The illusion of autonomy: an ethnography of teachers' professional lives in a primary academy in England

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis reports on an ethnographic research of primary school teachers' lived experiences of working and teaching in a school that had recently converted from a LA maintained community school to an academy. The aim of this doctoral study is to explore teachers' work and capture the changing nature of the teacher professionalism in the new educational setting that is a primary academy.

Academies are independent schools that are funded by the state but are managed privately. In England, academies built upon the ideas of the City Technology Colleges project developed by the former Conservative Government. They were also modelled on the international independent-state funded schools: charter schools in the Unites States of America and Swedish free schools. The first academies were opened in 2002 under the New Labour Government. At that time, the purpose of the Academies Programme was to address poor performance by creating different types of secondary schools in disadvantaged areas. Since 2010 when the Coalition Government took office, the academies programme expanded greatly encompassing primary schools. Since then, the rhetoric behind the Academies Programme revolves around greater freedom and autonomy for schools.

The expansion of the Academies Programme has led to the growth in the number of teachers working in these settings. Yet, studies investigating the experiences of teachers working in academies, in particular those in primary academies, are limited. Therefore, this ethnographic research set out to address the gap in what is currently known about implications of the Academies Programme for teachers' work and professionalism. In relation to this, teachers' professional autonomy constitutes a central theme in the analysis presented in this thesis.

The fieldwork was conducted over the period of one school year (September 2014-July 2015) in Bricklane Primary Academy (pseudonym) situated in an inner-city location in the North West of England. The data were generated through the use of participant observations, photographs, documentary analysis, informal conversations and ethnographic interviews and focus groups. The research participants included teaching staff and academy senior leaders who work in Bricklane Primary Academy.

Frostenson's (2015) three levels of teachers' professional autonomy provides a framework for analysis and presentation of the research findings. Drawing upon labour process theory, the main findings of the research indicated that the work of primary academy teachers is greatly constrained by policies at school and at national levels that limit teachers' professional autonomy. The findings suggest that the Academies Programme has contributed to diminishing the professional autonomy of teachers and thus contradict the policy rhetoric underpinning academies which promulgates greater freedom and autonomy.

Tables and Figures

Abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CTC	City Technology Colleges
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DES	Department for Education and Science
EFA	Education Funding Agency, an executive agency of Department for Education
EMO	Educational Management Organisation
GM	Grant-maintained schools
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LGB	Local Governing Body
LMS	Local Management of Schools
NC	National Curriculum
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PRP	Performance Related Pay
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RSCs	Regional Schools Commissioners
SATs	Statutory Assessment Tests
TA	Teaching Assistant
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)
USA	The United States

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale for the research

This thesis reports on ethnographic research which illuminates, describes and discusses the lived experiences of primary academy teachers' work in order to capture the changing nature of teacher professionalism in the context of academisation of the English education system. Academisation is understood as the process of converting local authority (LA) maintained schools to independent state-funded schools known in England as academies (Forrester and Garratt, 2016). Specifically, the study focuses on teachers' professional autonomy as the notion of autonomy is at the heart of the Academies Programme (DfE, 2010a) and it is a defining feature of the teaching profession (Larson, 1977).

Research has indicated that reforms in education influence the nature of teachers' work and the nature of teachers' professionalism (Menter, 2009) (see chapter 3). The first decades of the twentieth century marked the struggles of teachers to be recognised as a professional group (Hargreaves, 2000; Whitty, 2000). These struggles proved successful as according to Hargreaves (2000) and Lawn and Grace (1987), 'the golden age' of teaching was from the 1960s until the middle of the 1980s when teachers enjoyed unprecedented autonomy. Helsby and McCulloch (1997) argue that during that period teachers enjoyed a sense of trust, occupational security, higher wages, and recognition as an autonomous professional group. This situation, however, started to change with educational reforms of the 1980s onwards that gradually led to tightening of control over teachers' work (Menter, 2009). It was suggested that these reforms 'technicized' the work of teachers defining teaching as a 'craft' as opposed to a 'profession' (Menter, 2009). Many commentators such as Day (2002), Day and Smethem (2009), and Evans (2011) have argued that teachers' professional autonomy was diminishing due to externally imposed frameworks such as the National Curriculum which have outlined teachers' professional activities.

To explore teachers' professional autonomy in academies, the empirical research reported in this thesis was carried out between September 2014 and July 2015, and conducted in a primary academy located in the North West of England. In this thesis, the terms 'primary school' and 'primary academy' refer to educational establishments that provide education for children aged rising-five to eleven years old. The primary school in which the research was conducted had recently converted from a LA maintained community school to an academy under the Coalition Government (2010-2015) when the expansion of academies took place. The Coalition's Academies Programme was undertaken with remarkable speed and extent (West and Bailey, 2013). In what follows is the presentation of the changes in the number of academies illustrating the fast pace of the development of the Academies Programme. The legacy of New Labour's (1997-2010) Academies Programme was 203 secondary academies in 2010 (DfE, 2010a) while no primary academy existed at that time, as shown in the bar chart in Figure 1:
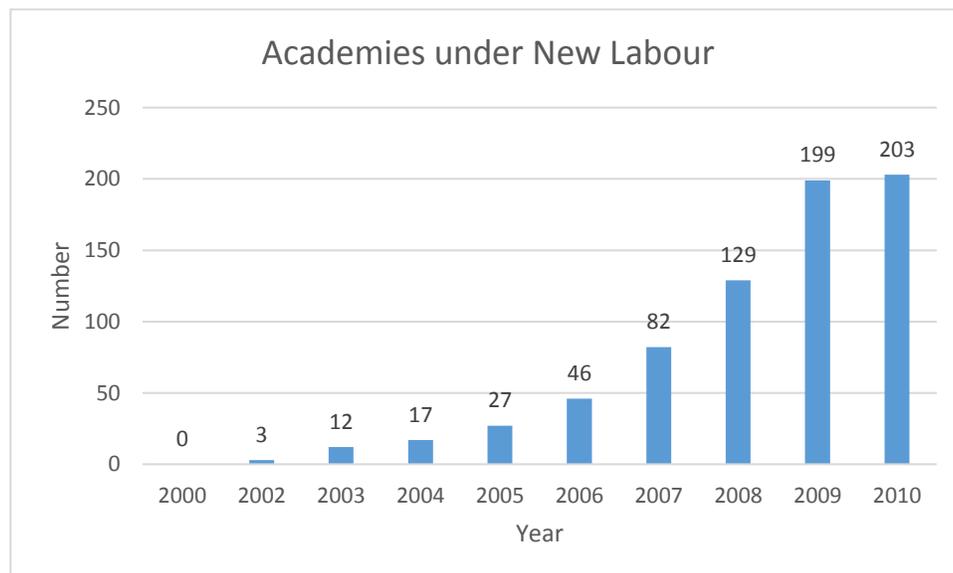
Figure 1: The increase in the number of secondary academies, 2000- 2010 (Gorard, 2009; DfE, 2010a; DfE, 2014)

Since 2010, the situation has been rapidly changing due to the growth in the number of both primary and secondary academies. At the time of writing, according to the latest data from the Department for Education (DfE), 6087 academies are currently listed as operating in England (DfE, 2017). Amongst them are 3707 primary and 2109 secondary academies indicating the growth in number of primary academies that have outnumbered secondary academies. The remaining 271 constitute special and alternative provision academies. The bar chart in Figure 2 demonstrates the rapid expansion of the Academies Programme from its inception in 2000 and in the following years between 2010 and 2017.
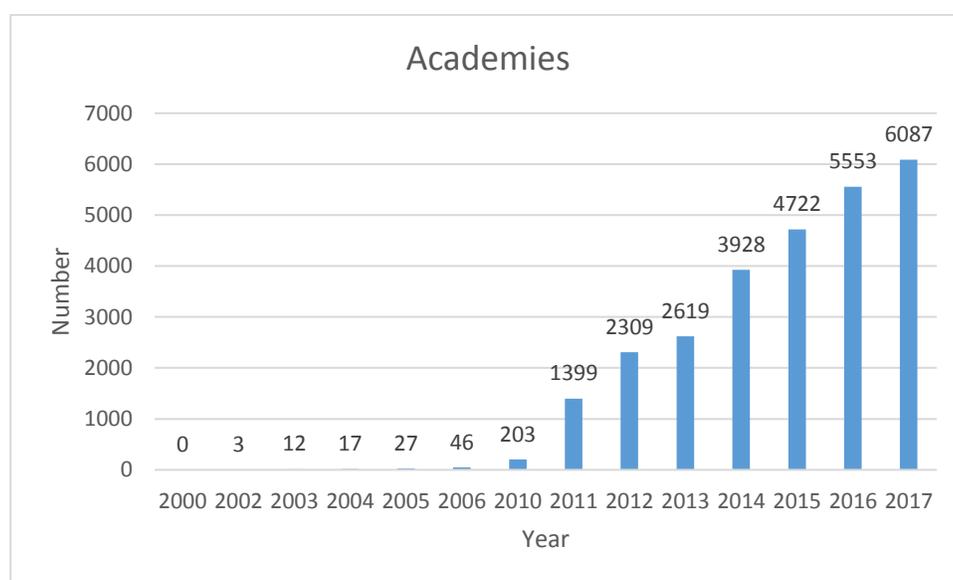
Figure 2: The increase in the number of secondary and primary academies, 2010- 2017 (Gorard, 2009; DfE, 2010a; DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2017)

When the empirical research was concluded in July 2015, there were 2581 primary academies (DfE, 2015). Due to primary academies being a relatively new phenomenon and very little research and literature in existence, this study was conducted in a primary academy. The bar chart presented in Figure 3

illustrates the growth in the number of primary academies between 2010 when primary schools were invited to convert to academy status and 2015 when the fieldwork was concluded.
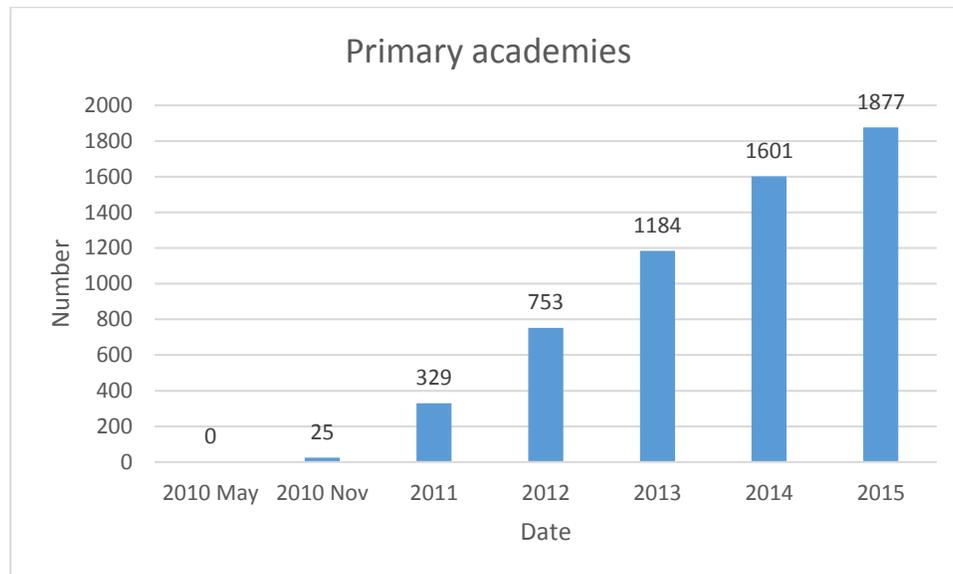
Figure 3: The increase in the number of primary academies, 2010- 2015 (DfE, 2015)

As the number of academies increases, so too therefore does the number of teachers working in this new kind of setting. The DfE (2015) notes that with the increase of academies, the number of Local Authority (LA) maintained schools is reducing. One result of the growth of academies and the number of teachers teaching in them is the decrease in the number of teachers working in LA maintained schools. Such changes highlight a growing need to explore the experiences of teachers who work in these new school-type settings. The graph presented in Figure 4 reveals the changes in the total number of teachers working in both LA maintained schools and academies between 2010 when the Academies Programme was accelerated, and 2015 when this empirical research was concluded. It also demonstrates the increasing number of teachers working in academies which further emphasises the rapid expansion of the Academies Programme since 2010.

Teachers in academies and LA schools
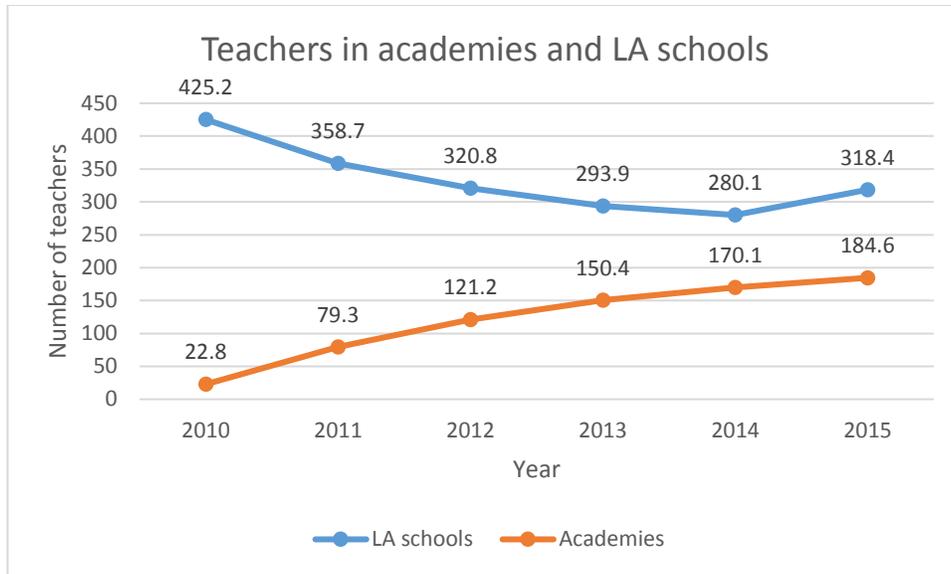
Figure 4: The number of teachers in academies and LA maintained schools, 2010- 2015 (DfE, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016)

Similarly, the graph presented in Figure 5 further highlights the changes in the number of teachers who were employed in primary academies between 2010 and 2015 (DfE, 2015). This demonstrates the constant growth in number of primary academy teachers since 2010 when primary schools were invited and encouraged to become academies.

Primary Academy Teachers
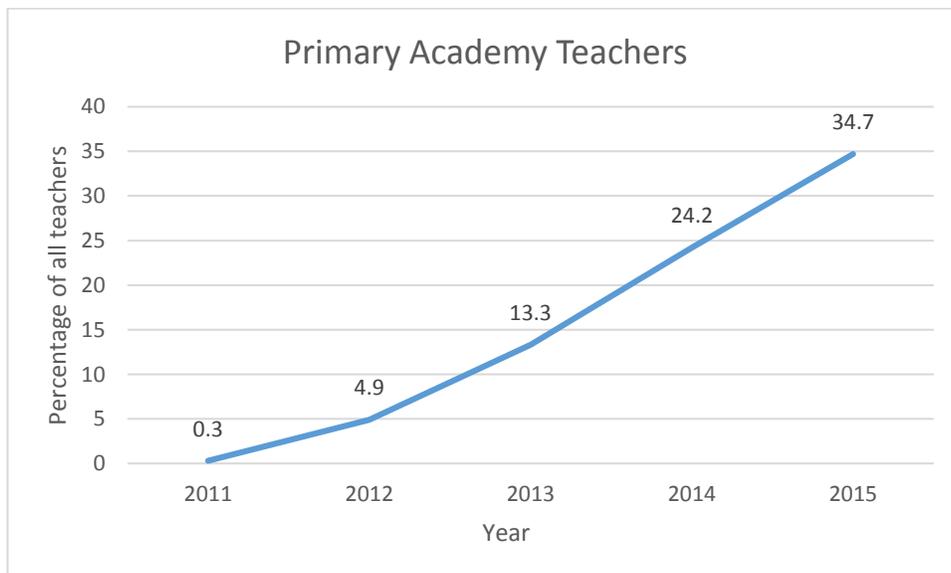
Figure 5: The number of primary academy teachers, 2010- 2015 (DfE, 2015)

Although working in academies has some implications for teachers (outlined in section 2.3.4), little research to date has focused exclusively on the experiences of teachers who work in these settings. Hatcher (cited in Beckett, 2012) claims that the theme of teaching and working in academies is 'under-researched and hard to access'. Dee (2010) explains that first-hand research within academies has rarely been permitted. Thus, the literature related to the working lives of academy teachers is scarce and limited to news reports (Coughlan, 2015; Wood, 2015; Marsh, 2016;), teachers' blogs (The Guardian, 2014), publications by teachers' unions (NUT, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2014a; ALT, 2012, NASWUT, n.d.) and governmental and parliamentary reports (House of Commons Education Committee, 2015; DfE, 2016d). Academic research that considers the experiences of teachers working in academies is also limited. A few studies have considered teachers' experiences in a secondary academy (for instance Salokangas, 2013; Keddie, 2014).

However, there is limited academic research that focuses entirely on primary teachers' experiences of working in an academy. Therefore, this thesis is particularly important as it explores the lived experiences of primary academy teachers. It contributes to the development of knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a teacher working in an academy and how the policy on academies legislated via the *Academies Act* 2010 may impact on teachers' work, profession and teachers' notions of professionalism. Additionally, this thesis contributes to the existing body of knowledge on primary teachers, on teachers working during the times of substantial, far-reaching and rapid structural change in education, their perceptions of change and the impact on teacher professionalism.

1.2 Research context

As indicated earlier, this thesis focuses on teachers and their experiences of working in a primary school which has recently converted to an academy. The case study school became an academy in September 2012 following the developments in the policy on academies, specifically the Coalition Government's legislation that accelerated the Academies Programme. The Academies Programme has been developed in the context of global neoliberal school reform movement which aims to reduce the functions of the state through promotion of school choice agenda, involvement of private providers in state education, school competition and increased school autonomy (Forrester and Garratt, 2016; Ball, 2017). Studies on school autonomy indicate that there is a growing worldwide tendency for countries to set up so-called independent state-funded schools (Cheng and Greany, 2016; Hanushek *et al.*, 2003; OECD, 2010). The term 'independent state-funded schools' is used in this thesis in relation to all types of schools that are funded by the state and managed privately including academies, free schools and charter schools. The trend of setting up independent state funded schools has been reported in many countries globally. In addition to academies in England, examples of such movements include the US charter schools, Swedish free schools known as friskolor, Partnership Schools in New Zealand, and a voucher school system in Chile (Meyland-Smith and Evans, 2008). The growing popularity of policies that lead to decentralisation of state school management is evident as more countries follow suit, for instance, Australia (Buckingham, 2015; Jha and Buckingham, 2015; 2015a).

In the UK, the Academies Programme has been implemented only in England and it is not applicable to other countries within the UK; Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Northern Ireland have devolved administrations that are responsible for education matters (Parker, 2015). In the English context, the Academies Programme can arguably be traced from the ongoing governmental projects

stemming from the time of Callaghan's Great Debate on education which first drew public attention to the shortcomings in the system (Ball, 2017). Since then, successive governments have aimed to 'raise educational standards' particularly in poor areas and diversifying the educational provision in order to broaden parental choice over schools. The City Technology Colleges (CTC) project initiated by the Conservative Government in 1988 laid foundations for the development of the independent state-funded school movement in England. This initiative was then expanded further under the New Labour Government through the development of the City Academies Programme since 2000. Since the introduction of academies into the education system, the Academies Programme has been constantly evolving and changing in nature. West and Bailey (2013) argue convincingly that the English education system has been undergoing a radical reorganisation since 2010. After the formation of the 2010 Coalition Government, a new education system based on different types of schools has been promoted extensively (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013). Since the inception of the City Academies Programme under the New Labour Government (2000-2010) only poorly performing secondary schools were converting into academies. However, the Coalition Government extended the eligibility criteria to include a wider range of schools such as maintained schools graded by Ofsted as 'outstanding', 'good schools with outstanding features' and more recently 'failing' schools and schools identified as 'coasting' (DfE, 2010a, 2015). Additionally, new types of academies, namely free schools, were introduced into the English education system via the 2010 Academies Act (Forrester and Garratt, 2016).

