constructed as actively attempting to make sense of his or her own world but these constructions are indebted to the *social context* in which he or she is situated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It has been argued that this perception of a strong, capable and social child lies at the heart of the rationale behind the use of projects (Malaguzzi, 1998 p. 90).

5.20.2 A discourse of creativity

Within Reggio literature there is specific reference made to a discourse of creativity (See Malaguzzi, 1998, p 75-77, Rinaldi, 2006, Ch. 10). Rinaldi has defined this as:

The ability to construct new connections between thoughts and objects that bring about innovation and change, taking known elements and creating new examples (2006, p.117).

She has argued that creativity is a ‘quality of thought,’ (ibid., p.111) closely associated with divergent thinking which young children possess as they theorise about the world. Malaguzzi (1998) has proposed that there is a strong association between creativity and intellectual capacities and from this position creativity is not viewed as a separate mental faculty but a *feature* of thinking (p.75). He maintains that creativity is more likely to flourish in contexts where there is less emphasis upon ‘prescriptive teaching methods’ and where teachers

conscientiously reflect upon the cognitive processes of young children building dialogic teaching and learning opportunities around these, since:

The most favourable situation for creativity seems to be interpersonal exchange, with negotiations of conflicts and comparison of ideas and actions being the decisive elements (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 77)

This holds congruence with the theorising of Craft and colleagues (e.g. Cremin, Bernard and Craft, 2006) outlined within Chapter Three (see 3.3).

5.20.3 A democratic discourse: the significance of the ‘group’

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) have proposed that an emphasis upon collegial ways of working towards the co-construction of a group understanding resonates with a democratic discourse. Dahlberg *et al.*, (2007) have further argued that the use of pedagogical documentation (see Chapter Two, 2.4) is underpinned by a democratic discourse since this seeks to value subjectivity whilst recognising the multiple perspectives of both children and teachers (see also Dahlberg, 2012).

Organising children into small groups is not viewed simply as a form of classroom management but as a necessity since it is reasoned that these interactions promote both cognitive and social development:

Children [...] do not just passively endure their experience, but also become active agents in their socialization, co-constructing with their peers. Their actions can be considered [...] as mental structuring developed by the child through social interaction. [...]. there is a strong cause and effect relationship between social and cognitive development, a sort of spiral which is sustained by cognitive conflict and modifies both the cognitive and social system (Rinaldi, 1993, p.105)

Rinaldi has proposed that in this way the group can be viewed as a co-constructive pedagogical tool building directly on the Vygotskian construct of the zone of proximal development (see Chapter Three). This is because all children are supporting each other as ‘knowledgeable others’ within project interactions.

5.20.4 Reggio and a Developmental Psychological Discourse

Such an emphasis upon the social nature of the child led to Malaguzzi levelling criticism at a developmental psychological position since ‘Piaget’s constructivism isolates the child.... (giving) marginal attention to social interaction’ (1998, p.

82). In other words from a developmental psychological stance children are seen as decontextualised from others and learning is viewed as an isolated process. This stands in contrast to an epistemological perspective in which learning is viewed as a social process of collaborative co-construction.

Rinaldi has further argued that Reggio pedagogy is incongruent with a staged theory of learning since 'learning does not proceed in a linear way, determined and deterministic, by progressive and predictable stages.' (2006, p.131). This is further evidenced through the willingness of Reggio pedagogues to focus on areas which from a DP perspective would be viewed as too abstract for the young child (see earlier section). This theorising is supported by Malaguzzi who has proposed that:

One can argue about whether the child is able to differentiate between concrete and abstract, if it reasons in a deductive or inductive manner, if a child is able to think in an abstract way at all, and if the child is able to create metaphors. All of these things are actually possible for a child. (Malaguzzi in Moestrup and Eskesen, 2009, p.11)

It can be consequently argued that Reggio Emilian pedagogy is incongruent with a developmental psychological stance at an epistemological level. This is deemed significant since this discourse was visible within the project constructions of Hadow and more particularly the projects of Plowden and is also visible within the contemporary project constructions noted within my research and (see Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten). This point is a further indication of the context and value laden nature of the pedagogical terminology in circulation.

5.21 The Reggio Teacher

The teachers' role within projects is not the 'stand back and watch' role associated with early childhood pioneers (see Chapter Three) but it is not didactic either. Rather. The analogy of 'Ariadne's Thread' has been used to represent the role of the Reggio educator since they 'hold the thread....giving orientation, meaning and value' to the learning of children (Rinaldi, 2006, p.54). Teachers reflect upon the thinking of the group in order to facilitate group dialogue (which they are part of) which may often take the form of symbolic (as opposed to verbal) languages

(Rinaldi, 2006). These experiences aim both to deepen the theorising of the group and simultaneously to support social interaction (Rinaldi, 1998). This position appears to hold some congruence with the role of the teacher presented within the literature on creativity, sustained shared thinking and dialogic ways of working (see Chapters Three).

From this perspective Malaguzzi has levelled criticism at a Piagetian position since there is ‘undervaluation of the adult’s role in promoting cognitive development’ (Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 82). This has consequences for the position adopted by educators since, in line with Vygotskian theorising, other people (including the teacher) can accelerate cognition through the questions and dialogues facilitated.

I believe this point to be highly significant because it appears to suggest more complexity than a Bernsteinian weak framing categorisation might suggest.

5.22 Summary

This chapter has considered the diachronic development of projects tracing the shifts in pedagogical practices inherent within different constructions of the term. This information is summarised in Table 5:1. It has argued that over time there may have been a move in meaning seen through an erosion of the centrality of enquiry; a shift towards emphasis upon learning as an individual process and later a move towards a targets based agenda. During this process the terms ‘project’ and ‘topic’ appear to have become amalgamated. The latter sections have considered the pedagogy associated with the projects of Reggio Emilia, Italy noting some fundamental nuances with the earlier constructions explored. These debates are highly significant to my own study since they indicate the instability and context laden nature of pedagogical language. The next chapter moves on to an exploration of the particulars of the research design and follows on from the epistemological arguments outlined within Chapter Two.

Table: 5:1: Comparison of the different project constructions presented within the chapter

Different Project Constructions	Hadow Broadest Interpretation	Hadow Simplest Form	Plowden	Topic (WAG, 1999)	Reggio Emilia
How do projects begin?	Questions to be answered and problems to be solved guide the flow of learning.	Pre-specified goals or objectives guide the flow of learning	Interests of children	Activities planned before topic begins in order to cover pre-specified goals or objectives	Continuous reflection upon questions and fascinations of children guide the flow of learning.
Central elements of the project construction	In depth enquiry	Cross curricula Enquiry based context for learning	A cross curricula context for learning	Cross curricula way of planning pre-specified content	In depth dialogic group enquiry
Emphasis upon class, group or individual ways of working?	Small group or individual	Unspecified	Individual	Unspecified	Small group
Bernsteinian analysis	Loose classification but shifts with the age of the child Loose framing	More tightly classified than broad Hadow construction More tightly framed than broad Hadow construction	Loose classification but shifts with the age of the child Loose framing	Loose classification but shifts with the age of the child Tight framing	Loose classification Loose framing

Resonating Discourses	Constructivism DP –stages Democratic	Constructivism DP -stages	Constructivism DP -stages Child centred- individual	Constructivism DP –stages and ages Technical rationality	Constructivism Creativity Democratic
Determined/open outcomes?	Open-ended outcomes (you never know where you'll end up)	Determined outcomes	Open-ended outcomes?	Determined outcomes	Open-ended outcomes (you never know where you'll end up)
Child or teacher originated?	Child originated teacher framed	Teacher originated	Teacher originated child framed Child originated teacher framed	Teacher originated	Child originated teacher framed
Time scale	Open	Unspecified	Unspecified	fixed	Open

Chapter Six

The Research Design

Alice made a short calculation, and said "Seven years and six months." "Wrong!" Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. "You never said a word like it!"



"I thought you meant 'How old are you?' "Alice explained." "If I'd meant that, I'd have said it," said Humpty Dumpty.
(Carroll, 2013, no page)

This chapter introduces the particulars of the research design within this study which have been influenced by the conceptual and theoretical frames discussed within Chapter Two. The choice of methods and analysis are explained and justified and ethical dilemmas considered. The research design was shaped by the research questions under investigation; my own philosophical, ontological and epistemological beliefs and my positioning as a teacher and learner.

As the introduction has outlined, a pivotal aim of this thesis was to explore the pedagogical practices associated with 'projects' both historically and contemporarily with a particular focus upon the perceived role of the teacher and associated pedagogical practices. This aim was met through consideration of the following questions:

6.1 Research Questions

1. How have projects been constructed historically by policy makers, academics and teachers?
2. *How* was the term '*project*' constructed more contemporarily within the bounded case of Foundation Phase settings within one Welsh Local Authority?
3. *Why* were projects constructed in particular ways? What were the main discourses which appeared to underpin different project constructions?
4. What were the implications for how teachers were positioned within different project constructions?
5. What was the connection between the pedagogical terminology and the pedagogical practices which terminology signified?

6.2 Paradigmatic Stance

Creswell, (2013) has argued that the paradigmatic stance adopted within a research project is always intricately connected with the philosophical assumptions of the researcher. In line with the epistemological and ontological beliefs underpinning my thinking (outlined in detail in Chapter Two) the research design was rooted in an interpretivist/constructionist paradigm (Grbich, 2013). This was deemed appropriate since an interpretivist/constructionist stance questions the possibility of an objective knowledge and reality is viewed as a social construction which is always contextually bound (Grbich, 2013). From this position knowledge is always subjective and the possibility of multiple realities experienced by different participants is recognised (Lincoln *et al.*, 2011). Further, any 'reality' is believed to be co-constructed between the researcher and researched (Creswell, 2013).

Grbich (2013) has argued that research underpinned by an interpretivist/constructionist paradigm focuses upon:

exploration of the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live and how the contexts of events and situations and the placement of these within wider

social environments have impacted on constructed understandings.
(p.7)

This was congruent with my own study since I aimed to explore both *how* participants *interpreted* and made meaning of the term ‘project’ within their settings and further *why* this may have been the case through considering the messages in circulation within the social contexts by locating resonating discourses. Subsequently, my justification for adopting this paradigm was twofold: first an interpretivist/constructionist position resonated with my own philosophical assumptions and second it was reflective of the research questions which were central to my thesis.

In line with this position, this study did not seek to locate ‘the truth’ but endeavoured to make visible particular interpretations of the term ‘project’ through a ‘meaning making’ process (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; Rinaldi, 2006, 2012). Research under the qualitative interpretive umbrella considers knowledge construction to be subjective in nature. The relationship between the researcher and the investigation is viewed as complex and the research process is perceived as value laden (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Pring (2004) suggests that the qualitative researcher has to consider:

Is this the real world that I am observing – or one that is interpreted through my own personal (and subjective?) scheme of things? What is the connection between the language through which I choose to describe the world and the world itself? (Pring, 2004, p.35)

Erikson (1986) has argued that qualitative interpretive methodology may encompass a broad range of explicit approaches including symbolic interaction, phenomenological and constructivism. Within this study pedagogical documentation was utilised within an embedded case study approach (Thomas, 2011a; see section 6.4). This choice stemmed from dissatisfaction with the pilot study which involved working with three participants across two Foundation Phase Settings: reflection upon this initial stage had fundamental consequences for this research project in terms of both methods and analysis.

6.3 Reflections: In the shadow of a framework

For a long time I had a 'simple plan' –I would research 'projects' from perceived key perspectives through a search of associated literature, drawing out the key elements whilst discussing differences and similarities. This would operate as a framework - a tool for analysis within my empirical research. Indeed, this is to a certain extent exactly what I did during the pilot of this study.

This involved working with three participants within Foundation Phase settings within close proximity within the same local authority who all claimed to be using a project approach. Data were collected through semi structured interviews, project sessions were observed within each classroom and documentary evidence of past and present projects collected. This information was interrogated using the framework which mapped out certain areas such as the role of the adult; the role of the child; the use of different media and the role of group work within project constructions.

However whilst engaging with this process I felt increasingly uneasy with this methodological stance and I constantly reflected upon why this might be the case. The pilot study allowed me to make decisions with regard to the role of the adult and child within different project interpretations through cross referencing with a framework. At the same time it seemed that this process was about me researching 'on them' about making judgements against a set of 'standards.' This meant that there was no dialogue; this did not sit comfortably with me.

My framework began to feel too 'closed' too 'narrow,' only allowing one way of 'seeing,' not embracing complexity or allowing the voices of my participants to be heard. I felt that the participants were not involved in the process of co-construction in any real sense. This was deemed to be unsatisfactory and at odds with my own epistemological value base. I also noted some 'critical incidents' which would not fit into this framework; a particular powerful episode occurred when one of the pilot participants announced passionately:

Words are bandied about but what do they mean? As long as we share an understanding of what we are doing with the children does it matter what we call it? (Veronica, I1)

This subsequently became the title of the thesis.

Both the order of data collection and subsequent analysis did not allow me to explore arising issues such as this in any depth. In line with the theoretical perspective of the thesis, I felt that the research process should be more intuitive and interactive in nature (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009) with more room to follow ‘gut feelings’ (see section 6.7.1 on epistemological shudders). After working on my framework for a long time there was realisation that I would not use this, at least as an inflexible tool. The research design needed modification.

Whilst feeling a sense of frustration, the pilot study was also extremely valuable, since it was fundamental in the refining of the research design and analysis. An initial decision was that follow up interviews were necessary within the pilot phase after observations had taken place. Further, during the main study the order of data collection would change to: (a) observation and transcription of a project session and (b) collection of documentation evidence and initial analysis; consideration of issues arising from (a) and (b) follow up with semi structured interviews/conversations in which any points arising might be explored and to share my initial theorising with participants; more analysis and at least one more interview to follow up any other lines of enquiry. This change in order of data collection would allow for interesting comments (see above) to be followed up and explored with participants since the first interview would occur after initial analysis of observations and documents. This would enable me to ‘dig deeper’ and to capture the richness of the data. I also wanted to find ways of including participants more within the research process, to make the process more collaborative so that they would act (at least in some way) as co-constructors. I reasoned that this might occur through sharing my thinking with participants and noting their comments.

I also recognised that any tools for analysis needed to closely reflect the ontological and epistemological positions which I sought to adopt. At the same time I continued to refer back to the Reggio inspired projects which I had used with children in Thailand. The process of pedagogical documentation (see Chapter Two, 2.4) explored a range of symbolic languages of children and

considered what these might signify in terms of how children were constructing understandings. This was rooted in a subjective stance in relation to knowledge construction. Pedagogical documentation was also considered appropriate as it emphasised reflexivity, enabling an examination of my own developing interpretations and subjectivities to be made. My previous experiences with pedagogical documentation as an educator in a school on Thailand were instrumental in my decision to attempt to adopt this as a research tool.

6.4 Context of The Study: A bounded embedded case

The use of the embedded/nested case study

Within this research project the case study was viewed as a container or ‘wrapper’ (Thomas, 2011a, p. 43) with pedagogical documentation nestled within this. The definition of the case study offered by Simons (2009) was deemed useful here:

A case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a “real life” context....The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic. (Simons, 2009, p. 21)

From this position, a case study can be viewed as an examination of either the singular or collective with the primary rationale of making visible the complexity of the case(s) placed under the lens (Stake, 1995, 2005; Punch, 2005). In this way the case study can be viewed as ‘a rich picture – with boundaries’ (Thomas, 2011a, p. 21), a framed and in-depth focus which bounds the research context in particular ways. In line with Thomas (op. cit.), the case study was deemed appropriate since I did not aim to generalise universally (see section 6.11 for an exploration of generalisability) but rather wanted to scrutinise (making visible) the *detailed complexity* of the *particular* case(s) (Simons, 2009), under the chosen spot light(s). To emphasise this point, there was a *considered* focus upon exploring the *how* and the *why* of *particular* project constructions within the *particular* context of this *particular* nested case.

6.4.1. Rationale for the focus upon one local authority as a bounded case study

Thomas (2011a) has argued that the choice of case will be dependent upon ‘where you are going to shine the searchlight beam’ (p.90). The case presented within this study is the bounded case of project interpretations of participants within Foundation Phase settings within *one* Welsh local authority. This case is framed in a number of ways. First it is bounded by a specified geographical location-all participants were located within a five mile radius (see section 6.4.2); second there is a curriculum boundary – all participants were situated within Foundation Phase classes and third there is an historical border – all data was collected between (2010-2011). My rationale for framing the study in this way was that I was particularly interested in exploring the project constructions of teachers who on the surface appeared to share contextual similarities (geographical and historical locatedness and working within the boundaries of the same curriculum) since I reasoned that any differences in interpretation were likely to be illustrative of subjective nature of knowledge construction in relation to the term ‘project.’

Consequently, my use of the case was deemed as ‘embedded’ (Yin, 2009) or ‘nested’ (Thomas, 2011 a) since the different project constructions were nested within the same ecological frame (all working within the Foundation Phase curriculum within a small geographical radius located in the same Local Authority). Both Thomas (2011a) and Yin (2009) have made distinctions between the embedded/ nested case study and the ‘multiple’ case. Whilst the emphasis within a multiple study is upon comparing and contrasting features between the different cases presented, within the nested case the different elements are viewed as components of the *same* case. As Thomas (2011a) has argued the:

nested study is distinct from the multiple study in that it gains its integrity, its wholeness, from the wider case’ (p. 153)

Use of an embedded/nested case study (as opposed to a multiple case) had implications for the approach taken to analysis of data – this issue is explored within Section 7.2 in Chapter Seven.

Stake (1995; 2005) has also classified cases into three distinct categories: (1) intrinsic, (2) instrumental, and (3) collective. My own use of the case was deemed as instrumental (Stake, 1995, *ibid.*) since my exploration of the case (interpretations of the term ‘project’ within the same local authority) aimed at facilitating understanding ‘of something else’ (Grandy, 2010). In reiteration, the aim of the study was to provide insight and understanding of *how* and *why* participants understood the term project in particular ways within this embedded case and the subsequent impact of different interpretations on the perceived role of the practitioner. It consequently became possible to also explore what was offered to children in the name of learning.

6.4.2 Methods for identification and recruitment of participants within the local authority

Potential Foundation Phase settings (within a specific five mile geographical radius) were initially identified by the Local Authority on the basis of their perceived current engagement with project work. The original radius was identified by the Foundation Phase advisor for the Local Authority, based on the perception that a cluster of ‘project’ settings were believed to exist within this area. Settings within this ‘cluster’ also had access to the same types of training opportunities often accessed as a group. They were also supported by the same Foundation Phase advisory team. These settings were subsequently contacted via telephone and individual possible participants were suggested by head teachers. Potential participants were later contacted via e mail or phone and their possible involvement with the study discussed. The main criterion for inclusion was a *personal* willingness to be part of the project accompanied by a *personal* belief that engagement with project work was part of everyday classroom pedagogy. In two cases the head teacher expressed personal willingness to participate within the project All participants also needed to be located within the Foundation Phase age range of three to seven.

The pilot study consisted of three participants whilst the main study consisted of six participants within the same geographical boundaries; this information is outlined on Tables 6:1 and 6:2 below. The pilot study took place during the

summer term of 2010 with data collection for the main study occurring over the academic year of 2010-2011.

Table 6:1: Pilot Study Participants

Pseudonym	Setting	Role
Veronica	Stand Alone State Nursery	Lead teacher (Nursery aged children 3-4)
Seren	Primary School (4-11)	Teacher (Reception children aged 4-5)
Carys		Teacher(Years 1/2 children aged 5-7)

Table 6:2: Main Study Participants

Pseudonym	Setting	Role
Heulwen	Stand Alone State Nursery	Head teacher
Ffion		Lead teacher (Nursery aged children 3-4)
Eira	Private Nursery	Key Worker Preschool room (Nursery aged children 3-4)
Jane	Infant School	Teacher (Years 1/2, children aged 5-7)
Efa		Teacher(Years 1/2 children aged 5-7)
Mari	Infant School	Head Teacher

6.5 Pedagogical documentation within this study

Within the ‘wrapper’ (Thomas, 2011a) of the embedded case study, pedagogical documentation was utilised as a research process. As Chapter Two (2.4) has explained within Reggio schools the process of pedagogical documentation is

viewed as a research tool, that is to say, a way of making sense of the thinking of children. The data under investigation can take many forms and will depend upon the projects under investigation and further the choices of the teacher(s) (Rinaldi, 2012). Holding congruence with the use of pedagogical documentation as a *process*, the research design was viewed as flexible in terms of both data collection and data analysis; as Robson (2002) describes there was limited pre-specification and the ‘design evolves, develops and ‘unfolds’ as the research proceeds’ (p. 5). This meant that both data collection and tools of analysis were open to modification as the research progressed. The process of collection and analysis were therefore not viewed as isolated entities but rather understood as closely intertwining phases (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007). These phases were not discrete but were akin to overlapping ‘waves,’ interweaved into a spiral (Rinaldi, 2006). Figure 6:1 attempts to outline this process in a way that is navigatable by the reader and the process is explored in more detail in the following sections. At the same time I recognised that this may simplify what was actually a very complicated and sometimes ‘messy’ process.

6.6 Research Tools

In line with qualitative research literature (e.g. Denzin and Lincoln 2005) and Reggio Emilian pedagogical documentation, a number of different research tools were utilised in order to capture the range of different project interpretations. During the First Wave, two different types of data were collected: observations of project sessions and the collection of documents related to projects. After initial analysis (Wave Two) these were followed up with interviews in Wave Three and Wave Five.

6.6.1 Observations

Observations only occurred when I was invited to do so and in these cases the participants were responsible for choosing when, for how long and for what was to be observed. Not all participants were observed, since neither of the head teachers (Mari and Heulwen) had teaching roles during this study.

Participants were asked to choose a period of time which reflected *their* construction of a typical project session. The rationale behind this way of working was twofold:

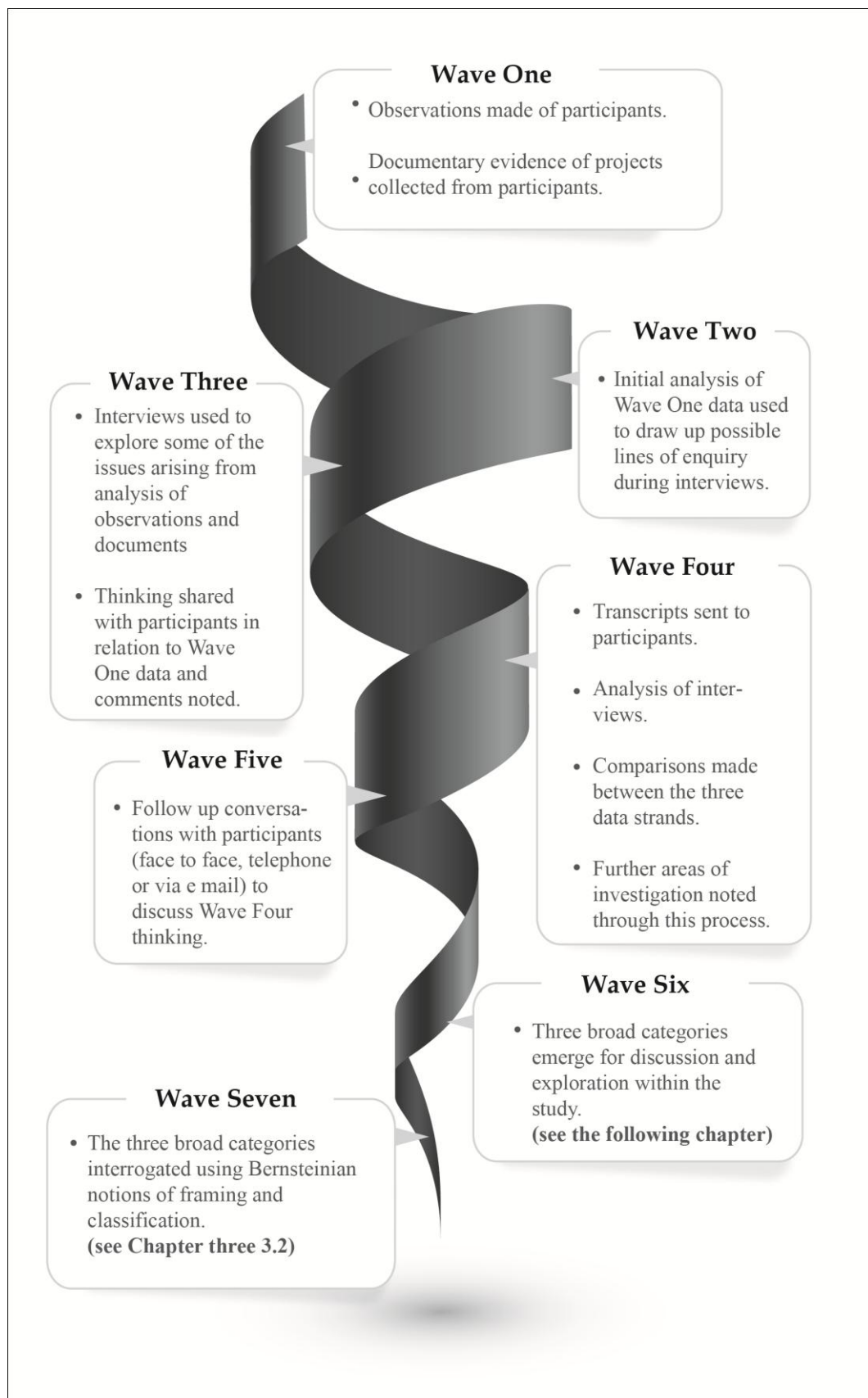
- a) To explore the participants' constructions of a project session
- b) To move towards a more participatory process than the previous pilot study (researching *with* as opposed to reaching *on*)

In most cases observations took place within the indoor environment, although within two settings these were both indoors and in a garden area. Most observations were over a one to two hour period generally consisting of a whole class input from the teacher and subsequent group work. Participants often suggested that I observed particular groups of children - the reasons for these choices were followed up in interviews.

6.6.2. Role of the observer

Vidich and Lyman (2000) have argued that all types of observations may fall under the category of 'participant observations' because, 'as observers of the world they (the researcher) also participate in it' (Vidich and Lyman, 2000). On the other hand, Angrosini and Mays de Perez (2000) suggest that observations should avoid 'interference with the people or activities under observation' (p. 674). Within this research design I attempted to observe the sessions in an as unobtrusive manner as possible in order to understand how normal practice was constructed and to avoid influencing what was being observed; however I also acknowledged that the young children or adults within settings would talk and interact with me as a researcher and that on these occasions interactions would be 'natural,' resulting in a friendly and supportive response. Subsequently I aligned my role to the 'observer participant' outlined by Gold (1958 cited in Angrosini and Mays de Perez, *ibid*, p. 677). Rossman and Rallis (1998) discuss how the 'observer as participant' role is appropriate when making classroom observations – in this case the researcher remains as a researcher but acts in a natural manner.

Figure 6:1: The to-ing and fro-ing of the Research Cycle



6.6.3 Recording observational data

Whilst video recording has been described as a ‘powerful tool’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2007), this was rejected since some of the participants expressed concern with this method. Subsequently observations were recorded via field notes and through audio recordings of the sessions. This was felt to be a compromise which although not ideal, still allowed observations to occur and for both participants and the researcher to feel comfortable.

6.6.4 Issues with observations

Holding congruence with the other strands of the research design, observations were viewed as a further tool for ‘*meaning making*’ and not an attempt to ‘capture’ the truth, underpinned by the impossibility of observing ‘reality,’ this was embedded in a position in which knowledge is viewed as subjective and contextually bound (Patton, 2002). As Denzin and Lincoln have argued:

there is no clear window into the life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of – and between – the observer and the observed. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 21)

There was also further recognition that during analysis (in the moment and afterwards) that ‘observations are ‘filtered,’ as it were, through the understandings, preferences and beliefs of the observer’ (Pring, 2004, p.35). In other words, the meanings drawn from observations were done so through my own ‘acts of interpretation’ (Steedman, 1991). This is one of the reasons why my own thinking in relation to data was offered back to participants in subsequent interviews. It was also anticipated that these follow up interviews would also allow for greater exploration of issues arising through the investigation of observations and documentary evidence.

6.6.5 Documentary evidence

At the beginning of the research process participants were also asked to submit documentation which represented *their* understanding of the term ‘project.’ The

brief here was deliberately ‘open’ and participants were free to choose what this material would consist of. It was anticipated that in each case the content and artefacts provided might vary resulting from the fact that participants were asked to choose information reflective of *their* understanding of how projects were constructed in *their* setting. The rationale here was that the choice of documents would also shed light on how the term ‘project’ was understood. In most cases material and artefacts included teacher planning which had been cross referenced with particular ‘targets’. In two cases large portfolios of ‘project’ examples were submitted: these portfolios included photographs of children engaged in project sessions, photographs of clay and other sculptural artefacts produced by the children within project sessions, extracts of project conversations and teacher commentary upon the particular project represented.

The documentary evidence submitted was useful since it enabled an exploration of the *choice* of material to represent projects to be made. This became possible since it was representative of what participants valued within projects, and also signified how projects were initiated and planned for. At the same time it was also noted that some participants found the non-prescriptive nature of the remit exigent and frustrating, asking for clarification (a ‘list’) of what they should include.

I had also anticipated that all data strands would assume equal weighting, in my processes of ‘meaning making’ and on reflection this was not the case. Beyond the initial categorisation of target centred/non target centred, ‘reading’ the documentary data was challenging without some sort of verbal accompanying explanation. This meant that the follow up conversations were vital.

6.6.6 Interviews as a ‘dialogic conversation’

Using questions and possible lines of enquiry drawn up from initial data analysis of observations and documentation, the third wave of the study comprised of interviews with all participants, which took place within settings usually after the school day.

As this study focused upon *interpretations*, qualitative interviewing strategies were deemed appropriate since they enable exploration of participants’ thinking in

relation to given phenomena (King, 1994). In line with a Reggio stance then the interview was understood as:

a form of discourse between two speakers[...]in which the meanings of questions and responses are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent. (Schwandt, 1997, p. 79)

In other words the interview was dialogic in nature and involved a level of 'negotiation' and co-construction on the part of both interviewer and interviewee with meaning, as Russell and Kelly indicate:

the dialogic interplay enacted as part of the interview process serves to join and integrate the two independent voices into a seamless co-creation of a newly formed reality. (Russell and Kelly, 2002)

The interview structure fell between semi structured and open (Fontana and Frey; 2000, Cohen *et al*, 2007). Taking Robson's (2002) lead in relation to semi structured interviews, a broad interview schedule was designed outlining areas of possible discussion (See Appendix Two). Interviews began with a 'warming up' phase used to ascertain biographical information before moving on to 'riskier' questions which attempted to explore beliefs and values in relation to project constructions. Initial interviews were face to face and this was important since:

1. it was anticipated that this would enable relationships to be established (and maintained) with participants
2. it facilitated modification of questions and exploration of areas deemed important to participants (Robson, 2002).

In order to interrogate project constructions further, some of the episodes/issues noted from observations and documentary evidence were offered back to participants in subsequent meetings, as initial starting points to promote a reflective dialogue (Moyles *et al.*, 2002). This process is illustrated at the beginning of Chapter Seven and also within the data Chapters (Eight, Nine and Ten). This also acted as a tool of validation as my thinking and theorising as a researcher was shared with the participants.

6.6.7 Recording and data storage

Interviews were audio taped using a small unobtrusive digital audio recorder which enabled the interview to ‘flow’ in the manner of a ‘natural’ conversation without interruptions. However, it was acknowledged that visual cues would not have been recorded. The use of video equipment was rejected on the basis that pilot participants had felt ‘uncomfortable’ with this as a recording method as it was deemed as obtrusive and that consequentially this could have a negative impact upon data as participants might be less ‘open’ during the interview process.

6.6.8 Handling interview data

Audio recordings were fully transcribed including any short utterances (‘ahh’, ‘yes’, ‘mmm’), pauses and hesitations- these were deemed important as they often appeared to mark pauses when participants were considering their response to a particular area, topic or question. Plummer (2001, p. 105) has advised that short utterances should be omitted as they can detract from the flow but I decided to include these as I was keen to attempt to capture a full picture of the interaction as it happened. Although on reflection I recognised that this is an impossibility – what I was capturing was my memory of what had happened after the event. Directly preceding first conversations comment boxes were used to denote my own thinking in relation to what was being said (see Appendix Three for an example).

Full transcriptions of conversations were made. I felt that it was important for a number of reasons. This had been my previous practice when engaging in project work with children in Thailand. During this time I had found re-listening to entire conversations useful since it allowed a picture to emerge of how children were thinking in relation to particular questions of interests.

The process in Thailand was also reflexive since it had also enabled me to reflect upon myself as a ‘conversation partner’ and had been instrumental in my own professional development as an educator. I realised that what I thought I was doing in terms of respecting children’s ideas and what I was actually doing within

my practice was often different. I took the opportunity to also try to ‘listen’ to myself as a researcher - what was I doing and saying? How did my ‘being’ impact upon my ‘conversation partner’?

6.7 Data Analysis

Thomas and James (2006) maintain that qualitative inquiry is challenging and ‘can lead to a floating feeling,’ after data are collected, ‘What does one do with one’s data?’ (p. 768). This is a dilemma I experienced. On reflection, the process taken towards data analysis resonated with the process of pedagogical documentation I was engaged with when working with children in Thailand in the process of Reggio inspired projects. This is because it was viewed as a reflexive and iterative cycle, a ‘critical dialogue’ (Freire, 1970) of to-ing and fro-ing between data collection and analysis. In other words, there was an ongoing intermingling of collection and analysis throughout the research period akin to a ‘research conversation.’ This is outlined in Figure 6.1. The description of iterative research offered by Berkowitz (1997) is useful here:

a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop along with a deepening understanding of the material. (This is) fundamentally an *iterative* set of processes. (p. 42, emphasis added)

Describing the iterative researcher as akin to a detective searching for clues, Patton, (2002) argues that an inductive analysis does not begin with a framework but instead relies upon themes and patterns emerging during the analytical process. This is highly reminiscent of classical grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in that there is emphasis upon a reflective and responsive (as opposed to a pre-planned) ‘question-led’ approach, as opposed to research which stems from a particular hypothesis. Consequently a research design which is flexible with a constant intertwining of collection, analysing and ongoing theorising, and utilisation of open coding through which themes emerge from the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Whilst my own work resonates, at least, in part with this description, I would describe my own analysis as both deductive and inductive, since, whilst I had physically removed my original framework for analysis, on reflection I still carried this body of ‘project’ literature with me, at

least, in my head, as a way of making sense of what I was seeing. Thus themes did not emerge from ‘thin air’.

Further, as with the ‘constructivist grounded theory’ of Charmaz (2000) the role of contextual factors (for example historical, political geographical, cultural) in data analysis and theorising were highlighted with both processes viewed as valued-laden and not value-neutral. As Bryant and Charmaz, (2007) state constructivist grounded theory emphasises:

how data, analysis, and methodological strategies become constructed, and takes into account the research contexts and researchers’ positions, perspectives, priorities, and interactions (p. 10)

As Chapter Two has argued, this resonates with the ontological orientation of this research which acknowledges the significance of contextual factors in how we ‘see’, ‘read’ and ‘make meaning’ of experiences in the contexts in which we are situated. Subsequently, an overlap between the process adopted within my study and the work of a number of theorists was acknowledged, amongst others the classic grounded theory proposed by Strauss & Corbin (1998), the ‘constructivist grounded theory’ of Charmaz (2000); social science hermeneutics (Reischertz; 2004; Soeffner, 2004) and the mosaic approach of Clark and Moss (2001, 2011). On reflection, these congruencies are of limited surprise; Chapter Two has outlined how Reggio Emilian pedagogy is underpinned by an ‘open theory’ drawing upon a range of anti-foundational theoretical and methodological positions which highlight the central role of interpretation in our meaning making capacities. Further, the process of data analysis within pedagogical documentation is viewed as a reflective and iterative process (Rinaldi, 2006, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007).