With the initiative proponents arguing for academy status to be the norm for all state schools 'with schools enjoying direct funding and full independence from central and local bureaucracy' (DfE, 2010a:52), the expansion of academies was initiated on a scale never seen under previous governments. This is evidence that suggests there has been an intention to create an education

system with schools independent from LAs' control. Thus, having academy status means total independence from local authorities, no obligation to comply with national regulations regarding staff working conditions and some flexibilities around the curriculum. Academies are overseen by charitable organisations called a 'trust' and some of them form multi-academy chains with more than one academy within the trust. The day-to-day responsibility for running the academies lies in the hands of the principals (West and Bailey, 2013). Therefore, academies are described as independent schools despite being in receipt of public funding. They were modelled closely on the ideas of the USA charter schools and Swedish free schools to which its proponents referred frequently as exemplars of best practice (DfEE, 2000; DfE, 2010a; Forrester and Garratt, 2016).

The notion of 'autonomy' is at the heart of the Academies Programme and therefore this research engages with this concept. The case for school autonomy is made strongly in *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper where it was argued that:

> 'The second lesson of world class education systems is that they devolve as much power as possible to the front line, while retaining high levels of accountability. The OECD has shown that countries which give the most autonomy to head teachers and teachers are the ones that do best.'

> (DfE, 2010a:3-4)

> '…Devolving as much decision-making to school level as possible ensures that decisions are being made by the professionals best able to make good choices for the children and young people they serve.'

> (*ibid:* 51)

The notion of autonomy is the central feature of the independent state funded school movement. Additionally, Larson (1977) strongly argues that autonomy is also the defining feature of teaching as a professional occupation (Larson, 1977). Despite being widely used in education policy and practice (Wermke and Salokangas, 2015), Fisher (2012) argues that the term 'autonomy' has been ill-defined in the UK government's statements. As a result, there is a crucial necessity for the term 'autonomy' to be explored and determined within this research.

In tracing the etymology of the concept of autonomy, it is crucial to consider its roots in the Greek language 'autonomos'. 'Autos' refers to 'self' while 'nomos' means 'law' (Siebert and Mills, 2007). This definition suggests that autonomy means having laws that govern the individual. With this definition, debates on autonomy focus on individuals and groups' capacities to self-rule and on constraints which restrict such capacities (Wermke and Salokangas, 2015). The literature refers to the variety of forms of autonomy in relation to education: school autonomy, teacher autonomy, autonomy of school leaders (Fisher, 2012; Parker, 2015; Wohlstetter *et al*.,1995). Wermke and Salokangas (2015) strongly argue for distinguishing local or school autonomy from the concept of teacher autonomy.

In terms of schools' autonomy, Wohlstetter *et al.* (1995) argues that autonomy is a multidimensional concept and it is subject to a variety of constraints. In defining school autonomy, Whitty (1997) suggests this concept can be understood as a devolution of aspects of decision-making powers from regional or district offices to individual schools. According to Arcia *et al.* (2011) school autonomy is a form of school management with schools being given powers over their operations. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) (2010a) identifies the following areas over which independent state-funded schools have autonomy: staffing, student policies, budget, curriculum and assessment.

In terms of teacher autonomy, it has been argued that autonomy is the defining feature of teacher professionalism (Hargreaves, 2000; Helsby, 1995; Larson, 1977; Parker, 2015a; Whitty, 2000). Pearson and Moomaw (2005) argue that the difficulty in defining the concept lies in the fact that teacher autonomy is constantly evolving. To date, many forms of teacher autonomy have been distinguished. For instance, Parker's (2015a) overview of definitions of teacher autonomy includes such conceptualisations like work autonomy, engaged autonomy, regulated autonomy, and occupational autonomy. These forms of autonomy as well as other related concepts are explored in detail in chapter 3. This research adopts a conceptualisation of teachers' professional autonomy developed by Frostenson (2015). Frostenson (2015) distinguished three levels of teachers' professional autonomy: general, collective and individual (detailed in 3.2.4). This conceptualisation provides a framework for analysis and presentation of this research findings in chapters 6,7 and 8.

Despite research providing inconclusive evidence on the benefits of increased school autonomy (Hanushek *et al.*, 2013; Jensen *et al.*, 2013; Meyland-Smith and Evans, 2008), the supporters of this movement argue that extended autonomy provides flexibility and capacity for local actors to make decisions that address the specific needs of the local school community (Cheng and Greany, 2016; Hanushek *et al.*, 2013).

1.3 Research interest

My personal motivation for conducting this original research comes from my interest in educational matters. The issue of academies was first mentioned whilst on my undergraduate degree in Education Studies. Due to my upbringing and education in Poland, I had not previously come across academies as a type of school. Therefore, it was a challenge to comprehend and fully understand the idea and the concept of academies in England. Since this time as an undergraduate, I became more interested in the significance of academies. I was therefore excited when the opportunity to critically research this policy arose.

This research was conducted under a 3-year PhD studentship offered by the Faculty of Education, Health and Community at Liverpool John Moores University. The proposed research project was to investigate the lived experiences of teachers and leaders who work in academies and the impact of the Academies Programme upon primary schools. The proposed study matched my personal interests and my educational background. I completed both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the field of education at universities in England. First, I undertook a BA (Hons) degree in Education Studies and English. Being involved in a small-scale research during my final year of my undergraduate degree developed my interest in research. Therefore, I continued my education on a postgraduate level studying for an MSc in Educational Research in order to further develop and deepen my knowledge on social research techniques. My educational background and my keen interest in educational matters, and in the Academies Programme in particular, enabled me to undertake the proposed study.

However, my upbringing and hence my educational experiences in Poland impacted on my positionality in the research site and the way I interpreted the events observed during the fieldwork. Thus, it is of paramount importance to

discuss my educational background in order to depict the degree of unfamiliarity I experienced during the research in an English primary academy.

I completed all compulsory phases of my education in Poland where the education system differed from the education system in England. My formal compulsory schooling phase started in a pre-school at the age of six. After one year in the pre-school, I moved to a primary school that was divided into two phases. The first phase consisted of the first, second and third grade. All subjects were taught by one teacher who examined pupils' work with no external influence from a national curriculum, age-specific targets, external school inspections or the 'testing regime' seemingly experienced by pupils in England (Ball, 2017). In the second phase of the primary school that consisted of grades between four and eight, students were taught by different teachers who specialised in one specific subject. In contrast to students studying in England, my primary schooling phase was uninterrupted by external tests such as SATs or visits by external inspectors such as Ofsted. However, this began to change in 1998 when many public services including education were required to be reformed due to Poland's intention to join the European Union (Le Donne, 2014). This led to unexpected and substantial change in the structure of my primary phase of education.

In 1998, the Ministry of National Education in Poland outlined their proposals for reforms aimed at improving the quality of education, raising the educational level of the Polish population and ensuring equality of opportunity (Ministry of National Education, 1998). This led to the rapid structural reforms of the education system launched in 1999 (Wisniewski, 2007). Wisniewski (2007) and Jakubowski *et al.*, (2010) explain that these reforms led to the reduction of the duration of education in the primary school from eight to six years. Wisniewski (2007) adds that the structural changes were accompanied by the development of a new 'core curriculum'. This meant that schools were required to create their

own study programmes within a pre-established general framework. According to Le Donne (2014), the curricular reform led to the development of new approaches to teaching in schools.

In order to monitor students' educational achievement, compulsory standardised tests were introduced in Poland for students at the end of their primary education. However, in contrast to England, students' test results were not published in any official league tables and schools were not compared against each other based on test results. Upon the completion of education in the primary school, students moved to new type of lower secondary school called 'gymnasium' (Wisniewski, 2007; Jakubowski *et al.*, 2010). Following the structural reforms of education in 1999, I was part of the first cohort of students who sat the compulsory competence test at the end of the primary phase of education and I started the next stage of education in gymnasium. The rapid change in the structure of the primary education combined with the introduction of the competence test was a stressful experience for many of my colleagues, parents and teachers. However, considering my education in Poland, I came to realise that the lack of personal experience of the education system in England allowed me to maintain some emotional distance from the matters affecting the English education system. Therefore, the fact that I was educated in Poland was perhaps an advantage in this research.

Another aspect of my educational background that had to be placed under scrutiny was my lack of teaching qualifications and no experience of teaching in a primary school. This was particularly significant matter due to the focus of the study on primary teachers' work experiences. Although I understood the importance and the benefits of my educational background, it was crucial to recognise its implications for this research. This was a lengthy, reflective process during which I wondered whether I would be able to adequately comprehend the experiences and the perceptions of teachers as a complete

outsider to the studied group. Would the teachers be willing to open up to me and share their views if I could not fully relate to their experiences? Would they take me and my research seriously? In respect to the considerations regarding my 'outsider' status, Fay's (1996) reasoning of comprehending others' experiences was particularly helpful. Fay posed the question: 'Do you have to be one to know one?' explaining that being a member of the studied group is not necessary or sufficient in order to know the experiences of that group. He argues: 'Knowing an experience requires more than simply having it, knowing implies being able to identify, describe, and explain' (Fay, 1996: 20). Therefore, not being a member of the group can help to better understand the studied group. With regards to this, the doubts experienced prior to the research were allayed by my reflections on the possible advantages resulting from my educational background. However, the reflexive journey continued throughout the research process as I attempted to negotiate my role and position in the school while comprehending the implications of my positionality for the research (see section 4.8).

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this doctoral study is to explore teachers' work and capture the changing nature of the teacher professionalism in the new educational setting that is a primary academy. The aim of this research was realised through the following objectives:

- To reveal, examine and discuss primary academy teachers' views and experiences of working in a school which recently converted to an academy;
- To explore teachers' perceptions on academy conversion process;
- To critically examine the nature of teachers' professional autonomy.

1.5 Research design and methodology

This research sought to provide teachers with a platform to give them a voice and enable their views to be heard on their experiences of working and teaching in a primary school which was impacted by academy conversion. The research process was influenced by a social constructionist position (detailed in section 4.2) where meaning was constructed through my interaction with the research participants and through our engagement with a reality in the academy (Crotty, 2015). In addition, labour process theory (detailed in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.4) was used as a lens through which to understand teachers' work (Reid, 2003). The choice of ethnography as a methodological approach to this research was dictated by the original proposal for the PhD studentship and my desire to develop a profound understanding of teachers' professional lives in their naturally occurring setting that was their workplace (Hammersley, 1998). Therefore, observing teachers' interactions with their colleagues and pupils, as well as observing and participating in their every day practices over one school year enabled me to describe the research context as well as explore their views on and their perceptions of their professional working lives. Previous ethnographies conducted in schools; for instance, by Acker (1999), Salleh (2008) and Troman (1996, 1999), presented numerous benefits of this approach to studying teachers' lives (detailed in section 4.2.3).

While in the research setting, I conducted daily observations of teachers' work and assisted teachers and pupils with various activities in classrooms. Notes from observations as well as conversations with the staff were recorded in the research diary which later supported the data analysis. In addition, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with teachers, teaching assistants, the Academy's principal and the executive principal. Furthermore, an analysis of photographs and various documents related to the administration and organisation of the Academy and its predecessor school was undertaken.

The initial general focus of this exploratory research was on teachers' experiences of working and teaching in a primary school which recently converted to an academy. When I entered the research setting, the broad research question was: 'What is it like to be a teacher working in a primary academy?'. However, during the course of the research, this focus evolved and finally concentrated on teachers' professional autonomy. In relation to this, Frostenson's (2015) three-levelled analysis of professional autonomy is utilised as the main theoretical framework as well as a heuristic device used in this thesis. Using this theoretical framework and the adopted research design, the aim of this thesis was addressed through the following research question:

What is the impact of a primary school's conversion to academy status upon teachers' work and their notion of professionalism?

1.6 Overview of the thesis

This thesis composes nine chapters. This first chapter is presented as a general introduction, justifying the research, explaining its importance, and defining some key concepts. Chapter 2 explores the development of the Academies Programme in the context of national and global movements of independent state funded schools. It also considers the known implications of working in independent state-funded schools in Sweden and the US where such schools have been operating for over 20 years. Chapter 3 reviews literature on the implications of externally mandated reforms in education on teachers and on the teaching profession in England. Chapter 4 outlines the research design, the methodology employed in this research, the strategies used to identify and access the research setting, the methods of data collection and analysis and ethical issues considered during the course of the research. Chapter 5 discusses the context in which Bricklane Primary Academy operates and key

events in the recent history of the school in order to provide background information about the researched Academy.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the research findings pertaining to the three levels of professional autonomy based on a conceptualisation developed by Frostenson (2015). Chapter 9 discusses the findings of this research. Finally, chapter 10 draws conclusions from the study, with a consideration of the contribution this thesis makes to the body of knowledge in associated fields; an explanation of its limitations; providing recommendations for avenues for future research and my personal reflections.

The next chapter reviews the literature on the origins and the development of the independent state-funded schools policy movement in England and globally that laid foundations for the English academies.

Chapter 2: The development of the Academies Programme

2.1 Introduction

This chapter situates the research in the historical and political context of the policy on academies. It discusses the origins and the expansion of the Academies Programme. In order to develop an understanding of the educational context in which teachers of this research have operated, the chapter explores key initiatives in the history of education policy which laid foundations for the Academies Programme. These initiatives are considered within the framework of changes in education influenced by the wide spreading neo-liberal ideology that has dominated the UK political scene and the policies in other parts of the world in the recent decades. As a result, this chapter is organised in two main sections. The first section considers the international independent state-funded schools movement, namely charter schools in the United States (US) and the Swedish model known as free schools. Both of the models in the US and Sweden have inspired and shaped the policy on academies in England, and have been referred to as examples of successful initiatives by the promoters of the Academies Programme (DfEE, 2000; DfE, 2010a). The second section of this chapter discusses key developments in educational policy in England which set the foundations for the expansion of the policy on academies. Within the second section, a consideration is given to the key initiatives implemented under the consecutive UK governments starting with the period of the Conservative Government (1979-1997), then moving onto the New Labour Government (1997-2010), and finally discussing the expansion of the Academies Programme under the Coalition (2010-2015) and the current Conservative administrations (2015 to present).

2.2 International Independent-state funded School Movement

The Academies Programme in England has been established in the context of global movement of independent-state funded schools. Since the late 1980s and 1990s, there has been a growing tendency in different parts of the world to set up independent state funded schools which arguably enjoy greater autonomy from democratic district (US), municipal (Sweden) or local authorities (England) as opposed to other local state schools (OECD, 2010). Examples of independent state-funded school movements were found to be popular in the US, Sweden, New Zealand, Alberta in Canada, Chile, Netherlands and more recently in Australia (Jensen, 2013; Buckingham and Jha, 2015; Buckingham, 2015; Jacks, 2015; Knott, 2015). The common characteristics of these schools include their freedom from certain regulations that govern other local schools therefore allowing them scope to be innovative with regards to curriculum, mission of the school, staff employment, and teachers' pay and working conditions (Wohlstetter, Wenning and Briggs, 1995). All these schools grew out of the neo-liberal thinking about education where policy makers aim at introducing market principles into the education system with an emphasis on school competition, choice and involvement of private sector in state educational provision.

In the UK, policy makers have been drawing on the examples of various international autonomous school movements but the most prominent examples in the policy rhetoric were from the US charter school model and Swedish free schools. Based on the seemingly successful stories of these school types (DfEE, 2000; DfE, 2010a), the Academies Programme has been promoted since 2000. To develop an understanding of the school movements on which academies in England were closely modelled, the forthcoming section focuses on key characteristics of the US charter school movement and the Swedish free school model and discusses their effectiveness.

2.2.1 Charter schools in the US

Charter school movement in the US appeared to be very popular amongst the proponents of independent-state funded schools in England. When initiating the City Academies project, David Blunkett, then the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, (DfEE, 2000) promised to take account of the best lessons learnt from charter schools in the US. When expanding the project in 2010, the policy makers presented the US charter schools as 'engines of progress' (DfE, 2010a: 51). Below, there is a discussion of some of the key features of charter schools that seem to be most appealing to the English policy makers.

One of the aspects of the charter school movement that found popularity amongst proponents of the Academies Programme in England was that the original intention of the US charter school concept was to address parental demand for schools by increasing the choice of schools on offer (Goldring and Mavrogordato, 2011). Within the school choice framework, the charter school law was passed in 1991 allowing groups of parents, teachers and community members to apply for a written agreement, called educational charter, in order to set up a charter school outside of school district control. An educational charter is agreed between interested groups and a charter granting authority that is usually the state or a school district. Since charter schools are open to all students regardless of their place of residence and they do not charge fees, it is argued that these schools provide increased educational choice thus meeting one of the goals of the initiative (Baker and Miron, 2015). Despite this, there have been debates concerning school choice with some critics of the charter concept arguing that charter schools have contributed to racial segregation (Bifulco and Ladd, 2007; Garcia, 2008) and others asserting that there is no evidence to support such claims (Ritter, 2017).

Another highly valued aspect of the charter school concept is extended school autonomy. Charter schools are freed from the apparent bureaucracy and control that traditional state schools are subject to (Chubb and Moe, 1988; Wohlstetter, Wenning and Briggs, 1995). They are granted greater autonomy in relation to the running of the school such as budget allocation, employment of staff, mission of the school and educational programme (Wohlstetter, Wenning and Briggs, 1995). According to Carpenter II and Peak (2013), those independent-state funded schools have autonomous school boards as opposed to being managed by school districts. The apparent higher level of autonomy was intended to allow greater innovation within charter schools (Burian-Fitzgerald and Harris, 2004). However, the extent to which charter schools innovate in their practices and the impact of such innovations have been highly contested (Lubienski, 2003). Nonetheless, the seemingly autonomous nature of charter schools has been emphasised by the policy makers in England who have been asserting that greater autonomy accounts for apparent success of the charter school policy. Gove, the Secretary of State for Education from 2010 to 2014, showed his support for autonomy on a number of occasions. For example, in 2011 he stated:

> 'And in America - where the Charter Schools system implemented by New York and Chicago is perhaps the quintessential model of school autonomy - the results are extraordinary.'
>
> (Gove, 2011)

Baker and Miron (2015) point out that in return for extended autonomy, charter schools are subject to increased accountability regime. This is another aspect of the US initiative most appealing to the English policy makers who claim that 'the features of the strongest education systems combine autonomy with accountability' (DfE, 2010a: 51). The US Department of Education monitors the progress of students and in addition to this each charter school operates under individual state laws and policies. Consequently, charter schools are required to

follow the state standards regarding curriculum, assessment and graduation requirements (Goldring and Mavrogordato, 2011). However, this leads to variations amongst charter schools and within states creating heterogeneous system and making it problematic to draw conclusions regarding the overall impact of the charter school concept (Toma and Zimmer, 2012). Despite this, the supporters of the Academies Programme, for example, Gove (2011), have not hesitated to draw on charter schools model as an example for school reforms in England.

In addition, existing research provide inconclusive evidence regarding charter schools' effectiveness. At the heart of the charter school concept lies the assertion that innovation associated with greater autonomy would lead to improved educational attainment of students (Lubienski, 2003). However, so far research have reported mixed evidence in this respect (Toma and Zimmer, 2012). Toma and Zimmer (2012) note that some studies claim that charter schools outperform traditional state schools whereas others find that charters' performance is worse in comparison to local state schools. Whereas Baker and Miron (2015) argue that performance of students in charter schools and traditional state schools is very similar. Moreover, studies such as Betts and Tang (2014) and Carruthers (2012) also indicate that charter schools improve over time with older charter schools being more effective and the quality of charter schools varies between the states (Chingos and West, 2015). However, it was found that the most effective charter schools are the ones that as opposed to innovative approaches to teaching employ the highly criticised 'no excuses' approach with focus on math and literacy skills, strict behaviour rules, and extended instructional time (Cheng *et al.,* 2017). The 'no excuses' model has been subject to debate due to high level of teacher turnover and the arguably punitive environment in which their students study.

Similarly to the free schools programme in England, the charter school law was initially intended to enable local communities to open schools in areas where

there was inadequate educational provision. However empowering as this promise might seem to be, many members of local communities found themselves being ill equipped and unprepared for the demands of operating a school (Hassel, 1999). Research findings report that many school founders, in particular parents, teachers and community groups, realised that set of skills required for setting up a new school differs from the set of skills essential for running a school (Miron and Applegate, 2004). This contributed to the growth of Educational Management Organizations (EMOs) that run and manage charter schools as opposed to local communities (Bulkley, 2005).