During the different waves of analysis all data (including transcripts and any other data which participants had chosen to share with me (for example field notes, transcripts of observations, planning documents and portfolios etc.), were visited and revisited and I began to explore different ways to represent the data. During early analysis, information was represented using a word table which separated data under headings which had emerged from the project literature (see Appendix Four); these included the perceived role of the teacher/ child within particular

constructions of projects, starting and planning projects, project contexts. I also began to categorise data under the different headings and in both cases comment boxes were utilised to note emerging questions and also to reflect upon my own thinking during this process (see Appendix Four and The Bridging Chapter).

6.7.1 Epistemological Shudders

These comments were in essence my own dialogue with the data and acted as working notes allowing different themes and possible paths for exploration to emerge. Whilst this might be viewed as a deductive form of analysis, with an initial comparison with the body of project literature, during subsequent readings I also adopted an inductive approach, noting any parts of the data which appeared to ‘jump out,’ causing a response akin to an ‘epistemological shudder,’ (Lozinski and Collinson, 1999, p.3), in that they did not fit with other parts of the ‘puzzle.’ An epistemological shudder ‘occurs when a person’s preferred representations of their known world prove incapable of immediately making sense of the marvellous.’ (Lozinski and Collinson, 1999, pp.3-4). Lozinski and Collinson have described how this leads to an ‘*aporia*’ in understanding leading to the formulation of questions. In my case these included incidences where there appeared to be contradictions between different data strands (e.g. what was said and what was observed), possible incongruence between terminology in play (for example in Mari’s case terminology stemming from a Reggio discourse intertwined with the use of targets and outcomes, see Chapter Nine), and themes which appeared significant for participants which would have been overlooked if the original framework had been the only tool of analysis. Many of these lines of enquiry were followed up during interviews and in some cases this process was repeated either through face to face contact or in some cases via phone and e mail communication. During these subsequent conversations the emerging themes and further interpretations were shared with participants for further collaborative discussion and exploration. This to-ing and fro-ing is illustrated at the beginning of the next chapter.

During this process emerging areas continued to be documented on documentation boards initially with post it notes (Appendix Five) and over time

'post its' were moved, re-located and in some cases re-moved. In this way '*low-level temporary working hypotheses*' began to emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 122). I began to pay more attention to themes and questions which appeared to be emerging from the data. During second (and in one case third) 'conversations' these emerging themes were explored in more depth and in this way there was a 'layering' of data and analysis akin to cinematic 'montage', a process in which images are layered on top of one and other to create a picture (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

This resonates with the life course of the word '*project*' which has been outlined within other chapters, layering of different meanings over time has led to some 'messages' being obscured, whilst others become prominent, this has led to different 'readings' of the term within different contexts. In a similar way a montage of the research data could also produce a variety of 'readings' depending initially upon the way the researcher (in this case me!) chooses to represent these stories, and further which themes and strands are highlighted whilst recognising that other stories may be silenced. 'Readings' of my research project (and entire thesis) may also be interpreted in different ways depended upon how the reader interprets this. This analogy holds more congruence with the path taken than the image of a 'mosaic' in which representations are placed next to each other, as opposed to on top of each other.

This layering of different strands of data led to an '*emerging construction*' (Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991, p.161). In this way my role resonated with that of '*bricoleur*':

The interpretive bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the settings[...]The product of the interpretive bricoleur's labor is a complex, quilt like bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage.' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 6)

Whilst engaging within this process I was compelled to reflect upon and thus justify to myself why I was categorising the data in particular ways to illuminate my process of theorising. Asking myself why was I thinking in a particular way and why were particular themes followed at the expense of another?

When all data had been collected I needed to find a way to organise and make meaning of what I had gathered; this again, was an inductive and iterative process and resulted in a wealth of data and possible paths to follow. My research questions acted as a compass which steered analysis as I considered the ‘*how*’ and the ‘*why*’ of the projects which had been offered by participants as examples of *their* understandings. This was a very lengthy and time consuming process in which emergent themes were sorted and re-sorted and at times I wished that I had used only my original framework. This would have provided an orderly means of interpreting my data which would have been less troublesome and unproblematic. However, knowledge construction, as I see it, is not a ‘tidy’, linear process, but rather complex and multifaceted akin to Malaguzzi’s ‘tangle of spaghetti’. Whilst the sole use of a framework would have facilitated a more rapid completion of a doctorate, it would not have embraced this complexity and would have been incongruent with my own ontological and epistemological positions (see Chapter Two). During this process of analysis three broad categories of project interpretations were noted and this process is explored within Chapter Seven.

6.7.2 Foucauldian discourses

I also began to consider the different discourses which appeared to resonate with the three broad categories. On many occasions this was through the types of language used by participants, for example in the data of one participant (Mari, see Chapter Nine) there was the use of a creative discourse (e.g. ‘creative therapy,’ ‘creative pedagogy’) and terminology from a Reggio perspective (e.g. ‘The Hundred Languages of Children’, pedagogy of listening’). The majority of participants spoke of the necessity to meet particular pre-specified targets and outcomes through project work. This language has been associated with a discourse of technical rationality (Moss, 2007). At other times I looked closely at the practices inherent within the different constructions. For example as Chapter Ten will argue, within the third project construction there appeared to be a democratic discourse witnessed through the collegial ways of working but not noted in what was said.

6.7.3 Use of Bernsteinian Analysis

At a later date the practices within the three broad categories were interrogated with a Bernsteinian analysis of framing and classification, (see Chapter Three, 3.2) in which I considered where ‘control’ lay for project themes and activities. This analysis enabled a closer consideration of the role of the teacher within projects to be made.

6.8 Ethical Issues

6.8.1 Teachers

Both written and verbal consent was obtained from all participants to ensure that they were willing to be involved (see Appendix One). It was stressed during each interview and at the time of observations that participants were free to withdraw from the research process at any given time. Subsequently, at each meeting participants were asked if they would like to continue to be involved with the research study and processes for withdrawing from the research were outlined: Participants were reminded that they could withdraw by verbally explaining that they no longer wanted to be involved or through written forms of communication, such as letter; e mail or text messaging.

I also recognised that there may have been an issue in the ‘power’ relationship between myself as the researcher and participants who may have initially felt that their practice was being questioned. This fact could have potentially led to a loss in confidence in what participants were doing. However I stressed throughout the research period that the aim was not to make value judgements or to say that one interpretation of a project approach was superior to another; rather the aim was to investigate diversities between interpretations and to discuss possible reasons behind these underlying differences. As this research took an interpretive view of knowledge, it was also stressed that findings represented only one possible interpretation of the data.

A further potential risk was recognised in settings where projects had been introduced by others without the support of teachers with the possibility that this might have led to the feeling that a practice had been ‘imposed’. In order to offset

this possibility, during the initial contact with schools it was stressed that it was necessary for participants to have a particular interest in exploring projects as a way of teaching.

It was also noted that some of the participants were also extremely open during conversational interviews to the point where I felt that they may be vulnerable in terms of the views expressed. This was a real moral dilemma (Pring, 2001); I had been given access to data of a personal and possibly inflammatory nature – thus placing me in a privileged position. I was concerned that I might not be able to protect anonymity due to the small number of people involved. For this reason all participants were allocated a pseudonym, all transcripts of conversations were sent back to participants and analysis shared throughout the process. The aim here was to ensure that they were comfortable with how their data was interpreted. However, I continued to feel a strong sense of duty to the participants throughout the process.

6.8.2 Teaching Assistants

It was also recognised that within all settings there were teaching assistants who had not given their written consent to be part of this study. Whilst these members of staff were not interviewed on occasions they were part of whole class project observations. At these times I spoke to individual teaching assistants both before and after observations took place. I informed them that if they were unhappy for me to observe what they were doing, or to subsequently use data which they were involved then this wish would be respected. I also made individuals aware that all data would be anonymised.

6.8.3 Children

Although the main focus of the study was on how teachers interpreted projects and not upon children per se, it was acknowledged that during observations/ audio recordings and photographs of sessions that the voices and images of children may also have been recorded. A number of steps were therefore taken to safeguard the rights of the children:

- Letters were sent to parents (Appendix Six outlining the nature of the project and their right as parents to decide that they did not want their child/children to be involved.)
- Children were given a simplified letter (Appendix Seven) and their verbal assent obtained; a full explanation of their right to decide that they did not want to be involved was given, in conjunction with clarification of how they might also withdraw from participation at any point by speaking to the researcher, class teacher or another significant adult within the setting.
- Parents were informed that data would be stored securely and that pseudonyms would be allocated.

It was also recognised that in cases where consent had not been given by parents that children might be excluded from the educational opportunities planned if they were not allowed to engage in activities which were being observed. Where these difficulties arose, I initially sought to focus upon a different group of consenting children within the same setting. In situations where it was not possible to observe a different group, the non consenting child's comments were not transcribed and photographic images were airbrushed. It was anticipated that this could alleviate any potential harm to children in terms of missing out on their entitlement to educational provision. The same procedures occurred in cases where consent was given by a parent but a child was not willing to be involved.

The study was implemented according to BERA (2011) revised ethical framework; this relates to the informed consent of the participants and their willingness to take part in the research. The study was explained fully to all the participants and questions arising were fully and thoroughly addressed. Anonymity was carefully preserved and all data were confidential (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996); both the data collection and storage complied with the Data Protection Act.

6.9 Issues with reliability and validity in relation to the ‘conversational interviews’

Whilst the flexible nature of this form of interviewing was deemed useful, it might also lead to questions in relation to reliability and validity. As the interview was understood as a ‘social act’(Kuhn, 1962) which is both reflexive and dialogic in nature (Denzin 2001), knowledge was positioned as co-constructed through a process of meaning making, as Denzin (2001) has said:

The interview elicits interpretations of the world, for it is itself an object of interpretation. But the interview is not an interpretation of the world per se. Rather it stands in an interpretive relationship to the world that it creates. (p. 30)

One of the anticipated benefits of using a form of reflective dialogue as a research tool, through re-presenting previous data accompanied with my evolving thinking in subsequent meetings was that it would also enable ‘*interpretive validity*’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 135). The rationale here was that participants were in some way involved (at least, in part) within the process of analysis.

From this position the interview was constructed as an ‘active interaction... between two (or more) people’ (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 698). As Flick has argued, interpretative research is:

a continuous process of constructing versions of reality[...] Researchers, who interpret the interview and present it as part of their findings, produce a new version of the whole. (2009, p.19).

6.10 Issues with validity from the adopted position

Debates in relation to validity within qualitative research have been ongoing for at least a half a century (Atkinson *et al.*, 2003) with terms such as ‘external validity,’ ‘reliability’ and ‘objectivity’ deemed problematic with the proposal that these might be replaced with ‘credibility,’ ‘dependability’ and ‘confirmability’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Some researchers have gone as far as to question the legitimacy of ‘validity’ as a concern when ‘reality’ is understood as a construct (see for example Lather, 1986). This is deemed particularly challenging for the researcher who understands meanings as socially constructed, contextually bound and ultimately value laden (as I do here) since ‘naive’ attempts to locate the

'truth' are incongruent with the ontological and epistemological positions adopted. As Kvale (1995) has said:

When the domain of the social sciences is extended from the prediction of facts to the interpretation of meaning, the criteria and forms of validation change (p.23)

From this position, Cho and Trent (2006) propose that:

the question of validity in itself is convergent with the way the researcher self-reflects, both explicitly and implicitly, upon the multiple dimensions in which the inquiry is conducted. (p. 324)

There is a consequential need for 'a holistic view of validity' based upon 'an inclusive discourse' which may involve a 'bricolage' of validity approaches (Cho and Trent, 2006).

In other words any research necessitates:

1. Reflection upon how 'validity' is understood within a *particular* research study
2. Consideration of the appropriateness of tools of 'validity' in relation to the paradigmatic positions underpinning the research design

My argument here is that how 'validity' is understood will be underpinned by ontological and epistemological positions adopted which will impact upon the types of tools for validation considered appropriate. This begs the question, how is 'validity' understood within this study? For, whilst the ontological and epistemological positions adopted did not 'fit' with more conventional approaches to validation (see for example Robson, 2002), in order to fulfil the requirements of a PhD reference to issues of validation needed to be considered in some form.

My initial plan was to utilise the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) in which 'validity' is exchanged for 'trustworthiness.' However, this remained challenging as this still necessitated an either/or judgment to be made (valid/invalid, trustworthy/untrustworthy) and consequentially operated in the equivalent way to a positivist position (see for example Scheurich, 1996). Stemming from a socio constructionist perspective Aguinaldo (2004) has maintained that:

validity polices the social science enterprise and thus, functions as a practice of power through the de/legitimation of social knowledge, research practice, and experiential possibilities. (p. 129)

In this way constructions of 'validity' are akin to a Foucauldian 'regime of truth' (Lather, 1993), in that they privilege certain ways of working at the expense of others. This has led Kvale (1995) to refer the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisation as the 'holy trinity:' a reified set of unquestionable truths.

Aguinaldo (2004) has maintained a need to move away from measuring validity through binary oppositions (is valid/is not valid) towards a process of interrogation of the particulars of the practices in use. This would involve:

explicit researcher accounts of ontological, epistemological, and methodological commitments within research write-ups. This type of reflexivity is crucial if social constructionist researchers are to address their own construction of the world and hence, their own practice of power. (pp. 133-134)

This account holds a strong resemblance to the pedagogical documentation approach adopted within this research, where reflexivity is viewed as a central component. Whilst this does not facilitate a means to 'validate' a truth, what it does do is build a level of 'integrity' into the research design (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007) by making visible the questions, dilemmas and the theorising of the researcher. From this position, validity is considered in terms of the 'craftsmanship' of the study:

The understanding of validity as quality of craftsmanship [...] becomes pivotal with a dismissal of an objective reality against which knowledge is to be measured [...] Validation comes to depend upon the quality of craftsmanship in an investigation, which includes continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings. In a craftsmanship approach to validation the emphasis is moved from inspection at the end of the production line to quality-control throughout the stages of knowledge production. (Kvale, 1995, p. 25)

It is this approach to validity which I embraced within this study, and there is a shift from 'validity' as a search for 'truth' to a focus instead upon 'integrity' (Am I considering alternative meanings? Am I making visible my own thought processes?). This would be in keeping with other post foundational positions associated with socio constructionist researchers who see validity as a process in

which critical reflection and dialogue are fundamental (Kvale, 1995; Aguinaldo, 2004). For this reasons the emphasis outlined within Chapter Two in relation to reflexivity was deemed essential.

Consequentially, whilst a range of tools of ‘validation’ are described below, they did not seek to ‘validate’ the research in a traditional sense at the end of the process, rather, in line with iterative research they were viewed as an ongoing dialogue with each other.

6.10.1 The use of multi methods of data collection

The use of multi methods of data collection is often associated with ‘triangulation,’ defined as:

the use of multiple methods [...] (which aim to) partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one investigation or one method (Denzin, 1989, p. 236).

This view is underpinned by a belief that the use of more than one method can lead to a more accurate reading of reality. Again, within this research this is somewhat problematic as ‘reality’ is viewed as a construct and there is no search for a ‘truth.’ It could be argued that ‘triangulation’ stems from a positivist paradigm which would be incongruent with this study. Richardson and St Pierre (2005) have proposed a need for three sided ‘triangulation’ within qualitative research projects to be substituted with the more complex representation of a crystal. As Richardson (2000) has argued:

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions’ (p. 934)

Using a crystal or a montage as a metaphor within the research process is useful because it offers a more complex image of the qualitative research process reflecting the complexity of knowledge construction as I see it. Flick, (2002) has proposed that the use of a range of data collection methods, (as I have done here), can be seen as a strategy which ‘adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth’ to an enquiry’ p.229). Whilst a range of data collection strategies have been used then, these aim to capture the density of project interpretations rather

than to pin down 'the truth.' In other words I did not consider that the use of multiple methods would capture an objective reality but rather a more complex representation of project interpretations.

6.10.2 Member Checking

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) have described member checking as 'the most crucial technique for establishing credibility.' Within this research study data were revisited with participants in subsequent visits and interactions (via phone or internet) in order to discuss my own evolving interpretations with them. Cho and Trent (2006) have described this as 'playing back' to participants in order to check for 'accuracy;' this process consists of 'techniques or methods by which misunderstanding can be adjusted and thus fixed' (Cho and Trent, 2006, p. 322). Whilst this technique was employed throughout my study, I would again maintain that a search for factual 'accuracy' would be incongruent with the ontological and epistemological positions underpinning my research design. This view acknowledges that my own construction of reality will be a re-interpretation and a re-construction of the participants' views, as Maxwell, (1992) has argued, the qualitative researcher seeks to construct 'what... objects, events, and behaviours mean to the people engaged in and with them' (p. 288). Member checking then offered a level of integrity as it allowed participants access to my own theorising of their thoughts, words and actions, and also involved them in the process of analysis.

6.10.3 Audit Trail and Reflexivity

Robson (2002) has outlined the usefulness of the audit trail as a tool of validity. Within this study, full records of the research process were completed including raw data, field notes and a research diary.

In line with the use of pedagogical documentation notes on my evolving theorising were added and offered back to participants. As this thesis has argued, a central focus of the research design was to ensure that there was a deep level of self reflexivity throughout. By illuminating aspects of my own theorising, it

became possible to make visible my own thought processes and also to take responsibly for the choices made. As Steier, (1991) has asked:

Why do research for which you must deny responsibly for what *you* have ‘found’? (p. 11, emphasis added)

This is in keeping with other socio constructionist research and research stemming from anti foundational positions (see for example Lather, 1986; Richardson, 1997). Table 6:3 outlines the range of tools for validity utilised within this study.

Table 6:3: ‘Validity’ methods employed within this study

Multi-methods of data collection	Three collection methods were used
Member checking	Ongoing interpretations of the data were presented back to participants for further discussion during the process of data collection and all transcripts were subsequently sent to participants.
Audit trail	Full records of the research process were completed including raw data, field notes and a research diary with comments added
Using reflexivity to identify possible bias	Reflexivity, supported by the process of pedagogical documentation lay at the heart of this research design. Ongoing notes on my own thought processes were added to documents.

Reflection upon the limitations and dilemmas of my research study can be found in section 11.6 in Chapter Eleven.

6.11 The potential limitations of generated knowledge claims from my research study

An often cited limitation of the case study is the impossibility of making generalised claims beyond the particular case in question. However, Thomas (2011b, p. 21) has argued that a lack of generalisability is ‘not unique to case study: such failure haunts all kinds of social inquiry.’ Hammersley (2001, p. 220) has also proposed that *all* generalisations need to be considered as ‘cautious formulations.’ Thomas (2010, 2011a, 2011b) has critiqued this viewpoint further since, ‘It fails...to recognize the offer that can be made in local circumstances by

particular kinds of looser generalization' (Thomas, 2011, p. 577). This is because criticisms of case studies generally do not recognise the significance of 'abduction,' defined by Hammersley (2005) as:

the development of an explanatory or theoretical idea... often resulting from close examination of particular cases. (p. 5)

The use of abduction does not aim to secure and pin down explications because they are based upon the epistemological assumption that theory is provisional. Rather, the use of abduction offers a way of analysing the complex social world heuristically based upon a:

fluid understanding that explicitly or tacitly recognizes the complexity and frailty of the generalizations we can make about human interrelationships. (Thomas, 2010, p. 577)

The use of abduction then was congruent with the theoretical orientation of the thesis which positions meaning making as fluid, temporal and context laden (see chapter Two). Thomas (2010) has further argued that the conjecture that knowledge which is generalisable is held in greater esteem to 'exemplary knowledge' is rather problematic, particularly when using a case study (Thomas, 2011b, p.24). Drawing on the terminology of Aristotle he has suggested that the use of abduction can lead to a form of knowledge within the case which he calls '*phronesis*,

practical reasoning, craft knowledge, or tacit knowing: the ability to see the right thing to do in the circumstances. (Thomas, 2011b, p. 23)

This position again holds congruence with a socio constructionist position (see for example Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Steir, 1991; Steedman, 1991, see chapter two) which maintains that we are continually making sense of our worlds through 'acts of interpretation,' which are based upon subjective and partial views. In other words our meaning making sensibilities are based upon '*phronesis*', explanatory propositions (Thomas, 2010, p. 27), or working theories in which we:

see links, discover patterns, make generalisations, create explanatory propositions—weak, vernacular (26) or protoscientific theory... emerging

out of our experience—and it is all involved in the interpretation of a ‘case.’ (Thomas, 2011b, p. 27)

The use of abduction then does not lead to a grand theory which can be generalised wholesale but rather to a localised and contextualised phronesis.

6.12 Summary

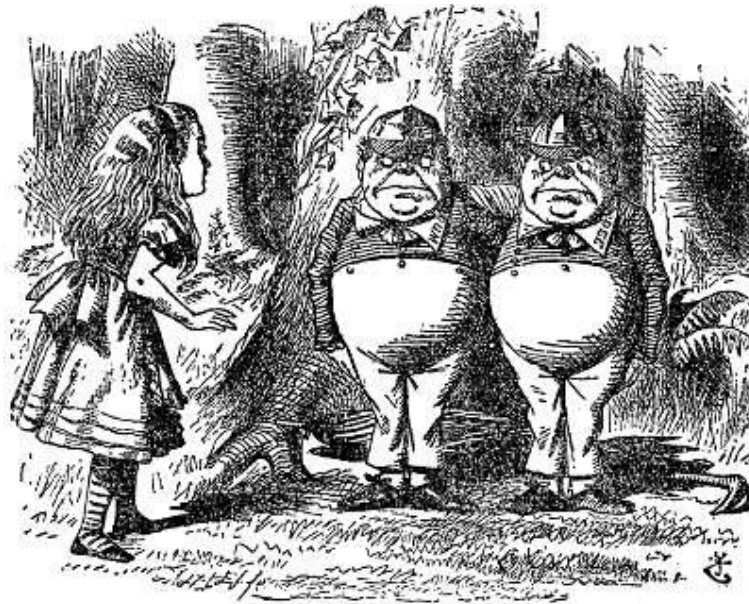
This chapter has outlined the detail of the research design whilst reinforcing my alignment with particular ontological and epistemological positions. I have argued that the research process is dialogic in nature and sought to explore different project *constructions* within the boundaries of an embedded case study (Thomas, 2011a) located within a pre-specified geographical location within one Welsh Local Authority. The subsequent chapter acts as a bridge, an orientation, between the two segments of my thesis, the literature explored thus far and the presentation and exploration of my data.

Chapter Seven

The Bridge

"Contrariwise," continued Tweedledee,

"if it was so, it might be; and if it were so,



it would be: but as it isn't, it ain't.

That's logic."

(Carroll, 2013, no page).

The next short chapter acts as a bridge between the first half of the thesis and the findings chapters which follow. The purpose of this 'bridge' is to illustrate the dialogic to-ing and fro-ing between the processes of data collection and analysis and second to clarify how three broad categories of projects were formulated (see Table 7.3). This is deemed important since the findings are reported as three chapters (eight, nine and ten) relating directly to these three project categories. The guide sheet to the full data set can be found in Appendix Eight.

7.1 The to-ing and fro-ing of the research process

The methodology chapter has described how the initial ‘conversational’ interview schedule was based around a loose set of possible areas of exploration (see Appendix Two). The interview schedule was used as a point of reference but conversations usually stemmed from reflections upon initial analysis of observations and documentation within the main body of the study. Due to the flexible nature of the interview, in most cases conversations went in different directions. The data from one of the participants (Mari) are focused upon here as illustrative of this dialogic research process. At the same time I must draw the reader’s attention to the fact that Mari did not have any observational data because she was not observed. Table 7:1 outlines the chronological order of our interactions.

Table 7:1 Data Gathering and interactions with Mari

November 2010	Discussion with Mari (two hours). This took place after school hours and began as Mari showed me around the school pointing out artefacts which had been made during projects.
Dec 2010	Transcript of conversation and initial theorising sent to Mari (no response)
February and April 2011	Contact via e mail and phone.
May 2011	Second visit to school interview and discussion of documentation deemed illustrative of Mari’s project construction. Mari also shared planning examples with me.
June and July 2011	E mail contact and transcripts sent back to Mari
September 2011	Follow up telephone conversation

My first conversation with Mari took place as we walked around the school environment and talked together over a two hour period. Mari was particularly keen to point out ‘creative’ artefacts which had been constructed in the process of

different projects (Mari. Doc 3). These ‘artefacts’ were also considered as data since they were illustrative of how creativity within projects might have been understood. During this initial conversation a range of areas were discussed in relation to projects. In the subsequent first stage analysis, comment boxes were added to the transcript and then the key emerging themes were set out in a frame and areas for future exploration noted (See Appendices Three and Four for examples of this process). I also included some initial theorising which was sent to Mari and discussed on a subsequent visit. In order to illustrate this process and make visible my own thinking during this time, some of this information is included below in Table 7:2.

I was keen to meet up with Mari to discuss these emerging themes and the questions arising. I was also interested in exploring what she thought of my initial tentative theorising.

A second meeting took place in April 2011 in Mari’s office one evening after school with the long conversation beginning in the following way:

Sarah: Ok, so if you are happy to continue our conversation that would be great. What I have done is I have made comments and raised questions about our last meeting which I would like to share with you today. I am keen to deepen my understanding of what you are doing here and attempt to represent *your* interpretation of projects. I am also interested in exploring how your views have been shaped.

I began by revisiting the theme of creativity and Mari’s earlier life; this felt important as when listening back to the tape I was struck by the raw emotion in her voice, which prompted an ‘epistemological shudder’(Lozinski and Collinson, 1999, p. 3, see Chapter Six, section 6.7.1). I further noted that the inclusion of information of such a personal nature appeared to be unconnected with the questions that had been asked- possibly indicating Mari’s need to tell this part of her story. This second meeting permitted many of the themes emerging from our first conversation to be explored and was illustrative of the research process undertaken with other participants. Key themes within the second conversation included links between targets and outcomes, precise planning, Reggio Emilia and creativity. This was because they were themes than ran throughout the first conversation (see Table 7:2) and were also noted in the artefacts which Mari

chose to share with me during our first meeting as examples of project work (Mari.Doc2, Mari.Doc3).

During the second meeting Mari also shared documentation with me which focused upon the planning of projects (Mari.Doc1). This evidence was used to support the interview data since in both cases there was an emphasis on a necessity to cover pre-specified targets through precise planning. An in-depth exploration of Mari's data and my subsequent theorising can be found in Chapter Nine.

7.2 How were categories formulated?

The chapter now moves on to explain how broad categories of projects were formulated, (reported in detail in Chapters 8, 9 and 10). As Chapter six (Section 6.4) has outlined the case presented within this study was viewed as 'nested' (Thomas, 2011) or 'embedded' (Yin, 2009) with the different project constructions positioned as components of the *same* case. All participants within my study were nested within the same ecological frame – all working within the Foundation Phase curriculum within a small geographical radius located in the same Local Authority. The case presented then, is of the different project interpretations of participants within a tightly bounded geographical, historical and policy context.

Whilst a multiple case study would have necessitated an analytical approach *principally* of comparison between different constructions, the nested case study led to a data analytical approach which was *predominantly* of one *within* participants (rather than across or between participants); as Thomas (2011a) has argued:

(whilst) comparisons are at the heart of each kind of study (multiple and nested cases)...in the nested study, these occur in a wider, connected context.' (p.155)

In line with Thomas, during the initial stages of analysis the data was originally also examined *across* the participants but always with reference to the 'wider, connected context.' During this process emerging categories were arranged and rearranged using documentation boards (see Appendix Five for examples of this

‘messy’ process). By examining data across all participants three broad categories of projects were noted (reported in detail in Chapters 8, 9 and 10) stemming from how projects began, were planned for and sustained. This information is set out in Table 7:3 and is discussed in more detail in sections 7.21 to 7.3.3.

There were two reasons for this approach; first I had noted that the projects of Hadow, Plowden and Reggio all began in *particular* ways (see Chapter Five) and second there appeared to be some congruence between how projects were initiated and the pedagogical practices subsequently incorporated under the project banner. Information from the pilot participants was also used to aid the theorising process. This was because during the process of analysis it became apparent that there were resonances between pilot and main study project constructions.

Table 7:2: The dialogic process of data collection and analysis

Data collection one	Possible area for exploration/line of enquiry	Follow up conversation	Theorising	Theorised data drawn from...
<p>'Government speak' throughout e.g. Outcomes, target, planning accompanied with Reggio type language e.g.</p> <p>'We use the Hundred languages of children, they are so important'</p> <p>'I am so Reggio'</p> <p>We have a 'pedagogy of listening'</p> <p>our artist is fantastic, brilliant...but she cannot plan and she is untidy and the staff need to know what is being planned but as an artist she is brilliant so I do the planning and think of outcomes and she does the creative bit she is also slow so I have to pace her and actually the same with the musician she wanted to plan for the reception but it was at the wrong level and the children were bored so I plan this now because you</p>	<p>The possible contradictory nature of language in play</p> <p>What do these terms mean within this context? How do they fit together?</p> <p>What does 'creativity' mean within this project construction and why is 'creativity' deemed to be important to? How does this link with a need for precise</p>	<p>Sarah I have noted a set of language which runs throughout our first conversation; these include standards, outcomes, targets and then creativity and Reggio. How do these issues sit together? I mean when I first saw them together I found this quite puzzling and wondered if they might be contradictory'</p> <p>Mari 'No, not at all, they are not contradictory but complementary! I plan the targets for the artist and musician and they do the creative bit. When I left them to plan it wasn't successful. (I2)</p> <p>Sarah 'You mentioned the term 'pedagogy of listening' on a number of occasions – what are teachers listening for? Is this the same during project sessions?'</p> <p>Mari 'They are listening to the conceptual level of the child, mathematically and</p>	<p><i>A possible intertwining of a creativity discourse, a Reggio discourse</i></p> <p><i>with a discourse of developmental psychology (a staged view of learning)with an accountability discourse</i></p> <p><i>Creativity as target driven?</i></p>	<p>Both interviews: Developmental psychology – emphasis upon stages and ages</p> <p>Both interviews: Reggio rhetoric</p> <p>Both interviews, artefacts including art work and art folders Discourse of Creativity</p> <p>Both interviews</p>

<p>need both without the planning you will not have a creative, flexible learning environment if it is not planned properly.</p>	<p>planning?</p>	<p>linguistically. We have our own school stages of development for these- these are our bread and butter.'</p>		<p>and in project folders Discourse of accountability regulatory modernity</p>
<p>A perceived emphasis upon planning and control</p> <p>Mari 'teachers have a six week planner and have medium term targets for the week, they are the outcomes they want the children to reach and then down the side they have the areas of development and then they have their focus for each week and as much as we can we link everything and we evaluate and staff are taking children with them to that outcome'</p>	<p>Is the pre-specified planning of activities important?</p> <p>What would happen to 'learning' if planning was removed or not tightly linked to outcomes?</p>	<p>Sarah 'There seemed to be an emphasis upon planning with the transcript of our last conversation. What would happen without planning?'</p> <p>Mari 'I think you misunderstand planning. They plan in Reggio, each night they sit together and they plan for the next day and that is why a short term planning is important , I mean with the medium term and long term planning I have put in the headings, the outcomes in for each topic..Project. Then it's about how you deliver learning.'</p> <p>Sarah 'And without planning towards outcomes?'</p> <p>Mari 'There would be haphazard learning' an example is then given (see chapter nine)</p>	<p>A possible tension between the use of Reggio as a point of reference and a strong emphasis upon the need to plan tightly? Possible different epistemological foundations?</p>	<p>Both interviews Developmental psychology – emphasis upon stages and ages</p> <p>Both interviews Reggio rhetoric</p> <p>Both interviews, art work and art folders Creativity</p> <p>Both interviews and in project folders Discourse of accountability regulatory modernity</p>

The purpose of the next section then is to *briefly* introduce how each project construction began in order to clarify why projects were attributed to particular categories. It begins by introducing how the three pilot participants began projects before moving on to the main study participants. Full accounts of the three different project constructions identified can be found in chapters eight, nine and ten.

7.2.1 Pilot Setting One: Veronica

Veronica had been working in pilot setting one, a standalone nursery for fifteen years and was nearing the end of her teaching career. She claimed to have been influenced by the projects and pedagogical practices of Reggio Emilia (see Chapter Five). When starting projects Veronica explained that:

You need to watch the children, watch them really carefully; listen to them, you know to start a good project. What are their current interests, what are they curious about? What is grabbing their attention? (Veronica, I1)

She explained that time to make observations was built into the time table and subsequently used to ascertain the developing interests of children used as starting points for project areas (Veronica, I1). Veronica claimed that initial beginnings could be reflective of either group or individual interests but needed to sustain the attention of children (Veronica, I1). Analysis of Veronica's interview data (Veronica I1 and I2, I3) seemed to indicate that projects would usually begin after reflection upon observations of children in playful situations.

We chat at the end of the day and during sessions, you know note what they are saying and doing usually when they are playing, how can we go forward, what should we offer in projects? (Veronica, I1)

This suggested that in order to plan and sustain projects staff were engaged in daily ongoing reflection and discussions in relation to the observed emerging and developing interest of children. Data also indicated that more formal whole staff meetings (head teacher, teachers, support staff) would take place weekly:

And of course weekly meeting with everyone, what to do next? What is the latest? Who is doing what? Where does the curiosity lie? (Veronica, I1)

These collaborative conversations were used to share thinking in relation to the possible direction of projects and project activities. I noted that Veronica made no reference to a necessity to meet external objectives such as Foundation Phase outcomes through project activities. No reference to external outcomes was found during a subsequent search of documentary evidence. I felt this finding to be highly significant in the light of other project constructions noted within this study in which external objectives were deemed to be essential. Data (e.g. Veronica, I1; Veronica.Obs1, and VeronicaDoc1;VeronicaDoc2; VeronicaDoc5) therefore suggested that in *this* construction projects stemmed from the observed interests of children.

7.2.2 Pilot Setting Two: Carys and Seren

In Pilot Setting Two, a primary school, both Carys (Year 1/2) and Seren (Reception) had recently moved into the Foundation Phase after the amalgamation of Infant and Junior schools. They had both previously taught for less than five years within the junior setting where they had also used projects.

Carys maintained that projects were ‘child led...following the interests of children’ (Carys, I1). At the same time, she also explained how projects began from a, ‘Loose overarching heading decided upon by the management team’ (Carys, I1). Both interview data (Carys, I1 and I2) and documentary evidence (Carys.Doc 3) suggested that after deciding upon a ‘project theme’ (Carys, I1), projects activities were planned around Foundation Phase areas of learning and also with reference to school schemes of work and the National Curriculum. Projects were planned in advance, taking place over a half term designated period.

Holding congruence with this description, her colleague Seren also described how projects began:

At the beginning we choose a topic and plan for it around Foundation Phase outcomes and then we tick off the content and skills that are covered (Seren, I1)

This was corroborated by the planning documents provided (Seren. Doc 2). Simultaneously, she claimed that projects were reflective of children's interests such as 'Fairy Tales' and 'The Jolly Christmas Post Man.' (Seren, I1). (For a fuller discussion of these data refer to Chapter Eight). Using these data as evidence, it was theorised that projects might be perceived by these participants as a way of both acknowledging the interests of children whilst at the same time enabling pre-specified outcomes to be achieved. This finding appeared to signify that the project constructions of Seren and Carys were not the same as the projects described by Veronica since in the case of the latter there was no attempt to aim towards a pre-specified outcome.

7.2.3 Main Study Setting One: Heulwen and Ffion

Main Setting One was a standalone nursery with two participants: Ffion, who had worked there for the past fifteen years and Heulwen, the head teacher of both this setting and also the head teacher of Pilot Setting One. Both Ffion and Heulwen were nearing the end of their teaching careers. Both participants claimed to draw on Reggio ideas and had visited Reggio Emilia together as part of a study trip.

When starting projects, Ffion and Heulwen explained how observations would be made of children in order to identify their 'fascinations.' (Ffion, I1, I2; Heulwen I1). As a consequence observation time was built into the daily timetable. As Heulwen argued:

Staff have to build time in to observe children. How else would we know what their interests are? (Heulwen, I1, original emphasis)

Staff were also engaged in weekly planning meetings in which they would share their observations of children/groups of children and then discuss what they might plan for children (and adults) to do next (Ffion, I1, I2).

These very 'lively' conversations would 'steer' the project direction (Heulwen, I1) since projects were not planned with reference to long term aims (Heulwen, I1).

This was exemplified through a description of a project entitled 'fungi' which had begun when teachers had noted that children were taking photographs of fungi in

the outdoor area (for a fuller explanation of this project see Chapter Ten, 10.2.3). No verbal references were made by either of these participants to external outcomes in relation to projects and other data (documentary evidence e.g. Ffion. Doc 1; Ffion. Doc 2) corroborated this. It was therefore theorised that there appeared to be a strong correlation with the project inceptions described by Veronica in pilot Setting One since data (interviews, observations and documentary analysis) signified that projects initiated from the observed interests of children without reference to external markers and were planned weekly.

7.2.4 Main Study Setting Two: Eira

Eira was situated within a private nursery working with preschool children aged three to four. She had previously worked within a reception class at a primary school. Eira maintained that projects took place over an unspecified time frame and were ‘free’ and ‘child led,’ (Eira, I1). She also argued that ‘Staff are completely free to follow the children’s interests’ (Eira, I1). When starting projects Eira described how projects stemmed from a weekly planning meeting with the three year old children used to ascertain prominent interests:

We are then completely free to just go with it, go with the children (Eira, I1)

Initial analysis of interview data indicated that projects within Eira’s setting began in a similar way to other nursery teachers (for example Veronica and Ffion). However an observation of a planning session and follow up conversation suggested that this may not be the case (see Chapter Eight). This was because it appeared that many of the activities had already been planned *before* the meeting which was meant to ascertain interests had occurred. During a second conversation Eira also claimed that:

We have a list and we can’t go back on ourselves and so we look at the skills (Government Skills Framework) and we try to fit things in. (Eira, I2)

This appeared to indicate that external markers such as Welsh Foundation Phase documentation were also a point of reference for the initiation of projects. As a consequence, this project construction was categorised as beginning after cross referencing external outcomes and attempting to match these with the perceived

interests of children. In other words this construction was closer to that of Carys and Seren than that of the other nursery participants.

7.2.5 Main Study Setting Three: Jane and Efa

Both participants within main setting three appeared to start projects in two distinct ways. In the first method, an area would be identified from a school scheme of work, cross referenced with national curriculum objectives. This is exemplified by the words of Jane:

When we start the topic, we have a general idea and we discuss it and if we think that they seem interested we say ‘yes, let’s go with that topic (Jane, I1)

During an initial whole class session children would be asked ‘what do you ‘know’?’ in relation to this particular project area. As Jane explained:

When we did what do you know about Victorians (We asked) what do you want to find out? There were things that they already knew that we had thought of and then we had to cross these off the planning and they might say that they want to find out about stuff that we didn’t think about and we will put that in. (Jane, I2)

This process was used to develop a ‘mind map’ and subsequently teachers would meet to formulate appropriate project activities (Jane. Doc 1). During the life course of a project, mind maps (see Appendix Nine) would be revisited and revised.

A second method also appeared to be described by Efa (Efa, I1). For instance, she gave the example of a project called ‘Around the World,’ which had begun when children were noted role playing ‘at the airport.’

They were really interested in this... really engaged and then we sat down together (with Jane) and thought you know we could use this ... and cover knowledge and understanding, some literacy, maths, so... a useful topic (Efa, I1)

This suggested that projects might also start from the children’s interests if it was believed that a particular area had the potential for covering specific Foundation Phase outcomes.

Since both of these participants appeared to begin projects by attempting to match outcomes to interests or interests to outcomes, they were categorised as similar to the project constructions of Seren, Carys and Eira.

7.2.6 Main Study Setting Four: Mari

Mari was the head teacher of an Infant and Nursery School and was nearing the end of her career. Mari explained that she had used projects ‘for years’ (Mari I1). When starting projects she elucidated that:

I plan *all* of the projects, decide on the topic. *All* our projects are based around quality literacy texts, you know like the Wizard of Oz. I have worked in this way for years and so every time we return to a particular topic I can add to the bank of resources or activities. I rotate them every four years and *every* child is involved, from nursery to year two. (Mari, I1, original emphasis)

This implied that the particular interests of children were not considered when deciding upon a project area since it was assumed that all children would be engaged by the chosen focus such as Peter Pan. Mari described how projects needed to be tightly focussed to ensure that outcomes and targets could be met:

A good project lasts the whole term and has a really creative element. They need careful thought so that they are planned properly. You know teachers have to ensure that children all meet the targets and this can only be done when activities are planned closely and carefully linked to the outcomes children need to achieve by the end of the term. (Mari, I2)

This suggested that projects were planned in advance, lasting a term and were precisely linked to specific targets. This theorising was substantiated through an exploration of documentary evidence (Mari, Doc1). An exclusively pre-specified project theme and rigid time frame accompanied by limited acknowledgement of children’s interests marked this project construction as distinct from all other settings within this research study.

Table 7:3: How were projects initiated?

Broad Categories	Settings	Age range of setting	Participant	Projects start from:			
				An investigation built around the questions of children	Observed interests of the children with no mention of external objectives	Interests of children matched to objectives	Pre-determined objectives matched to interests of children
One	Pilot Study Two	Primary	Teacher Carys (Y1/2)		X		
		Primary	Teacher Seren (Reception)		X		
	Main Study Two	Nursery (Private Sector)	Nursery nurse Eira		X		
	Main Study Three	Infant	Teacher Jane		X		
		Infant	Teacher Efa		X		
Three	Pilot Study One	Nursery	Teacher Veronica		X		
	Main Study One	Nursery	Manager Heulwen		X		
		Nursery	Teacher Ffion		X		
Two	Main Study Four	Infant	Manager Mari				X

7.3 Commentary

As a consequence of exploring the initial project starting points as described above, three broad categories of projects were formulated, these are set out in Table 7:3.

7.3.1 Category One

Projects begin by matching interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests.

Participants: Seren and Carys (Pilot Setting 2); Jane and Efa (Main Study 3); Eira (Main Study 1)

A starting point for Category One participants was to either match the interests of children to external targets and outcomes or to match the external outcomes with the perceived interests of children. These outcomes drew upon Foundation Phase documentation, National Curriculum documentation or school and Local Authority schemes of work. An exploration of the data of Seren, Carys, Jane and Efa in relation to starting projects enabled a clear categorisation to be made. The data of Eira were more problematic when considering how projects began: whilst she described practices which were more akin to Category Three participants (see section 7.3.3 below) observations and follow up conversations indicated that her understanding of projects was closer to Category One participants. This was because her data appeared to signify a perceived necessity to note external markers before beginning project activities and this perceived necessity was missing from the Category Three participants described below.

7.3.2 Category Two

Projects begin from predetermined objectives with a focus on ‘creativity.’

Participant: Mari (Main Study 4)

For one of the participants projects began from a completely pre-specified basis without acknowledgement of the interests of children. This was deemed problematic since I was uncertain if only one participant could represent an entire category. At the same time Mari’s data were markedly different to the other two constructions since there did not appear to be any need to recognise children’s

interests before projects began. This was subsequently viewed as a different project construction to the other two classifications.

7.3.3 Category Three

Projects begin by following the observed interests of children

Participants: Veronica (Pilot Study 1); Heulwen and Ffion (Main Study 2)

The impetus for projects from the third category of participants stemmed from child observations used to ascertain the interests or ‘fascinations’ of children. It was noted that in this case there was a lack of any reference to external targets. This appeared significantly different from all other participants within this study.

7.4 Summary

The function of this short chapter was to act as a bridge between the literature and methodological sections and the findings chapters which follow. It began by illuminating the dialogic processes of data collection and analysis before moving on to explaining how three broad categories of projects were created. The next three chapters focus on each of these categories in turn and are structured as follows:

Chapter 8: Category One - Projects begin by matching interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests.

Chapter 9: Category Two - Projects begin from predetermined objectives with a focus on ‘creativity.’

Chapter 10: Category Three - Projects begin by following the observed interests of children.

Holding congruence with the centrality of co-construction within the design of this research study, on occasions I include my own voice within the presentation of the data within these chapters. This is because the participants’ responses were often dependent on what *I* had said previously and the way I had worded questions. In the same way the questions I subsequently followed up with were

also in response to what participants had said. This too was a dialogic process of to-ing and fro-ing.

Chapter Eight

Exploring the Category One Construction:

Projects begin by matching

interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests.

"Take some more tea," the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.
"I've had nothing yet," Alice replied in an offended tone, "so I can't take more."



"You mean you can't take *less*," said the Hatter: "it's very easy to take *more* than nothing.
Carroll, 2013, no page)

Moving on from the Bridging Chapter, this chapter now introduces the data from the first category of projects noted within this study: projects begin by matching interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests.

Drawing on data from participants within this first project category as illumination, a number of research questions are explored within this chapter. First there is a focus upon *how* projects were constructed by participants with explicit reference to the Bernsteinian concept of framing and classification (1996). The latter part of the chapter also considers *why* projects may have been interpreted in this particular way through an exploration of Foucauldian notions of discourse (Weedon, 1987).

8.1 Commentary

There were five participants within this category, Carys and Seren from Pilot setting Two (PS2), Eira, Main Study Setting Two (MS2) and Jane and Efa, Main Study Setting Three (MS3). With the exception of Eira (MS2) all Category One participants worked within school classes which would have previously been classified as ‘infant’ classrooms (either Reception ages 4-5 or split year 1/2- ages 5-7). Whilst Eira (MS2) was situated within a private fee paying nursery, she had previous experience as a nursery nurse within the state schooling sector in a reception class. A range of data was collected from these participants including interviews, observations and documentary evidence. A guide sheet to the full data set can be found in Appendix Seven. The key points of this project construction are outlined within Table 8:1.

8.2: How were projects constructed?

8.2.1 Starting, planning and sustaining projects

As the bridging chapter has explained these participants were categorised as a group since they all began and sustained projects in similar ways, either by matching interests to outcomes or matching outcomes to interests. This was deemed significant because an acknowledgement of children’s interests marked these as different from Category Two participants (see Chapter Nine) whilst simultaneously, the necessity to consult external targets made these projects distinct from the Category Three project construction (see Chapter Ten).

Table 8:1: Category One –Projects begin by matching interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests.

Category One:	Setting	Age range of setting	Participant	Claimed key focus	Projects	Named Influences	Term used Project or topic?
Projects begin by matching interests to outcomes	Main Study Two	Nursery (Private Sector)	Nursery nurse Eira	Content	Me, Myself Animals Snow Winter Christmas		Both
matching outcomes to interests	Pilot Study Two	Primary	Teacher Seren	Content	Fairy Tales People Who Help Us Space Jolly Postman		Both
	Main Setting Three	FP	Teacher Jane	Content	The Victorians Birds		Both
		FP	Teacher Efa	Skills	Food Around The World		Both

The bridging chapter has also briefly introduced how a project area would be chosen based on the belief that it would enable specific outcomes to be achieved

whilst also acknowledging children's interests. Indicative of this view point were the words of Jane in main setting two who claimed that 'Projects come from learning outcomes matched to the children's interests,' (Jane, I2, MS3). The data of other participants within this group (e.g. Carys, I1 and I2, PS2; Seren I1 and I2, PS2) held congruence with this position again suggesting attempts to match both external outcomes and the perceived interests of children together (see section 7.3.1 in the bridging chapter).

A notable difference here was the interview data of Efa (MS3) since she maintained that projects originated *from* the interests of children and were then matched to external objectives:

Topics, I mean projects originate from children's ideas or interests, what children want to know and find out about, cross referenced with both the Foundation Phase 'Areas of learning' and a 'skills framework' (Efa, I1).

This appeared to indicate that Efa's projects began from children's interests and were *then* matched to outcomes and not the other way around. At the same time Efa's documentary evidence (e.g. planning documents) did not support this claim and suggested that like her colleague Jane, outcomes were also matched to interests. Using these data as evidence I theorised that within this category, projects were viewed as either a way of matching outcomes to interests or interests to outcomes. In other words, (on the surface at least) there appeared to be some shared control between teachers and children in relation to the chosen project area. This suggested that from a Bernsteinian perspective that the pedagogical practices would be neither weakly nor strongly framed.

8.2.2 Projects as a cross-curricula way of working

Resonating with the early years tradition recounted in Chapter Three (see 3.31 - 3.3.2) this group described projects as, 'child led', (Eira I1 and I2, MS2; Efa I2, MS3) 'child initiated', (e.g. Carys, I1, PS2; Seren I1, PS2; Efa I2, MS3) and 'following the interests of children', (Eira I1 and I2, MS2; Jane I2, MS3). A consistent claim made by all of the participants within this group was a perceived link between projects and 'cross curricula' ways of working (Eira I1 and I2, MS2;

EfaI1,MS3; CarysI1, PS2; SerenI1, PS2). The following data are illustrative of this point:

(projects are) a cross curricula way of working, the central theme filtered through everything else, that is how our projects are (EfaI2, MS3)

Projects are good for linking things, different areas of learning, so that children can understand information more easily. (SerenI1, PS2)

Projects are about linking learning (Eira, MS1)

These data indicated that projects may have been viewed as a way of planning activities converging around a central theme in an attempt to dissolve traditional subject barriers. This appeared indicative of weak Bernsteinian classification. However analysis of documentary evidence (Carys.Doc 3; Efa.Doc 2; Jane.Doc 1) suggested that whilst traditional subject headings had been replaced by new Foundation Phase headings (for example Knowledge and Understanding of the World), planning still aimed to cover specific content associated within these areas. My argument here is that this problematised the perception that projects were a cross curricula way of working.

Consequently this area was explored with many of these participants in subsequent conversations:

Sarah: I noted in our last conversation a possible connection between your projects and cross curricular ways of working. You use the term ‘cross curricula.’

Jane: Yes, that is what we are aiming for.

Sarah: Why? Why is it important? What is the link with projects?

Jane: Well, learning is best for young children when everything is planned around a central theme that is what projects are because that is how young children learn (JaneI2, MS3)

In this way these views appeared to resonate with the Plowden project construction presented in Chapter Five (5.7-5.12). Jane’s comments were representative of this group, suggesting that a perceived emphasis upon ‘cross curricula’ ways of working appeared to be based on an epistemological assumption that learning was more likely to occur where activities crossed traditional subject barriers. In the private nursery, Eira’s comments were

analogous with this theorising as she explained, ‘Children need to have things joined together for them, that’s how they learn.’ (Eira, I2). Efa argued from a similar position reasoning that projects were useful in that their ‘cross curricula’ nature in some way facilitated the transfer of skills across different subject disciplines:

the idea is that skills are transferable because you will get children who in language will write and write and they think we only do writing in language but when we come to the role play and they have to write the sounds (it is) just making sure that they can apply the skills, ok we can write in ‘language’ but can we use it to write signs or cards or a poem or a letter. So, taking the writing out of language and applying it in different areas of learning. (Efa I2, MS3)

Data indicated that this was an assumption shared by this entire group and that ‘cross curricula’ ways of working (or at least planning learning) were deemed superior to subject based pedagogies for young children. At the same time it was never fully established in any depth why teachers felt that this was the case and it may have been based upon a reified shared postulation; in other words an uncritical conjecture - an accepted ‘truth’.

Other terms often used in association with this project construction (and intertwined with notions of cross curricula ways of working) were ‘integrated learning,’ (Eira I1 and I2, MS2; Efa I1,MS3) and ‘active learning,’ (Seren I 1, PS2, Carys I1, PS2)

Projects are a good way of integrating learning, children actively involved (Seren, I1)

This was suggestive of a further postulation that there was in some way an explicit link between cross-curricula pedagogies and ‘active learning.’ As Eira said:

Children learn best by doing with everything joined together. (Eira, I2)

In other words there may have been a belief that if activities were planned around a central theme that children would somehow automatically be ‘actively’ involved. In order to explore this line of enquiry, observational data from project sessions were shared with participants and they were asked to give specific

examples of ‘active learning’ stemming from these previously observed project sessions.

Seren (PS2) described an example of ‘active learning’ within the ‘People Who Help Us’ project of children making a fire engine out of a cardboard box (Seren.Obs1extract 3) ‘because they were painting and choosing material’ (Seren, I2); Eira described children painting a snow scene as an example of active learning within the Winter project (Eira.Obs2extract4); within Carys’s class an example of children making flowers from a construction kit was given (Carys.Obs1extract 4 see Extract: 8:1 below, Carys, ‘Flower Construction’) within the context of a ‘Plant’ project. This provided further evidence that the Category One project construction may have had some resonances with the previous Plowden construction (Chapter Five).

Eira’s comments appeared representative of the explanations that followed as she claimed that ‘children learn through doing things’ (Eira, I2). Using these data as evidence I theorised that in these cases the pedagogical practices were presumed to be appropriate since through the process of *physically* doing something children were more likely to learn. It was also hypothesised that active learning within projects might also have been in some way linked with ‘choice,’ as Efa said:

Projects are useful because children need to *do* things and have some *choice* (Efa, I2, MS3, original emphasis)

Through these examples I theorised that there were similarities with some of the research outlined in the latter sections of Chapter Three (e.g. Cottle and Alexander, 2012; McInnes *et al.*, 2011) since ‘choice’ and ‘freedom’ were frequently noted as key aspects of projects by *all* of these participants but as will be argued in a later section, such notions of choice and freedom were often deemed as problematic.

8.2.3 Planning projects

After deciding upon a specific project theme, the majority of Category One participants (Carys and Seren and Jane and Efa) described a similar procedure in relation to the process of planning projects (e.g. CarysI1 and 2, PS2; JaneI2 and 3, MS3):

At the beginning we choose a topic and plan for it, you know Foundation Phase Outcomes and then we tick off the content and skills that are covered in the project. We then show what we have planned to the children and then sometimes ask what they want to do next. (Seren, I1, MS3)

This suggested that after consultation of long, medium and short term aims, activities were planned by teachers under the different Foundation Phase Areas of Learning with projects taking place over a half term. This was supported by some of the documentary evidence submitted (Carys.Doc 3; Seren.Doc2; Jane.Doc2; Efa.Doc2 and 3). All four school based participants explained how projects would begin with a whole class session in which children were asked, ‘What do you ‘know’ about a project area?’ (e.g. ‘Birds’, ‘Food’, ‘The Victorians’). Children were also asked what they would like to ‘do’ in relation to a particular project ‘theme:’

When we did what do you know about Victorians (we asked) what do you want to find out? There were things that they already knew that we had thought of and then we had to cross these off the planning and they might say that they want to find out about stuff that we didn’t think about and we will put that in, some of them are *really* interested in Queen Victoria so when we do that in our history, I mean, knowledge and understanding, we can fit that in. (Jane, I3, MS3)

Seren, Carys, Efa, and Jane were in the practice of recording this initial information using a ‘mind map’ (see Appendix Nine). Over the course of a project, mind maps would be revisited and the activities which had been covered would be ‘crossed off’ and new activities added. The rationale for this way of working was explained by Carys:

mind maps are great because the children also get to put in their ideas so it is not all about us as teachers (Carys, I1, PS2)

This suggested that through the use of these pedagogical practices participants believed that children had some room to steer the direction of projects. From a Bernsteinian position these practices appeared to be a balance of child and teacher framed, equidistant between visible and invisible pedagogy. In other words, in line with recent theorising (e.g. Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002) and Foundation Phase rhetoric (see Chapter Four) there appeared to be some attempts to balance the role of the child and adults within projects. As such these data seemed to

make visible how this equilibrium was perceived and put into practice within these *particular* settings. However, when digging below the surface of these practices, the matter was deemed to be more complex, this issue is explored within the section below.

8.2.4 Classroom Organisation

Similar classroom organisation methods within projects were witnessed and described within all of the school settings within this category (PS2, MS3) across all four classes (Seren, Carys, Efa, Jane):

Generally we have project sessions in the afternoons, the mornings are usually taken up with numeracy and literacy (Carys, I1, Ps2)

We sometimes have whole project days but usually they are planned for afternoon sessions. We generally focus on maths and English in the mornings. (Efa, I2, MS3)

Project work often took place in the afternoons only and morning sessions were usually reserved for numeracy and literacy. Documentary evidence (e.g. Seren. Doc1; Seren. Doc 2 ; Carys.Doc.1; Carys.Doc 2 ; Carys.Doc 3) suggested that activities were planned around Areas of learning reflective of the central project theme (e.g. Plants, Victorians, Birds, People Who Help Us, Space, and The Jolly Postman). Through analysis of observational and interview data (e.g. Carys.Obs1; Seren.Obs1; Efa.Obs1), I also noted that all school based participants organised classes in very similar ways during project sessions. In all observations there were two focussed activities in which groups of children were supported by a member of staff and ‘independent’ activities which in line with Foundation Phase rhetoric (see Chapter Four) were referred to as ‘continuous provision’ (CP). The CP was also set up by the teacher and in some cases children rotated around the CP activities (Seren, Jane) and in others they were free to choose from a range of specified tasks.

For example during an observation of a ‘Plant’ project within Carys’s class (PS2) the focus activities (supported by an adult) concentrated upon writing a list about ‘what plants need to grow’ and writing a fictional story based around plants (Carys.Obs1extract 2). ‘Choice’ activities from the ‘Continuous Provision’ included drawing flowers on the whiteboard; observational drawing of flowers

using water colours; observation work with celery and food colouring at the 'Investigation Station'; playing with soil in the sand pit and making flowers from a construction kit. (Carys.Obs1extract 3; Carys.Obs1extract 4 Carys.Obs1extract 5; Carys.Obs1 extract 6). A very similar set of pedagogical practices were observed during 'The Victorians' project in Efa's classroom (Efa. Obs1). In this case focussed activities were also supported by an adult, such as making and painting sweets for a Victorian shop (Efa.Obs1extract 3) and writing a Victorian story, (Efa.Obs1extract 2). Choice activities including 'making paper bags for the sweets,' 'copying 'Victorian' pictures' (Efa.Obs1extract 5) and finding information about Victorian shops (Efa.Obs1extract 6).

Drawing on the observation data of three of the participants (Seren.obs1; Carys.obs1; Efa.obs1), the classroom organisation strategies in place during observed project sessions are outlined below in Table 8:2.

As was the case with other participants, Carys was asked to explain where the responsibility for the planning of project activities rested:

Sarah: So were all of the activities planned by children or adults or... ?

Carys: Yes, I would say most of these activities have been planned by the adults, all science based from the scheme really but then again the children did suggest that we put soil instead of sand into the sandpit we added that to a mind map you know in, line with the topic, so yes that was their idea (I2, PS2)

This seemed indicative of how a child's involvement was understood within projects; whilst activities often originated from pre-determined targets, there appeared to be some room to include the ideas of children in relation to setting up particular activities. This theorising was supported by the data of Jane:

We (teachers) plan activities but we try and have room for their ideas if they fit in with what we need to cover, so if they suggest we do something then we can see if it is appropriate, like setting up an airport for role play when we were doing 'Our World' (Jane, I2, MS3)

At the same time all participants within Category One claimed that children had more 'freedom' within project sessions (EiraI1 and I2, MS2; EfaI1,MS3; CarysI1 and I2, PS2) particularly during the continuous provision (CP) activities, (such as

‘soil in the sandpit’) since these were often deemed to be ‘child initiated.’ As Carys and Jane argued:

Learning within projects is child initiated, children leading what happens, having choice. (Jane, I2, MS3)

When we do projects I think that this (Continuous provision) is usually the freest part of the day, children choosing. Children controlling *their* learning. (Carys, I2, PS2, original emphasis)

Table 8:2: Category One -Classroom Organisation within Project Sessions

Participant	Focused Tasks related to a central theme and supported by an adult	‘Continuous Provision’ Activities set up within the environment stemming from the central theme
Carys (PS2) ‘Plants’	Children sat in an ‘ability’ group 1. Writing a plant story individually 2. Writing a list of ‘what plants need to grow’ individually	Drawing flowers on the whiteboard Observational drawing of flowers using water colours Observation work with celery and food colouring Playing with soil in the sand pit Making flowers from a construction kit Designing a ‘new’ plant
Seren(PS2) ‘People Who Help Us’	Children sat in an ‘ability’ group 1. Writing about ‘People Who Help Us’ individually 2. Making Fire engines from boxes individually	Role play ‘at the post office’ Jigsaw puzzles – People Who Help Us Cutting and sticking –People Who Help Us using catalogues
Efa (MS3) ‘The Victorians’	1. Writing a Victorian story 2. Making and painting sweets for a Victorian shop	Making paper bags for the sweets Copying ‘Victorian’ pictures Finding information about Victorian shops.

In order to understand what ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’ meant within this project construction, a number of observational extracts were explored in more detail. Two extracts are included below as illustrative of these observations. Both observations took place within the Plant project in Carys’s class and occurred within ‘choice’ continuous provision time, since this had been described as the ‘freest part of the day’ (Carys, I2, PS2).

Extract: 8:1 Carys: ‘Flower Construction.’ (Carys.Obs1extract 4)

Four children had been allocated to an activity involving a construction kit (Connex), in which they had been tasked with making flowers. After completing the flower task, two of the boys began to make vehicles and were keen to show me (the observer) how fast they could go. They excitedly called me over:

Boy1	Miss! Miss! See? See...how fast?
Boy2	Wow! See miss? See? So fast! Ho ho!
Boy1	Bet you can’t make your one go faster
Boy 2	Bet I can
Boy 1	Bet you can’t! Bet you can’t...supercharged...mine...yeah!
Boy 2	No way...I’ll race you...look at these wheels!

The two boys spent time engaged in a race with the vehicles and after a few minutes a Teaching Assistant approaches the group.

TA1	What <i>are</i> you <i>supposed</i> to be making?
Children	Hmmm, flowers Miss!
TA2	<i>That</i> does not look like a flower to me
TA1	Yes and <i>that</i> is not a flower (pointing at the vehicles).
Boy1	But we already made a flower miss.....
TA2	Well now you can make a <i>different</i> type of flower. Break it up <i>now!</i> Make a flower or plant with the Connex like you were told to do.

The Teaching assistants walk away

Boy2	Yeah, well...we already did that didn’t we? (quietly)
Boy 1	boring flowers.....

As in earlier studies (e.g. Cottle and Alexander, 2012; McInnes *et al.*, 2011; Hunter and Walsh, 2014 see Chapter Three, 3.9) analysis of these extracts appeared to indicate a tension between freedom and control since there seemed to be a disconnect between the language utilised and the practices observed. Whilst the language used to describe these practices resonated with both the early

childhood lineage (Chapter Three, see 3.3.1) and the project literature (Chapter Five) with projects described as, ‘child led’, ‘child initiated’, and ‘free,’ at the same time a Bernsteinian analysis of the observational data described above was indicative of a more tightly framed visible pedagogy than the interview data seemed to imply. This was theorised since within both of the observational extracts the activities appeared to offer minimal space for children to deviate from a pre-specified path.

Extract 8:2 Carys, ‘Designing a plant’ Carys.Obs1extract 3

Two children are sitting outside in the communal area involved in a Continuous Provision activity entitled ‘designing a new plant’. Whilst they are sat together they appear to work independently (there is no interaction between them). A large roll of paper has been placed on the floor and the teacher has drawn an example. The first child carefully copies the teacher’s design and then appears to look for an adult to show. The second child works alone for some time. He tries to write something next to his design, stops and looks around. He then calls an adult over for help with the spelling:

Boy: How do you spell ‘evil’? (proudly) My plant is evil... cos it eats people, it’s really mean. See?(pointing at the drawing) See the claws? See? It can kill people....you know? Sharp claws and spiky teeth and....

TA1No, no, no, no. We don’t want evil plants here do we? We don’t want evil...This is a nice school, kind (pause). You will need to change it, yes why don’t we change it..... you can’t do that. Perhaps you could call it something else- what about a nice plant, a kind plant.... that helps people?

For example, in extract 8:1 children were denied choice in relation to what to make from the construction kit and within extract 8:2 what they were able to draw. There appeared to be limited ‘space’ for children to explore or experiment with their *own* ideas or to make their own choices and follow their own direction (Cremin, Burnard and Craft, 2006 see Chapter Three, 3.4). In both observations, the actual activities seemed to offer the potential for a range of possibilities which could have been reflective of a child’s interest. This may have led to the initial

excitement expressed by children within both observations. However, in both cases the adults' desire to control the learning taking place towards a pre-specified outcome seemed to impact on the amount of agency given to the children and their subsequent capacity to steer the activity direction. In other words children had a very limited range of 'choice' within both activities and were governed by the adult's expectations.

My argument here is that whilst at the level of *rhetoric* pedagogical practices appeared to be loosely framed, analysis suggested that practices were actually tightly controlled. This was because during these observations children did not appear to be 'leading the learning' within the time during the day allocated for them to do so. I felt this to be highly significant since this occurred within (a) a curriculum which advocates a balance between adult and child initiated activities (b) within project sessions which had been described as the 'freest' part of the curriculum (SerenI1, PS2) and (c) within continuous provision described as 'the freest part of that day' JaneI3, MS3).

These data then seemed to signify a possible tension between the pedagogical terminology used and associated practices observed or described within project sessions. This disconnect was also made visible through an analysis of data within the private day care setting. For example, Eira also described projects as 'free,' 'children choosing' (Eira, I1) whilst frequently arguing that her position in a nursery (as opposed to a school) allowed her the 'freedom' to follow the interests of children more closely through projects:

In schools they do not ask the children what they want, they pick a topic for a year or term and stick to it and we kind of drift in and out, we have spontaneously seen kids do something, it's like hey they are interested in that! So we put that in the planning (EiraI1, MS2).

She described how projects originated from a weekly planning meeting with the three year old children used to ascertain prominent interests and took place over an unspecified time frame (EiraI1, MS2). Eira argued that the staff were completely 'free' to follow the interests of children and that there were usually no preconceived ideas in relation to what these interests might be (EiraI1, MS2). This rhetoric again seemed indicative of loosely framed, invisible pedagogy (see 3.2)

since it suggested that children had the authority to both initiate and determine the direction of projects. This verbal explanation then appeared to resonate with the early childhood tradition outlined within Chapter Three and the practices described by the Category Three participants explored within Chapter Ten. However a closer examination of the observational data coupled with follow up conversations indicated that the situation was more complex. For example, during our first ‘conversation’ Eira explained how the planning meeting with children was followed by a staff planning meeting aimed at reflecting the observed interests of children within the activities for the following week:

Well on a Thursday we sit with the children and ask them if there is anything they would like to learn more about and we observe them we do spontaneous observations on things that children are particularly interested in.... or they want to go and look at this or that or to go outside and that’s how we plan the planning for the week after and so it is literally week by week depending on where the children want to go ...we would usually go with what the majority of children want to go with for the following week.
(EiraI1, MS2)

A planning meeting with children was observed in December 2010 (Eira.Obs2extract1), this involved all three year olds and four adults. It was noted that whilst the interactions between adults and children were warm, the dialogue was ‘closed’ and the majority of time was spent on ‘managerial’ tasks for example trying to get the children to sit still or to listen to one and other.

Extract 8:3: Eira: Class planning meeting with three to four year olds

Adult	Now, what is the WEATHER like today?
Children	Sunny!!!!
Eira	Yes it’s sunny but what else is it?
Children	Cold??
Eira	What else though?
	NO ANSWER
Eira	Well who has come to visit us on the ground?
Children	Santa

Eira	Who else?
Child	Sant.....
Eira	J...j...j
	NO ANSWER
Eira	(louder) J...J....J....Jac
Children	Jack Frost?
Eira	Yes! Jack Frost has come to visit us
Child	No! Santa
Eira	Santa is coming to visit us soon. We can talk about that later. J,j,Ja
Child	Jack Frost?
Child	No Santa
Child	Jack frost!!!!
Eira	Yes, that's right. JACK FROST!
Child	Um...um...well(mutters)...Santa is, is coming...he really is.

During the follow up conversation Eira was asked to reflect upon what had happened during this session:

Sarah: What were your thoughts on the planning meeting I observed? Was this typical of a planning meeting?

Eira: Yes, that's how it usually goes. Yeah, I was really happy because of their interest in Jack Frost and cold weather. That was great. I had already dug out a video on the Snowman and planned to get the children to act this out. We had also planned cold weather and icy pictures for next week with the team, so, yes, it was great that they were so interested in this area, and of course they also need to do some painting to finish off the snowman display and we might also be putting glitter and things in the water tray (Eira, I2)

The extract and the subsequent conversation then also indicated a tension between what was said in relation to the 'freedom' of the child to initiate and direct projects and the pedagogical practices observed. Whilst Eira's descriptions of the conception and sustenance of projects may have resonated with a loosely

framed invisible pedagogy, the data (Eira.Obs2extract1; EiraI2) suggested that the pedagogical practices were more tightly framed. Whilst she maintained that she was following the interests of children and planning *from* these observed interests, many of the activities had been planned *before* the meeting to ascertain interests had occurred. In other words within Eira's project construction there appeared to be at least some emphasis on the adult directing the learning process even if Eira was not consciously aware of this. Further evidence of this tension occurred when Eira added that:

We have a list and we can't go back on ourselves and so we look at the skills (Government Skills Framework¹) and we try to fit things in. (EiraI2)

The concepts of freedom and choice were further problematised within this setting during a small group observation of a maths activity stemming from the project theme of cold weather in which children counted pictures of snowman. During this observation one child seemed reluctant to join in:

Eira: Come on the blue group, come on, that's right time to go and work on maths, number time. Yes and *you* Mr!

The little boy pulls a face and grumbles to himself

Eira: Come on Mr, you know it is your turn. Stop the sulking

In a later conversation I explored this observation with Eira:

Sarah: You have talked a lot about children having freedom and leading the learning within projects. Is this always the case?

Eira: Yes, of course we are a nursery, not a school and the children are free to choose.

Sarah: I just wondered because of the project based maths session I observed; were the children really free to choose to do this? I ask this because I noticed that the one little boy did not seem so happy to be involved...

Eira: Well they don't *have* to do it. They usually do though because they will get bored of just sitting there and after being sent a few times they always end up doing it. (Original emphasis)

Sarah: So they don't have to do the maths. Could the little boy have chosen something else?

¹ See Appendix 10 for an example of the Skills Framework (DCELLS, 2008f)

Eira: Well no, he can choose not to do it but he can't leave the table, and if he gets bored then that is his choice.

A tension was further illustrated by Eira's description of a 'child initiated' project, stemming from an observed child's interest (EiraI1). She explained how this had begun when children had become 'really fascinated' in fire engines when they had seen one 'zoom by, with the sirens blaring.' After discussing this excitement with other staff members, they had decided to embark on a project called 'People Who Help Us,' which focussed around jobs and occupations (EiraI1). During initial analysis the link between the initial excitement in fire engines and the chosen project area seemed tenuous and was noted as a possible line of enquiry in a subsequent meeting. This was consequently explored during our second meeting:

Sarah: In our last meeting you explained how a project about occupations called 'People Who Help Us', had stemmed from a time when children had become excited when they saw a fire engine. Can you explain the link? I mean what was it about the fire engine that made you think that children were interested in jobs?

Eira: Well 'People Who Help Us' is always a popular topic; you know it's always what children like to do.

Sarah: What is it that they 'like to do'?

Eira: Well. Learn about firemen and doctors and nurses, every time, they like it.

Sarah: But...the fire engine...the initial excitement...could this be about something else? The noise, the speed, the colour....You mentioned that it had 'zoomed by with sirens blaring.'

Eira: I suppose so but this topic is always popular.

The description of projects offered by Eira seemed to hold a close resemblance to those of Seren, working within a reception class in Pilot Setting Two. A project observation took place within Seren's class (Seren.Obs.1extract.1) also entitled 'People Who Help Us.'

Extract 8:4 Seren: 'People Who Help Us'

The session began with a twenty minute whole class session (30 children). The teacher held up different photos (e.g. firemen, nurses, doctors and dentists) and asked the children what each person did and then if they were helpful.

Seren What does the dentist do?

Child 7 Hurts you

Seren No, he doesn't- the dentist doesn't hurt you

Child 8 Fixes teeth

Seren Yes but what does he put in?

Blank faces

Seren What does he do?

No answer

Seren What does he put *in*? In your teeth? F.F...F .F..Fill....