EMOs are private companies or organisations which manage charter schools on either for-profit or on non-profit basis (Miron and Gulosino, 2013). In England, the policy on academies also allows for the involvement of various groups and companies in provision of state education. In both cases, the main argument in favour of this is the belief that involvement of private entities will create more innovative and efficient education system (DfE, 2010a; Toma and Zimmer, 2012). The most recent data produced for the academic year 2014-15 by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2017) indicate that out of a total of 6633 charter schools operating across the US, 44% of them are run by EMOs. This has a number of implications for the charter schools movement. For instance, studies such as Wohlstetter, Wenning and Briggs (1995) and Finnigan (2007) found that the level of charter schools' autonomy varies between individual schools. Bulkley (2005) asserts that EMOs are likely to add an extra layer of constraint limiting the voices of school stakeholders. Furthermore, Barker and Miron (2015:7) convincingly argue that charter school policy has been 'a primary mechanism for privatizing public schools and public school functions' due to the involvement of EMOs on such a large scale. Concerning this, the charter school movement was recently criticised for allowing for-profit organisations to make profit at the expenses of taxpayers' (Baker and Miron, 2015). At present, for-profit organisations are not allowed to run any types of academies in England (Prince, 2015). Nevertheless, the media have already

reported on examples of outsourcing of auxiliary services to private companies through unclear bids (Boffey and Mansell, 2016). Therefore, the US experience where charter school movement has been operating for nearly 30 years provides important lessons on how EMOs take advantage of taxpayers' money and how such practices might spread in England in the future years.

The discussion so far has indicated that certain aspects of the US charter school movement appeared to be popular amongst the proponents of the Academies Programme. However, their claims about the effectiveness of the US model of schools appear to be largely unsupported by the growing body of evidence in this area (Baker and Miron, 2015). Thus, it has become evident that the English policy makers used evidence from the US school system very selectively focusing only on a few successful examples as opposed to overall effectiveness of the whole policy.

2.2.2 Swedish free schools

While the charter school movement was emerging in the US, free schools programme was being developed in Sweden almost simultaneously. The Swedish model of independent state funded schools, known as friskolor, emerged as a result of the introduction of a student voucher system in 1992 (Arreman and Holm, 2011). Following the construction of the welfare state since 1945 during the post-war period dominated by the social democratic values of equity and equal opportunities as well as social and economic justice (Arreman and Holm, 2011), the advocates of the neo-liberal way of thinking, which was prominent in the US and the UK at that time, began to criticise the public welfare service sector for being wasteful, bureaucratic and not allowing the citizens any choice over services (Wiborg, 2010). As the Swedish education system was rather homogenous with only a few private schools (Böhlmark and Lindahl, 2012), a more diverse school profile allowing for greater choice and competition

was seen as being a crucial part of the reformation of the national education system (Wiborg, 2010). In education, the new market-oriented policies influenced by the neo-liberal ideology with the emphasis on competition, choice, diversity and individual responsibility started to spread in Sweden (Sahlgren, 2011).

From the late 1980s, the process of weakening the state control over education began with the transfer of responsibilities for education from the Swedish state to local municipalities in 1988 (Wiborg, 2010). The next significant move towards decentralisation of the education system was the introduction of the voucher reform in 1992. The voucher system entitled privately run schools to receive public funding and compete for students with municipal schools. In line with the voucher programme, schools receive funding from the municipality in which they are located via a student voucher which is a sum of money for each student set annually by the government. The surplus of the student voucher can be used freely by the company which runs the school. In this context, the new independent schools, referred to as free schools, were formed. Similarly to the initial intentions of the charter school movement in the US and later on the Academies Programme in England, free schools policy in Sweden allowed parents, businesses, faith organisations and other groups interested in running a school to acquire a licence to start an independent school (Arreman and Holm, 2011; Sahlgren, 2011). As they are run by non-public providers, in legal terms these independent schools are private entities (Arreman and Holm, 2011). It was believed that private actors would transform the state education system. It was hoped that by offering various specialisms, the free schools would extend parental choice. Greater competition between schools would enhance teaching practices, improve school governance, decrease bureaucracy, and reduce cost of providing education, and students' experiences of schooling and their educational outcomes would be improved (Wiborg, 2010). Free schools are not allowed to charge any fees or to select pupils based on ability (Böhlmark and Lindahl, 2012). Although they are not required to follow the national curriculum,

free schools are obliged to provide education in line with the general objectives and values set in national documents. They are also controlled by national and local inspections.

Although at first it was anticipated that free schools would be set up as a result of parental co-operation, it was noted that the fastest growing free schools have been for-profit schools run by large private companies (Wiborg, 2010). In this respect, this situation resembles the US charter school movement. In fact, Arreman and Holm (2011) identified four large educational companies that have dominated the independent school sector in Sweden. Pollard (2013)argues that concerns over for profit organisations running free schools were raised when the Sweden's largest school operator, JB Education, announced its bankruptcy in 2013. Although it was not the first demise of a for profit firm, it was the biggest bankruptcy which led to a widely spread criticisms of for profit educational organisations which were seen as putting profit making first over providing education (Pollard, 2013).

Further to this, the development of free schools in Sweden has not enhanced parental choice over schools to a large extent as initially intendent. This has happened for two reasons. Firstly, pupils attend either free schools or municipal schools which are in close proximity to their home. In addition to this, various admission criteria are used when municipalities or independent schools make their decisions over admittance of students, and the distance between the school and a pupil's home is taken into consideration (West, 2014). However, research investigating access to free schools found that independent schools tend to be set up in urban areas and in more well-off locations (Allen, 2010; Båvner *et al.*, 2011). This implies that parental choice is greatly restricted by the place of residence. Further to this, West (2014) highlights the fact that at the upper secondary level, the real choice over schools lies in the hands of the students with the best grades.

Another important point to be made about free schools in Sweden is that pupils from better educated families and pupils with a foreign background are more likely to attend free schools than municipal schools which adds to the segregation between these schools (West, 2014). In relation to students' educational outcomes in free schools, the evidence from research is mixed. Previous research found that in areas with high concentration of free schools, there has been a small improvement in pupils' academic performance (Allen, 2010). Böhlmark and Lindahl (2008) found that although the educational results of pupils at the end of lower secondary school were slightly higher, there was no evidence of improvement in their long-term outcomes. However, in their next study, Böhlmark and Lindahl (2012) found that the increase in the number of free schools leads to greater competition between municipal and independent schools and to a greater productivity of these schools. This in turn causes improvement in pupils' educational performance and has a positive implications for the long term outcomes (Böhlmark and Lindahl, 2012). The researchers explain that 'because it has taken time for the independent schools to become more than a marginal phenomenon in Sweden, we have only been able to detect statistically significant positive effects for later years (about a decade after the reform)' (Böhlmark and Lindahl, 2012:42). Nonetheless, Sweden's results in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessments have been declining in recent years (Weale, 2015).

The discussion of the two international independent-state funded school systems indicate important disparities between the policy intents and its actual outcomes. Based on the reviewed evidence so far, the conclusions regarding the movements that were used to justify the direction of the education policy in England indicate that both movements have enabled an expansion of for profit actors who benefit from state funding. This also means that local communities have not been empowered in delivering education as originally indented. Some of the other contested aspects of the policy have been around the mixed evidence on students' outcome, the level of autonomy granted to individual

schools, and lack of real choice of school provision. Despite the mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of both the Swedish free schools and the US charter schools movements, the proponents of the expansion of the Academies Programme in England referred to these models of independent-state funded schools as examples of best practice. Having developed an understanding of the international models of independent state-funded school movements, the following section traces the development of the Academies Programme in England.

2.2.3 Teachers in international independent state funded schools

Both free schools in Sweden and charter schools in the US have been part of the educational landscapes in these countries for over twenty years. Thus, research investigating these type of schools provide an important information and lessons to be learnt about the matters affecting teachers in international independent state funded schools that were presented as models for academies in England. In relation to this, the following section discusses research concerned with teaching workforce in Swedish free schools and the US charter schools. The research findings present similarities between different aspects of teaching and working in these schools in terms of teachers' characteristics such as qualifications, years of experience and age, pay and working conditions, level of autonomy and responsibilities.

Studies on international state funded schools found that characteristics of teachers who work in these schools differ from the characteristics of those who work in other state schools. In terms of qualifications, research found that in Sweden larger number of unqualified teachers can be found in free schools than in municipal schools (Arreman and Holm, 2011; Fredriksson, 2009). Similar finding was reported in the US based charter schools which in comparison to

district schools tend to employ a higher proportion of noncertified teachers (Burian-Fitzgerald and Harris, 2004; Fusrelli, 2002; Podgursky, 2006). The study by Fredriksson (2009) found that teachers who work in Swedish free schools tend to have lower level of educational qualifications in comparison to their counterparts from municipal schools. In contrast to this, studies on charter schools report that charter school teachers are very talented individuals who are more likely to have attended a selective college with a major in an academic subject rather than in education (Podgursky and Ballou, 2001; Struit and Smith, 2012). This makes them more attractive to employers within and outside of the education sector; therefore, they are more prone to attrition and mobility.

Additionally, research found that demographics of the independent state-funded school workforce differ from the demographics of the municipal and district schools as both free schools and charter schools tend to attract younger teachers with less years of experience (Burian-Fitzgerald and Harris, 2004; Fredriksson, 2009; Stuit and Smith, 2012; Wiborg, 2015). The inexperience and the lack of qualifications of teachers raise concerns over the quality of teaching workforce and linked with it quality of education that children receive (Arreman and Holm, 2011; Podgursky, 2006). For instance, in Sweden, it was noted that the performance of students in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has declined in the past decade (Wiborg, 2015). The studies that investigate the effectiveness of charter schools report mixed findings relating to students' educational outcomes (Baker and Miron, 2015; Toma and Zimmer, 2012).

The practice of employing young and inexperienced staff who lack teacher training qualifications is arguably a cost cutting measure in the context of both Swedish free schools and American charter schools (Baker and Miron, 2015; Milner, 2015). Although Stuit and Smith (2012) argue that the starting salaries for charter school teachers are usually higher than the beginning salaries of

district school teachers, overall charter school teachers tend to earn less. Charter schools tend to employ low qualified teachers allowing the employers to pay their teaching staff salaries that are at the lowest end of the pay scale. As a result of this, research found that annual salaries of teachers working in charter schools are on average $18,000 lower than the salaries of district school teachers. Additionally, salaries of charter school teachers with experience and qualifications comparable to the experience and qualifications of district school teachers are still lower by $11,300 (Baker and Miron, 2015).

The working conditions of teachers in charter schools have been the subject of research interest since the inception of the charter school movement due to the perceived autonomy which this type of schools have. Charter schools do not abide by the state regulations or school district collective bargaining agreements which govern district schools (Stuit and Smith, 2012). For charter schools, this means they have the freedom to determine the pay and working conditions for their teachers, and the involvement of unions in relation to the charter school teachers' working agreements is minimal (Malloy and Wohlstetter, 2003). This presents a number of issues for the teaching workforce. For instance, Stuit and Smith (2012) reported that teachers in charter schools have a lower job security as the exemptions from regulations protecting the rights of teachers make it easier for the charter school leaders to dismiss their teaching staff. Further to this, as a results of increased autonomy, charter schools are allowed to make changes to the school day and to the school year. Fusrelli (2002) states that some charter schools offer longer school days, Saturday classes and summer school. As a result, charter school teachers report working longer hours and experience heavier workloads than their counterparts who work in district schools. However, longer working hours and heavier workloads can be also associated with teachers' extended responsibilities over school governance, curriculum, instruction, and recruitment of new staff (Fusrelli, 2002; Malloy and Wohlstetter, 2003). This is due to underfunding of charter schools which lead

them to put more responsibilities on all of the school stakeholders including teachers, parents and administrators. It was also reported that charter school teachers are more likely to work part-time (Podgursky and Ballou, 2001) and less likely to hold tenured jobs (Malloy and Wohlstetter, 2003).

Research found that teacher turnover rate, both voluntary and involuntary, is higher in charter schools than in district schools (Miron and Applegate, 2007; Stuit and Smith, 2012). Stuit and Smith (2012) highlight that factors such as lack of relevant teaching qualifications, inexperience, and lower job security contribute to higher teachers' attrition in charter schools. The high rates of teacher turnover in charter schools can be linked back to the quality of teaching and educational outcomes of charter school students as the consequences of high rates of teacher turnover include inability to provide a stable educational experience for students (Fusrelli, 2003).

In the Swedish context, Milner (2015), who reports stories of four free school teachers working in for profit schools, highlights that high staff turnover creates an insecure and unstable work environment where staff are replaced with ease which affects teachers' morale. As high staff turnover also impacts on the image of the school, teachers feel the pressure of improving the school's reputation in order to keep students in the school and to attract new students due to the school funding being closely associated with the number of students on roll. The teachers in Milner's (2015) study report working in a highly performative culture where competition between schools lead the focus being directed at students' results, teaching to test, and getting as many students as possible into universities. Linked with this is the argument put forward by Fredriksson (2009) who claims that the growth of the for profit charter schools and free schools have led to the creation of the market oriented teacher. The market oriented teacher exhibit behaviours which are different from the behaviours of traditional teachers due to the organisational differences of school contexts in which these

teachers operate. According to Fredriksson (2009), the market oriented teachers tend to comply with the mission of the school which guides the work of each individual in the school, follow the instructions of their management team and market the school by improving its reputation amongst parents and students who are seen as customers.

2.3 Academies Programme in England

In England, the Academies Programme was launched in 2000 under the New Labour's administration but its origins can be traced back to the previous Conservative Government's (1979-1997) initiatives that were introduced within the wider context of school choice reforms. These reforms were fuelled by neo-liberal ideology that has dominated social policy in the UK and around the world since the early 1980s (Robertson, 2007). In education, neo-liberal reforms meant the introduction of market principles with competition, freedom of choice, minimum of state intervention, and privatisation (Beckmann, Cooper, Hill, n.p.). The underlying belief of the market-oriented education system was the belief in superiority of the private sector over state system (West and Pennell, 2002; Ball, 2008). In line with this, the period of the Conservative administrations from 1979 to 1997 was characterised by reforms in education that diversified the educational provision, introduced accountability measures in the form of national testing, league tables and inspections by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED), encouraged competition between schools and involved private entities in provision of state education. Consequently, these reforms weakened the role of Local Education Authorities. In this context, the Conservatives introduced a number of initiatives amongst which the City Technology Colleges (CTCs) project and Grant-Maintained schools have been identified as the forbearers of the City Academies Programme.

The following discussion considers main features of the initiatives that laid foundations for the academies movement and it reviews the changes made to the Academies Programme throughout the existence of the policy.

2.3.1 The Conservatives and school diversity

The education reforms of the Conservative administrations from 1979 to 1997 were illustrative of their quest to fulfil the Party's ideologically driven aims of introducing market principles into the state education system. With consumer choice at the centre of marketisation of state education, the Conservative's earlier reforms in education emphasized the importance of parental choice. The Education Acts of 1980, 1986 and 1988 were gradually extending parental choice over schools (Whitty, 1989) with the Education Reform Act 1988 being recognised as the one that put 'choice' at the heart of the education policy (Walford, 1991). For instance, the Assisted Places Initiative introduced by the 1980 Education Act (West and Pennell, 2006) provided children from lower income families with funding to attend private schools. This demonstrated the Government's belief in private establishments offering better quality of education than state schools. Further move towards increasing parental choice by diversifying the available educational provision promised in the Conservative Party's Manifesto (Conservative Party, 1987) was materialized through the introduction of the City Technology Colleges and Grant-Maintained schools by the Education Reform Act 1988 (DES, 1988). As indicated earlier, both projects have been identified as the predecessors of academies. First, a discussion of these new types of schools and a summary of their key features that were taken forward by the consecutive administrations to build the Academies Programme is presented below.

The CTCs project that was first announced publically during the Conservative Party Annual Conference on 7th October 1986 by Kenneth Baker, the then Secretary of State for Education, was presented as a pilot network of schools

which would 'increase the range and quality of education in areas where it is most needed' (Conservative Central Office, 1986: 10). CTCs were planned to be opened in deprived inner-city areas to provide education for eleven to eighteen years old pupils as it was believed that local authority schools in urban areas were failing children. Although CTCs were said to offer 'broad and balanced' curriculum, a strong emphasis was put on science and technology (DES, 1986: 7) due to the need for workforce equipped in technical and practical skills (Edwards, Gewirtz and Whitty, 1992). CTCs were intended to be independent of LEA's control (DES, 1986) and they were established through partnership between the Government and private businesses. Despite being independent schools, CTCs would not charge fees. It was intended that the Government would pay the costs for running the CTCs whereas sponsors from private sector were to be encouraged to contribute a substantial amount of money towards initial capital in order to set these schools up. In addition to this, the sponsors who were required to set up companies with charitable status would own or lease the schools (West and Bailey, 2013). They would also be responsible for running and managing CTCs; thus, employing staff and setting the pay and working conditions with no restrictions from the national pay and conditions regulations (Edwards, Gewirtz and Whitty, 1992; West and Bailey, 2013). Therefore, the distinguishing feature of CTCs lied in the way schools were funded and managed.

Kenneth Baker intended to open about 20 CTCs (Chitty, 2008). His initial plan was to ask sponsors to donate £8 million towards capital costs. However, this goal appeared to be unachievable as sponsors from private sector were not keen on spending such amount of money on state education (Beckett, 2007). Therefore, the Education Secretary reduced the amount of the donation to £2 million and in an attempt to attract more sponsors he allowed them to name the schools after themselves or their companies. However, this also did not prove to be successful as number of well-known organisations refused to take part in this initiative (Beckett, 2007). The CTCs project was perceived as a failure and it

was suspended. The promotors of the programme faced difficulties with finding sponsors as well as appropriate sites for the new schools (Walford, 2000). By 1991, there were fifteen CTCs established and in many cases their sponsors contributed less than £2 million. Critics of the programme, for example Beckett (2007), highlighted the fact that the Government spent more money on each CTC than on a state school. Furthermore, the introduction of CTC was seen to 'encourage inequality in the system, reintroduce selection, weaken comprehensives and the power of the local education authorities' (Whitty, *et al.*, 1993:60). Due to the involvement of businesses from the private sector in state education, many critics perceived the CTCs project as an attempt at privatising state services (West and Bailey, 2013).

Another type of educational establishment presented as a means of broadening parental choice over schools under the Conservative Government (1979-1997) were Grant-maintained schools (GM). The grant-maintained schools programme allowed existing primary and secondary maintained schools in England and Wales to opt out of local education authority control and receive funding directly from the central government. Governors of all secondary schools and primary schools with over 300 registered pupils were allowed to apply for grant-maintained status after a secret ballot of parents (DES, 1988a). The supporters of this initiative believed that LEAs prevented schools' potential for innovation (Halpin, Power and Fitz, 1997). While the Conservative administrations' policies such as the CTCs and Assisted Places Scheme were presented as having the main purpose of increasing the variety of schools on offer and thus enhancing parental choice, the GM status initiative was the first one which highlighted the importance of institutional autonomy and put it at the centre of the policy. Autonomy became the perceived distinguishing feature of GM schools. Nonetheless, in contrast to its perceived benefits, Levacic and Hardman (1999) noted that institutional autonomy offered to GM schools did not lead to superior performance in terms of students' educational attainment. Later on, an attempt was made to expand this programme further through the introduction of the

sponsored GM schools (Walford, 2000). That initiative, similarly to the CTCs project, required a sponsor's contribution (DFE, 1992). Similarly to the CTCs project, the sponsored grant-maintained schools project was judged as a failure (Chitty, 1992; Walford, 1997, 2000).

Both CTCs and GM schools have laid foundations for the development of the Academies Programme. Their key features praised by consecutive administrations included their autonomy from local authorities' control, involvement of private sector in running state schools and diverse state educational provision. However, the extent to which these schools broadened parental choice was disputed. Critics of the Conservatives' policies argued that they attempted to undermine and eventually destroy the power of Local Education Authorities (Chitty, 1992; Walford, 1997; Leo, Galloway and Hearne 2010). In fact, Walford (1997: 32) claimed that the Conservative's policies were focused more on diminishing the role of LEAs than 'on establishing genuine diversity of schools from which parents could choose'.

2.3.2 New Labour's Academies

After the Conservative Government's defeat by the New Labour Party in 1997, the education policy narrative continued to focus on creating diverse educational provision, increasing parental choice and improving educational outcomes of students living in inner city areas. Gillard (2008: 12) emphasised that the education policy focused on 'extending selection, reducing the role of LEAs, and promoting privatisation'. In order to achieve the goals of the New Labour's education policy's narrative, the City Academies Programme was launched in 2000. The leading architect and promoter of the programme has been Andrew Adonis who was Tony Blair's education adviser (Adonis, 2008; Garner, 2011). The programme was first announced in 2000 by David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education, in a speech to the Social Market Foundation

(Chitty, 2009). Next, it was formally established through the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (DfEE, 2000a). In his speech, Blunkett presented his plans for the City Academies Programme, stating that:

> 'These Academies, to replace seriously failing schools, will be built and managed by partnerships involving the Government, voluntary, church and business sponsors. They will offer a real challenge and improvements in pupil performance, for example through innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum, including a specialist focus in at least one curriculum area. (…) the aim will be to raise standards by breaking the cycle of underperformance and low expectations. (…) They [the City Academies] will take over or replace schools which are either in special measures or are clearly underachieving.'
>
> (Blunkett, 2000 cited in Chitty, 2009)

As indicated in the quote above, the aim of the City Academies Programme was to replace poorly performing secondary schools located in inner-city areas with high level of socio-economic deprivation (Gorard, 2009). This can be seen as a continuity of the previous Conservative's rhetoric on education.