Children Fillings!!!!

Seren: Yes! If you don't clean your teeth properly he will put in fillings..so is he a person who helps us?

Children: Yes!!!!

Seren: Somebody else who helps us (shows photo)

Seren then shows a photo of a policemen and the children become very excited

Seren: And what does a policeman do?

Child 9 Miss, miss...When I was on holiday d'you know what? The policeman had *guns!!!*

Child 3 Yeah, he can shoot you and bash you with a ...trun!

Seren Well, we won't talk about that today, what would happen if there were *no* police?

Child 9 Naughty people would be naughty all the time

Seren Yes, good

Child 6 People would smack

Child 2	Punch
Child 6	Kick and spit
Child 3	and shoot you with guns.

Following the whole class session children were observed being divided into ‘ability’ groups based on attainment in numeracy and literacy and told that they would rotate around the activities which had been set up by the adults. During this period there were two ‘focussed tasks’ which were supported by an adult. These included a writing activity in which children were asked to write something about a person who helped them and a second ‘focussed task’ which involved making fire engines out of cardboard boxes, toilet rolls and red and black paint. Throughout this time, other children were engaged with the ‘continuous provision’ which included jigsaw puzzles of people who help us, role playing ‘At the post office’ and cutting out ‘People who Help Us’ from magazines.

Whilst Seren claimed that projects were ‘definitely, definitely, child led,’ (Seren, I1) the observational data described seemed to contest this claim since there appeared to be limited room for children to make autonomous decisions. At the same time, Seren argued that she was following the ‘interests of children’ since children were making fire engines from boxes which had stemmed from a child’s suggestion. This again appeared to signify that whilst a project might stem from the adult there was also some (limited) room within this project construction for children to decide what they might *do* in relation to the specified theme.

The data presented above of both Eira and Seren held further significance for a number of reasons primarily it was reminiscent of my own previous use of a *topic* approach and the topic literature presented in Chapter Five; that is to say projects seemed to be viewed as a cross curriculum planning tool. Indeed as Table 8:1 has noted all of the participants within this category used the terms project and topics interchangeably and the terms appeared to be perceived as synonymous. This might be unsurprising, since, as Chapter Five (see 5.13 -5.14) has argued over time within the context of Wales and England the terms projects and topics have

become conflated. Further, I have also argued that the Welsh Government (1999) has presented the terms as indistinguishable whilst emphasising how ‘good’ topic/projects would enable specific targets to be met (1999, p.6).

Secondly the above data resonated with the theorising of Anning (1998) writing in the aftermath of the introduction of the Nation Curriculum and the Desirable Outcomes (SCAA, 1996) in which she argued that ‘child-centred’ education had been reified and was based around ‘teacherly versions’ of children’s interests. As Chapter Three has further noted Bereiter, (2002) has also argued that the interests of children are often trivialised by teachers and this may be a consequence of ‘shallow interpretations’ of interests (Hedges, 2010). In the examples above this may have stemmed from a desire to cover pre-specified content. In other words the interests that initiated from the children were subject to a filtering process and then presented in the ‘teachery version’ which would enable pre-specified outcomes and targets to be planned for. Eira’s claims that she had more ‘freedom’ to follow the interests of children were therefore surprising in light of the practices observed and described. What I felt was particularly worthy of note here was that both of these examples were occurring over twenty years after the National Curriculum implementation and within the boundaries of a project construction within the Foundation Phase which claimed to balance child and adult initiated learning, whilst emphasising children’s thinking.

8.3 Missing project elements: enquiry based interests

Holding congruence with the Hadow, Plowden and Reggio Emilian projects outlined within Chapter Five some Category One participants maintained that projects could begin from the questions of children (e.g. JaneI3 and 2; EfaI1 and 2). Subsequently, evidence to support this claim was searched for across all data (observations, planning documents, project examples). During the course of this exploration no evidence was found to corroborate this assertion and no examples (from any data source) were found in which projects had initiated from an enquiry generating from children. At the same time, data suggested that in some classes particular lines of enquiry originating from children might, on occasions, be built into a ‘project theme.’ Illustrative of this were the practices described by Efa:

occasionally they do come up with questions, we will make a note... and then come back to it.... they are quite good at doing their own research, using the books and (we say) you go and find out and come back and tell us about it they can go on the internet or in the library... (Efa, I1 MS3)

These interview data were also supported by observational data (Efa.Obs1extract 6) during the 'Victorian' project within Efa's class. During an afternoon session children were observed using encyclopaedias and the internet to research questions such as: What did Victorian money look like? What did a Victorian shop keeper wear? Do Victorians use plates? Where did Victorians live? Did the Victorians have towels? During a follow up discussion Efa maintained that some of these questions had been raised by the children and added to the mind map as areas of possible enquiry:

You know they were really interested to find out if Victorians had towels, it is a question that I would not have come up with and did they have plates! So we added these as things to find out about. (Efa, I2, MS3)

A similar set of pedagogical practices were also noted within Carys's class during the 'Plants' project and she described how children had raised questions such as 'What do plants need to grow?' 'What happens if they have no light?' 'Do plants need roots?' (CarysI2, PS2).

I theorised that in the examples described above, lines of enquiry focused upon finding out factual information. This was because there was no evidence that questions may be more fantastical and abstract in nature. I would argue that these data were indicative of an epistemological stance in which knowledge was quantifiable and there was an objective truth to be located. In other words, the limited data in relation to enquiry within projects appeared to signify that within this construction 'enquiry' was more congruent with the projects of Hadow and Plowden than those of Reggio Emilia (see Chapter Five, sections 5.16-5.20). I further speculated that they also contrasted with my own personal epistemological positioning. A perceived emphasis upon factual knowledge may have been the reason that some participants maintained that it was important to research a project area thoroughly before it began in order to answer any questions raised by children during the project lifespan as Jane said:

You have to research projects really carefully before they begin so you can answer any questions that the children have. You don't want to get caught out! (Jane, I2, MS3)

This comment also suggested that the teacher's role here might have consequentially been viewed as the 'fount of knowledge,' rather than as a co-constructor of knowledge situated within a partnership with children akin to Reggio pedagogues.

8.4 The difficulty of including 'creative' activities within projects

Some of the Category One participants described the perceived difficulty of including art based subjects within projects which they claimed led to rather questionable links with the project central theme:

these projects lend themselves to some things really well like maths but something like the creative bit, the music, art - is sometimes difficult. So we might have to say when we are doing 'Around the world,' perhaps we should listen to music from around the world. (Jane, I1,MS3)

Sometimes (with art and music) the hard thing is linking it back (to the theme) without it being tenuous, but we kind of have to put in some things like in the 'Around the World' project, art in Australia or music from some parts of the world(Efa, I1, MS3)

These views held congruence with those previously expressed by Hadow (see Chapter Five, section 5.2) and were deemed noteworthy because of their disparity with a Reggio project construction in which the use of 'symbolic languages' was deemed central (see Chapter Five, section 5.19). It was also perceived as significant given the fact the Category Two Construction claimed artist media and 'creativity' to be of central importance to *that* project construction (see Chapter Nine). This lent weight to the argument that the meaning of terms were 'read' through 'acts of interpretation,' (Steedman, 1991) which were implicitly context laden.

8.5 Group work in projects

Whilst the projects of Hadow (1931) and Reggio (Rinaldi, 2006) emphasised group work (see Chapter Five, sections 5.2 and 5.20.3) most of this category of

participants did not refer to group work within project sessions unless they were asked explicitly to comment on this. Whilst this was searched for across data strands, there was limited data on this area. This *lack* of data was viewed as highly significant as it indicated that group work was not viewed as a significant element of this project construction.

Efa suggested that group work was useful for ‘bouncing ideas,’(EfaI2) whilst Jane proposed that when she was working with fewer children than in a whole class situation it enabled her to ‘assess what they could do more effectively’(JI2).

During project observations (SerenObs1, CarysObs1, EfaObs1, JaneObs1) it was noted that whilst children were often sat together in groups they usually appeared to work independently of each other. In other words, like the previous findings of Galton and Croll (1980), there was limited emphasis upon co-construction.

Some collaborative work was noted within Carys’s class within the Plants project when children attempted to make vehicles out of the construction kit (see Extract 8:1) but as discussed this was ‘closed down’ by the adult. Within Efa’s class collaboration was also noted when children were observed during the Victorian project (Efa.Obs1extract 4)

Extract 8:5: Efa’s ‘Sweetie bags’

Three children have chosen to work at an activity with a focus on making sweetie bags for the class shop. The two boys are observed in conversation (I am too far away to hear what they are saying) and then observed beginning to work together. The first boy begins the process of putting the sweets into bags and then passes this on to his friend to finish by closing the bag and twisting the corners tightly. They work methodically. The third child, a girl, works alone during this ten minute period. When they see me watching they begin to speak with me

Child1	What you doing miss?
Sarah	I would really like to come and sit by here and watch what you are doing closely. Is that ok?
Child2	Can you get what we are saying on your machine?
Sarah	Are you <i>all</i> happy with that?
<i>Nods</i>	
Child1	We’re doing the bags Miss, bags for the sweets
Child2	for a shop
Sarah	I see....was that your idea?
Child1	No Miss told us we had to do this but we made the plan, see
Child2	See he puts em in

Child1	and then passes to me and I twist them, it's quicker
Child2	Yeah doing it together and <i>you</i> (he speaks to the girl) are taking ages cos you're working on your own. You shoulda joined in!

At this point all children are called back to the carpet area for a whole class plenary.

Child 2	God, me and you will aft to finish this lot tomorro
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This demonstrated a number of points, first, that there may have been more likelihood of collaboration during continuous provision than during focussed project tasks, second, that collaboration might take place on an ad hoc basis when children decided to do so and third that children may have ways of exercising their own agency even within tightly framed activities. At the same time Efa maintained group work was important because:

you can have quiet children and if they are with other quiet children then this doesn't do anything for them so we try and pick out children with strength, good listening or speaker and this helps them and we do change the groups around. (EfaI2)

She also expressed a belief that whole class lessons were more prevalent under the 'chalk and talk days' of the National Curriculum whilst group work was more in line with the Foundation Phase:

It is good for them to work with different groups and dynamics, and that is the Foundation Phase, working in small group, working with others, no more chalk and talk (EfaI2)

8.6 Resonating Discourses in Circulation

Analysis across data strands made visible a number of interrelated discourses which seemed to underpin this particular project construction. These included technical rationality (Moss, 2007) (associated with targets and outcomes), developmental psychology (stages and ages), and child centred (child initiated, choice, freedom) discourses. On occasions the uncovering of discourses was noted not through verbal utterances but through exploration of the observed pedagogical practices (Weedon, 1987).

8.6.1 A discourse of technical rationality

A discourse of technical rationality was deemed to be possibly dominant since, as the chapter has described thus far, there was usually a focus upon a necessity to meet certain predefined outcomes. For example this appeared to be made visible by revealing the focus upon planning from outcomes, through the choice of project areas chosen because they would enabled specific outcomes to be achieved; through the limited levels of autonomy offered to children in relation to the choice of these areas; and through the lack of ‘space’ allowed for children to direct particular project activities since the main focus was upon achieving pre-specified outcomes.

Substantiating this theorising, *all* of these participants expressed a necessity to ‘deliver.’ Illustrative of this rhetoric were the words of Eira, Carys and Seren:

(my role is) just to deliver really, as much information as I can, as much information as they want to know about a topic.(Eira, I1)

As a teacher you have to deliver the goods, you need to make sure you can do this when you are choosing a good project and then deciding upon activities (Seren, I1, PS2)

We need to have learning opportunities in which the skills identified are covered and delivered. (Carys I1, PS2)

These data also suggested that whilst there was consensus amongst Category One participants in that projects were useful in ‘delivering’ the curriculum, there were differences expressed in what the focus of this ‘delivery’ should be. Whilst Carys (PS2) maintained that there should be, ‘A balance of content and skills’, her interview data suggested that for her, the coverage of particular skills was foregrounded; her colleague Seren (PS2) placed more emphasis upon content claiming that projects were useful in helping children to learn information ‘in an active way’. Consequentially a project entitled ‘Space,’ was deemed unsuccessful because ‘there was not a lot on it’, whilst the ‘Jolly Christmas Postman’ was successful because it ‘just ran and ran’ (Seren, I1, PS2); the data of Jane (MS2), were saturated with references to ‘knowing’ and the acquisition of ‘knowledge’ within project sessions. Drawing on language from the English context (QCA,

2000), she explained how projects gave you ‘something to aim towards,’ and were useful because they could:

increase children’s knowledge and understanding of what goes on around them and what they *know* and to broaden what they *know* they need the knowledge and they also need the skills but sometimes they interlink and to get the knowledge they need the *stepping stones* the skills to get the knowledge. (Jane, I3, MS3, original emphasis)

In other words, whilst data indicated that there was some congruence in terms of both indirect pedagogical practices (the way projects were planned in advance, mechanisms for building in levels of child autonomy), and direct pedagogical practices (types of activities), there was also disparity in relation to a project’s main focus in terms of skills/content and/or knowledge.

8.6.2 Developmental psychology

This desire to ‘deliver’ was also often connected with a need to ‘plant seeds’ a phrase used by four of the five category one participants.

As Carys maintained:

You have to plant a few seeds, to make sure you can deliver what you have planned. Often the children become excited because they think that it is their idea! (Carys, I1, PS2)

Whilst Efa maintained that projects were, ‘absolutely child led’ she felt that as a teacher it was part of her role to:

plant seeds as we sometimes find that when we sit them down they do not have much of an idea of the area. (Efa, I2, MS3)

Seren (PS2) also explained that she found it necessary:

to plant a few seeds some ideas I put in because they are so young at this age that there is not a lot of input. (Seren, I1 PS2)

Seren’s words further resonated with a developmental psychology discourse (see Chapter Three, 3.3.2), in which the older child is believed to possess more advanced cognitive competencies than his/her younger counterpart and in this example the younger child is perceived as lacking his/her own ideas. Indeed the presence of a developmental psychological discourse may also have been a reason that both Seren and Carys suggested that a ‘project approach’ was actually more suited to the older children:

Projects worked really well with the junior children, they are able to give ideas and suggestions more but the younger children are not always quite there yet. (Carys, I2, PS2)

Also resonating with a DP discourse, Eira, in the private nursery argued that:

The little kids, some of them well they need *a lot* of help; they can't do much at all (Eira, I2, original emphasis)

This suggested that a perceived lack of maturity in younger children meant that they did not yet possess the capacity to formulate ideas or opinions within projects and as a consequence teachers needed to 'plant seed.' This appeared to imply a weaker construction of the 'strong and capable' child (Gandini, 2012a) underpinning the project constructions of Reggio Emilia.

8.6.3 Child centred discourses

At the same time, drawing from a child centred discourse, the data presented within this chapter also indicated attempts by participants to build in mechanisms to involve children in the construction of particular 'themes' to varying degrees; for example by adding the ideas of children to mind maps or by asking children what they wanted to know or do in relation to a particular area: In other words whilst the terms topic/project seemed to be viewed as ways of organising and planning learning aimed at ensuring coverage of specific content or skills, there also appeared to be some desire to build in a level of child autonomy. It might therefore be unsurprising that a range of associated terminology such as 'choice;' 'freedom;' 'child initiated' was in circulation within this construction.

8.7 Summary

A central aim of this chapter was to explore a contemporary interpretation of projects through the examination of the data from the first project category: Projects begin by matching interests to outcomes or matching outcomes to interests. Using the data as illumination, it has outlined the key features of this particular construction such as the particulars of choosing and then planning project activities and a perceived emphasis upon cross curricula ways of working. The data also appeared to indicate that the central tenets of problem solving and group work associated with the historic project constructions of Hadow, Plowden

and Reggio Emilia (see Chapter Five) seemed to have been diluted and replaced with a focus upon outcomes and targets.

Through the use of the Bernsteinian concept of framing as a tool of analysis, I have argued that within the data there appears to be a tension between the terminology used and the pedagogical practices which such language appears to signify. As in previous research, (see for example Stephen *et al.* 2009 outlined in Chapter Three) whilst there was a *rhetoric* of weak framing in terms of what said ('child centred', 'following child's interest', 'freedom,' 'choice'), at the same time there was also evidence of stronger framing in terms of what occurred at the level of *practice*. In other words there appeared to be an inherent tension in terms of what teachers reported that they were doing in relation to pedagogical practices (i.e. following children's interests) and those indicated by analysis of data (observations, documents, interviews). Resonating with previous research within a Welsh context (Maynard and Chicken, 2010; Maynard *et al* 2013, see Chapter Four), data indicated that projects were usually teacher-initiated themes which incorporated a variety of associated activities aimed at meeting predetermined outcomes. Whilst the language used often stemmed from what could be described as a progressive base (Soler and Miller, 2003) for example 'project', 'child led', 'child-initiated,' 'freedom,' etc., the pedagogical practices underpinning this way of working were often aligned with an instrumental view of learning (Soler and Miller, *op. cit.*).

Projects stemming from children's interests were therefore challenging for these teachers with data indicating that for any interests to be acknowledged they needed to resonate with these preconceived external objectives (framed as either skills, knowledge or pre-planned activities). This meant that 'interests' were subjected to a filtering process by the teacher(s) or school in terms of whatever it was felt that participants needed to 'deliver.' These projects might be described as child initiated and teacher framed or more usually teacher initiated and child framed to differing degrees.

In other words, the data presented within this chapter appeared to signify that this project construction could be understood as a new 'spin,' on the 'project/topic' as

a concept - a move that marked not only a changing interpretation of 'project' but also of the term 'topic' itself (see Chapter Five, section 5.13) – a marriage union of two terms which has resulted in a hybrid offspring which like the topics of Sarah Tann (1988) may be underpinned by both a child centred and outcomes centred discourse. It is subsequently unsurprising that most of the Category One participants use the two terms – project and topic interchangeably, whilst using language which draws from both progressive and instrumental positions.

Whilst age and experience had not been a focus of this study it was noted that at the time of the research all of these participants were under the age of thirty and had been teaching for less than five years. Despite the fact that it could be argued that these may have been coincidental factors it may illustrate how the discourses in play at specific points in history shape our thinking: in line with the WAG discourses in relation to projects which were circulated from the late 1990s, most participants within this group used the terms projects and topic interchangeably and proposed that the terms referred to the same set of target driven pedagogical practices.

The next chapter now moves on to present the data from a second project construction made visible within my study in which projects were viewed as a tool for meeting predetermined objectives through 'creative' activities.

Chapter Nine

Exploring Category Two project constructions: Projects begin from predetermined objectives with a focus on ‘creativity’

**“Curiouser and curiouser!” cried Alice
(she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how
to speak good English).**



(Carroll, 2013, no page)

The previous chapter introduced the Category One Project constructions arguing that this construction attempted to amalgamate the interests of children with pre-specified outcomes. It theorised that the construction presented may have been the result of a marriage between a child centred discourse together with a target driven agenda. This chapter now moves on to introduce a second contemporary project construction noted within the embedded case study in which projects were perceived as a tool for meeting predetermined objectives through ‘creative’ activities. This chapter aims to explore a number of my research questions: First there is an initial focus on *how* projects were constructed with explicit reference to Bernsteinian notions of framing and classification. Second, the latter sections

explore *why* projects may have been interpreted in this particular way by utilising Foucauldian notions of discourse as a tool. The final sections also aims to consider what this particular project construction means in terms of the position adopted by the teacher. A central argument running through this chapter is that that whilst ‘creativity’ is proposed as being a vital tenet, this is interjected by a discourse of regulatory modernity (Moss, 2007) in which outcomes, targets and accountability are fore-grounded. The dominance of this discourse within the project construction appears to result in a desire to erase any uncertainty and risk, through tightly planned activities. This subsequently subverts the creative process and shapes the pedagogical practices offered under the project umbrella and the role that the teacher assumes within this.

This category was deemed particularly problematic for a number of reasons: first the category includes the data of *only* one participant, Mari, a head teacher in Main Setting Four. This fact raised problems for me since I questioned whether the data from a single individual could be used to represent an entire category. At the same time, Mari’s interview data were markedly different from all other participants and did not ‘fit’ into either of the other groups. The second issue I encountered was that no observations were undertaken in this setting and the data consisted of interviews and discussions with the head teacher only. Whilst it was possible to provide vignettes of observations to illustrate points within other data chapters this has not been possible here. However, I was eager to explore Mari’s data since it offered a different conceptualisation of how the term project was being interpreted to all other participants. The main elements of this project conceptualisation are set out in Table 9:1 below.

9.1 How were projects constructed?

9.1.1 Starting, planning and sustaining projects

During our first ‘conversation’ Mari explained how projects were planned on a four yearly cycle each lasting a term, involving all teachers and children within the school from nursery (3-4) to year two (6-7). Project contexts were decided upon by Mari, in her role as head teacher and drew from perceived ‘quality literacy texts,’ which offered the possibility for ‘cross curricula work.’

The decision to focus projects around stories was motivated by the belief that pupils would not have the opportunity to explore ‘quality’ texts within their home environments. This signified that projects were viewed as a way of compensating for a lack of ‘appropriate’ experiences. An exclusively pre-specified project theme and rigid time frame marked this project construction as distinct from all other settings within this research study. This resonated with strongly framed pedagogical practices since the control of the selection of the context lay firmly with the adult (Bernstein, 1996).

Table 9:1 Category Two: Projects begin from predetermined objectives with a focus on ‘creativity’

Category Two							
Projects begin from predetermined objectives with a focus on ‘creativity’							
Setting	Age range of setting	Participant	Claimed key focus	Projects	Named Influences	Term used	Key Themes from data analysis
Main Study Four	Infant and nursery school	Head Teacher Mari	‘Linking learning’ Creativity Content Outcomes and standards Reggio	Peter Pan Charlotte’s Web James and the Giant Peach	Reggio	Project	Creativity Planning Control Reggio Stages and ages

Mari described how she had utilised projects with children for over fifteen years and reasoned that she knew ‘what worked’ in terms of project themes:

I’ve been teaching for 35 years and for the last 14 years I have *always* taught through projects so I *know* what works well and what doesn’t and what is engaging for children and what will be a good learning context (original emphasis) (Mari, MS4, I1)

Each time a project was returned to she was able to increase the resource bank and extend her own thinking in terms of what children might do.

9.1.2 ‘Holistic’ learning and ‘linking’ learning

Across interviews Mari repeatedly associated projects with ‘linking learning.’ She described a project as ‘the context for learning and this linkedness and wholeness is central’ (I1). In other words, as with Category One participants, projects appeared to be understood as a way of unifying different subjects under a central theme, for example ‘The Wizard of Oz:’

linking learning, to link this together to make sense of something, it is like what you are doing now, you want to make sense of project work and this is what I want to do for the child (Mari, MS4, I2)

Mari maintained that ‘linking learning’ in this way would lead to ‘deep level learning’ and the production of ‘quality work.’ Evidence from planning documents (Mari. Doc 1) suggested that projects did not appear to be ‘cross curricula’ in the sense of dissolving subject boundaries but rather as a planning tool which made possible connections between different Foundation Phase areas to be made. This was assumed to facilitate a process of meaning making for children between different subjects which had been united under one central banner – the project theme. In other words, ‘deep level learning’ referred to learning information connected by a central topic – this resonated with the simplified projects of Hadow and the projects of Plowden (see Chapter Five, section 5.3) and further with the topic approach advocated by WAG (see Chapter Five, 5.14). There was also congruence with my own use of a topic approach at the beginning of my career in the early 1990s.

At the same time it was difficult to ascertain how or why working in this way was deemed appropriate for young children. Supporting the views of Anning (1998, see Chapter Three, p. 42) it appeared to be based upon ‘a gut feeling,’ a possibly uncritical assumption that planning across subject areas (through Foundation Phase Areas of Learning) was in some way more appropriate for younger children than planning through subjects (or indeed in any other way). As with the Category One project constructions, it could be theorised that ‘integrated’ ways of working may have been reified.

9.1.3 The importance of advanced planning

Advanced preparation and careful planning of projects were viewed as fundamentally important to a project's success and were reoccurring themes throughout conversations, as Mari maintained:

if teachers do not plan properly children become bored and then they are badly behaved it's like black and white (Mari, MS4, I2)

Mari maintained that 'outcomes' for children's learning needed to be decided before projects began, since:

You know what the outcome is and you put the children on a journey don't you? You have to aim - my staff are taking children with them to that outcome. (Mari, MS4, I1)

This emphasis on outcomes was reported to be central to the school:

that is what I would say is the philosophy of the school, you have medium term targets and your outcomes from the Foundation phase and the skills ladders. (I1).

This necessity for precision in relation to the planning of activities was emphasised throughout 'conversations,' as Mari maintained 'I ask them (the teachers) to be *more precise* with their targets,' (original emphasis) (I1). This appeared indicative of a desire to tightly control the teaching and learning process in order to ensure that the planned learning, (perceived in terms of targets and outcomes) was achieved. As a consequence when planning was not deemed detailed enough, with explicit reference to learning objectives, teachers were described as 'blagging it.' On these occasions children's learning was felt to be 'haphazard.' When asked to explain what this haphazard learning might look like, Mari reported that:

I saw an example like that, here in *this* school very recently, children were using a trundle wheel and they had not done any non standard measures - so planning, preparation are key. (I2, original emphasis)

This example and the comments above appeared to signify that the learning process may have been viewed as linear, sequential and controllable.

In a similar vein, Mari explained that when planning activities under the project umbrella, teachers needed to refer to Foundation Phase documentation and also to the school's skills ladder, cross referencing outcomes as a starting point:

The teachers plan, they have a focus for the week and they have medium term targets for the week and they have a six week planner. They are the outcomes they want the children to reach and then down the side they have the (Foundation Phase) areas of development... and, as much as we can, we link everything, and we evaluate this. (Mari I1, MS4,)

Whilst in our first conversation Mari emphasised long term planning, this prominence seemed to have shifted during our second conversation towards shorter-term preparation:

you need to know what the children have done and how to move forward, they plan in Reggio - short term planning is the most important, I mean with the medium term planning I have put in the headings for each topic but the teachers are the ones that know (I2)

This planning was completed by the class teacher and then submitted to the head for inspection and approval. This seemed to signify to me that it was the role of the head teacher to provide a project framework which the class teacher then needed to translate on a shorter-term basis within the classroom. However, as observations or conversations with teachers were not undertaken, it was difficult to ascertain how this translated into pedagogical practices.

The process of validation of project planning described above seemed illustrative of the power dynamics in play in relation to pedagogical practices. Control of learning stemmed from the head teacher at a macro level, this 'power' was distributed to the class teacher at a micro level but passed back to the head teacher who checked that planning was detailed enough to ensure that learning would take place. From a Bernsteinian analysis (see Chapter Three, 3.2) data in relation to planning provided further evidence of strong framing of pedagogical practices. This is because control in relation to both *what* was to be learnt (learning objective) and further *how* this was to be learnt (planned activity) lay firmly in the hands of the head teacher. This was indicative of visible pedagogy; this finding was deemed significant in the light of the less visible pedagogies underpinning the project constructions outlined within Chapter 8 and (to a greater extent) Chapter

10. This finding lent weight to the argument that different project constructions may have been underpinned by diverse epistemological assumptions and different theoretical positions even when situated within the same embedded case

This set of planning practices was also deemed congruent with the Welsh Government's interpretation of a successful topic approach (see 5.14) discussed within chapter five since monitoring and surveillance were utilised to ensure outcomes were met (Foucault, 1977, see 2.3). This way of working appeared to be underpinned by a perception that meticulous planning would ensure the success of projects since it would make certain that pre-specified objectives were achieved. In other words there were two issues signified by an analysis of these data: first, it made visible the regulatory processes that led to stating and achieving clear outcomes; and second it signified the impact of this in that it led to restrictions of space and creativity. This last issue is explored within a later section of this chapter (see 9.2.2).

9.1.4 Classroom Organisation

An analysis of data (interviews and discussion of planning documents) in relation to classroom organisation also was indicative of a pattern of strong framing (Bernstein, 1996). Within the planning documents activities were split into four groups and children were allocated by 'stages of development' (See Table 9:2 below).

Mari explained that:

activities are linked to the project and then are organised in groups around stages of development so: usually two groups working on a teacher directed task related to the project area and one group on a teacher initiated task and then a group doing something child initiated. (I2)

In other words, during these times, two groups would work on a 'teacher directed' activity focused upon the project theme and supported by an adult (a teacher or teaching assistant). Within the Group One Project Construction (see previous chapter) these were called 'focussed tasks' and not 'teacher directed,' however data appeared to indicate that a similar set of pedagogical practices were being described. These activities might include drawing or painting in relation to the

project theme or a piece of written work which reflected the project of the moment.

Table 9:2 Category Two: Classroom Organisation during project times

Group One (ability groups)	Teacher directed	Adult sits with children	Drawing and water colour paintings of a scene from Charlottes' Web
Group Two (ability groups)	Teacher directed	Adult sits with children	Writing about how Wilba felt when Charlotte died.
Group Three (ability groups)	Child initiated/ Continuous provision	Children sit alone	A range of 'choice' activities set up by the teacher stemming from the project theme.
Group Four (ability groups)	Teacher initiated	Children sit alone but are 'monitored' by an adult	Drawing from continuous provision activities (Group Three above) but children are allocated a particular activity

Simultaneously another ability group of children would be engaged in a 'child initiated' activity which was also referred to as 'continuous provision' (see Chapter Four): This would involve choosing from a range of project related activities set up by the teacher within the different learning zones. For example during the 'Charlotte's Web' project children could choose to use a construction kit to create a spider or to visit the 'maths zone' to work on the problem of the day (also usually project related). The final ability group would work independently on a 'teacher initiated' task; this appeared to overlap with the continuous provision but in this case the children were told what the activity would be (no choice). Mari highlighted that it was very important that both 'teacher initiated' and 'child initiated' activities were also carefully planned:

So in child initiated and adult initiated tasks children choose from what is set out in the learning zones, so children can be creative and independent learners. *But* it is important that everything is planned *properly*, what is the outcome children need to get to? So yes choice is very important, children

having autonomy but you need to know the target where you need to get to. (Mari, MS4, I2, original emphasis)

Consequently, in all cases the activities would have been planned *in advance* by the teacher /head teacher. In other words the classroom management strategies outlined here also provided limited room for children to direct learning, lending further evidence to indicate that this was a set of tightly framed pedagogical practices, under the project banner. These comments suggested that an activity was perceived to be ‘child-initiated’ when ‘choice’ was offered between several teacher pre-planned tasks. In other words ‘child-initiated’ did not refer to an activity stemming from a child’s interest. Consequently, even when children were perceived as having more control over learning, in project sessions during child initiated activities/ Continuous provision, there was still limited room for the child to manoeuvre from tightly planned teacher outcomes (such as making a spider from a construction kit). This was because the success of this activity (and of particular teachers and more over the head teacher and school) was judged in relation to whether the initial outcome had been achieved. This was deemed to be noteworthy since, as with the Category One construction (see previous chapter) it was during these periods (child initiated activities/ Continuous provision) that children were considered as having the most freedom in terms of the direction of their learning than at *any other* point during the school day. These data again appeared indicative of a tension between the language used (e.g. child initiated) and the practices described.

Mari’s comments suggested that the differences between a ‘teacher directed’ and ‘teacher initiated’ activity within project sessions appeared to relate to where the teacher was physically positioned within the classroom. Both activities originated from the teacher but within ‘teacher directed’ tasks the children sat with the group whilst the ‘teacher initiated’ children worked without an adult. In other words there appeared to be an assumption that children were freer when teachers were less able to continuously monitor children with a ‘regulatory glaze’ (Osgood, 2006, see Chapter Two, 2.3). A possible contradiction here was that the activities often did not allow for children to move beyond what was planned since the precise link to a target seemed to leave limited room for manoeuvre. Further, Mari maintained that all children within the class needed to be monitored

continuously to ensure that they remained ‘on task,’ regardless of what they were doing (I2).

The pedagogical practices described in terms of classroom organisation were further evidence of visible pedagogy (Bernstein, 1996) since they were designed to tightly control the learning process. This is incongruent with the more invisible pedagogy (Bernstein, 1996) traditionally associated with the project constructions of Hadow, Plowden and Reggio Emilia (see Chapter Five) in which children have more control over their own learning. At the same time the practices described here further resonates with the descriptions of topic work set out within Chapter Five (see 5.13, 5.14).

There were no data from either interviews or planning documentation to signify that projects were viewed as a tool for following a line of enquiry or evidence of project themes/activities which initiated from the questions of children. When in our second conversation Mari was asked if there was space in the planning for teachers to follow the children’s questions, Mari responded that whilst ‘personalised learning was really important’, there was currently ‘not much evidence of this but-it is something to aim for’ (I2). This seemed to indicate that exploration of the questions of children was not associated with this project construction. Holding congruence with a Plowden project construction, these comments also provided evidence of a focus upon learning as an *individual* process; as opposed to an individual situated within a particular social and cultural context.

Other comments seem to make visible an epistemological tension, as Mari explained:

I believe in children coming up with their own ideas *but* we have to play it safe, (voice softens) it would be too risky just to let them.....(unfinished sentence) (I2, original emphasis)

A probable consequence of the desire to tightly control the learning process and in so doing to ensure that given targets were met, was that there was no space for children to explore their own questions or ideas. This was because the direction

of learning could not be pre-empted, controlled and planned for in advance. A lack of emphasis upon enquiry was deemed a fundamental finding since this had been pivotal to the project constructions discussed within Chapter Five to varying degrees.

9.1.5 Group Work

Whilst collaborative working had been viewed as significant within the projects of Hadow (1931) and Reggio (Rinaldi, 2006), there was also limited data in relation to group work within Category Two projects. This indicated that this was not a central element. Mari (I2) discussed how children were grouped in accordance to their ‘stages of development’ which enabled the teacher to plan and therefore differentiate at the ‘right level.’ At these times children would be sat in groups but this did not mean that they were engaged in collaborative tasks. This suggested that grouping appeared to be viewed as a classroom management strategy akin to Category One Projects (Matching interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests). There appeared to be limited acknowledgement that children might also learn from each other during group project activities whilst at the same time Mari maintained that ‘personalised learning’ was important. This again appeared to signify an epistemological stance in which learning was viewed as an individual process as opposed to the individual situated *within* and learning *from* the social context. This was deemed worthy of note when compared to both the project constructions of Hadow and Reggio underpinned by democratic discourses in which the social context was viewed as fundamental (see Chapter Five).

The central aim of the first part of this chapter was to explore *how* projects were constructed, the chapter now moves on to investigate a second aim, *how* projects were constructed through a consideration of resonating discourses.

9.2 Why were projects constructed in this way?

9.2.1 Discourses in Circulation: Developmental Psychology and Stages and ages

Resonating with the project constructions of Hadow (HMSO, 1931) and Plowden (CACE, 1967), there appeared to be emphasis upon contextualising learning into ‘real’ and ‘meaningful’ experiences within this project construction. This is exemplified by the following extract:

in a story we were using there was an annual fare and we are actually having our Christmas fare and so I planned it so that the children are actually making the enterprise for the Christmas fare and *can* you imagine if you set the classroom up as a Christmas fair? Look at all of the opportunities that you have got, literacy, making flyers to advertise and posters and creative writing and maths, money, prices, maths games (I2, original emphasis)

Mari also explained how teachers were now being asked to plan cookery at least once per week, ‘not just messing about, *real* cookery’ (I2) (original emphasis). This perceived necessity to aim towards something real and tangible was deemed reflective of a developmental psychological discourse in which learning for the young child should be situated within ‘real,’ as opposed to abstract contexts (see Chapter Three, 3.3.1). A need to provide tangible experiences to which children could relate may also have formed part of the rationale for all projects accumulating in a school production in which everyone was involved.

Mari’s repeatedly forceful conviction that children learn through stages (expressed across conversations) resonated further with a development psychological discourse. She explained how she had been heavily influenced by a previous head teacher who had been ‘ahead of her time’ because she had introduced the notion of a staged view of learning before it had become ‘fashionable’ (II). Mari had adapted this approach within this setting and the school had devised its own school stages of development ‘which goes from when the child is taught a concept and then assessed and then if they get it they go up and move on’ (II). As such they were fundamentally significant to the school and this view had led to a move away from the grouping of children by ability to grouping in terms of stages of development for some areas of learning.

‘Stages of development’ were described as

our bread and butter, our building blocks. This gives you a framework - it isn't just loose and in this way I know that I will get good results. (I1)

In other words a staged theory of learning seemed to have been utilised to provide a planning structure, ‘a framework’ not only providing an understanding of the learning process but further as a way of planning for learning within projects. These ‘stages’ were also deemed useful when deciding upon roles for children within the end of project production:

Musically, the more able children, above average, level three, they do the tune percussion, we have had to target them, so we know those children will be able to follow what is right for them, that is stretching them, it would be incorrect to put a child on there who was not at that stage- you would feel a failure but if the task is matched to your ability at that moment in time you succeed. I have good dancers and singers and this year I have chosen narrators who perhaps need, well, some have one line and others learn a little piece, they should all feel comfortable (I1)

This appeared to signify a correlation between children who were judged to be a National Curriculum level three in maths or English and their ability within ‘creative’ pursuits such as music and dance. In this way, supposed creative activities could also be understood through the framework of stages and ages which Mari had constructed in order to organise the learning process. This statement also illustrated how different discourses (creativity, developmental psychology and, regulatory modernity e.g. targets and outcomes) had been mediated and fused together consequently underpinning the *thinking behind* the pedagogical practices witnessed within this project construction.

9.2.2 Discourse of Creativity and Reggio Emilia

Mari's data also indicated that a cornerstone of her project construction was ‘creativity.’ For example, throughout our ‘conversations’ she continuously used phrases such as ‘creativity’, ‘creative practice’, ‘creative therapy’, and ‘creative expression,’ in relation to projects. In addition the types of examples (Mari.Doc3) which Mari shared as illustrations of project work all appeared to be associated with ‘art’: these included photographs of ‘artwork’ displayed throughout the schools and pupils’ art portfolios. This was deemed as highly significant given

the fact that some of the participants within Category One (Efa and Jane for example) had reported the challenges of integrating ‘creative’ areas of learning into *their* project construction (see 8.4). It was further noted that ‘art’, ‘creativity’ and ‘expression’ within projects were often linked with language associated with the schools of Reggio Emilia (see Chapter Five, 5.19):

they all do art *every* child because of the hundred languages because I am so Reggio and I really believe in it (I1, original emphasis)

A desire to focus upon ‘creativity’ seemed to stem from Mari’s personal experiences as a child. She explained that she had been very creative but because of her academic ability she had been sent to a grammar school where she felt ‘suppressed.’ She returned to this theme on several occasions – her creativity had been stifled and she was keen that this did not happen to the children within her school, art within projects should act as ‘creative therapy;’ again this was linked with the rhetoric of Reggio Emilia:

I must admit this 100 languages is *so* important for everyone to express themselves and this is because of my own experiences I was a very intelligent child, I came from an impoverished background but I went to grammar school and education was very important to me but I was really too afraid to say anything. I was suppressed, I did all these formal things, I should have done dance (American accent) and drama, needlework... (voice drifts off) (I1, original emphasis)

This appeared to indicate a tension between perceived academic and creative subjects which Mari had attempted to reconcile through her construction of project work. An emphasis upon creative subjects was deemed significant at a personal level since:

as a person this would have been better for me, personally and emotionally and that is why I like Reggio because we are training children to have life skills. (I2)

From the outset of our first conversation Mari argued that her commitment to ‘creativity’ was illustrated by the school’s employment of both an artist and musician to work with children during project sessions. Children were enthusiastic about working with these specialists because of the ‘beautiful outcomes produced’ (I2). Artwork was displayed in ‘artist’ ways and often exhibited in other areas of the city when the different projects were finished (I2).

She added that she often found it necessary to plan these creative pursuits herself to ensure that children met the outcomes, when the musician and artist had tried to do this it had not been entirely successful:

So, our artist is fantastic, brilliant but she cannot plan and she is untidy but as an artist she is brilliant so I do the planning and think of outcomes and she does the creative bit (and) she is also slow so I have to pace her and actually the same with the musician she wanted to plan for the reception but it was at the wrong level and the children were bored so I plan this now because you need both without the planning you will not have a creative, flexible learning environment if it is not planned properly. I have actually had to take over all of the creativity roles here, all of the creative areas now and also maths. I have to pick up on the gaps. (I2)

This signified an attempt to ‘tidy up’ and organise creativity both practically and metaphorically possibly in line with Mari’s epistemological position. This signified a perceived necessity to manage the apparent chaos of the creative process, within a tight framework of planning based around the developmental stages. This provided further evidence that whilst ‘creativity’ was viewed as fundamental, this discourse may have been wrapped around a discourse of development psychology (stages and ages) and further, a discourse of regulatory modernity (accountability targets, outcomes). As Mari maintained:

You have got to *know* what the target is; what you are aiming for and if you are working with a lot of staff then they have to know as well, we need to build creative minds. (I1, emphasis added)

Mari returned to the Reggio Emilian phrase ‘the hundred languages of children’, repeatedly and this was linked with the need for children to ‘express themselves’. When asked if Mari could articulate what this phrase meant to *her* within this *particular* context she described pedagogical practices from the Charlotte’s Web project:

It’s about the children, from their project work, how can children express themselves. So, we have this little spider and we have read factual books about spiders and Charlotte’s web and I said now we are going to make webs and spiders, I want a detailed drawing, I want to see what you have learnt, the different parts of the spiders, the different shapes of the spider, the shapes of the spiders legs, the little spinneret, the spiders eyes, so *quality learning*. But if I asked them to write this down they will do it but they haven’t got the motivation or the interest or perhaps the skills, they

haven't got that access in, so what we have to do as a school is to give them that access in as well. (I1, original emphasis)

This suggested that 'expression' through the use of creative media (art, dance, drama etc) within projects was considered valuable since it facilitated access *to* and therefore assessment *of* the factual knowledge which children had gained in the process of the project. Whilst a child might find it difficult to write about what they had learnt, through drawing and painting the teacher would be able to make judgments in relation to content knowledge associated with the central theme. There was further evidence to support this theory when on several occasions Mari again drew on a Reggio discourse (see Chapter Five, 5.16-5.20) and described the necessity for teachers to 'listen' to children:

(Teachers) are listening to children-they are listening to the level of the child, mathematically and linguistically (I2)

'Listening' to children appeared to signify assessment and making judgments about the progress of children cross referenced with the stages of development, (a dominant discourse) it did not appear to resonate with Reggio projects as a 'pedagogy of listening' (Rinaldi, 2006, see Chapter Five) in which subjectivity within the knowledge construction process is highlighted. This was deemed significant for two reasons, firstly it was indicative of dissonance between the epistemological foundations of a Reggio project which was claimed to be a major influence and the Category Two projects as described here; secondly it provided further evidence of the intermingling of different and possibly competing discourses and appeared to demonstrate how Mari had personally been able to mediate the discourses in circulation within her project construction. Indeed during our second 'conversation' when asked to discuss the possible contradictions emerging between a Reggio approach and a targets driven agenda, Mari reasoned that within her setting these themes were complementary:

Sarah: I have noted a set of language which runs throughout our first conversations in relation to projects- these include standards, outcomes, targets and then creativity and Reggio, notably the 'Hundred Languages of Children,'... how do these issues sit together ? I mean when I first saw them together I found this quite puzzling and wondered if they might be contradictory

Mari: No, not at all, they are not contradictory but complementary! I plan the targets for the artist and musician and they do the creative bit. When I left them to plan it wasn't successful. (I2)

Mari further illustrated her understanding of 'creative practice' within projects with children who had been asked to make a robot. Some of the children in other groups were left to complete this alone whilst Mari supported her group in researching what robots looked like via the internet before actually attempting to make a model; this Mari claimed had led to her group creating robots which were superior to those of other groups because they were more 'realistic.' This led to the sharing of a personal memory that I had from my days of teaching in a Reggio inspired setting in Thailand with her:

Sarah: I was thinking of a project from my time in Thailand. Children had become interested in engines and were representing these in different ways and with different media and one child drew what looked like a rotational scribble. When I later asked him about the drawing he said that it was the engine and moved his arm in a fast and furious circular motion - I realised that he was probably drawing the power behind the engine.

Mari: Ah yes, so you would then show him pictures of real engines?

Sarah: Well, probably not – on reflection his interest seemed to be in the concept of power and movement.

Mari: Yes a creative pedagogy, that is important, and finding exciting ways and children working towards the 100 languages, helping children to represent all of the 100 languages and if you do not have a rich learning environment you will have poor behaviour. (I2)

These examples seemed to indicate that whilst this project construction emphasised creativity, creativity may have been associated with an ability to 'reproduce' a product reflecting 'reality.' This finding accompanied with the emphasis on 'precise' planning (previously reported) was deemed problematic. This was because whilst 'creativity' was argued to be pivotal there again appeared to be limited 'space,' (in terms of time and conceptual room) to take risks by deviating from a pre-specified path, idea or 'target'. There was not room to follow children's questions or to incorporate the ideas of children in relation to project themes or activities as this would be unpredictable and 'risky.'

Further, the above comments suggested that there was a physical list of ‘one hundred languages’ to pin down, work through and tick off instead of viewing the phrase as a metaphor based upon a perception of the child as a meaning maker with the capacity to symbolically explore ideas in multiple modes of representation (Vecchi, 2010). This added further evidence to signify dissonance between the epistemological stance of the claimed project influence (Reggio) and the pedagogical practices as described.

There consequentially appeared to be a real tension, a contradiction; as argued thus far the evidence explored within this construction was indicative of a Bernsteinian tightly framed visible pedagogical stance. As such these pedagogical practices appeared to be at odds with current creativity research (see 3.4) and Reggio Emilian literature (see Chapter Five). In both cases the learning process is viewed as complex and subjective in nature and the processes of creativity and knowledge construction viewed as uncertain, unpredictable and risky in nature (NACCCE, 1999; Cremin, *et al.*, 2006). These ways of working therefore resonate with invisible (or less visible) pedagogical practices. My argument here is that the project construction of Mari presented within this chapter would be categorised as (much) stronger in terms of framing when compared to the above literature since control rested with the (head) teacher in terms of the inception of project themes; the initiation of project activities; the direction which these activities are likely to take and the artefacts produced during projects. Consequently I would theorise that the teacher within this second project construction was positioned as a controller and planner of the learning experience based upon a ‘tidied up’ instrumental epistemological view (Soler and Miller, 2003). This perspective shaped how a ‘good’ teacher was judged:

Sarah: How would you judge a ‘good’ teacher?

Mari: You can judge them (the teachers) by the outcomes, the outcomes of children, there has to be careful planning and preparation, it’s black and white. (I2)

In contrast, the discourses of Reggio Emilia and Creativity are both underpinned by first a strong construction of the child who possesses the ability to theorise and

think independently and second a strong construction of the teacher, possessing the ability to harness and navigate the child's creative potential as a thinker. In these cases tight frameworks which aim at controlling the child/teacher/learning process are not viewed as necessary since there is an implicit culture of trust.

At the same time a challenge to working with an 'invisible pedagogy' in which creativity and possibility thinking are highlighted (see 3.4) is 'the problem of accountability' (see for example Cremin, Burnard and Craft 2006) – a very real pressure for Mari in her role as head teacher. This is because when the learning process is perceived as flexible and capricious it becomes difficult to predict what children will learn. On the other hand, when pedagogy is more visible and learning is constrained by tightly perceived outcomes and targets within a rigid framework, 'choice' for children is restricted and is largely determined by the teacher's planned outcomes. Simultaneously, when children lack autonomy and any sense of agency, the potential for possibility thinking and hence creativity is nullified.

Subsequently, I found the conviction that creativity was central to this project construction challenging. An analysis of the data has suggested a possible contradiction between the language utilised and the practices which the language described: a tension between practices associated with a socio cultural perspective (stronger construction of the child and acknowledgement of their interests) with a perceived prerequisite to tightly control the teaching and learning process to ensure its success.

The Category Two construction of projects presented here are therefore likely to have been the result of a fusion of the discourse of regulatory modernity Moss (2007, see Chapter Two); a discourse of developmental psychology (see chapter Three), a discourse of creativity (see previous sections) and a discourse of Reggio Emilia (see chapter Five). This is deemed important since a closer analysis of these discourses suggest that they may stem from different, possibly contradictory epistemological positions. In other words, there appears to be a tension between the discourses of creativity/ Reggio Emilia and an accountability agenda, inherent within Mari own words:

We are creative here but there are certain rules, timetables, things that children and teachers have to conform to. In any organisation there is management, and line management and people to manage, so yes in some ways teachers can be flexible but they have to also give in planning and I have to conform. I like the creativity of projects but I also have to think about covering curriculum, targets, Estyn (Welsh Inspectorate) and inspections – *this is the law* (I2, original emphasis)

This finding resonates with concerns expressed by Moss, (2007) regarding the translation of pedagogical practices from settings where there may be a contradictory paradigm in circulation, particularly when educators are unaware of this. This is seen as particularly problematic where there has been an uncritical transfer of ideas (Wright, 2000; Luke and Luke, 2000; Grieshaber & Hatch 2003); in other words in settings where a culture of collaborative critical reflection is not inherent.

9.3 Summary

A central aim of this chapter was to introduce data from the second project category to explore *how* projects were constructed. It has drawn out key themes which the participant believed to be of central importance to this project category notably the significance of planning, developmental stages and ages and the centrality of creativity. Probable discourses which resonate with the data have been used with the aim of explaining *why* projects were interpreted in this particular way and tensions within the data have been highlighted. A central argument is that that whilst ‘creativity’ is proposed as being a central tenet of this particular construction this is interjected by a discourse of regulatory modernity (Moss, 2007) in which outcomes, targets and accountability are fore grounded. The dominance of this discourse within the project construction appears to result in a desire to erase any uncertainty and risk, through tightly planned activities. This subsequently subverts the creative process and shapes the pedagogical practices offered under the project umbrella and further the role that the teacher assumes. The next chapter moves on to introduce, discuss and theorise the data of the final project group identified within the empirical part of this study.

Chapter Ten

Exploring Category Three Project constructions:

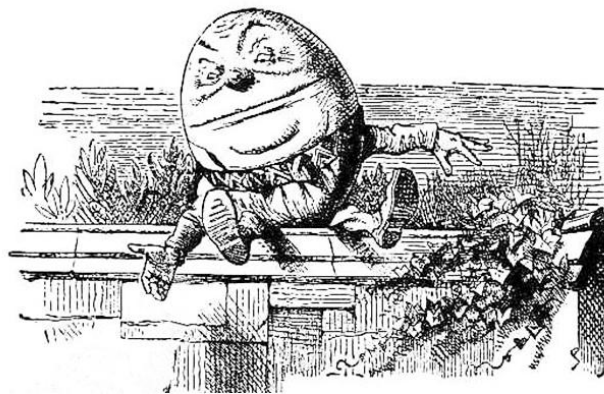
Projects begin by

following the observed interests of children

My name is Alice, but —'

'It's a stupid name enough!' Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. 'What does it mean?'

'Must a name mean something?' Alice asked doubtfully.



'Of course it must,' Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: 'my name means the shape I am — and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.'

(Carroll, 2013, no page)

Following on from the last two chapters, this chapter introduces the data from the third project category noted within the bounded empirical case of the Local Authority, 'Projects begin by following the observed interests of children.' This chapter argues that within this construction projects were initiated by the child, and it consequently differs in significant ways from the other two categories. The learning process is presented as a dialogical and collaborative endeavour. Whilst participants are committed to this way of working, at the same time they express

concerns in relation to the tension between personal and a contextual epistemological position and the external pressures of accountability, audit and parental concern. They maintain that they are ‘freer’ to work in this way because of their position in standalone nursery settings not attached to primary schools. As in the previous two chapters, there is an initial focus upon the research question *how* projects were constructed with explicit reference to Bernsteinian notions of framing. This is followed by a focus upon *why* projects may have been interpreted in this particular way using Foucauldian notions of discourse as a tentative tool of explanation.

There were three project constructions classified within this third project category, Veronica, Pilot Study One, Heulwen, Main Study One and Ffion, Main Study One (see Table 10:1). These practitioners were grouped together since they all maintained that *their* projects began after observing the interests of children particularly whilst they were engaged in play situations without *any* reference to predefined targets. This marked them as fundamentally different to both the Category One and Two constructions explored.

Table 10:1: Category Three: Projects begin by following the observed interests of children

<u>Category One:</u>	Settings	Age range of setting	Participant	Claimed key focus	Named influences	Term used
Projects begin by following the interests of children	Pilot Study One	Nursery	Teacher Veronica	experience	Reggio	Project – but questioned this
	Main Study One	Nursery (1a)	Head Teacher Heulwen	experience	Reggio	Project
		Nursery (1b)	Teacher Ffion	experience	Reggio	Project

All three participants were located in standalone state funded nurseries working with children between the ages of three and four and had worked closely together for at least ten years. Veronica and Ffion were lead teachers in separate settings and Heulwen was the head with responsibility for both nurseries.

10.1 How were projects constructed?

10.1.1 Starting, planning and sustaining projects

Across all interviews (Veronica interviews one, two and three; Ffion interviews one and two; Heulwen interview one) these participants consistently described how projects had evolved within their settings over time, with current practice inspired by the pedagogy of Reggio Emilia (see Chapter Five) which they had visited together as part of a study trip. They also described how they had all been on a number of project training days run by the local authority. In our first interview Heulwen also explained had they had worked ‘as a team’ with the expert advisor for early years provision at the time when the Foundation Phase was being drawn up. This was supported by comments from Ffion:

We went on project training with the local authority, project approach sessions at another school and on lots of project based things and a long time ago something at the Norwegian church in Cardiff and the head did one on the Reggio approach for other LEA schools (Ffion, I2).

Similar terminology was frequently referred to by these participants in relation to projects: projects were described as, ‘free,’ (Veronica I1 and 2, and 3; Heulwen I1; Fffion I1 and 2) ‘experiences,’ (VI1 and 2; FI1) ‘active learning,’ (HI1); ‘child led;’ (VI1 and 2, HI1; FI1 and FI2, FI3) ‘child initiated’, (VI1; HI1); ‘experiential learning’ (VI3) and ‘a journey, children leading the learning and following their own ideas.’ (FI1). This language resonated with the early childhood tradition (see 3.3) and also the descriptions offered by Category One participants (Chapter Eight). Ffion also continually referred to projects as a ‘process’ (Ffion I1 and 2).

As the Bridging Chapter has outlined (Chapter Seven, 7.2.1, 7.2.3), the interview data of Veronica and Ffion indicated that projects would usually begin after reflection upon observations of children in playful situations. These observations were used to ascertain the developing interests of children used as starting points

for project areas. These initial starting points could be reflective of either group or individual interests (FI2). During our first conversation Veronica described how all staff were engaged in daily ongoing reflection and discussions in relation to the observed emerging and developing interests, with more formal whole staff meetings (head teacher, teachers, support staff) taking place weekly. These conversations were used to share thinking in relation to the possible direction of projects and project activities and also other activities which were planned around seasonal themes. Contrasting with Category One and Two constructions, project activities were not cross referenced with pre-determined outcomes at an initial planning stage and there was no evidence that projects were viewed as a vehicle for achieving pre-specified targets. This was therefore deemed to be a significant finding. From a Bernsteinian position, the planning stage of projects described appeared to indicate that pedagogical practices under the project umbrella were loosely framed and underpinned by invisible pedagogy (see Chapter Three, 3.2). This was theorised since children seemed to have some control in relation to the direction of both project themes and activities. This broadly resonated with the project constructions stemming from a progressive position outlined within Chapter Five.

Further evidence of loose framing came from Veronica when she explained in our first conversation that project activities were sometimes ‘planned’ *after* they had taken place. This was deemed necessary in order to ‘be responsive to the ideas and suggestions of children *in the moment*’ (VI1, original emphasis). A necessity to fill in planning retrospectively was reported ‘in case anyone comes in, you know advisors, inspectors.’ It was also deemed useful ‘for future reference,’ for example when looking back and discussing what had happened in the course of a project with colleagues or visitors. In our second conversation Veronica linked this way of working specifically to Reggio practices:

In Reggio they keep everything, they archive and this is where this has come from (the idea) and I can dig it all out and it is useful and nice for others to see your journey .You know the Reggio thing is that they are interested in the process and not the product and you are interested in *our* process, in our journey and then you wouldn’t see our journey (without the archived material). (VI2, original emphasis)

I noted that for Veronica the idea that projects and the learning process were viewed as 'journeys' was a reoccurring theme.

Ffion also described similar pedagogy in relation to the planning of projects which also appeared to be reflective of an 'of the moment stance.' She explained that project planning was often not written down and justified this by saying:

Well, the project work is important to us, the children leading learning, exploring the world, having enriching experiences but I am not 100% confident that this is what others, you know inspectors, want to see. They want evidence that we have planned number and language work, that children are being taught the alphabet, are making progress in certain areas, you know and so I spend time planning that, writing it down, evaluating it, so it is important to us (project work) and we keep large portfolios of the projects which have occurred which we discuss as a staff and show visitors like you who are interested in this way of working, and parents and children, but some people well, they might question the value in it (F11)

These comments in relation to the planning of projects were indicative of a number of noteworthy points. Firstly, they indicated dissonance with the planning practices outlined by Category One (Chapter Eight) and to a greater extent to the Category Two (Chapter Nine) project constructions since a perceived necessity to meet a particular pre-specified target, outcome or goal was not the initial starting point. This suggested that there may be further differences between the constructions in relation to the *purpose* of projects. Whilst within the first and second categories, projects seemed to have been viewed as a planning framework into which outcomes were slotted, in this third category projects were viewed as a flexible way of working from the interests of the child. Secondly, the comments suggested a tension *between* and a recognition *of* a personal epistemological stance and a perceived official discourse leading to the need to provide evidence to others. In other words a difference between what participants believed was of value for children to learn and a bureaucratic epistemological position - what was officially perceived of as value in relation to children's learning. Subsequently, Ffion implicitly recognised that the pedagogical position adopted within projects was value laden and not value neutral.

10.2 Project Examples

10.2.1 The Car Boot Sale

During project times, children were described as ‘free’ to choose from a range of activities set up by the staff in both the indoor and outdoor environments and this was described as ‘free flow’ (VI1, HI1). Children chose with whom to work; some worked alone whilst most worked in small groups (FI1).

When describing project examples, participants explained how on some occasions project themes might originate from external sources, often reflective of either television programmes or the home environment (HI1, FI2). Illustrative of this was a project entitled ‘The Car Boot Sale’, which had occurred when a child had visited a Boot Sale on the weekend. Veronica shared this example with me during our second conversation (VI2) as she talked through a large portfolio of the project (Veronica.Doc3), which included photographs of children engaged in ‘play project’ activities, transcripts of what children had said and drawings which they had produced in response to the project. She described how this had begun when a little boy had come into nursery talking excitedly to the whole group about what had happened on the weekend:

Charlie had been to a car boot sale and came in on the Monday very excited he could hardly contain himself! He was shouting ‘There were so much stuff miss and people *everywhere* and lots of shouting.’ He was shouting ‘roll up, roll up!’ and laughing and he was saying and ‘I had money to get stuff, to spend...my *own* money!!!!It was a car boot sale miss!’ (VI2, original emphasis)

Using the photographs within the portfolio as a prompt Veronica explained how Charlie had then stated ‘with authority’ that he needed tables set up outside. Subsequently he began to move toys and books onto his tables whilst ringing a bell shouting ‘Roll up, roll up, come and grab a bargain!’ Children began to gather around and Veronica described this as ‘the project taking on a life of its own.’ Some children began to bring pots and pans from an outdoor musical instrument area to ‘sell’ on the ‘stall’ and more and more children (and staff) became involved. Teachers provided further ‘boot sale’ resources, took photographs and noted ‘boot sale’ conversations. When asked why she had shared

this particular example Veronica said that it was similar to how projects often started. It was theorised that Veronica seemed particularly keen to illustrate how this example had stemmed from an observed interest of a child and was not ‘pre-planned.’ At the same time it was also noted that Veronica herself questioned whether this was a project asking:

Can it be a project when it only took place over a short period of time?
Perhaps it might be termed something else, a learning episode? I am not sure.... (voice trails off)(VI2)

Indeed throughout our conversations Veronica consistently questioned the meaning of terms in play arguing that:

I think that you can get bogged down with language... I know I do- I think it is more important to *share* an approach, to all understand *together* what we are doing..... words are bandied about but what do they mean²? (VII, original emphasis)

10.2.2 The role of the teacher within this example

A first level analysis of the role of the teacher within this example appeared indicative of the ‘stand back and watch’ position traditionally associated with early years teachers outlined within Chapter Three. This was because the teacher appeared to be supporting the child’s exploration of the environment through providing relevant resources. As such this position appears to resonate with Bernstein’s invisible pedagogy. At the same time both Veronica and Ffion argued that the role of the adult was more complex. Veronica called this a ‘balancing act.’ She added that reflection upon teacher-child observations during her visit to Reggio had made her feel ‘more comfortable with giving direction, they were more hands on than I expected’ (VI2). Ffion argued that the teacher’s role was not a ‘free for all,’ indicating that this perception may have been a concern for her:

Obviously there is direction, advice, training, we saw guidance and special training in Reggio, for example how to use a paint brush, what would be the best thing to use, what paints, materials? What does this look like? Why is this used? You have to be on your toes. (FI2)

Some projects stemmed from the seasonal theme of the moment, planned around Foundation Phase Areas of Learning. However, these projects were also

² This became the title of my thesis

described as ‘going off in unexpected directions.’ For example during the summer term a project called ‘Tents’ had stemmed from a theme on ‘life cycles.’ This project was observed and was later discussed with Veronica (V.Obs1extract 1; V.Obs1extract 2; V.Obs1extract 3; V.Obs1extract 4). She explained how initially teachers had provided children with rolls of cloth and had anticipated that these would be used to make cocoons. However, groups of children began to use the cloth as picnic blankets and later for making tents. Other children began to represent camping and tents in their drawing and clay work. Staff attempted to explore the representations of children through ‘the One Hundred Languages’ to plan further activities. This involved talking to children to help them to articulate the meanings of drawings:

an adult might think that this is just scribble but the child has deliberately tried to draw something, sometimes you only know what children are trying to represent if they are able to tell you what’s in their head (VI3)

This signified that searching for meaning in relation to the child’s use of different modes of symbolic languages (for example play and drawing) was viewed as valuable to the practitioners within this setting. This was deemed significant for a number of reasons: First it resonated with the practices described with Reggio projects (see 5.19) and second this practice marked it as significantly different from the Category Two project construction (Chapter Nine) in which Reggio was viewed as a major influence.

Veronica explained that over time it was noted that children began to discuss picnics and camping within the context of their role play. These experiences were recorded with cameras and the conversations of children were written down. This was corroborated during observations when children were observed playing ‘camping’ and teachers were observed photographing and transcribing conversations (e.g.V.Obs1extract 2). These data were displayed throughout the nursery on documentation boards and later transferred into nursery project books for use across the entire nursery. After reflecting upon observations, drawings and conversations, further camping paraphernalia was provided and more children became involved. Other children became interested in camp fires and outdoor cooking and subsequently materials and plastic food were provided to develop the

children's experience of camping. This interest continued over a number of weeks during the summer term. This example was worthy of note since the starting point was a current theme planned by teachers (life cycles) which held congruence with the stimulus of the practices outlined by Category Two constructions which also initiated from a theme. However in this case there was more room for the children to steer the direction of the project because they had not been tightly linked to outcomes in the planning stage. From a Bernsteinian perspective, this again was indicative of loosely framed pedagogy and resonated with the project constructions discussed within Chapter Five.

10.2.3 The Fungi Project

Ffion gave the example of a project on fungi that had started when children became 'fascinated' with this whilst playing in the garden area. After staff discussions, children were subsequently given their own cameras because they wanted to take photographs of the fungi (FI2). Over time these photographs led to small group and whole class conversations and later to fungi drawings, paintings, clay work and role play; more photographs followed and the 'cycle' continued. Dictaphones were used to record what children said and the '1000 questions' which these activities heralded. Some of these questions were followed up with interested individuals or groups of children. I felt that this description was important since project activities stemming from the enquiries of children were generally limited within this research study. Ffion explained that this was indicative of the pedagogical stance across the curriculum and that consequently children were:

so used to us taking photographs and they do not bat an eyelid, except sometimes when they know their work is lovely they will say 'you haven't taken a photograph of that' or 'can I see the photograph you have just taken?' And with the digital recorders, sometimes they will repeat what they have said and ask us 'have you got it?' They know that we value their speech because we record it and type this up and this is displayed with the pictures, the photographs. (FI2)

Resonating with a socio cultural position she added that through these pedagogical practices children at the nursery were learning that their own thinking was respected and valued and that this was deemed important for their self esteem

and later learning. Indeed, analysis of the project data across this category appeared to indicate that a central rationale for the use of projects within these settings was to help children to see themselves as competent learners. This central aim consequently impacted upon the role of the teacher adopted during project sessions.

10.3 Changing understandings of the role of the teacher

Comments made in reference to the earlier parts of the careers of both Veronica and Ffion were noteworthy since they resembled the practices outlined with Category One and Two project constructions (see previous two chapters). In both cases these had occurred when they were working within primary school settings and were associated particularly with planning:

we don't plan as we used to years ago in the main; you know tightly planned around a theme before it starts around areas or subjects, I would rather have little episodes like the boot sale, rather than some overarching big thing and trying to link everything in, children not really interested in it but you feel you have to do it because it has been written down. (VII)

Ffion contrasted her understanding of projects with practices from the very early part of her career which she described as a 'topic' approach:

we would plan on a topic web and *shoehorn* all of the learning objectives around one topic, like the 'ginger bread man' and we would create areas in the nursery for role play, for dressing up, and the maths area, everything. The ginger bread man would go up and he would be as tall as the wall, that sort of thing, children might be working on flowers, everyone having a turn at everything, making this great big display, a lot of cutting and sticking, the screwed up tissue idea, I can remember way, way back all those years ago making a whole freeze, filling in areas with tissue, and I am 53 and at the end of my career and when you go back to my beginning days in X Primary School where I was for nine years, that was the kind of thing that you did and was valued by parents and other teachers, like in a farmyard topic I was making calendars and I remember one year I had pink pig circles of a calendar in 3D and they were drying everywhere! The parents and my colleagues *loved* these but (voice becomes quieter) they were all the same, they looked like they were shop bought, the children were pleased with the finished product but what was the real value? What had they learnt? That their work was not good enough and that it would be finished by adults? (FI1, original emphasis)

These data indicated a desire to be responsive to the ideas and interests of children and an aspiration to build in a level of child (and teacher) autonomy. Ffion added

that through her current practice it was unlikely that any final product would look 'polished' because it had not been 'doctored' by an adult. On the other hand, the '*process* now belonged to the child' (original emphasis) and this was important. This signified a shift in emphasis from the purpose of learning as arriving at a 'good quality' product towards a view of learning in which the process was foregrounded. In both cases, these data indicated a move from a curriculum centred to a student centred focus (Wood, 2004). This shift in emphasis was further reflected in changing constructions of the role of the teacher within settings in relation to both planning and pedagogical practices and was facilitated through a flexible approach to planning.

At the same time a central issue for Ffion remained the need to justify her way of working to others such as parents, teachers and advisors since she believed that they were often concerned about how a final product might be presented. As an inexperienced teacher, Ffion argued that admiration from colleagues had been particularly important. This provided further evidence of Ffion's recognition of the potential existence of alternative epistemological viewpoints other than her own, in other words knowledge construction was perceived as a subjective process and reflected in how she understood the term project as a set of pedagogical practices. In summary, the epistemological foundations of the third category appeared different to those of category one and two where tightly (to different extents) planned activities ensured that children would achieve a particular objective.

10.4 Role of teachers within projects

Both Ffion and Veronica described how their role within projects was 'flexible' and reflected the pedagogical stance taken during non project activities. These were categorised by Veronica into three key roles: observer, enhancer, direct teacher. These terms were used across the nursery setting and different staff members were timetabled to take on one of these three roles across the day within nursery documentation. In most cases all three roles would be in operation within the setting at the same time, usually within both the indoor and outdoor environments. This was corroborated by documentary evidence (e.g.

VeronicaDoc1; VeronicaDoc2; VeronicaDoc3; VeronicaDoc4) and also within the observation of the Tent project (V.Obs1).

10.4.1 The role of the ‘Observer’

The ‘observer’ was described as ‘documenting the learning as it takes place.’ Observations were recorded via note pads, cameras, post- its or Dictaphones used to record ‘interesting speech’ (see Fungi project described above). An observer was observed during the Tents project (V.Obs1). I noted that she moved from group to group taking notes and photographs with limited interaction with the children. Observations were described as an important tool to the project process. They were used to make visible the developing interests (Veronica) and questions of children (Ffion) and promoted whole staff discussions. Group reflections in relation to the observations steered the direction of a project. This seemed indicative of a pedagogical model for-grounded in reflection since reflection upon observations and representations was viewed as an essential meaning making endeavour in terms of moving the project forward. In this way there appeared to be some congruence with the Reggio practices described within Chapter Five.

10.4.2 The Role of the ‘enhancer’

‘Enhancers’ were described as having the role of supporting children in activities which children had often initiated independently. For example, during an observation of the ‘Tents’ project, two three year old boys were observed on a ‘Bug Hunt,’ in which they carefully observed trees, lifted up stones and pebbles, placing insects into jars (V.Obs1extract 3). They later worked with the class teacher (timetabled as an enhancer) trying to locate pictures of their bugs in an encyclopaedia and discussing what they thought the insects might like to eat and drink if they were having a ‘Bugs’ party’ (V.Obs1extract 4). During the same time period of observation, a four year old girl was observed independently constructing a kite out of recycled materials which she had collected from different areas of the classroom (V.Obs1extract5; V.Obs1extract 6). When the kite was finished she was observed telling an adult (also timetabled as an ‘enhancer’) ‘I need to get it to fly.’ The adult and child moved to the garden area where they attempted to fly the kite. This was not successful and there followed a

conversation between the adult and child (instigated by the child) in relation to why this might have been the case and what the child might do to modify the kite.

The position adopted by the ‘enhancers’ during these interactions seemed to provide further evidence of the ‘responsive’ stance adopted by participants within projects. Analysis indicated that learning may have been viewed as a process of co-construction stemming from a socio culture theoretical position (see 3.3.3).

Consequently, the adult ‘scaffolded’ (Wood *et al.*, 1976) the child during the process of learning. However, children were not steered towards a predetermined answer (Jordon, 2009). My argument here is that there was some flexibility; some space, in terms of where the learning would lead. This signified that the role of the adult may be different when compared to Category One and Two projects where the adult was more likely to ‘scaffold’ learning (and thinking) towards a specific target or outcome often related to external documentation (*ibid.*).

10.4.3 ‘Teacher directed’

Participants described how ‘teacher directed’ sessions took place during whole class story times and during small group focussed tasks. On the surface this appeared congruent with the practices described by Category One and Two participants (see Chapters Eight and Nine).

An observation (F.Obs1extract 2) of a ‘Teacher directed’ session took place within Ffion’s classroom (located within the ‘Fungi’ project). An initial aim of this pre-planned clay activity was to demonstrate the clay technique of ‘slip and score.’ During the observation, four children were called over to the table by the teacher who sat with them throughout the activity.

Extract 10:1 Ffion: Clay Table Observation One

Four children are called to the clay table by Ffion:

Ffion: Would you like to come and join me and work with the clay? Yes? Great! Come and take a seat. Budge up, budge up! (children laugh).

Child One: What we doing miss?

Ffion: Well what we are going to *try* to do is to stick the pieces together? Any ideas? What could we use?

No answer

Ffion Did you know you can make clay act like glue??

Children: OOOOOOh no! (shaking of heads)

Child Two: No you can't miss!

Ffion: Well have a little look and see what you think.....will it work?

Ffion Now..... (whispers) Are you ready?.....I am going to make a little mark some of this on here, 'Voila'! The pieces *should* stick. What do you think? Will it work? Do you want to have a go? Have a little try? Are they going to stick?