Since its announcement in 2000, the Academies Programme had been constantly changing and evolving under the New Labour Government. For instance, initially termed 'City Academies', their name was changed to 'Academies' by the 2002 Education Act (DfES, 2002) in order to allow the programme to expand and include rural areas (Beckett, 2008). Similarly to CTCs, academies were outside of LEAs maintenance. They were funded directly by the central government which contributed around £23 million capital cost and all running costs (Woods, Woods and Gunter, 2007) with a sponsor's donation of £1.5-£2 million towards the cost of the new buildings (Leo, Galloway and Hearne, 2010). After replacing failing secondary schools, academies were opened in new buildings with state of the art facilities. Nonetheless, the requirement for a

sponsor's donation was later limited to endowment fund and in 2009 it was completely removed (West, 2015). Academies were required to offer a broad and balanced curriculum with a specialisation in one of the areas of the curriculum. This included science, technology, languages, sport and the performing, visual and media arts. Despite being all-ability schools, academies were allowed to select up to 10% of their intake by aptitude in a specialist subject (DfEE, 2000). Although the first academies did not have to follow the National Curriculum, this was later amended to require all new academies to follow the National Curriculum in foundation subjects (Leo, Galloway and Hearne, 2010).

The Academies Programme was presented as a radical approach to education policy in the context of school improvement (Gunter, 2011). Its key aim was to break the cycle of educational underachievement. An important aspect of the initiative was the involvement of business and non-governmental partners as in the case of CTCs, Specialist Schools, and Education Action Zones (DfEE, 2000). In organisational terms, Labour's Academies were similar to CTCs as both types of institutions were classed as independent schools because they operated outside of LEAs maintenance. However, they were funded by central government. Additionally, both projects were aimed at improving educational performance of secondary age pupils. However, unlike CTCs which were specialised in technology, academies could specialise in a wider spectrum of subjects. The originators of the initiative claimed that academies were built on lessons learnt from the CTC project as well as the charter schools initiative in the United States (DfEE, 2000). Undoubtedly, the Academies Programme was informed by the charter schools concept since they share common features (see section 2.2.1).

Academies were sponsored by companies from the private, voluntary and faith sectors which were believed to be able to apply innovative approaches to governance, management, teaching and curriculum (Gorard, 2005). This

reflected the government's belief in private sector being more innovative, responsive and dynamic; thus, more efficient than the state (Gleeson, 2011). The sponsors of academies were put in charge of these new independent state funded schools. In return for their donation, the sponsors owned the school's site and buildings and were allowed to make decisions regarding the vision, ethos, leadership and management of academies (Woods, Woods and Gunter, 2007; West and Currie, 2008). They enjoyed extensive powers which allowed them to make decisions regarding curriculum, control admissions and exclusion of pupils, appoint the majority of the governing body and they also had places on the governing body. Further to this, they were responsible for appointing the principal and recruiting teaching staff for whom the sponsor set pay and working conditions as the staff were outside of the 'employment framework for teachers' (Beckett, 2007: 13).

As indicated above, the central feature of the Academies Programme was the schools' partnership with the private sector. This partnership raised controversy and it was widely debated. Due to the involvement of the private sponsors, the Academies Programme had been subject to discussion about the ownership of education (Gleeson, 2011). Beckett (2008) argued that allowing sponsors to run educational institutions was an attempt of the state to withdraw its responsibilities for providing public services. Further to this, it was noted that many sponsors who came from the business sector had no previous experience or knowledge on leading educational establishments (Beckett, 2007; Chitty, 2008; Yandell, 2009). Moreover, the involvement of the private sector in schools was seen as a move towards privatisation of public services and Chitty (2009: 79) called the initiative a 'blatant example of the systematic privatisation of schooling'. Handing the responsibility for providing education services to sponsors was seen as undermining democratic values. In LA maintained schools, LAs and school governing bodies provide democratic accountability. However, in the case of Academies which were outside of LAs control and where a sponsor could appoint the majority of the governing body, it was noted

there was no democratic accountability (West and Currie, 2008). In addition to this, many parents, teachers, pupils and other members of local communities where academies were planned to be opened believed their opinions as well as their right to voice their opinions were neglected which was seen as being undemocratic (Hatcher and Jones, 2006; Hatcher, 2008). Research documented instances where academies were imposed on local communities against their will and it reported tactics used during consultation processes which aimed to marginalise any attempts of opposition to academies or did not allow for a meaningful participation of all stakeholders (Hatcher and Jones, 2006; Hatcher, 2008, Hatcher, 2011, Wolfe, 2011). Although the academies initiative was supposed to expand parental choice, it was evident that it did not offer the choice to 'reject the imposition of an academy' (Yandell, 2009: 5).

From its early days, the Academies Programme was under a lot of scrutiny. As the overarching aim of the programme was to raise attainments which was supposedly possible due to the autonomy given to academies, the Government needed to provide evidence to prove that the Programme was achieving its goals. Since the earliest academies opened in 2002, the DfES, policy makers, news reports and the academies almost immediately claimed the success of the programme stating that the students' results have improved remarkably (Gorard, 2005). Nevertheless, a close analysis of the schools' contexts and the pupils' results contradicted these claims to success. Gorard (2005) found out that any improvements in GCSE outcomes might have been linked to the change in the intake of students eligible for FSM and criticised the policy makers for making statements regarding the Academies Programme based on little evidence. This was further confirmed after an analysis of a larger number of academies when Gorard (2009: 112) concluded that 'the programme is a waste of time, effort and energy'.

The academies initiative was very unpopular and highly criticised. The Academies Programme was analysed from different perspectives with

commentators focusing on various aspects of the policy. When the New Labour Government left office in May 2010, there were 203 academies.

2.3.3 Coalition and beyond

Expansion of academies under Coalition
Although the New Labour Government articulated their ambitions to extend the Academies Programme in their *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* White Paper (DfES, 2005), it was not until the Coalition Government took office in 2010 when the Academies Programme started its expansion with remarkable speed (West and Bailey, 2013). In addition to secondary schools, primary and special schools were invited to convert to an academy status, and new types of academies, namely free schools with their subtypes were created**.** This section discusses the main developments in the academies initiative under the two consecutive administrations, namely the Coalition Government between 2010-2015 and the Conservative Government from 2015.

While in opposition between the years 1997 and 2010, the Conservative Party worked on modernizing the party's image and distancing itself from the legacy of Thatcherism (Dore, 2007; Exley and Ball, 2011; Williams and Scott, 2011). After the election of David Cameron as the Party's leader, the Conservative Party was shifting its image towards a new socially tolerant and inclusive 'compassionate Conservatism' that placed emphasis on those most vulnerable in society and with a new approach to social policies (Dorey, 2007). The 'broken society' term was introduced into the Conservatives' narrative to describe the perceived state of social and moral crisis of the British society that was seen as being '*badly broken'* (Cameron quoted in Jones, 2007) and in need of 're-civilisation' (Jones, 2007). The 'broken society' concept became a catchphrase used by the Conservative shadow ministers justifying the need to fix 'broken Britain' (Kirby, 2009; Conservative Party, 2010; Williams and Scott, 2011). Nevertheless, the 'broken society' agenda was criticised by academics who argued it stigmatised

people who experienced poverty (Mooney, 2011) and deflected attention from the real problem that according to Slater (2012: 964) was in fact a 'broken state' which steadily shifted its role from curing social problems to generating 'marginality, inequality and precarity'. According to the Conservatives, the solution to the problem of the 'broken society' was the 'Big Society': the idea at the heart of which was the devolution of power, decision making and responsibility from the state and its organizations to individuals, families and local communities (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010). The underlying belief of the 'Big Society' agenda as opposed to New Labour's 'big state' was the importance of building a strong society in the times when the welfare state has run its course (Cameron cited in Wintour and Stratton, 2009). Regardless of this justification, Exley and Ball (2011) see the notion of the 'Big Society' as 'a rebranded form of neo-liberalism incorporating elements of communitarianism' (*ibid*:101). However, within the framework of the 'Big Society' agenda, a number of changes in education discussed below were initiated under the Coalition Government.

The Coalition Government sped up the development of academies with the plan to transform the entire educational landscape in England. The Conservative-Liberal Democratic Government's first enacted legislation, *The Academies Act* 2010 (DfE, 2010), enabled the expansion of the Academies Programme. This was done through the extension of the right to convert to academy status to free-standing primary and special schools as well as by providing provision for the creation of new types of academies, namely free schools with their sub-types: studio schools and university technical colleges. The growth of the initiative was further enabled by the inclusion in the programme of the best performing schools. In contrast to the New Labour's academies which replaced failing secondary schools, the Coalition Government pre-approved the application for academy status by outstanding schools and schools judged as good with outstanding features (DfE, 2010a). As the best schools could convert to academies, they did not require the support of an external sponsor who would

lead the schools to 'success'. In fact, these outstanding and good schools were encouraged to act as sponsors to poorly performing schools through collaboration which would transform the weakest schools. This led to the growth in the number of converter and sponsored academies (West and Bailey, 2013). Sponsored academies are seen as a form of continuation of the New Labour's policy which aimed to improve failing schools whereas converter academies are perceived to be a further attempt at privatization of the state education due to the increased involvement of private actors, which are academy trusts, in provision of state education (West and Bailey, 2013).

The Academies Programme continued to face serious criticism that echoes the arguments raised earlier when the programme was developing under New Labour. Amongst some of the arguments against the initiative were the claims that the process of establishing academies is undemocratic and that academy status is not appropriate for primary schools. In addition, it was claimed that academies have a negative impact on other local schools and they do not raise educational standards. Further to this, academies undermine the role of governing bodies and constitute a threat to Local Authorities funding and support they provide to schools, they threaten fair admissions procedures and have negative implications for teachers (NUT, 2012, 2013). What is more, the House of Commons Education Committee (2015) published their most comprehensive report on academies with inconclusive findings on effectiveness of the programme.

Conservative Government since 2015
Despite the concerns expressed by many commentators, the expansion of the Academies Programme continues. After winning the General Election in May 2015, the Conservative Party demonstrated the rapid rate at which they wanted to achieve a full academisation of the education system in England in their *Education and Adoption Act* (DfE, 2016a) and *The Educational Excellence Everywhere* White Paper (DfE, 2016b).

The Education and Adoption Act provided the Secretary of State for Education with new intervention powers in relation to converting poorly performing maintained schools to academy status. The Act also extended the eligibility criteria for conversion to include 'coasting schools', a new term that describes schools which performance have fallen below certain results threshold for three consecutive years (DfE, 2016d). However, the introduction of the term 'coasting schools' sparkled controversy as the DfE failed to provide a precise definition of this term in *the Education and Adoption Bill* which received Royal Assent on 16th March 2016. The agreed definition was set out a few months later in the regulations released by the DfE in November 2016 (DfE, 2016d). Writing in January 2016, Mansell (2016) argued that this move opened up an opportunity to amend the definition of coasting schools in the future by simply changing the regulations without a requirement for a Parliamentary debate. He convincingly stated that this could be a deliberate strategy to achieve a longer-term plan of restructuring of the education system (Mansell, 2016).

Based on the provisional result data, in November 2016, the Government identified 806 schools that met the definition of coasting schools and this number also included already existing academies (DfE, 2016d). Further to this, the Act removed the requirement for a general consultation with parents and teachers regarding the conversion of the school 'eligible for intervention'. This indicates an acceleration of the process of schools' conversion with fewer rights from the public to oppose academy status. Next, *The Educational Excellence Everywhere* White Paper (DfE, 2016b) proposed to turn all schools into academies by 2020 or have an academy order in place committing them to change by 2022.

Slade (2016) considered this proposal to be the most controversial aspect of the White Paper while Long and Bolton (2016) claimed that the decision to convert all schools into academies dominated the commentators' reaction to the White

Paper. The proposal was met with a wall of opposition. The media reported on teaching unions organising protests and members of the public calling on the government to scrap the full academisation plans and for a referendum over this matter (Ward, 2016). Parents expressed their concerns at the future of their children's education worrying that their children would be attending schools run by 'an oppressive dictatorship from way above' instead of 'the people who know best' (Keay, 2016). The Government also faced opposition from the leaders of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors across the country who argued that a full academisation would not address the real problems in the education system (Helm and Adams, 2016; Weale, 2016). Their concerns echoed those expressed by the Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Education, Lucy Powell who called the plan 'a costly, unnecessary re-organisation of schools which nobody wants' (Powell, 2016). In addition to this, the former Education Secretary, David Blunkett who was one of the initiators of the Academies Programme under the New Labour Government accused the Conservatives' move towards an all academy system of being 'Tory ideological obsession with removing all of them [schools] from any local authority control' (Blunkett cited in Helm, 2016). After the wave of criticism, Nicky Morgan announced that the plans to force schools to convert to academy status were dropped while still reassuring her strong belief in academies being the only option ensuring children receive a world-class education (Morgan, 2016).

Free schools
In addition to expanding the Academies Programme at a rapid rate, the Coalition's proposed legislation, *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper 2010 (DfE, 2010a) paved the way for the creation of the new types of academies, namely free schools which include University Technical Colleges (UTCs) and studio schools. In contrast to sponsored and converter academies which replace a previously LA maintained school, free schools are brand new schools which are said to be created in accordance with the local demand as claimed by Gove (2011). Modelled closely on international examples of independent-state funded schools such as Swedish friskolor and the US charter schools, free schools can

be set up by parents, faith organisations, charities and teachers. UTCs and studio schools are types of free schools. They are brand new state-funded institutions established outside of LAs jurisdiction. They provide vocational education to secondary age pupils and they are set up in partnership with local universities, colleges and businesses in case of UTCs or with businesses only in case of Studio Schools (DfE, 2010a; DfE, 2014; DfE, 2015).

Forrester and Garratt (2016) highlight that the free school policy movement embodies the principles of the Big Society agenda which places a great emphasis on the devolution of power from state to local communities which are expected to take control of their lives (Conservative Party, 2010; Evans, 2011). In line with this, Hodgson (2012) argues that the free school initiative indicates that the provision of state education no longer resides in the hands of the central government and new schools can be opened where there is an apparent parental demand for them. This, according to Hodgson (2012) is a further extension of the individual choice agenda promoted as part of the neo-liberal discourse since the 1980s. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that in his recent analysis of the various types of schools in England, Cortney (2015) convincingly concludes that parental choice has not been enhanced or improved in the past thirty years despite there being between 70 and 90 different types of state schools. This is due to the fact that many schools select their pupils instead of parents making choice over schools (Cortney, 2015). In addition to this, to further contradict the government's rhetoric about the free school initiative enabling local communities to open schools in the areas where these schools are most needed, Higham (2014) analysed the individuals and organisations that propose setting up free schools. Based on his findings, Higham vigorously claims that the actors involved in setting up free schools are more advantaged people equipped in resources, networks, knowledge, experience and expertise that favour them during the application process for setting up a new free school. Further to this, those who are at an advantage when accessing state resources bring in their private and self-interested motivations into public sector education.

These motivations do not necessary serve the needs of the most disadvantaged communities. Thus, his findings support earlier claims made by Hatcher (2011a) who argued that free schools are socially selective. To support this view further, Green, Allen and Jenkins (2015) suggest that although free schools are being set up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, they admit a lower proportion of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) than other local schools. In terms of quality of free schools, both the House of Commons Education Committee (2015) and most recently Bolton (2016) concluded that it was too early to judge the performance of free schools due to little reliable performance data on free schools. However, Ofsted (cited in House of Commons Education Committee, 2015) confirmed that free schools 'have a similar profile of inspection judgements to other schools' and that 'free schools succeed or fail for broadly the same reasons as all other types of schools' (*ibid*: 57).

Autonomy
The driving force behind the expansion of the academies initiative is its proponents' belief in the transformative power of autonomy which was placed at the heart of the policy on academies throughout the history of the initiative (Gove, 2010, 2011; DfE, 2010a). Schools are encouraged or in some cases even forced to opt out from the auspices of local authorities and instead they are accountable directly to the central government (Mansell, 2016). As a result of leaving their local authorities, schools are promised greater autonomy in certain areas related to the running of their academies. Greater freedom and autonomy given to schools are seen as means of raising standards and reducing educational attainment gap as autonomous schools are believed to be better suited for designing programmes of study that address the particular needs of their students (DfE, 2010a; Hanushek *et al.*, 2013; Wohlstetter *et al.*, 1995). However, Wright (2012) argues that this rhetoric, deeply rooted in the neo-liberal agenda in education, is linked to the idea of shifting a range of responsibilities from the state to individuals giving them a false feeling of empowerment.

In praising autonomy as a factor leading to better educational outcomes, the supporters of the academies initiative refer to the apparent success stories of various seemingly autonomous schools (Gove, 2010, 2011; DfE, 2010a). However, the quality of evidence used to support and justify the expansion of the Academies Programme has been scrutinised and widely criticised (Coffield, 2012; Morris, 2012; Lumby and Muijs, 2014; You and Morris, 2016). For instance, Morris (2012) notes that the authors of *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper refer to the publication by OECD '*Education at a Glance'* which confirms that there is a growing trend for countries to set up autonomous schools; however, he points out that this publication does not make any claims in relation to the impact of this trend. Thus, he concludes that the evidence drawn on in the White Paper was used selectively and conclusions from data were misinterpreted.

Further to this, one of the success stories the policy makers draw on is the CTCs project, the forerunners of New Labour's academies discussed in section 2.3.1. As indicated earlier, this initiative was subject to criticism on the grounds of involvement of private actors in public education and the high costs of the project. Further to this, as rightly pointed out by Mansell (2016) is the fact that only 15 CTCs were created which perhaps suggests that the use of this initiative as evidence to support system-wide reform is questionable. Further to this, the proponents of the policy on academies praise the international independent state-funded school movements that they present as examples of best practice. This is articulated in the White Paper 2010:

> 'Across the world, the case for the benefits of school autonomy has been established beyond doubt (…).In many of the highest performing jurisdictions, school autonomy is central. In high-performing US States, Charter Schools – publicly funded independent schools set up by a legal 'charter' – have been engines of progress. (…) In Alberta, Canada all schools are afforded significant autonomy in relation to how they teach and

how they manage themselves. In Sweden, pupils who attend state-funded independent Free Schools outperform those in other state schools and a higher proportion (eight per cent more) go on to higher education.'

(DfE, 2010a, *ibid*: 51)

This statement is an illustrative example of how policy makers in England looked upon the US charter schools and Swedish free schools which distinguishing feature is the schools' apparent autonomous character. Both initiatives were praised by their supporters in England for providing parents with a greater variety of schools and leading to better educational outcomes of students (The Conservative Party, 2010; DfE, 2010a). Nevertheless, the discussion of the US charter school movement and the Swedish friskolor presented in the earlier section of this chapter (see section 2.2) indicated that there is a mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of both movements. For instance, Flanders (2017) purports that there is a link between educational performance of students and the degree of autonomy enjoyed by charter schools. However, he acknowledges that charter schools differ in the amount of autonomy afforded to them and argues that only the charter schools that enjoy the highest level of autonomy outperform traditional public schools in terms of exam results and the schools' efficiency. Nonetheless, other studies on charter schools do not support this view (Parlady and Nesbitt, 2007; Carpenter and Noller, 2010; Clark *et al.*, 2015). In the Swedish context, a similar picture has been painted in relation to the effectiveness of the free school movement (Böhlmark and Lindahl, 2008, 2012; Allen, 2010). At the time when *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper 2010 was published promoting the benefits of extended school autonomy, Caldwell (cited in Glatter, 2012) argued that research had not provided any convincing evidence to prove there was a link between school autonomy and improved educational outcomes. Despite this, the supporters of the Academies Programme claimed the opposite. In addition to this, Levin (2010) highlights the fact that education systems such as England or New Zealand which allow

principals more autonomy do not outperform more centralised systems such as Canada or Singapore.