After Ffion demonstrated the specific clay technique, two of the group became interested in creating a clay 'tree.' They were observed busily working the clay, using slip and score, pinching clay with their fingers and sticking twigs, leaves and other natural materials into a large lump in the middle of the table. The other two children joined in and attempted to make the bottom of the clay look like a trunk but in this process the whole lump became unbalanced and fell over. An argument broke out and children began to blame one particular child for breaking the tree. Ffion explained that this was 'due to frustration' and that at this point she needed to 'step in' and begin a discussion on what to do next.

Extract 10:2: Ffion: Clay Table Observation Two (F.Obs1extract 3)

Child One: No! You just knocked it down! Don't touch!

Child Two: What are you doing?

Child One: Don't do that! You broked it.

Child Three: But, but, but.....I.....miss?

Ffion: Come on now, (quiet voice). I am sure that it was an accident. I wonder why that happened. Can we have a little think?

Child One: Because he done it miss, he done it. He broked it!

Child Two: Stop touching!

Ffion: Shh, come on now. Well let's have a think. You have been doing some fantastic team work. Let's have a little think...how could we make it stand up, is there anything we could use? Hmm. What could we do? Remember now team work (soothing tone)

Child Four: Lots of water, splish, splash.....

Children : No!!! (laughing)

Child Two: Clay on the top.....put *lots* and *lots* and.....*lots* (shouts)!

Child One: Ha! Ha! It would go plop, plop, plop...so heavy! (Pretends to fall over and the children laugh)

Child Four: Get some sand around?

Child Two: Sticks at the bottom!

Child Four: Yeah and sand round there ...

Ffion: Wow! Some great ideas. Let's go and get some things to try out your fantastic ideas.

When this observation was later shared with Ffion, she explained that the role of the adult here was to support children in their interactions and to help them to resolve the quarrel and to ensure children were able to offer their own suggestions, as some children might 'take over.' She added that it was important that they were able to 'bounce ideas off each other.' This would 'move' the learning forward. Further analysis of this episode also suggested that the adult's

role was additionally to help children to try out some of their ideas by providing relevant resources (as indicated in previous examples) and further to ask questions which might help children in their own thinking. Indeed, the ‘thinking’ of the children seems to be central to this interaction. I felt that this last point was worthy of note since within the project constructions of Veronica there appeared to be less emphasis upon projects as a tool for supporting cognitive growth and more emphasis upon the social development of group members. This was a fundamental difference between these two particular practitioners and appeared noteworthy as it implied differences *within* as well as *between* project categories. Further, there was a lack of acknowledgement of projects as a potential tool for cognitive growth displayed by most participants across this research study.

Whilst this activity was pre-planned around the teaching of a specific skill (how to use slip and score), it also appeared to demonstrate a level of flexibility, since the teacher could not have predicted the direction which the activity was to take or the learning which would occur (with perhaps the exception that the four children would have all at least observed a demonstration of slip and score). This again seemed indicative of the ‘responsive’ stance which Veronica, Ffion and Heulwen referred to in relation to practice within project sessions. In summary, whilst a more ‘direct’ teacher approach was the starting point which may be associated with Bernstein’s visible pedagogy, there still remained an inherent flexibility underpinning the teaching and learning process (and how the teacher perceived her role). The process of learning (and teaching) appeared to be viewed as organic and provisional, initiating from an intended outcome but still loosely framed since there was some space for the children to direct the activity. This ‘space’ resulted in the practices (and associated role of the teacher) as appearing different from Category One and, to a greater extent, Category Two project constructions. From a Bernsteinian perspective this episode might be described as teacher initiated and child framed, based around co-construction (see Chapter Three) of both knowledge *and* the activity and involving a level of open ended thinking. As such it resonated with sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002), reported in Chapter Three) drawn upon specifically within Foundation Phase documentation (see Chapter Four). Indeed, it has been argued that where

pedagogical interactions are most effective in promoting thinking that they should include elements of problem solving, be dialogic in nature and be open enough to allow for a range of possible directions (McInnes, *et al.*, 2011, see Chapter Three). As such this interaction also appears to hold congruence with the thinking skills agenda within Wales (see Chapter Four).

10.5 Why were projects constructed in this way?

The first part of this chapter aimed to explore *how* projects were constructed within this category and further to consider what this particular construction might mean in terms of the perceived role of the teacher. The central objective of the next section is to consider *why* projects may have been constructed in this way through an exploration of some of the key discourses which resonate with the Category Three construction.

10.5.1 Resonating Discourses in circulation: Creativity

As the last section touched upon there is an increasing awareness of the importance of providing young children with opportunities for sustained shared thinking and possibility thinking in which children both generate and explore their own theories (Wood, 1998). These ideas are interrelated with a discourse of creativity (Craft, 2001) outlined within Chapter Three (see 3.4) and also resonate with Reggio Emilian pedagogy (see Chapter Five, see 5.16-5.20). Whilst none of the Category Three participants used the term ‘creativity’ in relation to their projects, the data outlined thus far also holds congruence with literature in relation to possibility thinking (Craft, 2000, 2001; Craft and Jeffrey, 2004). There were elements of the ‘inclusive pedagogy’ outlined by Jeffrey and Craft, (2004) underpinned by an epistemological stance in which learning is viewed as a ‘co-participative process’ between adults and children (and groups of children). This was because learning seemed to be viewed as unpredictable and there was a consequential limited emphasis placed upon arriving at a pre-specified answer. Subsequently, a number of the features of pedagogic practices which foster creativity and possibility thinking could be seen within the data of the Category Three project construction, these included:

- Standing back, listening to and noticing the child's engagement with an activity (Cremin, Bernard and Craft, 2006)
- Working within a climate of uncertainty (Grainger and Barnes, 2006)
- Engaging in critical reflection (QCA, 2005)

Pedagogical practices therefore built in a level of 'space' in order to nurture the child's self image as an autonomous and capable learner. This 'space' was witnessed at both the level of the child and teacher.

10.5.2 A discourse of democracy: practiced not spoken

It has also been argued that successful pedagogy is underpinned by reflective practice and the associated pedagogical perception of the educator (Mailhos, 1999). Moyles *et al.* (2002) warn that an 'inability to articulate [their own practices] may put a significant constraint upon effective pedagogical practices' (Moyles et al, 2002, p. 3). Without reflection the teacher is in danger of becoming a technician and the child a passive recipient of a pre-specified body of knowledge (Dewey, 1933). Within this project construction space for teacher reflection was built into the process through the whole staff weekly planning meetings, described by Ffion as 'a bouncing brain storming – *valuable*' (F11, original emphasis). Data indicated that the process of meaning making was viewed as a subjective, dialogic and collaborative endeavour:

(In the meetings) we share thinking and if staff are not happy or don't agree we reason with each other as to why we think (the way) we do; discussing why we think this or that is important and we come to a consensus, yes, this is what we are going to do and this is why. We all question ourselves but more so once we get together. If you talk to other staff members they might see something differently because we are all individuals and different, and will all think differently. (F12)

The process described by Ffion was foregrounded in a subjective epistemological position not highlighted within the other project constructions. This is because there was recognition that other members of staff might have different viewpoints and different perspectives in relation to what observations of children may signify. This is reminiscent of the words of Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, (2007):

Meaning making[...] (is) a democratic process of interpretation, a process that involves making practice visible and thus subject to reflection, dialogue and argumentation, leading to a judgement of value, contextualised and provisional because it is always subject to contestation (Dahlberg *et al.*, 2007, p. ix)

As Chapter Three has argued less visible pedagogies are a challenge in terms of accountability (see for example Cremin, Burnard and Craft, 2006). Within this project construction, teachers were tasked with justifying and explaining their own *interpretations* of observations, thus ‘accountable’ for personal pedagogical choices. There was subsequently less reliance upon official frameworks, underpinned by an official epistemological position. Ffion’s words signify that she was aware that she had made a choice to work in this way and that there were other ways of working (with both staff and children):

as teacher in charge I suppose I could say today we are going to do, this, this, this and this ...and then staff might be thinking, I’m doing this and I hate that, I have done that long ago in the past, there is no job satisfaction...It is valuing different people’s perspectives. (FI2)

All participants continuously indicated that there was a need to justify this way of working as ‘others’ might not see a value in this:

We had a meeting with our other nursery and I was talking to Veronica and we were talking about the planning time we have on a Friday. In the light of an inspection we have to justify this time, we are worried, we are accountable - an inspection is always in the back in your head’. So we were asking how it is worth its value. (FI2)

Collaborative ways of working were highlighted as projects were co-constructed between staff members (and children). This was underpinned by reciprocal relationships in both settings:

We share this as a team (pauses), yes share an ethos because it has evolved; we see a value to it, a value to what we are doing. We have got a respect for this way of working now, it has evolved, and we have respect for each other. (FI2)

We share an ethos, a general ethos to move forward and so in the planning time we check that everyone is happy with the move forward. (VI1)

Whilst the terms ‘democratic’ or ‘dialogic’ (Wells, 1999; Alexander, 2004) were never used by any of these participants, the descriptions of both direct and indirect pedagogical practices (see Chapter Three) resonated with a discourse of democracy seen within the projects of Hadow and Reggio Emilia. My argument here is that these data appeared indicative of a democratic stance: discussion, dialogue and debate appeared to be central to the pedagogical practices described within projects at both a planning and practical level. In this way participants were able to work in a way which was congruent with their *own* value positions.

Simultaneously there were some resonances with a Reggio Emilian discourse, particularly in relation to the pedagogical practices and associated position adopted by the teacher. Indicative of this discourse were the attempts made to explore the child’s use of symbolic representation within projects; to utilise pedagogical documentation; to acknowledge children’s interests and to value the viewpoints of other staff members. At the same time participants within this group were reluctant to say that they were ‘doing Reggio,’ as Veronica said:

What they do in Reggio, they do in Reggio! We use it as a point of reference but in our own way which is particular to *our* setting (VII)

This contrasted with the Group Two Category (see previous chapter) which claimed a strong association with Reggio Emilian practices and where there was a continuous use of Reggio terminology.

10.5.3 A discourse of developmental psychology: Stages and Ages

I also noted that whilst the practices described by these participants were broadly congruent there were also some nuances. For example whilst Ffion appeared to foreground social *and* cognitive development within her descriptions, the data of Veronica indicated a particular emphasis upon social development. This may have been a consequence of the developmental psychology discourse running through her data, based upon a view of child development dependent upon ‘stages and ages’ (see 3.3.2). This is illustrated by the fact that projects were viewed as more appropriate for the older children within her setting (the four year olds), since younger children (rising threes) needed to:

go through processes and explore materials before projects are possible, somehow they are not ready. During project times other (younger) children are busy getting on with their own little things.’(VI1)

Veronica’s data were also saturated with references to ‘readiness’ and ‘experiences:’

they (the three year olds) are not ready for this (project work), it also depends on the child and also the experiences that they have had before (VI2)

Consequently she appeared to view projects as a vehicle for offering meaningful experiences to children (such as the Car Boot Sale and Tents projects) which reflected their current interests, as she said, ‘Projects are about experiences for children. Trying to give children a sense of their world’ (VI1). Her colleague Ffion maintained that projects facilitated the exploration of children’s interests, ideas *and* questions. Analysis of her data revealed the absence of any reference to stages and ages. I found this surprising since a discourse of developmental psychology has been described as the ‘bedrock’ of early years thinking (Edwards, 2005, see 3.3.2, p.40) and was present in the data of *all* other participants.

10.6 Space in a standalone nursery

At the same time both Veronica and Ffion maintained that they were only ‘free’ to work in this way since they were located in a standalone nursery with a supportive head teacher (Heulwen) who ‘trusted’ what they were doing. This was contrasted with other periods of profession practice when there has been pressure to use ‘inappropriate’ pedagogical practices. This had occurred in primary schools even when located within nursery or reception classes

the demands are pushed down from the top and you just dread going to work. I felt that I was going to crack.’ (VI2)

Ffion also used the term ‘freedom’ which she linked to an ability to ‘let go,’ ‘because we are stand alone and we do not have to be so rigid’ (FI2). This flexibility manifested itself in a number of ways:

Time is not an issue, so we don’t plan for any period of time, it takes as long as it takes, for example in the garden, we are not going to worry that it is supposed to be fruit and milk time, we are not going to do that and we

code it to each other, ‘are you ready?’ ‘Are you ready?’ Somebody might be doing an observation ... really in the middle of it and you are not going to stop that but in other places they would, ‘blow the whistle’ and then it is wrecked but we have got this rapport (pauses), and sometimes things go off into extreme directions and sometimes you think I can’t believe that we have ended up here or there! How did that happen? (FI2)

The flexible nature of the timetable was deemed as fundamental since it enabled teachers to observe children closely and was believed to be pivotal to Ffion’s project construction. In contrast she described practice which she deemed ‘constraining:’

You know in some infant classes - in ‘Strepford’ schools where all the children are rotating like ‘little robots’ around activities. The Reggio influence has moved us on – the days of rolling up tissue paper are gone.(FI2)

The projects and project activities described also were indicative of flexibility in relation of the direction of learning and there appeared to be an acceptance on the part of the educator that the learning journey was uncertain, unpredictable and risky. In other words there appears to be some ‘conceptual space’ here for teachers (and children) to deviate from a specific path.

10.7 Tensions

At the same time there was a tension expressed through Veronica’s frustration that it was not always possible to ‘run with what the children are interested in.’ She explained that she often felt a ‘dilemma’ between running with it and ‘constraints,’ in relation to ‘other expectations’. Indeed a tension within the data of all of this group was noted accompanied by a continuous desire to justify what they were doing: Veronica worried that a change in ‘policy direction’ would subsequently leave limited space for project work or observing children’s interests (VI3). She argued that, ‘we need to have the courage to stand back but it is difficult’ (VI2). Heulwen, in her position as head teacher of both settings expressed concerns in relation to changes to the ESTYN inspection framework with a new emphasis upon provided ‘hard’ statistical evidence of pupil progress. This she suggested might impact upon pedagogy since it would be more difficult to provide statistics in terms of project ‘outcomes.’ She also worried that the Welsh policy of closing down standalone nurseries would also impact upon the

type of activities children would be offered in the name of learning when all nursery classrooms became attached to schools because of the possible ‘top down effect.’ These comments were powerful for a number of reasons since they were indicative of a gap between personal and official epistemological positions; a tension between freer ways of working which value children’s thinking and meeting external agenda and an associated recognition of the potential power of policy discourses in shaping pedagogical practices. This finding resonates with the work of other researchers within the English context (see for example Cottle and Alexander, 2012, Chapter Three) since it has been reported that English early year’s practitioners also have to mediate different tensions between their own epistemological positions and policy frameworks which are often target driven (Anning *et. al.*, 2006).

Heulwen described this as needing to ‘play the game:’

As a team, we know what we want for the children, the experiences we think are important, how we see learning but we also have to fulfil certain criteria, expectations from outside. We might not always agree with this but we have to play the game; if we don’t the consequences could be devastating for the staff, the parents and the children...a poor inspection would lead to poor staff morale...so yes, we play the game. (HI2)

There are other congruencies with the research of Cottle and Alexander (2012) in which they theorised that practitioners in Children’s Centres appeared to place more importance on child-initiated activities whilst reception class teachers placed more importance upon teacher led activities (See chapter three, 3.9). They found that within stand alone settings (three children’s centres), not attached to schools, that there was a culture of ‘positive dissensus’ (MacNaughton, 2005) based around dialogic and collaborative ways of working since they were removed from a ‘managerial paradigm.’ In summary then, distance from a discourse of technical rationality (Moss, 2007) based around targets and outcomes meant that Category Three participants had some room to be able to practice ways of working with children underpinned their own epistemological positions. This signifies that practitioners in the early years on both sides of the Severn Bridge may be

grappling with a similar set of challenges even though the curriculum frameworks report to be different.

10.8 Summary

A central aim of this chapter was to introduce and explore the data from the third project category noted with this research study which resonates with elements of the previous projects of Hadow and Plowden and Reggio Emilia (see Chapter Five). Drawing from a progressive position (Soler and Miller, 2003), the pedagogical practices described have been categorised as less visible since they are loosely framed with the child possessing some control in relation to the direction of project activities. Within this construction the teacher is presented as a reflective practitioner, situated within a dialogic and democratic community of practice. In other words the ‘strong’ construction of the child (see Chapter Five) is mirrored within this project construction by a strong construction of the teacher. Participants have argued that they are ‘free’ to work in this way since they are not attached to primary school settings with associated ‘top down’ pressure and were supported by a head teacher. At the same time concern was expressed in relation to the probability of external factors (e.g. Estyn) shaping the pedagogical practices of the future. Data from these participants has highlighted a tension between a personal and a perceived official epistemological position. The next chapter moves on to drawing some conclusions in relation to my theorising and to offer some recommendations for future research.

Chapter Eleven

A search for the logic of the discourse

Drawing the strands together

"When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.



"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master— that's all."

(Carroll, 2013, no page)

11.1 How was the term '*project*' constructed by Foundation Phase participants within the embedded case study?

Chapter six focused upon the research question, how have projects been constructed historically by policy makers, academics and teachers. Through an analysis of key documents I proposed that different discourses resonated with the different constructions of Hadow, Plowden and Reggio Emilia whilst also highlighting the implications for the pedagogical practices deemed appropriate and the corresponding role assumed by the teacher (see Table 5.1). I further argued that within the context of England and Wales that over time the terms project and topic had become synonymous and that the original meaning(s) had shifted in line with changes in contextual factors such as theory and policy.

In the last three chapters I have moved on to the core of the study, the empirical research which explored contemporary understandings of projects. Within these chapters I outlined how ‘projects’ were interpreted in at least three different ways within Foundation Phase settings with nuances appearing both *between* and *within* the different constructions noted. These included:

Category One - Projects begin by matching interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests.

Category Two - Projects begin from predetermined objectives with a focus on ‘creativity.’

Category Three - Projects begin by following the observed interests of children.

Through this analysis I have highlighted: how the *raison d’être* for projects differ; the diverse nature of the pedagogical practices described under the project banner and the various discourses which appear to resonate with the different constructions presented. The main elements of the three categories are outlined on Table 11.1. These data signifies that there were considerable variances in how the term ‘project,’ as a pedagogical tool was constructed.

This research is deemed noteworthy since to date there has been limited other critical examination of ‘projects’ within the context of early years provision and different project constructions have implications for the teachers’ role within the classroom with associated implications for the levels of child autonomy deemed appropriate. In other words interpretations of pedagogical terminology have repercussions in relation to what is offered to young children in the name of learning (Stephen, 2010).

Within my empirical study projects were rarely enquiry based and did not generally include opportunities for collaborative problem solving, this is deemed significant when compared with the historical project constructions of Hadow, Plowden and Reggio Emilia explored within Chapter Five. This shift in meaning is deemed indicative of the unstable and value laden nature of pedagogical terminology. At the same time projects were reported to be the part of the curriculum in which children had more autonomy and freedom and in which their

thinking, ideas and interests were acknowledged. This may signify a tension, a ‘struggle’ noted by other researchers (see for example Anning *et al.*, 2006) indicative of conflict between external policy discourses in which targets are prioritised and the traditional epistemological beliefs of the early years community (Aubrey, 2002; Wood, 2014).

Table 11.1: A comparison of the main elements of the different project constructions noted within this study

	Category One	Category Two	Category Three
How do projects begin?	Projects begin by matching interests to outcomes/matching outcomes to interests	Projects begin after planning pre-determined objectives.	Projects begin by following the observed interests of children.
How were projects constructed?	A teacher initiated planning tool used to ensure coverage of outcomes whilst also recognising interests of children when congruent with pre-specified targets.	A planning tool used to ensure coverage of outcomes.	A child initiated experience.
Central elements of the project construction	Matching interests to outcomes	Creativity Reggio Emilia	Child initiated learning experience
Child or teacher originated?	Teacher originated	Teacher originated	Child originated
Timescale	Half term	A term	Open
Resonating Discourses	Technical modernity (targets/outcomes) Developmental psychology Child-centred	Technical modernity (targets/outcomes) Developmental psychology	Dialogic/ Democratic Creativity Reggio Emilia Developmental psychology (Veronica) Child-centred

11.2 Why were projects constructed in particular ways? What were the main discourses which appeared to underpin different project constructions?

Through this analysis I theorise that different project constructions appear to be underpinned by the *intersection and overlapping* of different discourses and (possibly contradictory) epistemological assumptions. These findings concur with Kable (2001) who has argued that the presence of competing discourses leads to different ways of viewing the curriculum with, ‘the merging of discourses within the text contribut(ing) to teachers’ contradictory interpretations ... and uncertainties (p.32).

In most cases the dominance of a discourse of technical rationality (Moss, 2007) (frequently amalgamated with a discourse of developmental psychology) often appeared to act as a steering mechanism navigating the ways in which projects were interpreted. As such the project constructions may signify the impact of formalised curricula as shaping agents in relation to the subjectivities of early years educators. Ball (1999) has argued that this becomes particularly prevalent where teachers feel that they are ‘measured’ by their ability to ensure children have achieved targets. The resulting pedagogical practices are often incongruent with socio cultural learning theories (BERA, 2003) with limited emphasis upon co-construction. This has clear consequential implications for the agency of the child *and* the role assumed by the teacher. In summary, the pedagogical practices witnessed within projects and the roles participants assumed may have been at least partially the result of a perceived ‘policy panopticon,’ (Ball, 1999) ‘as teachers shaped their pedagogy to conform to the ‘regulatory gaze’ (Osgood, 2006, p. 5). Whilst my findings support this view it is also deemed significant that my study is contained within the boundaries of a curriculum which aims (at least partially) to give children greater levels of autonomy.

11.3 What were the implications for how teachers were positioned within different project constructions?

Whilst Hedges (2010) has argued that teachers need to become more analytical in terms of children’s interests and look more closely at their inquiries, as in previous research (see for example Hedges, 2011) within my study part of the

teachers' role was to subject children's interests to a filtering process. From this position children's interests were usually only acknowledged if they allowed for predetermined targets to be met. This was because a pivotal part of the role of the teacher within the first two project categories was to ensure that children would reach a range of pre-specified targets.

Whilst it has been proposed that reflection is central to the role of the teacher (Mailhos, 1999; Moyles *et al.* 2002, see Chapter Three) there appeared to be significant variance in relation to the emphasis placed upon teacher reflection built into these different practices (See Figure 11.1). Whilst the Category Two construction placed significant emphasis upon official epistemological frameworks, the Category Three participants placed greater emphasis upon their *own* epistemological positions through building in reflective and collaborative mechanisms to interrogate their practice. These findings support the view of Moss *et al.* (2000) who have argued that:

a climate which prioritizes technical and managerial discourses and values is, arguably, particularly unfavourable to the type of critical thinking that brings self-awareness (Moss *et al.*, 2000, p. 237)

Tensions between personal and official epistemological frameworks were felt less prominently by participants situated within standalone nurseries who were more likely to follow the interests of children within projects. Participants argued that they were 'freer' to enact pedagogical practices in line with what *they* believed to be most appropriate for younger children since they were not in school settings. Practices tended to be dialogic in nature with group reflection viewed as pivotal. This led to levels of congruence between personal epistemological positions and the opportunities offered to young children in the name of learning.

The project practices witnessed from these participants included levels of child autonomy, opportunities for creative expression, (some) group work and incidences of sustained shared thinking. In other words, some of these pedagogical practices resonated with Welsh Government Foundation Phase Documentation in relation to 'thinking' (see for example NAFW, 2003a and

WAG, 2010a, 2010b). The paradox here is that it is currently Welsh Government policy to attach all nurseries to primary schools, to close those that ‘standalone’ and in so doing bring all settings under the ‘regulatory gaze’ (Osgood, 2006).

This contradiction has also been noted by the recent Foundation Phase ‘stocktake’ (Siraj-Blatchford, 2014, p.20)) which argued that:

at a time when Wales is looking for models of good practice to support the implementation of the Foundation Phase (the Government is currently) overlooking (this) vital resource.

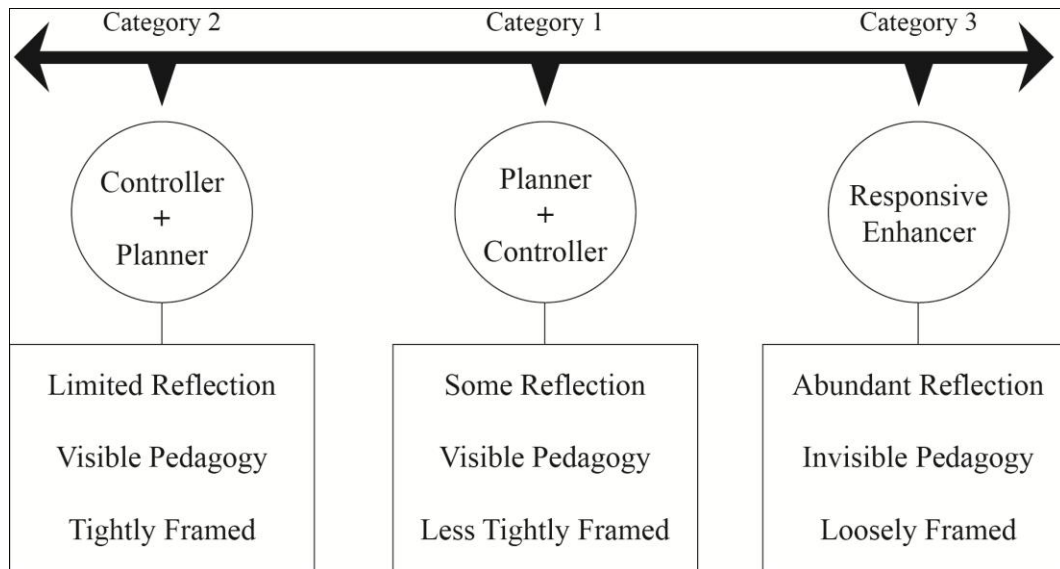
Whilst acknowledging that my theorising is a ‘tidied up’ version of what was actually a very ‘messy’ process, at the same time, it may be useful to view the different constructions noted within the study as appearing on a continuum (see Figure 11.1). At the one end, more visible pedagogy in which projects originate from a teacher directed focus and where teacher control of the learning experience is viewed as pivotal (Category Two). This has subsequent implications for (a lack of) levels of child autonomy. At the other end more invisible pedagogy, in which projects are child directed and control of the learning process is shared (Category Three). In these cases there is a consequential increase in the agency of the child but less possibility of controlling the learning outcomes (see figure 11.1).

11.4 What was the connection between the pedagogical terminology and the pedagogical practices which terminology signified?

As in other studies, whilst there was a common ‘pedagogical rhetoric’ in circulation, there was often dissonance at the level of practice (e.g. Martlew *et al.*, 2011). Whilst a range of socio cultural language was consistently used to signify practices (for example ‘active learning’ ‘child initiated,’ ‘facilitator’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘agency’) the practices signified were often didactic (and at times constraining) in nature and may have stemmed from an alternative paradigmatic position. This may again be indicative of an underling tension: whilst socio cultural pedagogies were advocated within projects, ‘success’ (or otherwise) appeared to be measured by the achieved outcomes of children. In other words, the overlapping of certain (possibly contradictory) discourses might further

explain the gap between rhetoric and the pedagogical practices noted within this study. This concurs with the theorising of Ball (1990) who has argued that ‘Words and concepts change their meaning and their effects as they are deployed within different discourses’ (p.2).

Figure 11.1: positions adopted by teachers within different project constructions



These findings may further indicate that ‘taking on’ the language of a socio cultural theoretical position might be less problematic for practitioners than facilitating the actual practices which the terminology seems to resonate with. Indeed the complexities of the role of the socio cultural teacher warrants further attention, particularly when situated within settings where targets and outcomes are pre-specified.

These findings may also signify what Stephen (2012) has called a ‘folk pedagogy,’ (p.123) in relation to how the learning experiences of young children are framed. She has argued that two of the ‘big ideas’ frequently cited by the early years community are that ‘play’ is a vehicle for learning and notions of ‘child-centredness’. Within this study cross curricula ways of working were also continuously highlighted by participants but this rhetoric was rarely accompanied with critical explanations of why this was deemed more appropriate than any

other way of working and appeared to be based on little more than ‘gut feeling’ (Anning, 1998, p. 308). I would consequently suggest that within this study notions of ‘cross curricula’ working may also be added to the ‘folk pedagogy’ of the early years.

11.5 What are the implications of this study in relation to current understandings of the Foundation Phase?

Whilst the focus of the study was upon projects, at the same time these interpretations were situated within the boundaries of Foundation Phase settings. It can therefore be argued that how projects were interpreted also sheds light on thinking in relation to what the Foundation Phase is. Indeed *every* participant within the case study argued that *their* interpretation of a project held congruence with Foundation Phase pedagogy. Simultaneously, as previously discussed there were many nuances in the practices witnessed, in the perceived role of the teacher and in relation to the levels of child autonomy permitted. This suggests that there may be a range of pedagogical practices in operation under the FP banner (even within the same Local Authority, within a very small geographical boundary as in this case), underpinned by various personal and official epistemological assumptions. This appears indicative of some uncertainty in relation to pedagogy within these Foundation Phase classrooms, particularly in relation to the role of the adult within activities in which children have agency (also noted within the Foundation Phase pilot study, see Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2005 and 2006).

Whilst Foundation Phase documentation has suggested a need for teachers to interact and engage with children across both adult initiated (focused tasks) and child initiated (continuous provision) learning (see Chapter Four), this was rarely noted within this study. During project sessions teachers tended to sit with the focus task groups, whilst children worked alone on the continuous provision. Indeed, the continuous provision within most settings seemed to be underpinned by a development psychological position in which the teacher is viewed as an arranger of the environment with interactions with children tending to be of a managerial nature. The ‘balance’ advocated within FP documentation may be challenging when teacher accountability remains attached to pre-specified

learning outcomes. These data may therefore signify a tension between pedagogies which aim to control the teaching and learning process and those which view teaching and learning as a more complex, uncertain and ‘messy’ process (Wood, 2010).

At the same time both Foundation Phase documentation and Welsh Government ‘thinking’ documents (e.g. WAG, 2008; WAG, 2010a; WAG, 2010b) emphasise the role of the teacher in nurturing divergent, creative and critical thinking. Documents argue that this can be achieved through dialogic pedagogical practices based around sustained shared thinking and collaborative problem solving tasks. With this agenda as a backdrop, ‘projects’ as a pedagogical construct appear to be a wasted opportunity.

11.6 What are the implications of the study in relation to the meaning making process?

Chapter six (sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2) has explained how the participants within this bounded case were chosen because of their apparent minimal dissimilarity: All participants within the ecological frame of this LA had access to similar training, support and advice and as a consequence, any variations in pedagogical practices were viewed as noteworthy. This finding was deemed significant since it suggests that even when participants share ecological similarities, pedagogical terminology may still be interpreted in different ways.

I would argue that the pedagogical understandings associated with projects within this one bounded case are likely to have been shaped by an amalgamation of the personal beliefs and values of participants (Kable, 2001; Stephen, 2010); the culture of the setting in which participants were situated (Rosaen and Schran, 1998; Kable 2001; Cottle and Alexander, 2010); the perceived formal requirements of the curriculum (Stephen, 2010) and the initial and continued professional development of participants (Stephen, 2010). The findings further suggest that for some of these participants (notably Category Three) ‘acts of interpretation’ were likely to have been shaped by *reflection* upon previous personal and professional experiences. Further there is some indication that the

professional position occupied by participants may also have impacted on how they viewed the term. For example Mari, in her role as head teacher, felt most strongly the need to tightly control the pedagogical practices within projects to ensure that targets were met and hence her school would be viewed as successful. A final conclusion drawn from the data is that pedagogical understandings are also likely to have been shaped by mechanisms through which the curriculum is *measured*. This may be particularly significant within the current educational climate within Wales where, in a drive to raise ‘standards,’ there has been the recent introduction of numeracy and literacy tests for all children from years two to six. These tests are accompanied by procedures for reporting and comparing results across both schools and Local Authorities and appear indicative of a desire to tightly control the teaching and learning process through a set of micropractices (Gore, 1998). It will be interesting to research the impact of these new policies upon the Foundation Phase pedagogy.

These findings are illustrative of the complexity of the meaning making process (Steedman, 1991) which is influenced by a number of interrelated and overlapping factors. I would consequently argue that interpretation of pedagogical terminology is context dependant, shaped at the level of the *individual*, who is situated in a *particular* setting, within a particular Local Authority, within a particular curriculum (and so on). The ecological framework of Bronfenbrenner (1979) is useful here in representing this visually, with the different spheres of influences represented as nesting within each other much like a Russian doll (see Figure 11.2).

From this perspective the language we ‘choose’ to describe practice is not value free as it has been shaped by the social context in which we operate (Derrida, 1997). As such interpretations of pedagogical vocabulary can be viewed as a social construct shaped by the discourses in circulation. As Wertsch (1998) has argued:

we usually do not operate by choice. Instead, we inherently appropriate the terministic screens, affordances, constraints, and so forth associated with the cultural tools we employ. Unlike Lewis Carroll’s Humpty Dumpty, then, speakers are not in a position to assert that ‘When I use a word, it

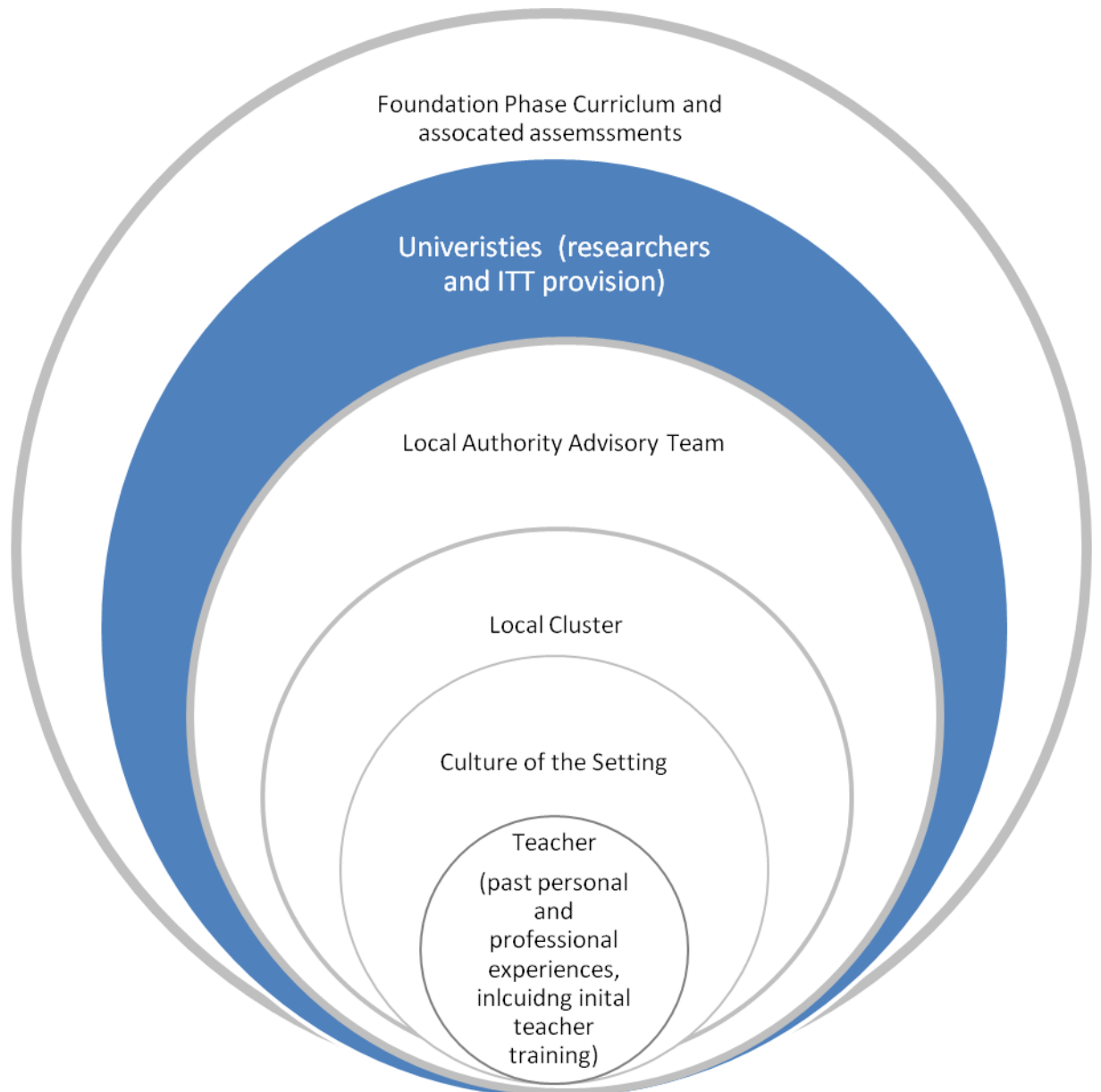
means whatever I want it to mean' (Carroll, 1872, p.189). (Wertsch, 1998, p. 55)

11.7 Strategies for the introduction of new curricula models and associated educational training for early years professionals

These data also suggest that the implementation of policy is a complex and dynamic process (Ball, 1994) since the ways in which teachers interpreted and thus enacted policy appeared to be based upon differences in epistemological assumptions. At the same time, whilst it has been argued that teacher decision making is a *conscious* process informed by understandings of pedagogy, curriculum and children (Hedges and Nuttall, 2008), within this study participants did not always seem fully aware of *their* epistemological positions as signified by the gap between what was said (the signifier) and was practiced (the signified). If this perspective is adopted there are *explicit* implications for:

- (a) The policy to practice trajectory
- (b) The subsequent methods through which a new curriculum is both introduced and sustained.

Figure 11.2: Spheres of influence on interpretation of pedagogical terminology



This is deemed as highly significant within the current policy context with Wales as the Welsh Government considers a ten year Early Years and Childcare strategy (July, 2013) . A central rationale here is that investment in early years provision has long term economical benefits for society and that the status of those working with young children needs to be raised (ibid.).Notably, this document also argues that:

High-quality early education and childcare (is pivotal and that) effective primary education (should) support a whole-school approach to the Foundation Phasebalancing child-/adult-initiated learning. (p.18)

The practitioner's understanding of the Foundation Phase is positioned as fundamental particularly in relation to the 'balance between providing direct teaching and practitioner-led learning and providing rich opportunities for child-initiated learning' (2013, p. 40). To this aim the Welsh government proposes that there is a need to develop guidance in order to illustrate 'successful' practice through the inclusion of exemplary case studies (ibid.) and further to improve provision through 'strengthening regulation and inspection' procedures (p.44).

However, drawing on my findings I would suggest that a more complex conceptualisation of the policy to practice trajectory is needed since our 'acts of interpretation' (Steedman, 1991) are coloured by multiple influences. I would propose that there is a necessity to have *dialogic* strategies in place both *within* and *between* each level of the ecological framework (see 11.2) in order for stakeholders to come to some sort of *shared* understanding of the key pedagogical terms in circulation. Further, there is also a necessity to spend time reflecting upon the implications of particular interpretations and what these signify in terms of learning opportunities for young children. For example at the level of:

- The government and policy makers (outer circle)
- Universities with ITT provision for the FP
- Local authorities and advisory teams
- At the level of local clusters of schools within the same areas
- At the level of particular settings

From a socio constructionist stance this can only be achieved through ongoing dialogic processes and *collaborative* ways of working. For example, by considering as the communities (situated within and between each level of the ecological frame) the perceived key issues in relation to the implementation of the curriculum. This might begin through exploration of some of the following key questions:

- *How* is the child understood within this curriculum?
- *What* theoretical perspectives underpin this construct of the child?
- *What* implications does this have for how the teacher is understood?
- *What* is the consequential role of the teacher within the learning process?
- *What* does this mean in terms of the pedagogical practices we utilise?
- *What* is the rationale underpinning our choice of particular pedagogical practices?
- *Why* as educators do we choose to enact practice in particular ways?
- *What* do the pedagogical terms key terms mean to *us*, within *this* setting?
- *What* does the balance between child and adult initiated pedagogy look like within the context of the FP curriculum at this point in time?

This would necessitate a more complex view of the policy to practice trajectory in which co-construction is highlighted rather than a simplistic view of meaning making such as providing written definitions in policy documents.

This might involve collaborative work and research between academics and educators, or groups of teachers within the same authorities with a central aim of making explicit what pedagogical terminology means to them within their *specific* contexts and the drawing out theoretical value positions.

This could include group *reflection* upon examples drawn from everyday classroom practice to explicitly draw out both group and personal epistemological assumptions in order to consider how these shape classroom pedagogy and what the consequences of viewpoints might be for children within particular settings.

There may also need to be reconsideration of the closure of standalone nurseries as these could act as ‘hubs’ at the centre of this collaborative work.

Central to ‘training’ for early years professionals would be ways of working in which teachers are supported in reflecting upon both their own and official the epistemological assumptions inherent within curriculum documentations. Further it would be advantageous to draw out and discuss any perceived tensions which may arise in particular contexts and further to reflect upon how these might be ameliorated.

This would mark a move away from ‘training’ educators in curriculum development, which suggests a didactic mode of delivery toward a model based around the co-construction (Jordon, 2009) of curricula models through reflective collaboration.

11.8 Limitations of the study

11.8.1 Pedagogical Documentation

Chapters Two and Six discussed how pedagogical documentation is viewed as a dialogic and *collaborative* process. However the PhD as an academic exam assesses the researcher as an individual and not as a member of a research team. Whilst there was at least some collaboration with my participants within this study and some room to discuss my evolving interpretations with colleagues, this was not to the extent that I had previously experienced as a teacher who was part of a community where pedagogical documentation was a central tool for reflection.

As Chapter Six has argued I wanted my study to be participatory in nature: researching *with* as opposed to researching *on*. One of the ways in which I attempted to do this was through a process in which I shared elements of my thinking with participants. In other words there was a process of to-ing and fro-ing between data collection and analysis. In this way I attempted to reconvene the balance between researcher and researched. But, never the less, when the research ended I was left with the question was this a true co-construction? For some participants the perceived power dynamics would indicate otherwise. In

other cases teachers may have been too busy to read the transcripts and notes of my theorising offered back to them.

At the same time, engaging in the process of pedagogical documentation as a researcher has allowed my own subjectivities to be made visible as Russell and Kelly (2002) have argued that:

We are changed by many aspects of the research process: through engaging in real conversations, through what we learn in the course of listening well, through participation in a process that allows new creations to occur, and through our own reflexivity. As researchers, we come away with new understandings, the origins of which are not entirely clear to us. Our very participation in the research endeavor changes us (Russell and Kelly, 2002)

Consequently, whilst engaging with the process of pedagogical documentation enabled me to consider both the interpretations of participants and my own thinking in relation to this, in future research I would need to consider how to make this a far more inclusive process.

11.8.2 Dialogue and conversations- are conversations *really* conversations?

I had hoped that the interview process would be ‘dialogic’ in nature akin to the work of Kvale (1995) who has argued that the interview can be seen as a ‘communicative process’ in which ‘truth’ develops between researchers and participants through dialogue. However, I noted that interactions within the ‘conversational interviews’ varied between settings and participants. On reflection the type of interaction which took place appeared to be based upon my prior relationship with participants and possibly their professional positioning. For example in the cases of the most forthcoming participants, Mari, Veronica, Ffion and Heulwen, I felt that these were ‘*conversations*,’ in which a dialogic space was created in which we actively sought to construct meaning together; our prior relationship coupled with their position as either a lead teacher or head teacher may have meant that the power dynamics between the researcher and researched were less obvious. This perception is supported by other qualitative researchers (see for example Hammersley, 1987; Popay, Rogers, & Williams, 1998; Hall and Callery, 2001) who have highlighted the significance of the research relationship,

arguing that since ‘meanings’ are created through the interview process and translated into data, the ‘quality’ of data will be influenced by the rapport between researcher/researched.

I also noted that in some cases (Jane for example) participants were far more forthcoming as the research process continued (there was a significant movement in the dynamics between Jane and I during our last conversation) and would cautiously suggest that this was because we were beginning to build a relationship. Russell (2002) refers to this as the concept of ‘relationality’ which:

acknowledges the connectedness between researcher and participant and excludes any recognition of subject or object as constructed within the positivist paradigm. (Russell, 2002)

Within this study the challenges of utilising ‘dialogic or conversational interviews’ were highlighted particularly when working with younger participants who were newer to the profession (although this may have been coincidental). I felt that in these cases the researcher/researched power dynamics were more pronounced and this may also have impacted upon the research process - I felt at times there was a desire to give me the ‘right’ answer (Eira for example). Reflection upon this has led me to question just how dialogical this process was and at times how much ‘co-construction’ was taking place?

Academics have proposed a need for qualitative researchers to create ‘empathetic’ and ‘open’ environments (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998) in which power equality can be established in an ‘unstructured, informal, anti-authoritative, and non hierarchical atmosphere,’ leading to a ‘feeling of intimacy’ (Karnieli- Miller *et al.*, 2009, p. 280). However, Kvale (1996) has tempered this by arguing that the ‘warm’ nature of qualitative interviews might also mask power differences which may remain invisible during the dialogic process. I have to concur that at times I was painfully aware that the power was firmly in my own hands. This has implications for the construction of future research. Consequentially, I would propose that a dialogic model of research needs to be steeped in relationships which are based upon mutual respect- this does not mean that you have to be in agreement with ‘the other’ but that you are open to the possibility of sharing an understanding or perspective. I found that without any prior relationship this was

challenging. In practice this does not mean that research can only be undertaken with colleagues but that there is a need for a rapport-building period of time (Ceglowski, 2000; Goodwin, Pope, Mort, & Smith, 2003). However, the dilemma here is that this has major implications for funding.

11.8.3 The Use of Bernstein's concept of framing

Despite the fact that the Bernsteinian concepts of classification and framing were useful in making initial distinctions between pedagogical practices at the same time this did not always capture the complexity of the data. This was particularly the case with the Category Three projects. Bernstein's description of invisible pedagogy resonated with these participants (Category Three) in as much as that there was an emphasis upon cross curricula ways of working and there also tended to be:

implicit rather than explicit control over the child by the teacher (and reduced emphasis on the transmission and acquisition of specific skills (Bernstein, 1975, p.1)

At the same time Bernstein (1975) also associated invisible pedagogy with:

relatively free activity by the child in exploring and rearranging an environment arranged by the teacher(p.1)

This latter descriptor held congruence with a 'stand back and watch' position and resonated with some of the continuous provision noted within some settings. However, analysis of the role of the teacher within the Category Three construction signified more complexity. Whilst these interactions (see 10.4) might be classified as loosely framed and less visible when compared to the other categories, this was not the 'stand back and watch,' Piagetian stance that Bernstein (1996) seemed to allude to. This was because the role assumed by the participants appeared to be more interactive than an invisible classification would signify and within the examples presented practitioners were able to grasp the 'learning moments' and 'surf it' (Dahlberg and Moss, 2010, p. xii). My argument here is that in these cases there appeared to be conceptual 'space' for the participants to reflect upon the learning taking place, and to subsequently frame their role accordingly.

At different times these interactions might be described as 'child initiated and teacher framed' and at others 'teacher initiated and child framed.' Whilst

Bernstein's invisible pedagogy draws explicitly from a developmental psychological position, I would tentatively theorise that at times the roles assumed by Category Three participants (notably Ffion) may be indicative of a move towards a socio cultural theoretical position in terms of the role of the teacher which *my* use of a Bernsteinian analysis did not fully capture.

11.9 Impact of the research process upon ME, the researcher

I can't go back to yesterday because I was a different person then. (Carroll, 2013, no page)

Freire (1993) has argued that a critical reflexive process can be transformative and just as engaging with pedagogical documentation as an educator had made me consider how I positioned myself as a teacher; this process has also forced re-consideration of my position as a researcher. Whilst Rinaldi (2006) indicates that the Reggio educator (and therefore Reggio researcher) should suspend all judgements when engaging in analysis, I have found this impossible. My original framework built around the project literature, has remained with me as a point of reference. Further I maintain that my ways of 'seeing' and of 'interpreting' the data have been coloured and shaped by my experiences of the world, which resonate with the discourses in circulation. My own experiences as a teacher (and a learner) have also acted as frames of reference informing my own 'acts of interpretation,' in relation to making sense of pedagogical practices within different project interpretations. On reflection the similarities between my own meaning making sensibilities and those of my participants is stark: they have also drawn upon *their own* frames of reference to make sense of the term project, underpinned by particular epistemological positions and theoretical assumptions (even if they might not always have been consciously aware of this). I would theorise that without our *own* context laden frames of reference how would we make sense of the world(s) in which we are situated?

Whilst writing this last chapter I have reflected upon my reasons for beginning this journey. As the introduction outlined, I was confused by the range of pedagogical practices which I saw under the 'project' umbrella, which were incongruent with my own understanding of the term. I have to concede that a

possible initial aim was to prove that my interpretation of projects was *right*. Engaging with this process however, has led me to adopt a position which does not see the world in such black and white terms, there are differences in interpretations shaped by a multiplicity and complex set of ways of seeing and interpreting; perhaps, the most fundamental change then has been to my own epistemological position which is now strongly aligned with a constructionist stance, perhaps I have experienced a paradigm shift.

11.10 Projects as a palimpsest

This thesis has outlined how the term project has been used over time to describe a range of pedagogical practices. Projects are consequentially viewed as a pedagogical construct; a construct with a particular meaning contextualised by time and place; different constructs are agreed and promoted by given groups of people (policy makers, educationalists, teachers) in order to satisfy different political, epistemological and philosophical positions but also need to be interpreted at the individual level: individual LEAs, individual schools and ultimately individual teachers - and in this way there is a layering of interpretation...a construct of a construct of a construct...this highlights the instability of language and the complexity of the context laden meaning making process.

In this way the shifts in project constructions resonate with the analogy of a palimpsest: In her post structural work Bronwyn Davies, (1993, p.11) has explained how 'palimpsest' was used to describe the process by which ancient parchments were recycled and written over. In some places on the parchment the original texts would, over time be completely erased; other parts of previous texts would still be visible, although only a partially detectable trace. At the same time the new messages would become more prominent.

This analogy is useful in representing the changing meaning of projects: as time has passed different discourses have emerged, become dominant or residual. At different times (and within different contexts) these discourses may have acted as determining factors in the shaping of the different project constructions recounted within this thesis: The democratic discourse of Hadow with its subsequent

emphasis upon collaborative problem solving is now barely visible and the child centred discourse so prevalent within Plowden seems to be in the process of fading. These shifts in discourses have consequently helped to determine the positions offered to the teacher within the boundaries of the ‘project’ and the subsequent positions offered to the child.

At the beginning of this chapter Humpty Dumpty asked ‘which is to be master?’ (Carroll, 1872, p. 189); it appears that within the project constructions witnessed within my study the new ‘master’ may have become a targets driven agenda amalgamated with a sprinkling of developmental psychology. There appears to have been a shift from the dominant discourses of progressivism and democracy, now only left as a trace. I have suggested within this chapter that I may have personally experienced a paradigm shift during the process of this PhD - mirroring my own experienced my data suggests that projects as a pedagogical construct may have experienced a paradigmatic shift of their own. Sarah Chicken May 2nd 2014.

11.11 Agenda for future research

As this study draws to a close I am left with another set of questions which I would like to offer as a future agenda for research *with* teachers:

1. Further exploration of the relationship between pedagogical terminology (signifier) and pedagogical practices (signified) within the early years, with a focus upon the following questions:
 - What are the processes through which pedagogical terminology is interpreted? What are the implications for the policy to practice trajectory?
2. Further exploration of the role of the teacher within early years settings with a particular focus upon the following questions:
 - What is the role of the socio cultural teacher when situated within settings where targets and outcomes are prioritised through different micropractices?
 - What is the role of the teacher within the Foundation Phase particularly within pedagogical practices which aim to facilitate levels of child autonomy and nurture the thinking competences of children?

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Appendix One: Consent letters - teachers

Dear

I am a Senior Lecturer at the University West of England, Bristol where I train teachers and have many years experience in the local area as a primary teacher. I am also currently enrolled as a research student have been CRB checked. The aim of my doctoral research is to explore how 'projects' are interpreted across a range of settings within the context of Foundation Phase classrooms. It is anticipated that any participants are currently utilising projects or 'project work' within their own classrooms.

Data collection might include:

- Documentary evidence from past/ongoing projects illustrative of *your* understanding of the term
- A number of short conversations
- I may also make observations of project sections specified by my participants but this is not compulsory.
- Any other information which you think may shed light on how projects are utilised within your classrooms.

This research is exploratory and is in no way judgemental. The data will be stored securely and will only be available to myself and my supervisor. All data used in the thesis and in any subsequent publications or dissemination of the findings will be properly anonymised. Once the research is complete the data will be stored in a secure environment.

It is necessary under ethical codes of conduct for written consent to me obtained before entering the classrooms (see attached slip below). Please also be aware that you are free to withdraw from this research at any point.

If you have any queries at all you can contact me at any time on one of the following numbers, or via email as given below:

Home: Tel no.

Mobile: Tel no.

With many thanks for your support with this research,

Sarah Chicken

Sarah.Chicken@uwe.ac.uk

I give my consent for Sarah Chicken to undertake the research as described above and understand the confidentiality that has been assured.

Name:

School:

Signed:

Appendix Two: Loose initial interview schedule

Possible lines of enquiry for interviews (not in a specific order)

Can you give a brief description of your career history, outlining any significant experiences?

Can you give some examples of how projects are used within your setting?

Can you describe a typical group session from a recent project?

Why have you chosen to use projects?

During a project what do you want children to achieve??

At the end of a project what do you want children to have experienced??

What are the benefits/limitations of using projects within your setting ?

How are projects planned? When? By Whom? Why?

How do projects start?

Do you have an opportunity to reflect upon what is happening during projects? Why?

How much room is there for moving away from original plans? Can you give an example?

Do you ever change direction because of what children say or appear to be interested in??

Can you give a specific example?

How are children organised during projects sessions together?

How are projects assessed/judged/evaluated? Why? By whom? When?

How do projects fit in with your understanding of the Foundation Phase?

Appendix Three: An example of Interview data with initial comments

Interview 1 008

2 teachers present –

Year Efa and Jane

mixed year one/year two

MS3

So is it possible to tell me a little bit about your background? Don't be afraid! I am trying to gauge an understanding of what 'project' means in different settings and I am not making good/bad judgments. I am interested in what you have to say

Efa I did an education and English literature degree in Cardiff and then a PGCE in primary in XXXXX

Jane I did a degree in education studies and science and a pgce all in England and I qualified in 2004. Working here in Wales is almost like It is like retraining again, sort of like going back to what I used to do when I was younger, we have gone **back** to this **topic**...we used to do like history and we would do like the great fire of London for a couple of weeks, it never used to be really broad and across everything.....and at the moment we are doing 'around the world'

Comment [S1]: Back to previous 'topicky' practice..What does this mean? Why? Need to go back to this

And so how what would you say a project is within the context of your school? How might you define the term?

Efa OOOOh, Topics, I mean projects originate from children's ideas or interests , what children want to know and find out about, cross referenced with both the Foundation Phase 'Areas of learning' and a 'skills framework,' you know for example 'Around the World.' You know a cross curricula way of working, the central theme filtered through everything else, that is how our projects are here.

So 'around the world' did that come from you or...?

Efa They were really interested in this, yeah, really engaged and then we sat down together (with Jane) and thought you know we could use this (area) and cover knowledge and understanding, some literacy, maths, so yeah a useful topic, so it comes from the children really, we tend to sit them down and we have some rough ideas in our heads of what they might like to do and we talk it over with them about the produce throughout the school when we start the **topic**, we have a general idea and we discuss it and if we think that they seem interested we say 'yes, let's go with that **topic**

Comment [S2]: Topic and projects used interchangeably here

And we plan together, we have PPA together we do short and long term planning as a year group and once we have a **topic** we do what do we **KNOW**, so what do we **know** about places around the world we have a sit down and brain storming session, what do they **know** about different countries, have they ever been there or just try and get down a starting point for a **project** and then we do what we do what do we want to find out, at the start of every **project** the teacher will sit down with the children across the school and ask what do we **know** and what do want find out? And then we try to use this (the brain storm) to inform our planning and draw up a mind map. So we might say they want to do this and we think how we can fit this into our **project** under the different areas of learning and get stuff covered.

Comment [S3]: Emphasis upon 'knowing'?

And do you revisit this web/brainstorm?

Efa Yes, we revisit this at the end and we say right have we learnt about what kind of food they eat in different countries, the animals around the world...so it really does **come** from the children

Comment [A4]: What comes from the children? The theme? The questions? The activities?

So would this be different from a topic kind of approach? Or is this different to what you did before the Foundation Phase?

Efa Well I have only been teaching for three years so it is hard to say but when I was doing supply I was at schools where there were no **topic, projects** or anything at all and the only **projects** were the old one that came out of national curriculum subjects like history

Jane and I have only been teaching in Wales for two years and I was teaching the Foundation Stage in England for two years in a reception also so it was quite similar but I did teach year two before that.

So if you are working on the same projects would your classes be the same?

Efa we put them both out together to do our medium term planning

Jane No, we try to put them both out (the mind maps) and see where we could fit.....so we both have food and we try to fit them together

And so if the children have questions that they come up with during the project would they be included?

Both Yes

And does this happen very often?

Efa Not really, occasionally but we are quite good at ...well the children are quite independent here **and** when they do come up with questions we will say we will make a note of it and then come back to it and they are quite good at doing their own research, using the booksAnd we make it an enhance task and we might say well can you go and find and come back and tell us about it? And they can go on the internet or in the library...

Comment [S5]: Planning of projects?

And are the project sessions timetabled?

Efa It runs through everything, so if I show you the plans....this is the way that we interpret this.

Comment [S6]: What does this mean?

So we were doing places round the world and this is our medium term planning for our second autumn term, so **knowledge** and understanding of the world and these are the weeks and obviously it was Christmas so it was a bit different **but** based on things they said...they said that they **know** about Scotland, Wales, England and Ireland and that made up the uk but that was about it and so we looked at things like airports in GB and decided that they wanted an airport in the role-play area and that **linked** in with that and all **trying to link** it in and we look at products round the world and where did our food come from so had the maps out and the internet and so that goes under our places and people, and then we did plants and animals and then the effects of the seasons and climates so we looked at hibernation, migration and different animals and we are trying to **feed** it back to the **projects**.

Comment [S7]: Knowing and knowledge

Comment [A8]: For Efa at least this is a central theme, linking back learning to the central theme, **topic, project**...why does she think that this is so important?

Comment [A9]: This idea of **feeding** back to the 'mother ship' runs through this interview

And you said that this was not successful can you say something about this and what makes a successful project?

Jane it was too broad

Efa I think perhaps that...yes it was too broad and I thought this pretty much as soon as we had started..far too broad and yet you live and **learn**

Comment [S10]: What does 'too broad mean? In terms of????

And how long was it planned to last?

Efa well..this one was a term and the next one over two terms because a half term is not quite enough to get into it and the next one is Birds

Why?

Efa Different reasons really..... We are visiting a museum and.....

Jane And they are really into animals

Efa Yes and we were doing this they wanted to **know** about the animals in different countries and so animals is too broad and we have narrowed this down and in January will do the brainstorm, what do you **know**, what do you want to find out, where would you like to visit and a trip out to start with and yes they are so interested in animals and this is too **broad**

Comment [S11]: Knowing.....

Is there a difference between a topic and project approach for you?

Efa hmm...well people use the terms interchangeable but people would argue that they are different...I don't **know** (hmm)...I think that they are the same really.....not sure (silence)..hmm...not sure

I am interested in what different terms mean...

Efa Well it would be worth asking some of the members of our staff because you go on some courses and they say '**projects**' and everyone goes (sucks in breath) and then you go on another course and they say **topics** and everyone goes (sucks in breath)...really but don't they both mean the same thing as long as you are **doing**.....

Comment [A12]: Meaning of words.....
Link between terms and practice?

Jane Yeah, the same thing

Efa And we have one TA in each class, full time and there is a lot of group work and in the **projects**...so we don't like the old national curriculum standing at the front, 'chalk and talk', then everyone does the same...we don't do that so on Monday afternoons it is the **Knowledge and Understanding** afternoon so the year group gets together and they are in three groups and one group goes to forest school and one group does one of these **projects** and then the other person will do the geography aspect..to use the old fashion terms...i mean people and places, **people** so the groups rotate and within that we are in here if I did a brief I put on the carpet I might have a small group investigating and then I might work with other children and there will also be enhanced and continuous provision set up. It is quite hard to explain. So we swap....

Comment [A13]: Importance of using the correct language?

So it is on a rotation system? Are they grouped together because of particular interests or because of friendships or??

Efa For maths and language ability across the two classes and they are streamed and we do assessments at the beginning of the year, in the afternoon we are mixed ability for **knowledge** and understanding and art and craft .. Just mixed ability, random, in the morning they are very much set by ability and so it nice for them in the afternoon to work with different children and because we have year ones and twos, more confident and less confident but often they rotate.

Do the arts and art baseddoes this come in here too?

Jane fruit salad

Efa why fruit salad?

Jane Foods from around the world

Efa Hmm...yes that was the DT

They think about this for some time whilst looking through their planning folders

Efa yes and sometimes the hard thing is **linking it back** without it being tenuous, but we kind of have to put in some things like art in Australia or music from some parts of the world but they might not have said this so we have to do this..... you **know** they might not have said anything for the creative and so we have to help them

Comment [A14]: Linking back a theme here, seems convergent

Comment [A15]: Epistemological shudder.

View of arts, challenges of fitting this in
in the light of the way art based media is viewed as a central tool within the **project** constructions witnessed within the schools of Reggio Emilia

BUT would they have noted this if I did not ask specifically?

Efa because... these projects lend themselves really well, to some things, really well like maths but something like the creative bit, the music, art - is sometimes difficult. So we might have

to say when we are doing 'Around the world,' perhaps we should listen to music from around the world. (Jane, I1,MS3)

Jane Sometimes (with art and music) the hard thing is linking it back (to the theme) without it being tenuous, but we kind of have to put in some things like in the 'Around the World' project, art in Australia or music from some parts of the world

Efa And we send home newsletters at the beginning of the terms so all of the parents **know** what we are doing the **topics** and then parents then will send things in and may come in...one of my mum was an air stewardess and she sent in things and they can share **knowledge**.

And where does forest school fit it?

Efa **yes trying to fit it in really**.....I am trying to think of examples...hmm. We did making bug houses and planting bulbs but again it is not...this is why this has not worked it is too board...not so many **links**...although it is lovely and sometimes is its better when things do not go well because you think well I won't do that again!

Comment [A16]: Again convergent?

Comment [S17]: Fit everything in. Skills? Content? What?

And were you using a similar approach in your English classroom?

Jane Yes, with reception

Efa We plan together and we try to meet with the TAs but they are not involved we asks them what they think and how we can expand and try to discuss it as a team really bit on a Tuesday morning it is only us and the TAs are in the class with **the** PPA teachers as they **know** the children the best.

Comment [A18]: More important than being involved in planning

Efa there is a timetable of everything too to **ensure coverage and we** can also use PPA time for observations and assessments.

Comment [S19]: Of?

So when you are doing projects what is it that you are trying to achieve? The reasons behind this?

Jane To increase children's **knowledge** and understanding of what goes on around them....and what they **know** and to broaden what they **know**.

Comment [S20]: Knowing and knowledge again

Do you know what that knowledge is going to be before you start?

Jane you have some but until you have questioned the children...what you thought could be completely different.

So what role do the children play? (Silent) are the projects child initiated? Child led? Or..

Efa Child led definitely, sometimes we find that when we sit down they sometimes do **not** have much of an idea and we have to plant the seed and see what they do with it

Comment [A21]: This idea of planting seeds seems to be recurring to a number of the **projects**.planting the seeds in terms of...? Look back at the data of other participants

Jane but sometimes we have our ideas and theirs might be different

Efa yes they wanted an airport and we thought great airport sand they can learn about all these different places and

Jane And it was never ending

Efa ...We researched it on the internet and books and some children had been to airport and we got them to share what they knew and then we started making the things and then they lost interest..it seemed like a great idea at the start and we thought that it was going to be great and they were going to love it but then they **lost** interest and fizzled out and so it is time to change now

Comment [A22]: Why?

So what is your role within projects?

Efa Oh.....oh...Its hard(silence) and I suppose the idea would be this is what the children want to find out

Jane And this is what we will do

Efa Yes this is what we will do...but then you have people saying...well I have you covered everything? And I would LOVE to do everything through what the children want to do and go to town on this BUT at the end of the day you have people saying have you covered everything, have you done this or that, have you followed the schemes of work so I suppose it is a kind of a balance between making sure you get coverage in all the different areas and actually doing something that the child is interested in and is child led because at the end of the day the better **topics** and the better learning comes out of what the children are interested in and we have had lovely **projects** in the **past** we did in food and we had a bakery and a fruit and veg shop and they adored this and EVERYTHING came out of it, maths weighing and factions and all sorts and cooking with the fruit ...but **THIS one...I don't know** but that's the thing really if they want to go with something then you go with it and then well you do the best you can

Comment [A23]: Epistemological shudder

Dilemma, balance as in Plowden but feels as if a moving away from Hadow and problem solving.....is there a tension here?

So you say we have these things to cover.....where do these things come from?

Efa We follow a scheme of work for maths which is changing ...that's from the LEA, it might have come from the national curriculum but it is quite detailed and we have schemes for language written in school and this is the same for reception and nursery

Jane and the long term planning kind of **feeds** into the **projects**

So when the children are put into groups why is this? Is it classroom management strategy or...

Efa a bit of both really....its....Well you can have quiet children and if they are with other quiet children then this doesn't do anything for them so we try and pick out children with strength, good listening or speaker and this helps them and we do change the groups around, it is nice for them to mix, more confident with less confident.

Jane and you find out what they **know**

Comment [A24]: A pattern from Jane

Efa And sometimes you have children who cling to each other and this is not healthy ...it is good for them to work with different groups and dynamics. And because they are mixed up all

the time so they mix better..... they can work with anyone....and that is the foundation phase, working in small groups with others

Comment [A25]: Nc whole class fp small groups?

School policy not to have worksheets across the school

And what is the thinking behind this?

Efa a move away from the sort of all sitting down and towards more practical things and we do record some things in books and extended writing but more practical, 'get up and do'...here's a sheet about measuring, well ok let's not do a sheet let's just get up and do some measuring with a clip board....I **know** if I was six and someone said there is a sheet fill it in or do the weighing, would you like a weighing scales? I **know** what I would prefer

Jae and with the sheet what would they have learnt?

Efa yes because the worksheet kind of takes you on a different road than a more practical based curriculum I suppose

How do the six FP outcomes sit with a lay based curriculum?How do the six FP outcomes sit with what you are doing?

Efa in some ways I find it easier because when you look at the outcomes and think can they do this well I have actually SEEN them do it and if they had done a worksheet then how would I **know** if they understand it...so if they are weighing I have seen them do it, it is almost easier because it is practical and I can remember when you did that and you did it really well and you struggled a little bit...perhaps it is because I am not used to working with worksheets, I can't imagine having lots of children filling in worksheets and then thinking can I tell because you have filled in a worksheet whether you have got it

Comment [S26]: This needs further unpicking

Jane And that is what I have found working in my small group, you **KNOW** what they are doing and if they are stuck you can help and your TA has a group as well.

Interrupted by school secretary

Have you been influenced or are you aware of any project interpretations?

Quiet

Have you been on any courses?

Efa Not really no

So where has your idea come from?

Efa I am not sure really perhaps EJ would be the person to speak to..I am not sure historically, but this is how it has been done since I have been here (3 years), you **know** cross curricula, filtered through, that is how our **projects** are, you **know** I do **know** other teachers who have **project** afternoons, which we may do occasionally, we might have children all working on

Comment [S27]: Is this a theme of this construction?

food, art work etc. but mostly the **project** stuff goes in through the planning and kind of filters through everything really.

Efa At the end we do another (brain storm).....this is what knew, this is what we wanted to **know** and find out and have we? Tell me what you have learnt...I didn't **know** that and we have a big discussion, what did you learn? And class books that go in the library which is a nice way of assessing the **projects** or part of the **project**.

Jane its quite nice just talking to children and finding out...you **know** we might have led them off and then they have gone home and looked at a book and do you **know** wow...

What is the difference between continuous and enhanced provision?

Efa **Continuous provision** is out all the time and children are free to choose and **Enhanced provision**.....is continuous provision where we put something related to the **topics** or to maths and English so that it enhances what we have already taught or learnt or perhaps what we are going to teach and we have little boards with questions of challenges so we were doing phonic words and they were buried in the sand but they could play with the sand if they want to and the children love them and a minute timer how many adds add take aways in a minute..they love it and if you watch them you can see what they are interested.....coins in the sandpit..they like digging for buried stuff! It is **knowing** your **children** at the start we did some enhanced provision which fell really flat...but our children like a challenge.it is **knowing** what your children like...and they are competitive in a healthy way and that is the nice thing about the FP they are very enthusiastic about stuff and they are not frightened to have a go, if they get in wrong it doesn't matter and I remember being in schools and saying we are going to do and painting today and the children would say....well I don't want to paint my hand, would be paint me, paint me and so willing to have a go....so **knowing** what they like doing which interest them..t is an interest trap..they are changed fortnightly when we do the planning.

Comment [A28]: Interesting if **knowing** children is important difficult to plan in advance

And what happens with questions?

Efa Try to... Well often they ask random questions o the carpet and if we have a spare five minutes, if I don't **know** the answer, or have something to show them then I will say let's put the white board on and we can find out

Efa You know I was trained nc and fp was just coming in..I have been here three years and a year of supply..I qualified in 2006ish...most of what I know about the FP is working in it...until you are actually immersed in it...I read **about** this and had all the documents...but I had a **completely** different idea about what it was until you get into schools

Comment [A29]: Epistemological shudder...

what did she think it was before...immersion

So what was your idea before.....what was it about (the FP)?

Efa so from what I heard and from what I had read and was in the public domain at the time it was coming in, it was VERY play based and very free and very and didn't focus on the balance all most...and I think that a lot of people who I talk to still don't understand that yes we are doing the foundation phase and it is a **fabulous** curriculum and yes it is play based, it

is practical, it is getting the children up to do things and it's the outdoors and all thatbut at the end of the day the children **need** to read and write, there **needs** to be standards ...it is almost..Some schools have gone whole hog into it and thrown the baby out with the bathwater, we are going to learn through play, just play....and we are going to learn through experiential learning and we get to the end of the year and we are like..hmmm.....have we covered that...can they spell? Can they read? So it is almost a balance of this lovely curriculum but making sure because at the **end** of the day that is what we are here for..for making sure that the children achieve their **potential**. Unless you still have your mind on the standards at when they **are** I know...

Comment [A30]: default position of a relatively new teacher who has only worked under the FP. Contradiction in terms of other points made...or perhaps not? Needs exploration.

Comment [A31]: In terms of?

Comment [A32]: Something about assessment here?

Standards of...

Efa you know the outcomes at the end of the year and not just for recording them and sending them to the LEA BUT for themselves really...to make sure they achieve...you know...

Efa We are skills based... a skills based curriculum so when we are assessing the children we are not saying right can they tell me where these animal's come from? can they name me this that or the other? It is do they have the skills and have we taught them the skills that if they needed to find something out they can..//that is why we use these skills progression ladders...almost these and our planning is a way of covering the **skills**...and at the end of the year it is difficult to say do the KNOW this because we don't know what the topics will be but the skills are covered

Comment [A33]: Similar to Carys in pilot and Mari?...Go back and look at their data again.

HT enters and the teachers have to leave for another meeting.

Initial thinking.....