Further to this, research on autonomy of free schools in Sweden and the US charter schools provide evidence that contradict the claims made by the policy makers in England with regards to the suggestion that these independent-state funded schools are afforded greater autonomy in comparison to other state schools. For instance, Finnigan (2007) investigated the degree of autonomy of charter schools and concluded that in contrast to what is being purported by the policy makers in England, many charter schools do not enjoy high levels of autonomy and that the degree of autonomy in some schools decreases over time. This point was stressed further by Flanders (2017) who highlights that the types of charter schools vary in terms of the level of autonomy being granted to them.

In respect of academies in England, a research by Salokangas (2013) challenges the commonly held assumption that increased autonomy of academies empowers staff at the organisational level. In her study of autonomy and innovation in a secondary academy, she found that the autonomy of both teachers and academy's leaders was regulated by the framework of accountability measures in which the academy operated. The same accountability measures such as tests and Ofsted inspections curtailed the staff capacity to innovate in respect to pedagogy, curriculum or management. However, the academy's sponsor was found to have the greatest decision-making capacity over the matters related to the running of the academy.

2.3.4 Known implications of working in academies

Academies differ from maintained schools in many respects and this has a number of implications for teachers working in these schools. The differences result from the fact that academies supposedly enjoy greater autonomy over various matters relating to the running of the school (DfE, 2010a). As outlined in section 2.3.3, policy makers in England promised greater freedom and autonomy to the professionals who work in academies as they are believed to be the best people to make decisions regarding the day to day lives of the schools (DfE, 2010a). Thus, academies have arguably more freedom over curriculum, schools' budged as well as flexibilities relating to teachers' pay, working conditions, and the level of qualifications of the teaching workforce.

Reports by the teachers' unions (NUT, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2014a; ALT, 2012, NASWUT, n.d.) examine the impact of LA maintained schools' conversions to academies on teachers' pay and working conditions highlighting the fact that academies are allowed to set pay and working conditions for their staff. Both academies and free schools have a status of independent schools and thus are not required to abide by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions document or the Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales known as the 'Burgundy Book'. This freedom, however, can be used only in relation to newly appointed teachers who join an academy. Teachers' pay and working conditions employed in a LA maintained school replaced by an academy are protected under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). This means that teachers' pay and contractual working conditions in place at the predecessor school are transferred to the academy in which the teachers continue their employment. However, NUT (2014a) emphasises that TUPE provisions do not protect non-contractual working conditions such as changes to the length and timing of the working day or regulations regarding the class size. This indicates that academies can extend the school day that leads to extended working hours.

In July 2012, the Department for Education announced that academies were allowed to employ staff with no teaching qualifications giving them the rights and flexibilities that were already enjoyed by independent schools, free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools (DfE, 2012). It is important to note that a number of studies have documented the practice of employing non-qualified teachers in the US charter schools and Swedish free schools (see section 2.2.3) indicating the direction of policy travel for English academies (Arreman and Holm, 2011; Burian-Fitzgerald and Harris, 2004; Fredriksson, 2009; Fusrelli, 2002; Podgursky, 2006).The DfE (2012) justified this change arguing that academies should be allowed to employ great specialists such as linguists, computer scientists, university professors, musicians or engineers who have the relevant knowledge, expertise and qualifications despite them lacking a Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This move was presented as a means for school improvement. However, it was met with a great criticism from the teachers' and head teachers' unions. Blower (cited in Kershaw, 2012) recognised it as 'a cost-cutting measure dressed up as 'freedoms'. Other critics argued that employing staff with no formal teaching qualifications would devalue the status of the teaching profession (Mulholland, 2012). Further to this, this move contradicts the claims made in The Importance of Teaching White Paper (DfE, 2010a) where the importance of good quality teachers was recognised and highlighted.

Following the announcement of the right to employ staff with no QTS, the number of teachers with no qualifications rose in 2013 compared to 2012 (DfE, 2014). The following year the number of teachers with no QTS increased further as the DfE's annual school workforce survey carried out in 2014 recorded 95,5% of teachers with QTS which is down from 2013 when there were 96,2% of qualified teachers working in state funded schools in England (DfE, 2015). This is an important change since the Labour Government was frequently criticised

for allowing high number of people to teach without the QTS status and measures were taken to ensure that teachers are appropriately qualified. The most recent data on school workforce also show that academies and free schools employ a higher proportion of teachers with no formal qualifications in comparison to LA schools (DfE, 2015). This move contradicted the Coalition Government's rhetoric about the importance of raising the status of the teaching profession by employing good quality teachers (DfE, 2010a).

As discussed above, the number of teachers working in academies is growing rapidly especially after the expansion of the Academies Programme in 2010. Literature on the experiences of teachers working in these settings is still rather limited highlighting the importance of this research.

2.4 Conclusions

This chapter reviewed the main developments in the policy on independent-state funded schools that have shaped the current educational context in which teachers in this research have operated. The chapter discussed the formation of the Academies Programme by tracing its roots in the key developments in the education policy under the Conservative Government (1979-1997), the New Labour (1997-2010), the Conservative-led Coalition (2010-2015) and the present Conservative Government (2015-to present). It traced the historical development of the Academies Programme that was built on the previous initiatives that seemingly aimed to diversify the school system in England, extend parental choice of schools and shrink the state through devolution of responsibilities and power from the central government to individuals and local communities.

Further to this, this chapter situated the Academies Programme in the context of the international independent state-funded school movement that influenced the direction of the policy on academies in England and it shaped the current state

of the Academies Programme. Specifically, the chapter briefly reviewed the US charter school movement and Swedish free schools which apparent autonomous character provided to be most appealing to the policy makers in England who highlighted the perceived benefits of school autonomy for students' performance. Thus, the policy rhetoric was centred on extending schools autonomy by removing them from the jurisdiction of local authorities. The policy makers has also claimed that when schools become autonomous and independent academies, the responsibility for providing education is shifted to the professionals who know best what is appropriate for the students. These professionals are teachers and academy leaders.

However, research reviewed in this chapter indicated that school autonomy does not provide better results for students. In addition, academies in England operate in a framework of high accountability that in fact restricts the promised autonomy. The next chapter continues the exploration of autonomy in the context of the development of the teaching profession and teaching professionalism.

Chapter 3: The changing nature of the teaching profession

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the evolution of the Academies Programme in the context of national and global movement of independent state-funded schools in order to develop an understanding of the current state of the English school system in which teachers operate. The rapid expansion of the academies programme has transformed the educational landscape in England and brought many implications for the teachers who work in these settings. In relation to this, this chapter reviews literature that examines the implications of externally mandated reforms in education on teachers and on the teaching profession. For this purpose, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section elaborates the key concepts used in this thesis. The second section traces the development of the teacher professionalism throughout four broad historical phases as distinguished by Hargreaves (2000).

3.2 Defining key concepts

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) highlight teachers' longstanding struggle to achieve a professional recognition. They point out at the 1960s and the early 1970s as being the golden age of teaching professionalism whereas Helsby (1995) notes that many commentators see the 1950s and early 1960s as the height of teacher autonomy, freedom and professionalism associated with a stable economic situation in England and Wales. According to many commentators, since the 1970s, the successive governments' interventions in education have been challenging teachers' professional and personal identities (Day, 2002; Helsby, 1999; Menter et al., 1997; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). In fact, some claim that educational reforms have changed what it means to be a teacher (Bernstein, 1996; Marshall and Ball, 1999). In recent decades, the rhetoric on changes in teachers' working lives and the teacher professionalism has centred on two differing themes. One has been proletarianisation or de-

professionalisation of the teaching profession resulting from market-oriented reforms in education (Helsby, 1995). The second one, promoted by the proponents of such reforms, has been re-professionalisation of teaching understood as a process of changing the nature of the teacher professionalism in order to ensure it meets the needs of the new era (Whitty, 2000). In order to understand the implications of the Academies Programme for the teaching profession, this section examines literature on development of teaching as a profession and it problematises the concepts that are commonly used in the literature on teachers' working lives. These include the following terms: profession, professionalism and professionality, professionalization, proletarianisation, and professional autonomy.

3.2.1 Professionalism and its substance: professionality

Freidson (1994: 169) convincingly argues that debates about professionalism are 'clouded by unstated assumptions and inconsistent and incomplete usages'. This is why literature concerning teachers' work highlight the difficulty in defining the concept of 'the teacher professionalism' (Helsby, 1995; Parker, 2015; Parker, 2015a). According to Hanlon (1998) this is due to the term 'professionalism' being seen as 'a shifting rather than a concrete phenomenon' (*ibid*: 45). This point is stressed further by Helsby (1995) who argues that the term 'professionalism' is a difficult one to define because it includes a range of characteristics that are shaped by culture, geographical location and time. All these factors make 'professionalism' an elusive and contestable concept. An extra layer of difficulty in defining the concept is added by Evetts (2003) who distinguishes between two contrasting interpretations of 'professionalism' presented in the sociological literature on professions. Some interpretations present professionalism as a normative value system while other as a controlling ideology. Professionalism as a normative value system presents a vision of a professional group seen as a moral community that is characterised by altruism and willingness to provide service to others. This perspective has been

contrasted by the view of professionalism as being elitist and occupied by powerful, privileged and self-interested groups that keep monopoly over particular occupation. Freidson (1994) adds to this point noting that when professionals are under attack, the main accusation is their failure to protect the interests of the poor and underprivileged groups.

In an attempt to define this vague notion of professionalism, Whitty (2000) agrees with Hanlon (1998) that professionalism is whatever lay public considers it to be at any particular time and that view is subject to change. This indicates that professionalism is a socially constructed concept (Hilferty, 2008; Troman, 1996). Notwithstanding, a contrasting view is presented by the sociologists working in the area of professions who in the 1950s and 1960s were concerned with establishing what constitutes professionalism. Lortie (1969) notes that sociologists have not reached an agreement on a single set of criteria that identify a professional occupation. However, based on the models of medicine and law (Larson, 1977; Whitty, 2000), they compiled lists with characteristic features that an occupation should have in order to be considered as a profession. Some of the most commonly named characteristics of a profession include: the use of skills based on theoretical knowledge, knowledge that is esoteric in nature, long periods of training and education, high degree of autonomy, a code of professional conduct, a powerful professional organisation, and professional culture interpreted as homogeneity of values, viewpoints ideologies, ways of working and attitudes towards working (Goode, 1969; Larson, 1977; Freidson, 1994; Talbert and McLaughlin, 1994; Helsby, 1995; Hargreaves, 2000; Whitty, 2000; Evetts, 2003; Evans, 2008). Abbott (1988:8) defined professions as 'exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases'. Some commentators interpret 'professionalism' as an externally formulated and applied design shaped by external agents and imposed on the professionals (Ozga and Lawn, 1988).

Evans (2008), who examines the substance of professionalism, suggests that professionalism constitutes a combination of a range of 'professionalities' of individual workers within the professional group. 'Professionality' is a term that Evans borrowed from Hoyle (1975, cited in Evans, 2008) who distinguished between professionalism and professionality. According to Hoyle, professionalism relates to the status of teachers' work while professionality to the skills, knowledge and procedures used by teachers. Professionality is also understood as a singular unit of both professionalism and professional culture, and all three elements are interlinked and influence each other. Additionally, Hoyle distinguished between two models of professionality: restricted and extended.

Evans (2008) interprets the model of restricted and extended professionality as a form of a continuum. At the restricted end of the continuum, there are professionals whose work is guided by a rather narrow, classroom-based vision of education based on intuition and experience while at the extended end of the continuum there are professionals who exhibit a wider vision of education with its values and purpose, and who base their practice and pedagogy on underpinning theory. Based on this interpretation, Evans (2008) perceives professionalism to be a mixture of many professionalities that are located on different parts of the restricted-extended continuum. Therefore, she rejects the idea that professionalism is characterised by homogeneity or commonality, and argues that professionals within a professional group shape the nature of their professionality. This is in opposition to the view that professionalism is formulated and shaped by external agents.

Evans's (2008) interpretation of professionalism is in line with Helsby's (1995) ideas who argues that since professionalism is a socially constructed concept then teachers should be seen as the key players in formulating and establishing the teacher professionalism. Thus, she argues, they should be 'accepting or

resisting external control and asserting or denying their autonomy' (*ibid*: 320). Swann *et al.* (2010) conducted two large-scale national surveys with primary and secondary school teachers to understand their conception of teacher professionalism. The study revealed that teachers do not have a single view of professionalism.

However, teaching has not always been regarded as a profession because the extent to which it met the criteria of professional occupations has been contested (Etzioni, 1969; Larson, 1977). For instance, Lortie (1969) highlighted the lack of autonomy in teaching that other established professions enjoyed as well as the lack of esoteric knowledge since what was being taught in primary schools was presumed to be known by all adults. Thus, teaching was considered to be a 'quasi-profession' or 'semi-profession' (Talbert and McLaughlin, 1994; Whitty, 2000).

With all the interpretations and definitions of professionalism in mind, in this research, teaching is seen as a professional occupation. The nature of the teacher professionalism is shaped and determined by teachers as well as by external agents such as policy makers. Teachers' notion of professionalism has been evolving throughout history because of various reforms in education and the changing perceptions of teaching by teachers and other members of the public.

3.2.2 Professionalisation

Helsby (1995) purports that the status and financial advantages associated with professionalism have led many groups of workers to claim professional status. These groups might interpret the central elements of professionalism to their favour adding an extra layer of difficulty to the process of defining the term

'professionalism'. These attempts at improving the status and the standing of a profession are termed 'professionalisation' (Labaree, 1992; Englund, 1996; Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Hargreaves, 2000; Whitty, 2000).

In terms of teaching, the process of professionalisation included extending accreditation, lengthening training, making the knowledge base in pre-service education for teachers more academic; restructuring the work roles of teachers, increased remuneration and some policy making influence (Lawn and Ozga, 1981; Labaree, 1992; Hargreaves, 2000). However, not everyone has perceived professionalisation of teaching to be a positive phenomenon. For instance, Labaree (1992) warned against the potential of negative consequences of professionalisation of teaching that according to him was the danger of acceleration of the rationalization of classroom teaching understood here as a process of making classroom teaching more efficient. Further to this, despite the number of projects that seem to support the teacher professionalisation movement, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) point out that this process has been met with resistance from governments and bureaucrats. This was manifested through, for instance, reduction of the links between teacher training and universities, and shifting of the decision-making over curriculum to the centre.

Englund (1996) rightly notes that different groups used the concept of the teacher professionalism to achieve different aims. Whilst teachers have strived to be considered as professionals, many commentators argue that the discourse of professionalism has been used as a means of exercising control over teachers by the state as well as by managerialists via creating expectations that are difficult to meet (Lawn and Ozga, 1981; 1986; 1988; Freidson, 1994; Evans, 2011). In line with this view, Evans (2011) vigorously claims that governments' policies and directives shape teacher professionalism. For instance, she points at the performance management system that became statutory in 2007 as an

example of evidence that supports her claim. Similarly, Forrester (2011) also argues that performance management can be perceived 'as a form of managerial control over professional work' (*ibid*:5).

3.2.3 Proletarianisation

Since the 1990s, the educational debates have been dominated by the apparent 'proletarianisation' of teaching (Helsby, 1995). Similarly to the work intensification thesis discussed in the next section (section 3.2.4), the proletarianisation thesis is associated with Braverman (1974) and his famous work: *Labour and Monopoly Capital*. In Braverman's labour process theory, there appears to be need for control of workers who cannot be trusted to work to the best interest of capital in a capitalist society. Thus, 'the desire for profit determines the organisation of labour' (Reid, 2003: 560) hence leading to change in labour. Regarding this, proletarianisation involves increased managerial control and an erosion of professional autonomy. This leads to reduction of authority, status and reward. In this vein, the proletarianisation of work refers to the process that leads to 'devaluation of labour power' (White, 1983: 55). Ozga and Lawn (1988) argue that the proletarianisation process is evidenced in the division of labour into initiation and its execution where the worker is deprived of the right to design particular tasks and then carry them out. This means that labour is divided and subdivided leading to fragmentation of work into meaningless units that 'can be timed and measured' (Reid, 2003: 561). As a consequence of this, the worker is being deskilled and their autonomy is reduced while the managerial control over the worker increases (Ozga and Lawn, 1981; Ozga and Lawn, 1988). However, to contradict the proletarianisation thesis, Murphy (1990) argues that teaching has undergone a formal rationalisation and bureaucratisation as opposed to commonly believed process of proletarianisation.

3.2.4 Intensification

The intensification thesis was first put forward by Larson (1980) and then developed by Hargreaves (1994). Hargreaves (1994) asserts that the concept of intensification is derived from labour process theory. Regarding this, Larson (1980) argues that intensification is one of the tendencies of the labour process where 'the work privileges of educated workers are eroded' (*ibid*: 166). Galton and MacBeath (2012) explain that intensification refers to the expectation from teachers to undertake a larger number of tasks during shorter time for completion of these tasks. Further to this, they are also increasingly pressurised 'to be responsive to a greater range of demands from external sources, to meet a greater range of targets, to be driven by deadlines' (*ibid*: 13).

Considering the Conservative Government's initiatives of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Hatcher (1994) asserts that teachers' work underwent intensification due to the increased workload caused by such initiatives (discussed further in section 3.3.4). He also draws on the study by Tomaney (1990) who investigated changes in the organisation of work in the manufacturing industry and found that production workers' job comprises of a number of tasks as opposed to one single task. In translating this finding into the school context, Hatcher (1994: 47) claims a similar development occurs in relation to teachers' work where teachers are increasingly expected to deal with a higher number of varied 'non-teaching administrative tasks'. In addition, Hatcher (1994) also recognises that intensification of teachers' work leads to 'colonisation' of their time at home. Regarding teachers' working time, similar claim was made by Hargreaves (1994) who also found that teachers struggle with reduced time for relaxation and lack of time for lunch due to increased intensification of their work. In addition, intensification leads to 'chronic and persistent overload' with limited time for preparation which in turn encourages teachers to depend on external expertise in the form of, for instance, 'pre-packaged curricula'. Robertson (1996: 45) argues convincingly that

intensification of teachers' work restricts their opportunities to 'engage critically' with their students and also leads to teachers giving greater priority to the tasks that are being rewarded. As such, the quality of teachers' work diminishes. However, Hargreaves (1994) suggests that intensification of work is frequently misconstrued as professionalism.

3.2.5 Professional autonomy

According to Larson (1977), autonomy is a crucial feature that distinguishes a professional occupation from a 'proletarian work'. This indicates that professional autonomy is at the heart of all professions and its loss is commonly associated in literature with de-professionalisation of any profession including teaching (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013; Evans, 2008). However, Frostenson (2015) argues against this assumption held on teaching professionalism and encourages viewing teachers' professional autonomy from a new perspective. He developed a three-levelled model of professional autonomy that was applied to this study as an analytical framework for the analysis of the teachers' professional autonomy in a primary academy. This framework, discussed in detail below, was used to inform the interpretation and presentation of data, and it enabled me to understand the impact of the Academies Programme on primary teachers' professionalism.

Frostenson (2015) argues that researchers jump hastily to conclusions about de-professionalisation of teaching when teachers lose their autonomy to decide on some aspects relating to their work. Although he acknowledges that the teaching profession has been under attack in many countries, he suggests that it is crucial to analyse closely all aspects of teachers' professional autonomy in order to conclude whether teaching has been de-professionalised. Therefore, his analysis of teachers' professional autonomy identified three levels of professional autonomy, namely general professional autonomy, collegial

professional autonomy and individual professional autonomy. General professional autonomy refers to teachers' capacity to influence 'the frames of professional work' (Frostenson, 2015:22) including organisation of the school system, curricula, procedures and ideologies of control. Researchers tend to focus on this level of professional autonomy when examining the impact of certain reforms in education that supposedly lead to de-professionalisation of teaching (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013). Collegial professional autonomy concerns teachers' collective ability to decide on their practice at school level. Finally, the third level of autonomy is individual professional autonomy. Individual professional autonomy assumes a degree of decision-making power associated with an individual teacher. The scope to make decisions by teachers is applied by them to influence their pedagogy, choose teaching materials, decide on the temporal and spatial conditions of work, and influence the evaluation systems of teaching practice. Such a close examination of the different aspects of teachers' professional autonomy is crucial according to Frostenson (2015) who argues that the loss of capacity to decide on some aspects of teachers work does not eliminate their capacity to decide on other areas of their professional work. Thus, there is no total loss of professional autonomy and therefore the teaching profession should not be seen as being de-professionalised.