- Projects are.....Cross curricula???
- Feeding back to central theme is a theme here
- Relationships
- Knowledgeable as 'knowing stuff' particularly Jane
- Use of projects and topics interchangeably
- Recognition that terms are **contentious**?
- Interesting points made about arts made subjects not fitting in naturally particularly interesting in the light of Reggio projects
- EFA - Fp group work nc whole class teaching
- Changing 'vocab' and discourses note Efa's apologetic stance when using geography as **opposed** to people and places

Comment [S34]: Jane says very little during the first interview and there is a very heavy emphasis upon the need for children to know and gain knowledge and her role as a teacher in helping them to do so

Comment [S35]: Something about the 'correct' official language being important...something about Foucault here?

Comment [A36]: 'does knowing and using the 'correct term' validate us as teachers//'

Look at Mari's data again– similar here in the status given to vocab which is deemed as being 'correct' .Does this language govern us or do we through our interpretations govern the language.....

Acts of interpretation.....

Appendix Four: An example of early data analysis

Mari, MS4 Visit 1,

Personal Background	<p>Degree in sociology at XXXXX university in 1970s and then a PGCE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3 years as a reception teacher 2. 8 years at a school teaching a cross infant age range 3. science advisory teacher 4. DH in LH School (the experience) <i>taught me a lot, it was a very good school and the head teacher was fantastic and before her time...you know they already had the stages of development in literacy and numeracy?</i> 5. HT current school for 14 years <p>Described herself as a creative child e.g. dress making, (I1)</p> <p><i>I am a creative teacher... a good all rounder...able to think outside of the box</i></p> <p>Childhood experiences seem very important to thinking as a teacher</p> <p><i>this 100 languages is SO important for everyone to express themselves and this is because of my own experiences I was a very intelligent child, I come from a one parent family, quite an impoverished background but I went to grammar school and education for me raised...it was very important to me... but I was really too afraid to say anythingI was suppressed...I did all these formal things...I should have done dance (American accent)and drama etc and as a person this would have been better for me on a personal and emotional level. (I1)</i></p>	<p>Comment [A37]: Explore in conversation two the idea of a staged theory of learning seems to be an informant to M's thinking and also to the way in which she understands and constructs projects...that is to say that developmental psychology may be her 'regime of truth' – can this be explored? What is the connection here with self expression and creativity are these competing discourses? What is my evidence here?</p>
Project examples.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Charlotte's Web 2. Peter Pan 3. Narnia 4. The Wizard of Oz 5. Oliver 6. Lion King 7. Mary Poppins(I1) 	<p>Comment [A38]: Needs exploration in conversation two, this seemed almost painful for M to talk about</p>
Referenced influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reggio 	<p>Comment [A39]: How do these pre-planned projects sit with the Reggio projects Mari claims to have been influenced by?</p>

‘Evidence’ – data strand		
Epistemology Knowledge as:	<p>Predefined as suggested by strong emphasis upon planning towards predefined outcomes?</p> <p>Children learning through stages of development in a cross disciplinary manner, certain subjects may fall outside of this e.g. numeracy but where possible they should be linked back in.</p>	<p>Comment [A40]: How is planning understood her? What happens if there is no planning?</p>
What is a project?	<p><i>A project links all of the areas together ...it is...holistic approach... the project is the context for learning and (has) linkedness and wholeness (I1)</i></p> <p>A project is pre-planned for the whole school</p> <p><i>It is linking learning...to link this together to make sense of something...it is like what you are doing now...you want to make sense of project work...and this is what I want to do for the child because the child does not learn like that (I1)</i></p> <p><i>it is (the project) wonderful for teaching children text and what you can gain from the story and it takes the children to another place and to enrich their minds which is the greatest gift (I1)</i></p> <p>A topic involves an individual child’s ‘line of enquiry’</p> <p><i>...it is an investigation that springs from a child’s interest (like space) and you can have topics within the projects and then what is important is to follow the child’s interest...(I1)</i></p>	<p>Hadow</p> <p>Plowden</p> <p>Katz and Ch</p> <p>Comment [A41]: Why do activities have to link to a single theme? Is this divergent/convergent? Does this matter?</p> <p>Comment [A42]: The idea of ‘linkedness’ is a theme throughout this interview – why is this important to Mari and her construction of projects?</p> <p>Comment [A43]: clarify...learn like what?</p> <p>Comment [A44]: She speaks very passionately here and again almost with pain as when discussing how she was suppressed. Is there a connection?</p> <p>Comment [A45]: Topic and projects seem to have ‘flipped’ from the description in the literature – what does this suggest?</p>
What constitutes a relevant context?	<p>A context based on a text which facilitates cross curricula learning experiences?, offering ‘rich learning experiences (I1)</p> <p>Offer motivation and engagement</p>	<p>Comment [A46]: clarify...?</p>
How are project areas decided upon and started?	<p>Projects have been triated over 14 years</p> <p><i>I have ALWAYS taught through projects so I KNOW what works well and what doesn’t... (I1)</i></p> <p>Projects need to be engaging and to provide a ‘good learning context?’ (I1)</p>	<p>Comment [A47]: The data of a participant at another school is brought to mind here. Freya had said that her thinking had changed throughout her career and that it had ‘evolved’.</p>
How do children learn?	<p>In stages of development – very clear on this point (I1)</p> <p>Child also learns through cross curricular experiences</p> <p><i>that is what I would say is the philosophy of the school, you have medium term targets and your outcomes from the Foundation phase and the skills ladders</i></p> <p><i>The stages are our bread and butter, our building blocks. This gives you a framework - it isn’t just loose and in this way I know that I will get good results</i></p>	<p>Strongly reminiscent of Hadow</p> <p>And Plowden</p> <p>Comment [A48]: which is?</p> <p>Comment [S49]: Stages and ages</p>

<p>Role of adult</p>	<p>'Facilitator', 'Coach', 'Trainer' (11)</p> <p>of both staff and children</p> <p>Adult needs to plan activities which will enable children to reach specific learning outcomes and then to assess against these outcomes.... (11)</p> <p><i>I think that I am a good teacher you ask these questions and you follow lines of enquiry...you pose questions and you answer questions</i></p> <p><i>There are definite skills where you can intervene with children, your expectations can be higher and I do think you can get them there, they can be taught.....</i></p>	<p>Hadow's simple project</p>	<p>Comment [A50]: DP discourse?</p> <p>Comment [A51]: But is thisTowards certain knowledge...e.g. the outcome which you have planned for?</p> <p>Comment [A52]: Do you already know the answers? What is the process of dialogue here between adults and children?</p>
<p>Role of the child</p>	<p><i>children have to be taught, ...(they) learn from their environment but they also have to be taught</i></p>	<p>Hadow Plowden</p>	<p>Comment [A53]: What are these?</p> <p>Comment [A54]: What do they have to be taught? Who decides this? Where do projects fit into this picture?</p>
<p>Role of the social group</p>	<p>Children are put into groups based on 'stages of development' for numeracy and literacy as a time management strategy and to facilitate :</p> <p><i>'a clear focus for the group and you have a learning objective, through the planning and you assess, observe and evaluate against that learning objective</i></p> <p><i>I do think that it is good at times to group them by their stages of development and at other times they can learn together..... art and DT, and learning environments and music...they learn from one</i></p>		<p>Comment [A55]: Use of 'government' discourse , Moss's discourse of 'regulatory modernity'</p> <p>Comment [A56]: Is there an example?</p>
<p>Planning of projects</p>	<p>Preplanning is seen as VERY important without this how will teachers know what they are meant to be teaching or be able to be judge if this has been successful?</p> <p>Projects are planned around a four year cycle, viewed as the medium term planning</p> <p>each project involves the whole school and lasts a term</p> <p><i>I plan all of the projects, decide on the topic. All our projects are based around quality literacy texts, you know like Peter Pan or the Wizard of Oz. I have worked in this way for years and so every time we return to a particular topic I can add to the bank of resources or activities. I rotate them every four years and every child is involved, from nursery to year two.</i></p> <p><i>'teachers have a six week planner and have medium term targets for the week.....they are the outcomes they want the children to reach and then down the side they have the areas of development and then they have their focus for each week and as much as we can we link everything and we evaluate and staff are taking children with them to that outcome'</i></p> <p><i>'I have a four year curriculum plan of the projects so I know what goes well where and of course then you go in at the skill level of the children'</i></p>		<p>Comment [A57]: Again language in play is very much in line with government rhetoric:</p> <p>Outcomes Standards Objectives skills</p>

<p>Place within the curriculum</p>	<p>Art based part and 'freer' part of the curriculum?</p> <p><i>our artist is fantastic, brilliant...but she cannot plan and she is untidy and the staff need to know what is being planned but as an artist she is brilliant so I do the planning and think of outcomes and she does the creative bit she is also slow so I have to pace her and actually the same with the musician she wanted to plan for the reception but it was at the wrong level and the children were bored so I plan this now because you need both without the planning you will not have a creative, flexible learning environment if it is not planned properly.</i></p>	<p>Hadow, Plowden and C</p>	<p>Comment [A58]: What does this mean?</p> <p>Comment [S59]: Controlling creativity?</p>
<p>Type of activities</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working with the artist on diorama boxes, 2. songs and dance about theme e.g. dance like a spider. 3. in a story there was an annual fare and we are actually having our Christmas fare and so I planned it that the children are actually making the enterprise for a Christmas fare and CAN you imagine if you set the classroom p as a Christmas fare look at all of the opportunities that you have got, the maths for example, the maths games but I haven't seen much of that so ...I'm a bit disappointed but never mind 	<p>Hadow, Plowden</p>	<p>Comment [A60]: Emotional here gain: What was it about this experience that was disappointing?, Are there different discourses within this setting?</p>
<p>Role of research</p>	<p><u>Example of a child interested in space</u></p> <p><i>He could have his own book and we have excellent IT facilities which he knows how to use and he can Google and research and what he needs then the practitioner as a facilitator to aide his learning and he s a fluent reader and what I am doing is being a facilitator to aide his learning and put him in the right direction.</i></p>	<p>Similar to H Plowden</p>	<p>Comment [A61]: What does this mean?</p>
<p>Use of art and art based media</p>	<p>Artist and musician employed by school on a PT basis</p> <p>Children's art is exhibited</p> <p>Art as 'creative therapy' with the focus upon 'expression'</p> <p><i>they all do art EVERY child because of the hundred languages because I am so Reggio and I really believed in and there is so much that can be done and every child from the nursery up is involved</i></p> <p><i>'it is creative therapy...when you are working alongside children they will grow; there is no stress and you get to know them'.</i></p> <p><i>all I know is that there is this 100 languages that children need to express themselves and it goes away from sitting down in the classrooms and that is only one small aspect of a child's learning...it is a necessary aspect but only one aspect.</i></p> <p>But what is it about the hundred languages...what does this mean to you at this school?</p>	<p>The example below suggests not...art as of using knowledge taught. Dur the theme.. integrating mechanism line with Hadow</p>	<p>Comment [A62]: needs exploration ...what is creative therapy how does this link with a stage view of learning</p> <p>Comment [A63]: Lots of Reggio language here but are artist media used to explore and deepen the thinking of children in terms of conceptual understanding to questions which they have posed themselves/as a group ?</p> <p>Comment [A64]: Again, there seem to be competing discourses at play why is the 'sitting down' a necessary aspect?</p>

	<p>it's about the children... from their project work... expressing themselves...</p> <p>An example</p> <p>I wanted the children to draw the spider ...I want a detailed drawing... (I told them that) I want what you have learnt, the different parts of the spiders, the different shapes of the spider, the shapes of the spiders legs, the little spinneret and the bottom, the spiders eyes, so quality learning.. but if I asked them to write they will do it they haven't got the motivation or the interest or perhaps the skills, they haven't got that access in, so what we have to do as a school is to give them that access in as well..... there is no right or wrong answer, nothing is wrong you just have a go and constantly being able to take on suggestions and to improve and create that atmosphere for learning is wonderful, ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL...but you have to have a certain mindset to see that...(M fades off, whimsical, again almost sad)</p> <p><i>they all do art every child because of the hundred languages because I am so Reggio and I really believe in it</i></p> <p><i>We have a 'pedagogy of listening'</i></p> <p><i>'this 100 languages is SO important for everyone to express themselves and this is because of my own experiences I was a very intelligent child, I come from a one parent family, quite an impoverished background but I went to grammar school and education for me raised...it was very important to me but I was really too afraid to say anythingI was suppressed...I did all these formal things...I should have done dance (American accent)and drama etc and as a person this would have been better for me on a personal and emotional level and that is why I like Reggio because we are training children to have life skills, so when they become young adults it is a hard world and they need to be equipped, not only for school but to be independent'</i></p> <p><i>We use the Hundred languages of children, they are so important</i></p>	<p>Comment [A65]: What is quality learning? What is it about the arts that provides 'access in' and access in to what? a conflict???...I wanted them to....but there is not right or wrong answer</p> <p>Comment [A66]: What is this mindset? How do you get it? Why is it important?</p> <p>Comment [S67]: What does this mean within this context? Listening to.....?</p>
Documentation and display	<p>No documentation</p> <p>Display as a celebration?</p>	<p>Comment [A68]: Discuss this, display as what?</p>
assessment	<p>Need to assess against learning outcomes have children 'got it', before moving on</p>	
The Foundation Phase and Projects	<p>Is it easier or more difficult to work in this way under the FP?</p> <p><i>'A lot easier but I have always worked this way but I can do it now and the Welsh assembly has given us the money to do this and the ratio is superb so I do expect to see our standards maintained and even better'</i></p>	<p>Comment [A69]: Standards in terms of?</p>
Other areas for exploration	<p>Is there a space on the planning for them to do that? To follow the child's interests?</p> <p><i>I say in your plan I want to see personalized learning...haven't seen much.....something I</i></p>	<p>Comment [A70]: What does this mean? Where has this phrase come from?</p>

	<p>would like to aim for...it is really important</p> <p><i>It would be fantastic to be in a setting where everyone was in tune but..... this shows through with what the Welsh Assembly are saying that there are such interpretations not just between schools but within schools.</i></p> <p><i>Need to have the right mindset....to 'think outside the box' to value this way of working and 'I sometimes feel that you can't change people you have either got it or you haven't ...because I have been teaching for 35 years'.</i></p> <p>I've been teaching for 35 years and for the last 14 years I have been here and have <i>always</i> taught through projects so I <i>know</i> what works well and what doesn't and what is engaging for children and what will be a good learning context.</p>	
<p>key terms and themes in use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Quality work' • Digitilisation <p>Deep learning experiences <i>children in this school could tell you all about that spider's web and sing songs about the spider, they could draw and write and know about feelings the empathy that Charlotte had for Wilba.... they are our people of the future and you can't have these narrow minded people...society is changing and you need to be able to use what is around you and you can only do that by having this deep level understanding.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep level understanding – is this cross curricula? Knowing lots of information about the same 'topic'? • Linking learning • Quality work • A good learning context • Customized learning • Personalised learning • Linkedness • Standards in terms of levels in maths and language...finished projects? • Working in this way requires an 'understanding of learning'. • Difficulty when ethos is not shared 	

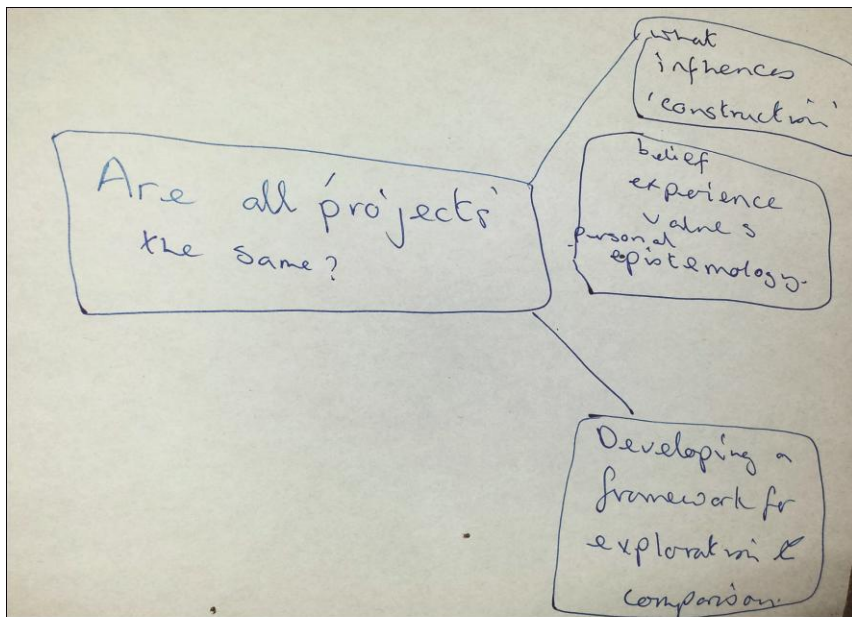
Comment [A71]: Why is this important? How might you get everyone 'in tune'?

Comment [A72]: Which is?

<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Epistemological shudders.....</p>	<p><u>Key themes emerging</u></p>
<p>Analysis One</p>	<p>Discourse of Reggio taken on and belief that participant is engaging within Reggio project work and this is her biggest influence 'I am Reggio'.....language having personal meaning (or no meaning?)</p>	<p><u>Language and use of language, the</u></p>

	<p>Trying to work within opposing ways of thinking about how children learn...viewed through this use of language..... impacting upon perceived role of teacher</p> <p>However, data suggests far closer congruence with other project constructions and practice which is in congruent to Reggio thinking. e.g. ability groups, targets, outcomes.....<i>child is stunted if the outcome is proposed in advance</i></p> <p>This case study appears to be highlighting the complexity of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy to practice divide 2. Role of interpretation in knowledge construction at the level of the individual? 3. Dominant discourses e.g. standards, outcomes, married with the hundred languages, personalised learning...buzz words??? Which become meaningless??? 	<p><u>meaning of words</u></p> <p>Explore some of the key terms used</p> <p>Do you think that you have changed at all as a teacher during the course of your career?</p>
<p>Analysis Two</p>	<p><u>Discourses</u></p> <p>Developmental psychology – stages and ages</p> <p>Creativity, wrapped around Reggio</p> <p>Power, Control and lack of control</p> <p>Competing discourses – developmental psychology/ creativity and Reggio – are these competing or complimentary?</p> <p>Lack of dialogue as a staff</p> <p>Dialogue with children?</p> <p>‘Buzz words’</p>	

Appendix Five: Documentation Boards



development
deep level
comes put

what you gain from the story... takes the child to another place and to enrich their minds is the greatest gift. (I, 202-214)

Teachers don't understand it - should it really last a term. (I, 260)

Projects and Topics ...

clipped see 101-106
- a topic

checklinks

a child representing what they 'know' and what they have learnt through drawing - a more appropriate medium than writing see (I, 165-181) and

ple (2 124-126)
mp le

Projects as....

creative but also ^{need to} covering curriculum (2,62)

cross curricular methods in which knowledge + skill can be transmitted.

Tightly framed.

→ knowing all about something spiders - Charlotte's web ... EVERYTHING ABOUT spiders' knowing everything because curricular is deep level

Skill development + conceptual dev (1, 16-17) 'It's perfect'

linking everything so you get learning (1,38)

-D a package too low.

word assessed is used instead of listen in I1, 40-41

Judging against stages of development I2, 26-33 DP

listening to the conceptual level of the child, maternal & linguistically...

school stages of development

assess ment against stages

'listening' as....

you have to listen to children can take their ideas (1, 187) but no room for this not everyone listens to school

There is a clear focus you have a learning
be planning & you assess, observe & eva
learning objective (1, 145-146)

learning process
as tidy &
controllable ...

you can't change
people, you have to
manage them' I 2,
line 140

CONTROL

Projects
learning
role as
headteacher.

Discourses as
complimentary
(2, 81-86)

Rigid frame
tight control

cannot be
'haphazard'
2, 34-37
example
of using
a kind of
wheel
before non
standards
DP

creativity,
language of
management

making discourses

learning as
'tidy' and
controllable
if planned correctly
POSITIVIST.

I know I
will get good
results. (2)

'loose'
no structure =
no building
blocks

If you change the words
in play is the practice diff

School D No, language changes but
I have been doing this for 35
years,
So ... practice similar, language
different Piaget assimilation-
accomodation.
I know....

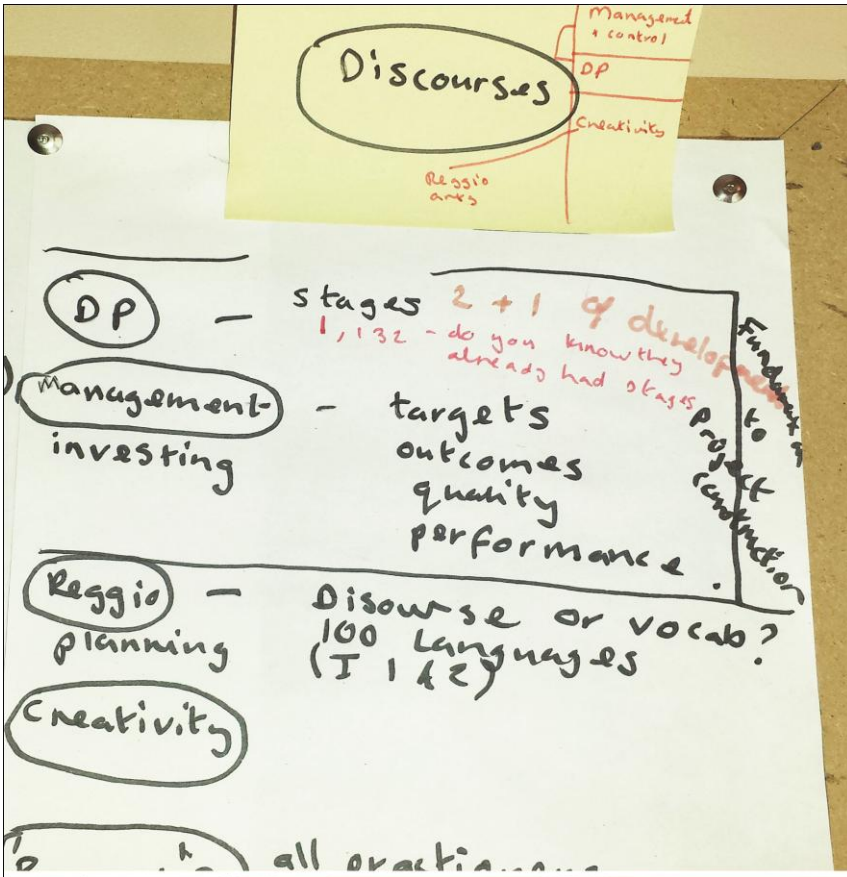
School C Consideration of what
language means
'words are banded about
but what do they mean?'

School A we did that when it
was 'in'.

School B Have to use the
correct term.

School D

overlapping frames +
discourses, sometimes con
which shape projects a
with a



Appendix Six: Consent - parents

Dear Parent

I am a Senior Lecturer at the University West of England, Bristol where I train teachers and have many years experience in the local area as a primary teacher. I am also currently enrolled as a research student and have been CRB checked. The aim of my doctoral (PhD) research is to explore the ways in which different teachers think about and support project work in early years classrooms.

As part of this study, I would like to undertake some research in your child's school. This will involve one observation of a teaching session where the children are undertaking project work. While the focus of this research is on the teacher and not on the children, nevertheless to understand what the teacher is doing, there may be occasions when the children's conversations with their teacher are audio- recorded and children may be photographed working on their projects. Further, samples of children's project work may be photographed or collected.

I wish to assure you that audio recordings, photographs and samples of children's work will be stored securely, will only be used for the purposes of research and will only be available to myself and my supervisor. The names of participating children, the teacher and the school will be changed within my thesis and any subsequent publications so that they cannot be recognised. Once the research is complete the material will be stored in a secure environment and subsequently destroyed.

If you do not wish your child to be involved in this research please let the class teacher know or contact me at: Sarah.Chicken@uwe.ac.uk. I will also be sending a letter to the children to explain who I am, what I will be doing and asking them if they are willing to take part. The children will be told that if at any time they decide not to be part of this project they can tell me or their teacher.

If you have any queries at all I would also be happy to answer these on XXXXXXXXX

With many thanks for your support

Best Wishes

Sarah Chicken

Appendix Seven: Consent Children

Dear Children

I am a teacher from a local university (school for grownups) and I am going to be at your school to watch a 'project session.' I may ask you if I can record what your group is saying on a special machine called a digital recorder which tapes voices. I may also ask if I can take photographs of your group working together. You do not have to work with me if you do not want to! You can say 'No thank you Sarah', shake your head or you can tell your teachers that you would rather do something else!

I am hoping to use what I discover in some writing I am doing for the university.

Many Thanks

Sarah Chicken

Appendix Eight: Guide Sheet to the Full data Set for all participants

Participant	Data	Code and description
Veronica	Interviews	Interview 1 VI1 Interview 2 VI2 Interview 3 VI3
	Observations	V.Obs1extract 1 tents documenter (adult) V.Obs1extract 2 tents children V.Obs1extract 3 bug hunt V.Obs1extract 4 bug hunt adult interaction V.Obs1extract 5 kite making V.Obs1extract 6 kite making interaction with adult V.Obs1extract 7 water play children V.Obs1extract 8 cymbal work V.Obs1extract 9 construction work
	Documentation	Folders including photos, children's drawings and conversations of projects (no planning): VeronicaDoc1 Ice Project VeronicaDoc2 Chinese Project VeronicaDoc3 Car boot sale VeronicaDoc4 What's in the Box! VeronicaDoc5 Camping VeronicaDoc6 Collecting rubbish folder VeronicaDoc7 Spiders
Carys	Interviews (one)	C.I1 C.I2
	Observations	C.obs1

		Carys.Obs1extract 1	whole class session (plants)
		Carys.Obs1extract 2	Focus task (writing about plants, class teacher)
		Carys.Obs1extract 3	designing a plant
		Carys.Obs1extract 4	flower construction kit
		Carys.Obs1extract 5	sand and soil
		Carys.Obs1 extract 6	painting plants
		Carys.Obs1extract 7	investigation station
		Carys.obs1 extract 8	drawing plants on the white board
	Documentary Evidence	Carys.Doc.1	Plants mapping
		Carys.Doc 2	Castle mapping
		Carys.Doc 3	Detailed thematic planning
		Carys.Doc 4	My trip to XXX Castle
		Carys.Doc 5	Letter to the baron – reasoning against invasion
		Carys.Doc 6	Dastardly escape 2 (levelled NC1)
		Carys.Doc 7	Dastardly escape 2 (levelled NC2)
		Carys.Doc 8	Adjectives to describe a giraffe –
		Carys.Doc 9	Gelert story sequenced
		Carys.Doc 10	Bridge maps
		Carys.Doc 11	Escape from a castle
		Carys.Doc 12	Venn diagrams facts v opinions -
		Carys.Doc 13	plan of castle 1
		Carys.Doc 14	plan of castle 2
		Carys.Doc 15	photo of castle from display
Seren	Interviews (One)	SerenI1	
		SerenI2	
	Observations	Seren.Obs1extract 1	Whole class session (PWHU)

		Seren.Obs1extract 2	Focus task -writing (PWHU) with CT
		Seren.Obs1extract 3	Focus task– making fire engines with TA
		Seren.Obs1extract 4	Jigsaws – People Who Help Us
		Seren.Obs1extract 5	Role play – (PWHU)
		Seren.Obs1extract 6	Cutting and Sticking - (PWHU)
	Documentary Evidence	Seren. Doc 1	People Who Help Us mapping
		Seren. Doc 2	Thematic Planning
		Seren. Doc 3	Example of the Grocery Shop
		Seren. Doc 4	Example of the Robbery
		Seren. Doc 5	De Bono Hats mapping
<u>Eira</u>	Interview	Eira1	Interview 1
		Eira2	Interview 2
	Observation	Eira.Obs1	dance session
		Eira.Obs2extract1	whole class planning (snow)
		Eira.Obs2extract2	small group maths (snow)
		Eira.Obs2extract3	small group art room 1(snow)
		Eira.Obs2extract4	painting snow scenes
		Eira.Obs2extract5	small group art room 2(snow)
		Eira.Obs2extract6	small group art room 3(snow)
		Eira.Obs2extract7	small group garden (snow)
		Eira.Obs2extract8	small group sand pit (snow)
	Documenta- tion	Carys.Doc1	Pre-school routine timetable
		Carys.Doc2	LLC - photographs of children working
		Carys.Doc3	Mathematical Development - photographs of children working
		Carys.Doc4	KU of the World - photographs of children working
		Carys.Doc5	Creative Dev - photographs of children working

		<p>Carys.Doc1 Pers. and soc. dev folder photographs of children</p> <p>Carys.Doc1 Photographs of Displays</p> <p>Carys.Doc8 WAG development stages (submitted as part of the project documentary evidence)</p>
Ffion	Interview	<p>Interview 1 FI1</p> <p>Interview 2 FI2</p> <p>Interview 3 FI3</p>
	Observation	<p>F.Obs1extract 1</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 2 Fungi clay 1</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 3 Fungi clay 2</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 3 role play</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 4 light table</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 5 puzzles</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 6 soil tray (outside)</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 7 water play children (outside)</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 8 outdoor construction work- big blocks</p> <p>F.Obs1extract 9 leaf moving –group of boys outside</p>
		<p>Ffion. Doc 1 folder fungi</p> <p>Ffion. Doc 2 folder recycling</p> <p>Ffion. Doc 3 photos boys in the process of leaf moving</p> <p>Ffion. Doc 4 photos clay work</p> <p>Ffion. Doc 5 photos of ‘documentation’ of the ‘chair’</p>
Heulwen	Interview	Interview 1 HI1
	Observation	No observation
	Documentation	Heulwen did not submit documentation but said that the project portfolios submitted by both Veronica and Ffion were representative of her own project construction

Efa	Interview	Interview 1 Interview 2	Efa1 Efa2
	Observation	Efa.Obs1extract 1 Efa.Obs1extract 2 Efa.Obs1extract 3 Efa.Obs1extract 3 Efa.Obs1extract 4 Efa.Obs1extract 5 Efa.Obs1extract 6	Whole class Victorian session Focus task – writing a Victorian story with an adult Focus task - making sweets for the shop with an adult making sweetie bags putting sweets into bags 'copying 'Victorian' pictures' finding information about Victorian shops using books and the internet
	Documenta- tion	Efa. Doc 1 Efa. Doc 2 Efa. Doc 3 Efa. Doc 4 Efa. Doc 5	Victorian mapping Two week planning sheets Daily planning sheets Victorian sweetie photos sugar mice photos
Jane	Interview	Interview 1 Interview 2 Interview 3	Janel1 Janel2 Jane I3
	Observation	No observation	
	Documenta- tion	Jane. Doc 1 Jane. Doc 2 Jane. Doc 3	Victorian mapping Two week planning sheets Daily planning sheets
Mari	Interviews	Interview 1 Interview 2	Maril1 Maril2
	Observations	No observation	
	Documenta-	Mari. Doc 1	Planning docs (not taken from school)

	tion	Mari. Doc 2	Art portfolios (not taken from school)
		Mari. Doc 3	photographs of project artefacts

Appendix Nine: Mind map Carys

PLANTS

Science

Learning about parts of the plants, petals stems
Information about parts of the plants e.g. petals and stems
Find out about parts of a plant like a petal or stems- books
write about what happens to plant seeds

How to look after flowers

Do plants need light?

Art

Make a flower picture with mud and anything we can find

Colour mixing to make different coloured flowers like a rainbow

We want to invent our own flower

Mud painting-

Classroom

Grow some seeds
Cress seeds
Grow sunflowers
Can we write about what happened?

Writing

Write letters – free things for Forest School
Recipe for a fabulous Forest School
We can make a book about plants?

Forest School

Grow Your Own Plants
Make a Forest School Flower Book

We want to make Our Own Forest School Barbecue

Sand tray

Can we make mud?
Flower cutters instead of sands
Lets have soil
Mud cakes !!!
Find out about bluebells, tulips, roses
Find out about different types of flowers

We need soil, water, mud?

Creative Area

Make tree using craft things
Paper flowers
Origami
Draw flowers?
Draw plants
Big pictures
Design a new plant

The class teacher explained that the mind map was drawn up with the children around the theme of 'plants'. This 'project' was taken from the county's scheme of work for Science. The children were free to add suggestions on what they would like to do to the map. These are highlighted.

Appendix Ten: Example of a Skills Framework (DCELLS, 2008f)

Cognitive development

Age	Developmental stages (approximate guidelines)
18–24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to follow one direction. • Can recognise an object in a picture. • Enjoys opening and removing objects from boxes. • Matches simple shaped blocks into matching boards/balls.
24–30 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows inquisitive interest in surroundings by opening things/ looking into boxes. • Counts two objects. • Understands the concepts of 'big'. • Remembers where toys are kept.
30–36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands concept of 'one' when asked for one. • Can match one colour. • Asks questions about surroundings. • Copies an example by placing object in a row. • Completes a simple inset puzzle.
36–48 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows inquisitive interest in materials/environment by verbalising many questions, such as 'Why?', 'How does it work?', 'Where does that come from?' and 'What makes it go?' • Is beginning to understand the concept of time – remembers events in the past and can anticipate events in the future. • Can sort objects into simple categories. • Has an understanding of the concept of 'empty'.
48–60 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands concepts of 'one' or 'more'. • Has increased memory skills. • Is able to sort objects into groups. • Is able to give reasons and solve problems. • Has an understanding of daytime and night-time routines. • Is beginning to understand the value of coin.
60–72 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands concept of 'one less'. • Produces drawings with detail. • Arranges objects in order from smallest to largest and/or is able to communicate reasons for grouping objects in a certain way. • Can identify which is 'bigger'. • Is beginning to think in a more coordinated way, and can hold more than one point of view. • Can extend the sequence of events in a logical way.
72–84 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands conservation of number including zero. • Recognises negative numbers especially in the context of temperature. • Enjoys the challenge of experimenting with new materials. • Is confident enough to tackle new mathematical and scientific concepts. • Understands how to tell the time.

Language development and communication skills

Age	Developmental stages (approximate guidelines)
18–24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows simple commands and directions. Can name a few objects in a picture. Uses two words to indicate need/desires. Makes marks on different materials.
24–30 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can understand many more words than they can speak. Responds to first name. Uses three-word sentences. Is beginning to listen to and follow stories that are read aloud. Is beginning to 'draw' (mark making) with preferred hand.
30–36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answers simple 'Where?' and 'What?' questions. Uses four-word sentences consistently. Often misses link words. Joins in with nursery rhymes. Is beginning to follow stories from pictures and differentiates between print and pictures. Tries out a variety of instruments to make marks and shapes on paper or other appropriate material.
36–48 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has established speech and comprehension but with some immature pronunciations and unconventional use of grammar. Asks a variety of questions using the words 'Who?', 'What?', 'Where?', 'When?', 'Why?', etc. Sings songs and rhymes. Is beginning to recognise the alphabetic nature of reading and writing. Handles a book as a 'reader' and talks about its content. Understands that written symbols have sound and meaning.
48–60 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses complete sentences consistently. Listens to others and usually responds appropriately. Is beginning to use tenses and conjunctions. Tells stories but sometimes confuses fact with fiction. Is beginning to appreciate and have fun with jokes and riddles. Recognises familiar words in simple texts, and when reading aloud uses knowledge of letters and sound-symbol relationships to read words and establish meaning. Demonstrates an understanding of how sentences work. Is beginning to understand the different purposes and functions of written language.
60–72 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is beginning to recognise patterns in the way words are formed. Speaks in a group and will ask questions. Initiates or participates as a speaker and listener in a variety of structured and unstructured situations using language extensively. When reading simple texts is generally accurate. Shows understanding and expresses opinions about major events or ideas in stories, poems and non-fiction. Communicates meaning in writing. Uses appropriate and interesting vocabulary showing awareness of the reader. Often develops ideas in a sequence of connected sentences.
72–84 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is steadily developing literacy skills. Talks fluently and with confidence. Can pronounce the majority of the sounds of own language. Tells a story without the need for support material such as a picture, etc. Reads independently, using appropriate strategies to establish meaning. Shows an understanding of the main points and talks about significant details. Produces writing that is often organised, imaginative and clear. Uses main features of different forms of writing appropriately. Chooses words for variety, interest and effect.