Frostenson's (2015) model of teacher professional autonomy brought together different dimensions of professional autonomy which enabled me to better understand, interpret and explain my own data about teachers' work in the context of academisation. In addition, through the examination of the three levels of professional autonomy, Frostenson's (2015) model enabled me to determine the extent to which the teaching profession was de-professionalised as a result of a primary school's conversion to an academy. These dimensions are not necessary included in the same way in other frameworks; for instance, Evans's (2008, 2011) conceptualisation of professionalism. Evans (2008) calls

for an-depth analysis of the substance of professionalism in order to understand how professionalism functions and how it may be influenced by policy changes. Evans's (2011) presents her conceptualisation of professionalism as consisting of three components: behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual and each of the three main components includes further elements. However, Evans's (2011) conceptualisation of professionalism would enable me to only describe the nature of teaching in Bricklane Primary Academy without demonstrating how the nature of teachers' work has changed over the years as a result of the conversion. Further to this, Evans (2011) does not consider teachers' professional autonomy that is considered as the defining feature of a professional occupation (Larson, 1977). Thus, her model was not used in this thesis. I also considered Giddens' (1976; 1984) structuration theory in order to show the complex relationship between managerial control and professional autonomy. However, I found that this theory was restricting and did not give me the scope to explore and make sense of the different dimensions of professional autonomy.

After a consideration was given to other frameworks, it became clear that Frostenson (2015) offered a new way of looking at teachers' professional autonomy and the apparent de-professionalisation of the teaching profession. The three-levelled model of professional autonomy enabled me to analyse different dimensions of teachers' decision making capacity and simultaneously to present a snapshot of teachers' work in a school that converted to academy status. In addition, this model proved to be helpful with structuring and the presentation of the research findings in a logical manner.

3.3 Development of teaching professionalism

3.3.1 The pre-professional age

In an attempt to illustrate the changing nature of teaching throughout the twentieth century, Hargreaves (2000) distinguished four distinct historical phases in the evolution of teacher professionalism. These four phases include the pre-professional age, the age of the autonomous professional, the age of the collegial professional, and finally the post-professional/postmodern phase that has been recognised as a 'new professionalism' by Evans (2011) and Hargreaves (1994).

In the pre-professional period that according to Hargreaves (2000) encompasses the first six decades of the twentieth century, teaching was regarded to be managerially demanding but technically simple. With the roots of the state education in a factory-like system, students, segregated into age groups, were mass educated or as Hargreaves (2000) terms it 'processed in large batches' (*ibid:*154). At the core of mass education has been the teaching of literacy and numeracy which Alexander (1984) sees as a tradition that stretches back from the late nineteenth-century. Literature indicate that this tradition with its emphasis on English and Maths is still dominant today in the current form of the National Curriculum (Murphy, Kassem and Fenwick, 2006; Pollard, *et al.*, 1994). The main methods of instruction of such large group of students were recitation, lecturing, note taking, and question-and-answer. Individual needs of a student were not considered and teachers' aim was to cover lesson content while ensuring that order and control were maintained in the classroom. In terms of teacher's learning, one mastered teaching skills during a period of teaching apprenticeship at the side of a more experienced 'cooperative teacher' (Alexander, 1984). Once the brief period of apprenticeship was concluded, the new teacher would improve their practice based on experience with no further assistance, feedback or guidance from other

experienced colleagues. This type of professionalism is what Hoyle (1975, cited in Evans, 2008) would call 'restricted professionalism'.

3.3.2 The age of the autonomous professional

Hargreaves (2000) notes that from the 1960s until the mid-1980s, the status of teachers improved in many countries compared with the pre-professional period. He terms that period 'the age of the autonomous professional' when the process of professionalization of teaching took place (detailed in section 3.2.2). This was manifested through increased pay and unprecedented teacher autonomy in terms of curriculum development, methods of teaching and decision-making.

Teaching started to move towards an all-graduate profession with the delivery of pre-service education becoming increasingly the responsibility of universities. This in turn allowed for development of an extended-professionalism where teachers' practice was underpinned by theory. On contrary to common practice of the pre-professional period when a novice teacher learned how to teach from a more experienced teacher, during 'the age of the autonomous professional' classroom pedagogy became an area of concerns for teachers. It was during that period when child centred approaches were increasingly more popular (Alexander, 1984). Governments invested in projects aimed at innovative curriculum development and teachers were encouraged to adopt innovative practices in their classroom teaching. However, these projects were developed by 'experts' other than teachers themselves who rarely chose to fully implement these innovations into their teaching practices. For instance, Galton, Simon and Croll (1980) indicate that there was little evidence of cooperative work or discovery learning in classroom teaching during that period. This indicates that teachers had autonomy over what and how to teach. This claim is stressed further by Alexander (1984) who discussed primary teaching in the 1980s arguing convincingly that teachers ruled in their classrooms. This was arguably

possible, according to Alexander (1984), due to the absence of externally devised teaching syllabuses and no curricular constrains because of the lack of departmental structure of primary schools. The teacher's classroom was their world likened to a 'cocoon' or 'garden' that teachers 'protected, nurtured and defended against others' interference or criticism' (Alexander, 1984:165).

Whitty (2000) notes that despite paying teachers' salaries, the state did not intervene in their classroom practices. According to him, in the 1960s teachers enjoyed licensed form of autonomy. This meant that they were trusted and perceived as professionals who knew best what was appropriate for their pupils (Le Grand, 1997). In the 1970s, teachers' licensed autonomy shifted towards 'regulated' autonomy due to the emerging view that teachers abused their licensed autonomy. Dale (1989) argues that in industrial societies some professionals are granted license autonomy whereas others regulated autonomy. In the case of teachers, the move towards regulated form of autonomy involved:

> 'a move away from the notion that the teaching profession should have a professional mandate to act on behalf of the state in the best interests of its citizens to a view that teachers need to be subjected to the rigours of the market and/or greater control and surveillance on the part of the re-formed state.'

> Whitty (2000: 283)

Another characteristic of teachers' work during 'the age of the autonomous professional' was the isolation of teachers (Hargreaves, 2000). Working in isolation from other colleagues was also highlighted in the pre-professional phase when teachers were left to their own devices after completing their teaching practice. This continued to be a prevailing feature of teaching in the 1970s and 1980s. For instance, Alexander (1984) discussed the importance of 'privatisation' for teachers' work in the sense that teachers worked in isolation

from others which allowed them to work away from 'the constraints and distractions' that could possibly prevent them from achieving their educational goals. However, Little (1990) notes that teachers interacted with their colleagues but only to discuss matters relating to teaching materials or discipline. Another aspect of the isolated nature of teaching was manifested through the in-service teacher education that was delivered off-site. Little (1993) emphasises the fact that professional development training tended to have little relevance to teachers' classroom practices. Thus, after completing their trainings, teachers were unable to incorporate what they had learnt into their teaching. Individualism, isolation and privacy associated with teaching of these days led to many consequences including for instance teachers' limited sense of effectiveness and lack of confidence in their skills (Hargreaves, 2000).

3.3.3 The age of the collegial professional

The next phase that was identified to last between the mid to late 1980s was 'the age of the collegial professional' (Hargreaves, 2000). Hargreaves (2000) argues that this period emerged in response to the increasing complexities of teachers' work that individualism and high levels of teacher autonomy could not cope with. It was also then when teachers started to question in-service education delivered off-site and in isolation from classroom practices, and turned to each other for professional support. In his analysis, Hargreaves (2000) identified a number of factors that contributed to the emergence of a growing collaborative culture in teaching. However, the main factors that initiated the change in teachers' culture were various reforms in education.

3.3.4 The Post-professional, postmodern or new-professionalism?

The final historical phase in Hargreaves's (2000) classification is what he calls the post-professional or postmodern age, and what Hargreaves, D. (1994) and Evans (2011) term the 'new-professionalism'. In his ethnography of a primary school Jeffrey (2014) purports that postmodern professionalism is a new type of professionalism where workers have to comply with a top-down approach to management of their workplaces. In this structure, the government controls their work from a distance by expecting the professionals to implement centrally devised policies. Professional autonomy and professional collegiality, according to Jeffrey (2014), have been replaced by 'school managerial team work' (*ibid*: 111). Hargreaves (1994) explained that the postmodern age has begun around the 1970s with the electronic and digital revolution in communications, and with the globalisation of economic and political activities. Nations and their policies began to be market oriented and companies needed to be flexible and responsive to demands in order to remain competitive.

Hargreaves (1994, 2000) vigorously claims that these postmodern developments have led to an attack on professionalism and many aspects of teachers' professional work have been subjected to change and targeted by politicians and policy makers. For instance, changes were made to teachers' salaries and working conditions in order to ensure reduction in cost of teacher employment (Acker, 1999). Discussion about 'de-professionalisation' and 'proletarianisation' of teachers entered the discourse on teacher professionalism (Evans, 2011). Additionally, debates have been developing about the education policies that have contributed to the increasing intensification of teachers' work (Hatcher, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994) and given rise to a 'performative culture' of schools (Forrester, 2005; Jeffrey, 2014) creating a new type of professional teacher (Forrester, 2005). The discussion below considers different initiatives in education implemented since the late 1980s with an emphasis on their impact on teaching profession and teacher professionalism. It is important to note that the reforms under consideration here were emerging alongside the development

of independent-state funded school movement in England (detailed in Chapter 2).

There is extensive literature concerning the impact of educational reforms on teachers' work (Acker, 1999; Broadfoot & Osborn, 1988; Pollard et al., 1994; Woods et al., 1997). For example, Acker (1999) notes that in the late 1980s, steps towards weakening teachers' autonomy were made when teachers' bargaining rights were withdrawn through the *Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987*. Hatcher (1994) adds that the same Act also extended teachers' working day and working year by a week. This prepared ground for the policy makers to introduce ten subjects within a prescribed National Curriculum that had to be fitted into the school day (Lawton, 2008). Regarding this, many commentators have pointed at the legacy of the *Education Reform Act 1988* (ERA) as having a lasting impact on teachers' work (Day and Smethen, 2009; Pollard *et al.*, 1994).

Since the passing of the ERA 1988, debates in academic literature focused on intensification of teachers' work (Hatcher, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994) and de-professionalisation of teachers (Day, 2002) due to the introduction of the National Curriculum, national testing in the form of SATs, Ofsted inspections of schools and publication of test results in national league tables. Gray (2006) argues that all these initiatives indicated the Government's desire to increase centralisation of education as the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 enabled shifting of control over curriculum and classroom pedagogy from teachers to the policy makers.

Hatcher (1994) argues that the introduction of a prescribed National Curriculum and national testing for all maintained schools in England and Wales brought in a regime of regulation of teachers' work. When the National Curriculum became statutory, teachers were expected to teach the content of the curriculum devised by external agents which some of them found problematic as this affected teachers' autonomy over the content of their lessons (Pollard *et al.*, 1994).

Further to this, at the beginning of the 1990s, Coulby (1991) predicted that the assessment and recording arrangements would intrude on teachers' valuable teaching time. Additionally, he recognised that public reporting on students' results would impact on teaching and learning in schools for two reasons. Firstly, Coulby (1991) argued that teachers would give the highest priority to the subjects that would be assessed by the tests and secondly, teachers would teach to the test. These predictions were proven true in a number of studies that followed the implementation of the National Curriculum and performance measures (Pollard et al., 1994; Forrester, 2005, Gray, 2006, Webb, 2006). Years after the implementation of the components of the ERA 1988, Lawton (2008) argues that a NC has turned out to be a 'straitjacket' that hindered teachers' capacity to offer 'what they considered to be a good curriculum' (*ibid*: 337).

Pollard *et al.* (1994) explored the impact of the *Education Reform Act 1988* on primary schools. One of the many aspects of this large, longitudinal study were the implications of the Act for teachers. Researchers used a variety of data collection methods that included interviews and questionnaires to a large sample of teachers, and classroom and assessment observations conducted in primary schools. Despite the research being carried out at an early stage in the implementation of the reform, the study revealed that teachers experienced a gradual erosion of their capacity to use their professional judgment in classroom teaching due to an increased external control over the classroom curriculum. They also commented on how their work intensified due to increased bureaucracy and central direction. In terms of assessment, teachers recognised that SATs interfered with their usual classroom practices and diverted valuable time from teaching as predicted by Coulby (1991). Because of these changes to their work, teachers felt they were unable to respond to their pupils' individual learning needs and spontaneity in classroom teaching was declining. Another study that explored the effect of the 1988 ERA on primary school was an ethnography by Acker (1999). Recording daily experiences of teachers over a

period of three years between 1987 and 1990, Acker (1999) captured the gradual change in teachers' working lives caused by the introduction of assessments and the National Curriculum. Acker (1999) notes the changing culture in the school and the growing anxiety of teachers who faced difficulties with implementing complicated guidelines for all subjects and then assessing whether pupils met the attainment targets. Mac and Ghaill (1992) argue that the reforms of the late 1980s led to routinisation and standardisation of classroom practices while Hatcher (1994) discusses the increasing intensification of teachers' work through the increase of their workloads that the implementation of the National Curriculum and assessment brought to schools.

Similarly to Hatcher (1994), Hargreaves (1994) investigated how educational reforms changed teaching and teachers' work. His research reported intensification of teachers' work caused by higher expectations of teachers, increase in administrative tasks, more responsibilities and increased accountability. He noticed that as a result of intensification of teachers' work, the quality of their service diminished, they had no time to relax or to talk to their work colleagues, and their increased workload led to stress. These findings are supported by Troman and Woods (2001) who also found that due to the reformation of education, the changing nature and demands of teachers' work caused intensification of their work which led to higher level of stress.

The research by Perryman, Ball & Maguire (2011) which explored policy enactments in secondary schools found that there was more pressure put on teachers to perform well due to GCSE exams. It was found that such pressure can lead to stress which in turn creates emotions such as anxiety, guilt and shame. Teachers who work under pressure to produce exam results may experience emotional dissonance, crisis of their professional self-worth, sense of loss of control and lack of creativity as they are required to teach to the test and have no control over what they teach. This also causes frustration at having to work to others' agenda. They feel that they cannot be trusted to take control

over their job. In fact, Webb (2006) argues that the governmental initiatives since the late 1980s indicated the lack of trust in teachers' professional judgment.

Researchers recognised that in the past three decades of reforms, policy makers and politicians have been concerned with performance of schools, teachers and students. This is manifested through all the accountability measures used in order to assess the performance of individual schools, students and teachers. Forrester and Garratt (2016: 64) argue that the emphasis on testing and outcomes 'has pressurized teachers (…) to focus on performance' thus forcing teachers to focus on activities which would be measured by tests. This provide further evidence for Coulby's (1991) predictions about the impact of the 1988 ERA on teachers' working practices.

The reforms since the 1988 ERA have gradually diminished teachers' professional autonomy. However, with the strong emphasis on school autonomy, the Academies Programme made some believe that the period of increased autonomy has returned (Basset, Lyon, Tanner & Watkin, 2012). Nonetheless, the recent study conducted by Salokangas (2013) who investigated the concept of autonomy and associated with it innovation in educational and managerial approaches found that teachers' autonomy was constrained on many levels. Salokangas's study was conducted in a secondary academy. Through her observations, documentary analysis and interviews, she found out that teachers' pedagogical autonomy was constrained by the national, local and the Academy chain's policies. Although the school had a legal right to teach their own curriculum, the school's performance was measured against the same framework as other schools. This limited the teachers' autonomy to innovate with the curriculum. This indicates that Salokangas's (2013) study challenged the claim that autonomy in academies empowers school level practitioners.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed literature concerning teachers' work and the impact of externally mandated reforms in education for teachers' work by defining key terms used in literature about teachers and by discussing the development of the teaching profession in the twentieth century. This has provide background information for the developing of an understanding of teachers' work in academies. The next chapter outlines the process of this research.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The research reported in this thesis aims to capture the changing nature of the teaching profession in the wake of academisation. At the time of conducting this research, little was known about the experiences of primary teachers who worked in an academy. Although researchers have considered academies hard to access, there is a need to describe, illuminate and discuss the realities of teachers who work in this type of schools. As a means of explaining how this ethnographic study was conducted, this chapter discusses the research design, methodology and methods which were employed to address the following principal research question:

> What is the impact of a primary school's conversion to academy status upon teachers' work and their notion of professionalism?

In detailing the research process, this chapter falls into eight sections. Firstly, it discusses the theoretical paradigm that guided the conduct of the research. Secondly, it outlines the strategies which were used to identify and access the research field. Following this is a discussion of research participants and how they were selected and approached. The fourth section explores the research methods applied to address the research question. The subsequent section outlines the data analysis process and it discusses how 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of this research was established. Ethical issues that were taken into consideration during the course of this research are discussed in the sixth section. In addition to detailing how the study was conducted, the final section of this chapter presents a discussion of my reflections on the research journey and the implications my personal biography, positionality and the role I assumed in the research field might have impacted on data generation. The research perspective employed and the philosophical underpinnings of the research are also considered throughout the chapter.

4.2 Theoretical paradigm

4.2.1 Social Constructionism

This research offers insight into the process and lived experiences of academisation as it captured teachers' perceptions during a time of reform and change in schools, and it was influenced by a social constructionist paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 5) explain that a paradigm is 'a world view' while Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe it as a set of principles that guide the investigator's conduct of research in terms of the choice of methods as well as the investigator's ontological and epistemological stance. In line with this view, a paradigm combines a researcher's ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs.

Social constructionism suggests that all meaningful reality is socially constructed and set in a historical perspective (Crotty, 2015). Therefore, the specific context in which participants live and operate is of importance to developing understanding of their historical and cultural setting. According to Creswell (2007), individuals strive for developing an understanding of the world they live in and when engaging with their world they develop subjective meanings of their experiences. Research conducted within a social constructionist paradigm is concerned with the participants' views of events of which they form multiple meanings. This indicates that one event might be understood, experienced, perceived and made sense of by different people in numerous ways. According to this perspective, all understanding and meanings are social constructions, thus findings cannot be generalised (Crotty, 2015).

4.2.2 Ontological and epistemological stance

The ontological assumptions concern 'the nature of existence' and 'the structure of reality' (Crotty, 2015:10). Social constructionism adopts relativist ontology (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011). Relativist ontology asserts that there are multiple realities in the social world or in the words of Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011:103) there are 'multiple mental constructions' of reality that are socially created through our experiences and interactions with others (Crotty, 2015). Hussain, Elyas and Nasseef (2013:2376) add that the socially constructed reality is interpreted by individuals 'according to their ideological and cultural positions'. Relativist ontology refers to reality that is historically and culturally localised. In an attempt to depict the reality of research participants, a researcher interacts with them acting as part of the research instrument (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011).

As this research is concerned with the experiences of teachers' work in a primary academy, relativist ontology implies that the reality constructed by each participant reflects their own understanding of working in that primary academy in a particular historical time and location. As such, there might be multiple perceptions, interpretations and meanings made of the participants' experience of working in Bricklane Primary Academy. When interacting with me as a researcher and through reflection on their experiences, the participants made sense of their reality. Additionally, the findings reported in this thesis should not be seen as merely 'mirroring what is there' (Crotty, 2015: 64) but as a combination of my and the research participants' reactions and interpretations of the events that took place in the Academy.

The epistemological assumptions refer to the theory of knowledge, the nature of knowledge and its characteristics (Crotty, 2015), and consider the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Creswell, 2007). The epistemology of social constructionism is subjectivism that asserts that knowledge is constructed and co-constructed between the researcher and the research

participants (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011). Additionally, it is shaped by individual experiences and therefore knowledge is unique and personal (Hussain, Elyas and Nasseef, 2013). Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that we as researchers cannot separate ourselves from what we know because our own understanding of the world, our background, previous education, personal characteristics, values and beliefs as well as our lived experiences shape how we understand ourselves and others. As a result, our lived experiences shape the knowledge we generate (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011). In line with this, my own reflexive journey to understanding my own position and the role in the research setting is detailed in section 4.8. Moreover, my reflections on the type of knowledge generated through this research are incorporated into the following sections as generated knowledge was influenced and shaped by various factors at each stage of the research process.

4.2.3 Methodological approach: ethnography

The epistemological and ontological assumptions inherent within social constructionist paradigm point at the importance of a close interaction between the researcher and the research participants in their natural setting (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 2015). Therefore ethnography, which involves intensive first-hand fieldwork requiring the researcher's engagement and immersion in the researched world (Ball, 1993), was the most appropriate methodological approach to be employed in this research. It enabled to address the research's overarching aim of presenting teachers' lived experiences and perceptions of teaching and working in a primary academy.

This ethnographic research was carried out in one case study primary school that had converted to academy status two years prior to the commencement of the research. The researched academy was given a pseudonym Bricklane Primary Academy. The research was concerned with the school's conversion to an academy and the implications of this for teachers' work and their notions of

teacher professionalism. In relation to this, Woods (1986) highlighted that ethnography is particularly useful in studies that explore the effects of changes in organisational structures or impact of particular policies on individuals and groups due to the researcher's lengthy engagement with the setting.

As this research focused on teachers, over the duration of one year I spent approximately 4 weeks in each classroom across Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) working alongside teachers and observing their work, activities and interactions. While in each classroom, I was involved in various activities that brought me closer to teachers' classroom experiences (see section 4.5.1). Further to this, my lengthy engagement in the setting allowed me plenty of time to familiarise myself with the school and to learn about teachers' work through my exposure to their daily activities. I had also time to reflect on what I witnessed and to question teachers on various matters related to their work. For instance, while practising Roman Numerals with the children, the classroom teacher confessed to me that she was not secure with Roman Numerals as the previous National Curriculum did not require the same level of knowledge from teachers. This led me to question all teachers about their experiences of implementing the New National Curriculum and its implications for their professional lives. On another occasion, I was informed about the staff weekly meetings on Fridays when they ate lunch together. After a few weeks of observations, I did not note any meetings taking place; thus, I questioned the teachers about it. I learnt that although weekly Friday lunches used to be the teachers' tradition, they stopped these meetings due to their increased workload following the school's conversion to an academy (see section 4.5.2). These examples demonstrate that my prolonged involvement in the research setting provided me with opportunities to learn about changes that took place in the school. In addition, engaging lengthily within the setting provided me with opportunities to not only question my research participants about their experiences but to also observe their everyday experiences of working in Bricklane Primary Academy.

Ethnography derives from the practice of anthropology that is concerned with the study of 'primitive' cultures (Scott, 1996:143). Hammersley and Atkinson (2010) state that in the nineteenth-century Western anthropology, ethnography constituted a description of a community or culture that was usually non-Western. In addition to anthropology, Walford (2009) also points to sociology as being another discipline where ethnography originated from in the early years of the twentieth century. This has been particularly credited to the sociologists working at the University of Chicago where approaches to studying various aspects of human life were developed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010). Deegan (2011) notes that a prolific subgroup of these sociologists created the 'Chicago School' of ethnography. Ethnography has been popular amongst a number of disciplines (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010) one of which has been education (Anderson-Levitt, 2012). After conducting a comparative review of research from the contrasting British and American traditions in educational ethnography, Delamont and Atkinson (1980) observed that the British tradition is rooted in sociology of education. In contrast to this, they noted that educational research conducted in the United States has its roots in the American cultural anthropology that is concerned with examination of 'human beings living in cultural worlds (…) of meanings constructed by people rather than given in nature' (Anderson-Levitt, 2012:5). Gordon, Holland and Lahelma, (2011) claim that ethnography of schools has been also popular in other parts of the world. For instance, ethnographic research has been carried out in Canada, Australia and Europe (*ibid*).

Up until the 1960s in Britain, educational research was dominated by the tradition of quantitative methods while qualitative research in education developed and expanded in the 1970s and 1980s. Educational ethnography has arguably become popular due to Max Gluckman who found the 'Manchester School' of Anthropology (Mills and Morton, 2013). Mills and Morton (2013) note that his prominent students included David Hargreaves (1967), Colin Lacey (1970) and Audrey Lambart (1976) who conducted innovative ethnographies of

secondary schools in Manchester in the 1960s. Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2011) argue that in Britain ethnographies on schools and classrooms became popular in the 1970s. However, Delamont (1987) notes that until the 1980s, ethnographic method was less frequently utilised in primary schools. Until then, the more popular method was observations with pre-specified schedules to code what happened inside classrooms in order to produce statistical generalisations about various aspects of schooling.

Erickson (1984:52) explains that ethnography means 'writing about the nations' while Fetterman (1998:1) states it is 'the art and science of describing a group or culture'. An important aspect of an ethnographic research is the study of a group of people in their naturally occurring settings as opposed to controlled experimental conditions (Hammersley, 1998). As my research was conducted in a primary academy, this provided me with the opportunities to learn about teachers' experiences through my day-to-day exposure to teachers' work in their workplace. This meant that all activities, events and situations I witnessed presented real events that occurred in the school providing a snapshot of teachers' professional lives. Fetterman (2010) adds that ethnography offers a holistic approach to the study of social groups placing an emphasis on contextualization of data, emic (from the perspective of the participant-insider) and etic (from the perspective of the observer) perspectives and non-judgmental orientation of the researcher. Therefore, the account of teachers' work presented in this thesis is placed in the historical context of the global and national development of independent-state-funded school movement (see chapter 2). Further to this, chapter 5 presents a discussion about the school, the area where the school is located and information about the pupil population that contextualises the research setting. Troman *et al.* (2006) stresses Fetterman's (2010) point further stating that in ethnographic work a great importance is given to the accounts from the perspective of research participants. Although as a researcher, I steered the research by focusing my observations on aspects that were of interest to me, in chapters 6, 7 and 8 I included the participants' opinions

as well as their own recollections of events that affected their professional lives. This demonstrating that the participants' own perspectives and their understanding of events were of great importance to this research.

The ethnographic investigation is focused on a small number of cases, for instance, a single setting or a group of people (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley, 1998). This is possible due to the wealth and depth of information that can be generated through an ethnographic inquiry which requires a researcher to invest considerable amount of time in the research setting. There are numerous examples of previous ethnographic studies that focused on one school setting producing insightful data by exploring the complex social world and the lived experiences of research participants from their perspectives. For example, Troman (1999) conducted his ethnographic study in one primary school, Meadowfields, where he explored the implications of several educational policies on teachers' work and their professional identities and occupational cultures. Salokangas (2013) carried out her ethnography in Northern Academy where she explored autonomy of those who were involved in a sponsored secondary academy as well as the extent to which autonomy led to innovation. Similarly, Hayes (1994) also reported undertaking an ethnographic case study research in one primary school where she investigated teachers' involvement in decision making during a time of rapid change following the ERA 1988.

Considering the complexity of the social world in schools and the importance of prolonged involvement with the research setting that allows developing an understanding of what is happening in the field, this research was conducted in one primary school that converted to an academy. Although this research concentrates on a single school, according to Wolcott (1995), the power of the single case should not be undervalued. Conducing this research in one school enabled me to focus my attention fully on exploring various aspects related to Bricklane Primary Academy thus allowing me to build a profound and a holistic understanding of the school and the teachers' experiences in the school. In

order to achieve this, I gained access to various documents such as books, reports as well as information available on the Academy's website and requested from the Academy's administrative office. Visits to the local libraries enabled me to gather information about the history of the area where the school is located as well as the history of the community that resides in the area (see section 5.2). Other available documents about the Academy enabled me to reconstruct the recent history of the school (see section 5.3). Such information set out the context in which the research was conducted and developed an understanding of teachers' workplace.

Further to this, being in one school allowed me time to build meaningful relationships with both staff and pupils. While spending time with pupils, I learnt about children's personal stories, their various needs, and how teachers catered for these needs. Through working with children, I developed a better understanding of the curriculum, teaching strategies used to deliver the curriculum and all the challenges associated with the implementation and the teaching of the new National Curriculum. When spending time with teachers in the classrooms and supporting them with various activities such as teaching, photocopying, creating displays and marking, to name just a few, I built a better rapport with them. This facilitated the interviewing process as it encouraged my research participants to open up to me more easily as they were familiar with me and my research (see section 4.5.1). What is more, supporting teachers with their ever day tasks helped me to understand the nature of their work. For instance, in section 7.5.2, I discussed the isolated nature of teaching at Bricklane while in section 8.2.3 I outlined the various administrative tasks that led to teachers' work intensification and contributed to their feeling of isolation. However, the limitations of the use of a single case are also acknowledged and discussed in section 10.4.

Ethnographic research is carried out over a prolonged period of time during which the researcher builds an understanding of the context, culture, social

structure, power relations, social meanings, and activities in which people engage (Brewer, 2000; Robson, 2002; Frankham and MacRae, 2011). An advantage of a prolonged involvement with the research setting is the researcher's ability to build trust and rapport with the research participants who become familiar with the researcher's presence in their setting (Herbert, 2001; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). This was evident in my interactions with teachers and children in my research setting. When I entered each classroom, the classroom teacher always introduced me to the children as a new teacher. Children very quickly showed their interest in me. For instance, once I was asked to check the reading skills of a new pupil who just joined the school and the classroom teacher believed he could speak only Spanish. I spent an hour working with the student on a one-to-one basis when he revealed to me that he understood English and was in fact fluent in it while his teacher was still not aware of this. On another occasion, I worked with a group of Year 4 pupils when one of them said to me: 'Miss, I wish you were our teacher'. The trust that children showed me made me feel very welcome in each classroom and made my time in the school more enjoyable and meaningful. Further to this, my prolonged presence in the school had some important implications for building relations with the teachers too. For instance, in sections 4.4 and 4.5.1, I discussed the challenges associated with the negotiation of access to my research participants. I demonstrated how over time I gained trust and built rapport with some teachers who were initially reluctant towards my presence in their classrooms. Other teachers admitted to being used to my presence in their classrooms and therefore not feeling stressed by my observations demonstrating the advantages of a lengthy involvement with the research setting.

The time that a researcher should spend on ethnographic fieldwork is not rigorously specified and varies between studies. For instance, Acker (1999) who researched the realities of primary school teachers' work during a period before and after the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988 visited her case

study schools over a period of three years. Salokangas (2013) described her involvement in the secondary academy as an 'embedded researcher' over two academic years whereas Troman (1999) based his work of the interconnections between education policy and school-level practice on 18 months of fieldwork in a primary school. In contrast to these studies, Jeffrey (2014) reported having twenty days of observational field notes in a primary school where he conducted his ethnographic research investigating creativity and performativity.

The above examples indicate that ethnographies vary in duration from a period of few weeks to few years. Some researchers suggest a time frame for this type of study; for instance, Sanday (1979) recommends at least a one-year long immersion in the field. In the case of a school setting, Wolcott (1975) proposes a span of the school year. To contrast this view, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) claim that this time frame can be reduced in the instances when the researcher studies a community which is part of the researcher's own society. Nonetheless, Jeffrey and Troman (2004) highlight the difficulty in establishing an ideal time to be spent in the field. Walford (2002) argues that this is due to researchers' other work commitments suggesting that ethnography might be more suited to research students than to tenured academics. He also points at the 'classic' ethnographies in the British educational tradition such as Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970) and Ball (1981) as being originally doctoral studies.

The ethnography reported in this thesis was conducted over a period of one school year from September 2014 until July 2015. This allowed me to study the annual cycle of the school's life. For instance, on my first day of my research, I learnt that the first two days were devoted to the preparations for the new school year and they were called 'inset days'. There were five inset days organised throughout the year when teachers attended training sessions and prepared for the upcoming activities. Following the in-set days, my further daily visits to the school enabled me to notice some patterns in the school days. For instance, I observed that the school day started at 8.50 with children lining up in front of

their classrooms. When they were in their classrooms, teachers would read out their names in order to complete a registration. Depending on the day of the week, children either attended a 'Collective Worship' on Mondays, 'Well Done Assembly' on Fridays, and a 'Collective Singing' on Wednesdays (KS) and Thursdays (KS1). The school day ended at 3.15pm and after the children were dismissed home, teachers would continue with their work by either attending staff meetings, marking or preparing for the next day. The school year was divided into three terms: autumn, spring and summer term with a half-term break during each of the terms. During the year, there were various celebrations taking place in the school. For instance, children spent time preparing for the nativity play, there were two family weeks when parents came in to the school to participate in the morning lessons of their children or a World Book Day when children turned up dressed up as their favourite book character.

During the process of an ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher generates data using a range of techniques including participant and nonparticipant observations, informal conversations, interviews, questionnaires, documentary analysis, photographs and many other techniques deemed necessary by the researcher (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley, 1998; Wolcott, 1975). In fact, Whitehead (2004) suggests that ethnographers should utilise any methods, both qualitative and quantitative, depending on the needs of the study in order to provide the most holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon. Therefore, he argues that ethnography should not be perceived as a predominantly qualitative approach to research. Walford (2009) stresses this point further arguing that although ethnographers are unlikely to use sophisticated statistical analysis, they tend to produce both quantitative and qualitative data.

The research techniques utilised in this research included participant observations, informal conversations, interviews, focus groups, photographs and collection of documents (detailed in section 4.5). Similar research methods were

used by other researchers who carried out ethnographic studies. For instance, in her ethnography that explored the impact of faith on school culture and pupils' behaviour, Awad (2015) reported using observations, interviews, focus groups and documents. Hayes (1994) used non-participant observations of staff meetings and governors' meetings as well as informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with various members of school staff including teachers, deputy heads, head teacher and governors.

Similarly to Awad's (2015) and Hayes's (1994) research, it was of paramount importance to use a variety of research methods in my study in order to achieve the most holistic understanding of teachers' work and teachers' experiences in a school that was undergoing a substantial structural change. This holistic understanding would not have been achieved if my research relied on a single method such as participant observations or interviews as all methods utilised in this study were mutually dependent. The use of multiple methods was possible due to my lengthy engagement in the school that allowed me time to decide on the use of the most appropriate research methods to investigate different aspects of teachers' work.

As highlighted in section 4.5.1, it was crucial to begin my research with participant observations. This was due to my limited previous exposure to teachers' work in a school in England. Participant observations allowed me to learn about teachers' work through simultaneously observing them in the classroom, undertaking some of the activities that teachers did, through informal conversations with them as well as through gathering of relevant documents, policies and information that shed light on teachers' experiences. During the exploratory 'survey period' (Fetterman, 2010:8) (see section 4.5.1), I immersed myself in the school's life and I established my place in the research setting (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011). Further to this, I made my research participants familiar with my presence in the school and I built rapport with staff and children that improved the research process. Due to the heavy workload

that teachers experienced, it was not always possible for me to ask them questions for clarification or for reflections on their experiences. Therefore, it was crucial for me to set up interviews with staff to allow them to discuss their experiences more freely. As demonstrated, participant observations played an important role in enabling me to learn about the activities of teachers in the natural setting and then my observations provided context for development of the interview schedule (see section 4.5.2).

Spindler and Spindler (1992) stress the importance of direct participation of the researcher in research setting arguing that 'no matter what instruments, coding devices, recording devices or techniques are used, the primary obligation is for the ethnographer to be there when the action takes place (…)' (*ibid*: 64). In relation to this, scholars who discuss the process of ethnographic research highlight that the researcher is the main research instrument (Wolcott, 1975; Woods, 1986; Ball, 1993; Troman *et al.*, 2006). Thus, there is a strong emphasis placed on the importance of the researcher's reflexivity during all aspects of the research process (Foley, 2002; Robson, 2002; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003; Pillow, 2003; Davies, 2012).

Robson (2002) explains that the notion of reflexivity is the researcher's awareness and understanding of the implications of her/his background and identity for the conduct of the research. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) add that reflexivity is the process of conscious and critical reflection on the self as researcher. The importance of reflexivity is stressed by Pillow (2003) who argues that it should be used to legitimise and validate research as being reflexive offers insight into how knowledge is produced. Taking into consideration the importance of reflexivity, I reflected on my educational background, my origin, gender, age, on my position and role in the Academy as well as on the ways I was perceived in the research setting. Being aware of the importance of reflexivity, I engaged in this process continually and various aspects of my reflections are presented throughout this chapter (see section 4.3;

4.4; 4.5; 4.7 and 4.8). For instance, in section 4.4 I discussed how one of the teachers, Ms Harris, showed her reluctance towards my presence in her classroom. While in her classroom, I felt I was ignored on many occasions which indicated to me that Ms Harris did not want me around. This led to my reflections on my position in the research setting and on how the teacher could potentially perceive me. Was I a researcher, a student on a placement or just an unnecessary burden on her? Such negative experiences were contrasted by more positive situations such as my interactions with the children who always made me feel welcome in the school. For instance, when I met the pupils who I previously worked with, they always smiled to me, enquired about my whereabouts and asked when I would be coming back to their classroom. Children frequently showed their curiosity about me; for instance, by asking about my age, my background or inquiring why my hair was so short. When I was in the school, I made notes to help me make sense of my experiences, perceptions and feelings and I wrote my reflexive notes in Polish as it was easier for me to reflect on my experiences in my first language.

Fetterman (2010) states that the ethnographer should enter the research setting with an open mind. This point is also stressed by Spindler and Spindler (1992) who argue that this is particularly important in initial stage of an ethnographic fieldwork. Therefore, they claim, the researcher should not rely on hypotheses or coded instruments to avoid predetermining what is observed. The importance of 'an openness to people, data and places' is further emphasised by Deegan (2011:11) who argues against a strict set of criteria guiding the research process. Therefore, Hammersley (1998:2) states that the approach to data collection is 'unstructured' although prior research design was considered as suggested by Brewer (2000). This indicates that ethnography allows the researcher the freedom and flexibility to be creative and to steer the research in any direction depending on the events in the field (see section 4.4 and 4.5). With this in mind, I entered the research setting with an open mind but, as Fetterman (2010:1) puts it, not with 'an empty head'. In 2011, I completed a bachelor's

degree in Education Studies; this gave me a profound understanding of the English education system. However, my understanding of teachers' work was limited and therefore making me more curious and keen on exploring teachers' work. Further to this, throughout the course of the research, I engaged with literature concerning the matters relating to the development of the Academies Programme. Despite having the knowledge of the developments in the education policy, I remained sensitive to my research setting and I attempted to understand how that policy implementation was experienced at the school level and at a personal level by individual members of the school staff. Through my engagement with the school, I observed and participated in teachers' everyday lives in their workplace which allowed me to build a holistic understanding of the implications of the Academies Programme for teachers' work. In the subsequent section, a discussion about the process of identifying and accessing the research setting is presented.

4.3 Journey to securing a research setting

An ethnographic approach to research gives the researcher an insight into the everyday lives of a group of people in their natural settings (Brewer, 2000). The aim of this research is to understand the lived experiences of primary academy teachers; thus, requiring the research to be undertaken in a primary school that has recently made the transition from a LA maintained school to academy status. In relation to this, the first step in the study was to identify the potential research setting. Thus, this section discusses the steps undertaken along with reflections on the journey to gain access to the research setting illustrating the difficulties associated with the process of research setting selection.

Gaining access to any research site presents various problems for researchers ranging from identifying appropriate gatekeepers, utilising various ways of approaching them to building a rapport with the gatekeepers who can grant access and then introduce us to the potential research participants that we want

to study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Fetterman, 2010). However, gaining access to academies has been recognised as particularly problematic (Gunter, Woods & Woods, 2008; Dee, 2010; Hatcher as cited in Beckett, 2012). For instance, in her PhD thesis, Dee (2010:4) states that 'very little first-hand research has been permitted within Academies to date making [her] investigation relatively unusual'. Daniels (2012:3) adds that 'the Academies Programme has been the subject of limited research'. Why this is the case is explained by Gunter, Woods and Woods (2008) who shed light onto this matter reporting on the experiences of the researchers who had investigated these types of schools. Some researchers claim that although some academies are very cooperative, their staff are vigilant to share their knowledge being aware of the public attention due to the policy being perceived as controversial. Other researchers reported 'secrecy' that surrounds academies to which access is either denied or difficult to get (*ibid*: 5).

In the case of this study, initially a convenience sampling strategy was employed in order to access participants to whom I had easy access and who were willing to participate in the research as suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). Brewer (2000) argues that gaining access to the field requires the ethnographer to be flexible and use various methods to identify potential research settings. One of them is by approaching an individual who has links to the group the researcher is interested to facilitate the process of granting access to the field. With this in mind, after the ethical approval for this research was granted, an academy that had prior links with Liverpool John Moores University was approached. The email that was sent to the academy (Appendix 1) included a brief explanation of the purpose and the process of the planned research. In addition to this, I offered to provide the school with my help and support in return for their permission to conduct the research. Therefore, a brief summary of my previous experience of working with children was included in order to show the relevance of my skills which could be utilised once I was in the school. When reflecting upon my offer of help, I recognised that this was my first attempt at

negotiating my own role, position and responsibilities in the research setting (detailed in 4.5.1 and 4.8). Nonetheless, a few weeks later, I was informed that due to a number of trainee teachers starting their placements in September 2014, the school did not have the capacity to accommodate me for the following academic year (Appendix 2a).

As my first attempt to gain access to an academy was unsuccessful, another method of finding a research setting was utilised. After having previously contacted the Department for Education (DfE) in February 2014, I was informed that the *Open academies and projects in development* section of the Department's website provided data on established academies and schools that were in the process of converting to academy status. Thus, that website constituted the most accurate source of information on academies. Using the data available on the DfE's website (DfE, 2014), all primary schools that converted to academy status and those that submitted their applications for approval for conversion were identified. A decision was made to approach the schools that were located in the North West of England due to the lack of research on primary academies in that location and due to the proximity of the schools to Liverpool John Moores University. At that time, there were 116 primary schools located in the North West of England that matched such criteria. After having selected the schools located in areas most easily accessible by public transport, 51 primary schools that were either operating as academies or were planning to convert to an academy status in the near future were approached via email. An email was sent to schools' email address located on the schools' websites.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2010) state that the key personnel or gatekeepers who can grant access to the field can be identified based on common-sense knowledge about the setting. With regards to a school setting, head teachers are commonly regarded as having the power to grant or refuse access to their schools. For example, previous studies by Troman (1999) and Acker (1999)

reported negotiating access with head teachers and senior management team who granted them access to schools to carry out their research. Therefore, the 'subject' line of my email read: 'For the attention of the Head Teacher'. Despite this, it was not possible to ensure that the email was read by head teachers in all instances as the email addresses found on the schools' websites were often for general school email accounts.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2010) note that the process of negotiating access involves ethical dilemmas of whom should be contacted to grant initial access to the research setting. They argue that in formal settings initial access can be sought from key personnel who are considered to have the power and the authority to open up or to refuse access. Although having access to the research setting being granted by the people with authority is frequently necessary and unavoidable, it can also cause ethical problems. For instance, participants may perceive the researcher as the managers' 'spy' or they may feel pressured to participate in the research to which otherwise they would not consent to get involved in (*ibid*). Reeves (2010) states that ethnographers tend to report feeling wary of being seen as 'spies' for senior managers in their research settings and Herbert (2001) reports on his experience of actually being initially perceived as a 'spy' by his research participants. This has a number of implications for the research process as it potentially hinders building rapport and trust between the researcher and the participants and arguably impacts on the knowledge that can be generated through the research. Reflecting on my own experience, it is now clear that not all of the research participants welcomed me in their classrooms (detailed in section 4.4). However, I did not feel that they treated me like the principal's spy.

Out of 51 contacted schools, only 4 agreed to discuss my research in more detail whilst other schools either did not respond to my follow up emails and telephone calls or refused to take part in the research. The common theme that appeared in the responses from schools that did not wish to participate in this

research was the lack of space to accommodate another professional, helper or volunteer in the school (see Appendix 2b and 2c- some of the rejection responses). Some respondents did not provide clear reasons as to why it was not possible to conduct this research in their schools (see Appendix 2d and 2e). However, potential participants do have the right to refuse to partake in research without giving a reason for their decision.

In the meantime, one head teacher expressed his interest in taking part in this research. I was invited to discuss my project with the head teacher who introduced me to the school staff and showed me around the building explaining the school's history and the recent changes that had taken place there. The head teacher showed his enthusiasm to have a researcher working in the school and who was willing to provide help and support to the school staff by assuming the role of a TA. Nonetheless, after consultation with the school's sponsor on the prospects of research being conducted in the academy, I was informed that it was no longer possible for me to conduct my fieldwork in that setting. The response from the head teacher read: 'With other variables at stake we do not feel that we are in a position to offer such a placement in our current situation.' (Appendix 2f). This perhaps indicates the powerful position that academy sponsors hold in multi-academy trusts.

As indicated earlier, 4 schools were willing to discuss my research in depth. One of the schools withdrew their intent to participate in the study (explained above) whereas the remaining three schools were still in contact with me as no final decisions were made at that time. Next, the head teacher of Bricklane Primary Academy (pseudonym) contacted me expressing his interest in taking part in my research. During our first meeting, I was given permission to start my research in September 2014. After securing access to that research setting, I informed the other schools that access was no longer required.

The discussion presented so far has indicated some difficulties faced when searching for an appropriate research setting. What follows is the discussion of the process of selection of participants in the case study academy. For the purpose of this research, the name of the school and all the names of individuals are pseudonyms that are used to protect the identity of the research participants. In this research, the academy where the study was conducted is named Bricklane Primary Academy.

4.4 Selection of research participants

Due to the focus of the research on the experiences of teachers who work in a primary academy, main participants were teachers who work in Bricklane Primary Academy. However, throughout the research process, views of other members of the school's community were included. For instance, teaching assistants (TAs) were identified as playing a crucial part in the life of each classroom providing valuable support to teachers. My observations indicated that TAs led 'booster groups' by taking a group of children to a separate room and teaching them specific topics. They also worked with groups of pupils in the classrooms and occasionally stood in for teachers during their absence (field notes). Teachers also highlighted the importance of TAs' support with various teaching-related and administrative tasks (interview notes with all teachers). Due to TAs' interactions with teachers, their opinions on the experiences of working in the Academy were regarded as significant for the research.

Furthermore, other staff members namely the Academy's principal and executive principal provided accounts on the school's conversion and on the working conditions of the school staff from a managerial perspective. They had knowledge that enabled me to better understand the governance structure of the school, the reasons for the school's conversion and the conversion process. Their knowledge and understanding of the academy enabled them to describe

the events that occurred in the school before and after the conversion process providing different perspectives. All of this contextual information enabled the building of a more profound picture of the teachers' workplace and everyday experiences. Additionally, including the views of different members of the school's community allowed for triangulation within this research (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Participants who took part in this research consisted of 27 individuals. They were the executive principal, principal, sixteen teachers and nine teaching assistants. Access to the Academy was granted verbally by both the executive principal and the principal, and prior to the start of the fieldwork all teachers signed the consent forms (ethical matters are discussed in section 4.7). Nevertheless, this did not give me an immediate access to all the research participants and it meant that the negotiation of access was an ongoing process throughout the course of the study. Every four weeks, I moved to a different classroom in order to work with another teacher. A few days before moving to the next classroom, I checked with teachers whether I could carry out the fieldwork in their classrooms. This meant providing information, answering any questions about the research and about myself, and gaining consent from the class teacher every time I moved to a new classroom.

The majority of teachers seemed happy with my presence in their classroom; however, some of them expressed their reluctance towards me. In particular, Ms Harris's behaviour indicated that she was very apprehensive about my presence in her classroom. On the mutually agreed day when I intended to start my fieldwork in her classroom, Ms Harris unexpectedly changed the plan asking me to carry out my fieldwork in a different year group. When a few weeks later I returned to her classroom, she requested me to leave earlier in the final week of the fieldwork claiming that there were too many adults working in her classroom. Additionally, on one occasion after agreeing to answer some of my questions during lunch break, I recognised that Ms Harris delayed our planned discussion allowing only the last five minutes of the lunch break for my questions (field

notes, December 2014). In their report of fieldwork experiences, Scott *et al.* (2012) highlight the importance of recognising the impact of the researcher's feelings and emotions upon fieldwork and research relationships. Upon reflection, I recognised that Ms Harris was apprehensive towards me and this made me feel like an unnecessary burden on her as I understood how demanding her role was as a teacher. However, it also led to my reluctance towards Ms Harris after feeling ignored by her which arguably impacted upon the nature of knowledge generated through our interactions.

Another teacher, Ms Williams, also displayed her ambivalence about my presence by asking numerous questions about who I was and what my research was about before allowing me to ask her any questions about her work (field notes, January 2015). My experience in the field resonates that of Herbert (2001) who spent eight months of ethnographic fieldwork accompanying sergeants in the Los Angeles Police Department during their ride-alongs. He explored 'how officers defined and controlled the territories they patrolled' and reported how wary and sceptical of his presence they were initially (*ibid:* 305). Similarly, most of my research participants became less reluctant towards me and 'grew friendly and helpful' over time (Herbert, 2001:304). This suggests that my prolonged presence in the school allowed for greater trust and rapport to develop. Nonetheless, these examples demonstrate the ongoing need for continuous negotiation and re-negotiation of access to the research participants. It also indicates that having been granted access to the Academy by senior managers was only a first step towards accessing participants. Teachers' attitudes towards me contributed to the nature of knowledge generated through the research as the reluctance of some teachers to the presence of the researcher in their school was reflected in the amount of information they were willing to share. The main focus of this study was teachers; as such, the table below presents some personal characteristics of teachers who participated in the research. To protect their anonymity, the table does not include the pseudonyms given to them in this research. Teachers' and other staff

pseudonyms are detailed in Appendix 3. The next section discusses the research methods employed in this research.

Gender	Age	Year taught	Other responsibilities	Student placement prior employment	Years worked as a teacher	Years worked in the school
F	35	Y1	Deputy Head Assistant & Subject Leader for Literacy in KS1	yes	9	9
F	25	Y1	Subject Leader for EAL in KS1	yes	3.5	3.5
F	26	Y1	Maternity leave cover, KS1	no	2	5 months
F	27	Y2	Subject Leader for Numeracy in KS1	yes	4	4
F	28	Y2	Subject Leader for Computing in KS1	yes	4	4
F	40	Y2	Maternity leave cover,KS1	yes	3	2
F	29	Y3	Subject Leader for Computing in KS2	yes	3	3
F	42	Y3	Subject Leader for Geography KS2/NQT	yes	1	1
F	41	Y4/5	Subject Leader for Design Technology/KS2	yes	3	3
F	31	Y6	Maths Co-ordinator/part time Assistant Principal, KS2	yes	5	5
F	30	Y4	Sabbatical leave cover, KS2	no	5.5	2 months
F	22	Y5	Subject Leader for History KS2	yes	1	1
F	29	Y6	Subject Leader for Science KS2	yes	5	5
F	30	Y6	Deputy Head Assistant & Subject Leader for Literacy & Health Safety in KS2	no	8	8
F	32	KS2 All classes	Subject Leader for French/KS2	no	2,5	2
F	40	All years	Drama teacher	yes	11	6

Table 1: Details of research participants

4.5 Research methods

Atkinson (2015) argues that ethnographies always employ multi-method approaches to research noting that this is due to the fact that 'the social world is enacted and represented through multiple forms and multiple cultural codes' (*ibid*: 38). Following this point, different methods were applied throughout the course of this research depending on what was most appropriate during the fieldwork. These methods included a combination of participant-observations, informal conversations, interviews, focus groups, collection of various documents and photographs. The variety of methods used to generate data allowed for building a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of teachers' professional working lives (Whitehead, 2004) in their 'natural setting' (Brewer, 2000: 59). The design of this research was an ongoing 'reflexive process' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 28). Although the different aspects of the research design were carefully considered prior to the fieldwork as recommended by Brewer (2000), there was a scope for unanticipated changes of the initial plan regarding the choice of methods and participants based on the needs of the research.

Hammersley (1998) stresses the overall approach to ethnographic fieldwork is rather 'unstructured' as it does not follow a detailed plan set up prior to the commencement of fieldwork. In this sense, this research was 'unstructured' as the conduct of fieldwork proceeded inductively allowing for modifications in the overall research design. However, through reflection on this research process, two main stages of fieldwork can be distinguished. The first stage was dominated by unstructured participant observations and informal conversations whereas in the second stage eighteen semi-structured voice-recorded interviews and two focus groups were conducted.

4.5.1 Participant observations

Fetterman (2010) argues that every ethnography is exploratory in nature and it begins with 'a survey period' during which the ethnographer learns the basics (*ibid:* 8). In line with this, the first months of the fieldwork were spent on immersing myself in the life of the school by what Geertz (1998) calls 'deep hanging out'. The process of immersion involved learning the 'language' or rather the jargon used in the school, the formal and informal rules governing everyday behaviours and interactions with children and staff. I also became familiar with the rules regarding an acceptable dress code, patterns of behaviour, daily routines, every day activities, and also the layout of the school building where I frequently got lost in the first weeks of the fieldwork (field notes). While I was familiarising myself with the life of Bricklane Primary Academy, all members of the school's community were getting used to me being in the school. Therefore, this was a crucial period for the research as successful negotiating of access to various participants depended on how I was perceived by the members of the school community and the impressions I made on staff in the first weeks in the field (detailed in section 4.4). In relation to this, Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) rightly argue that the key element of participant observation is 'establishing a place in some natural setting' (*ibid*: 354).

Atkinson (2015) maintains participant observations constitute a central element of ethnographic research as ethnographic fieldwork can be possible only when the researcher 'takes the role of the other' (*ibid*: 39). Between September 2014 and December 2014, my role in the school was predominantly as a participant-observer with ever-changing degree and intensity of participation from being heavily involved in activities to observing some events (Herbert, 2001). My initial intention was to get closer to the teachers and to attempt to do what they did in order to better understand their experiences. However, upon reflecting on my role in the research setting, I recognised that I could never be truly one of the teachers due to simply not being the school's employee or a qualified teacher (see section 4.8).

Nevertheless, I attempted to be involved as closely as possible in the activities that teachers were engaged in. Therefore, whilst in the school, I assisted teachers with their daily tasks while observing what they did naturally in their workplace. For instance, I was assigned to a group of children who I worked with during all classes on the day. Some teachers provided me with a lesson planning sheet at the start of the day or the week with my name already incorporated into their lesson plans. Others assigned me to certain groups on a daily basis. I supported pupils with writing stories, spelling words, counting and reading. In Year 3, I listened to children's reading. I was also involved in marking children's work which helped me understand the complex marking policy.

Although I did not plan any lessons or conduct a whole class teaching, my involvement in working with pupils gave me insight into the nature and complexity of teachers' work. I quickly learnt that in each classroom, teachers dealt with students of different abilities all of whom had to be catered for. I recognised that in addition to delivering lessons, teachers cared about their students' emotional development, were often aware of problems affecting the pupils' home lives and also dealt with some disruptive behaviour. In addition, they also had administrative duties. I offered my help with anything I could assist with such as photocopying teaching materials, preparing displays, providing assistance during school trips, and supervising children during lunch breaks. Therefore, before starting my placement in Ms Williams's classroom, she confessed to me: 'Miss, I heard that you are very helpful' (field notes, October 2014). I believe this indicated I was perceived by some teachers as an extra pair of helping hands. On another occasion, Ms Taylor divulged that she found being observed was a very stressful experience. However, it seemed she was comfortable with my observations in her classroom as she was used to my presence in the school (field notes, December 2014). This could be interpreted as my prolonged involvement and presence in the school worked towards my advantage because it helped to build trust in the field (Herbert, 2001). Therefore, working with children and supporting the teachers with various tasks made me

feel as if I was a partial member of the teachers' world (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011) and it seems that I was more accepted by the teachers whom I was observing.

However, there were also occasions when I was simply observing various events without actively participating in them. This included, for instance, observing school assemblies or preparations for Christmas play. Although there were very limited opportunities for me to engage in informal conversations with the teachers, whenever an opportunity arose, I asked questions to better understand teachers 'interpretations, social meanings and activities' in their workplace (Brewer, 2000:59). Therefore, participant observations allowed me to gain insights into the activities and behaviours of participants by observing them in their workplace (Brewer, 2000; Jones and Somekh, 2011). My observations that focused on teachers' experiences were guided by the initial project aim that was to explore the lived experiences of primary academy leaders and teachers and the impact of the Academies Programme upon primary schools. Thus, the original topic established a broad focus of this research. Next, the review of literature demonstrated the apparent lack of research into the experiences of teachers in academies (see section 1.1). This gap in knowledge helped to narrow the focus of this research on teachers' experiences leading to the formulation of the following broad research question: 'What is it like to be a teacher working in a primary academy?', which guided my initial observations.

An important aspect of the fieldwork observations was writing up my field notes in a systematic manner in both Polish and English languages. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011a) emphasise the importance of producing 'written accounts and descriptions' (*ibid*: 354) as they allow the researcher to bring the version of the social world under study to others. Field notes are a form of representation of the social world and they are highly selective (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011a). As a researcher, I made the decisions on what information to include depending on what I regarded to be of significance to the research question and

aim. My field notes and scratch notes were made in my research diary either while I was observing certain activities or soon after leaving the school. My research diary constituted an important research tool as it allowed me to record data from my daily observations and from conversations, record information about the setting, make notes of my daily activities, reflections, ideas and plans (Bell, 2010; Holly and Altrichter, 2011). As reflexivity is a crucial part of an ethnography (Frankham and MacRae, 2011), during the course of the research I noted my thoughts and my reflections on my role as a researcher and on my personal preconceptions resulting from my upbringing, previous experiences or from my educational background. This helped me understand the impact of my own presumptions and experiences on the research process and on my interpretation of various events and people's behaviours (detailed in section 4.8). Further to this, keeping a research diary enabled me to track the progress of the research, make sense of my experiences, and reflect on the research process. Finally, it also allowed me to report on my study in a more precise manner.

A number of photographs were also taken in the school. As suggested by Madden (2011), the photographs were treated as a field note strategy, more specifically as complementary field information. The photographs were used to reconstruct tasks that both children and teachers were engaged in.

4.5.2 Interviews and focus groups

The intensive nature of teachers' work did not provide many opportunities for informal conversations with them. During the duration of the fieldwork, I did not come across a teacher drinking a cup of tea and chatting to a colleague in the staffroom. This was in contrast to the commonly painted picture by previous studies about teachers' and their work. For instance, Nias (1989) demonstrated the importance of staffroom chats to teachers' experience of work explaining how teachers went to the staffroom for support from colleagues in order to deal

better with the classroom stress. In this research, my observations and the teachers' accounts confirmed that staff room was not commonly utilised by teachers. For instance, in the interview, Ms Clark explained that teachers did not seem to use the staff room at Bricklane Primary and she contrasted her observations with her previous experience of working at another primary school:

> 'No one really uses the staffroom really apart from for photocopying which is the only time when you see other people. (…)The school I was at before, everybody went to the staffroom at lunchtime. At that school, the head teacher timetabled that lunch hour of the day to be in the staffroom. (…) So if you needed to catch her, you catch her there (…) and she really worked hard to make sure that everyone came and if you didn't go then, she wouldn't tell you off about it but she would invite you along and get you into conversations. She obviously put a lot of importance on like staff just kind of socialising.'
>
> Ms Clark, teacher

In her account, Ms Clark clearly demonstrated the importance of the use of staffroom to facilitate staff interactions in her previous workplace. Another teacher, Ms Dixon also presented her different experience of staffroom in her previous school where the staffroom provided a place for socialisation with other teachers:

> 'In my other schools, everybody would be in staffroom at break times having a cup of tea (…). You would spend a half an hour in your classroom doing your marking and setting up for the afternoon and then you'd go to the staff room for half an hour and you would have a chat and have a cuppa. And everyone was great friends and got on very well. In here, it's not like we don't get on, we just don't see each other.'
>
> Ms Dixon, teacher

My observations at Bricklane Primary indicated that every minute of teachers' working day was filled with various tasks preventing them from taking breaks in the staffroom. These observations were corroborated by staff accounts during interviews. For instance, Ms Dixon compared her experience of socialising with other teachers at Bricklane Academy with her experience in her previous workplace, concluding that:

> 'You are in your classroom and you work in your classroom, and you are forever running around getting stuff done eating on the go. (…) You never have time to see anybody.'
>
> Ms Dixon, teacher

Teachers were also expected to accompany their pupils during lunches at least twice a week. However, when they stayed in the classroom for their lunch break, they were preoccupied with marking, preparing for the afternoon classes and looking after the children who stayed in the classroom to either complete the work they did not manage to finish during the lessons or as a punishment for misbehaving during classes (field notes).

Due to the limited opportunities for informal chats, ethnographic semi-structured interviews and focus groups with various staff members were conducted. These included teachers, teaching assistants, executive principal and principal of Bricklane Primary Academy (Appendix 4 includes details of interviewed staff). Ethnographic interviews were conducted with sixteen teachers, the executive principal and the principal of the Academy between January 2015 and July 2015 (see Appendix 4). Further to this, two focus groups were conducted with TAs. There were six TAs in the first focus group and three TAs in the second focus group. The ethnographic interview and focus group sessions took between 17 minutes and 1 hour 23 minutes. All interviews and focus groups were recorded on a voice recorder allowing to focus my attention on the participants' accounts. However, during the interviews and focus groups I also made notes. All

ethnographic interviews and focus groups were conducted in Bricklane Academy.

Fetterman (2010) argues that interviews and focus groups are used in ethnographic research as supplementary methods during the post-survey phase when a researcher has identified significant themes of interest. In relation to this, the interview (Appendix 5) and focus group schedules (Appendix 6) were created based on the observational field notes and my informal conversations with staff. When observing situations, interactions or events that required to be explored in more detail, notes were made to support the process of designing interview questions aiming to elicit insights regarding the events of interest. For instance, I witnessed a situation when Mr Peters walked into Ms Taylor's classroom and questioned the teacher about the WAGOLL (What a Good One Looks Like) display. The WAGOLL display demonstrated pupils' best work and served as an example for other children. What Mr Peter was concerned with was whether Ms Taylor changed the display regularly. This unexpected questioning left the teacher distressed and it prompted my interest in the various classroom displays and the requirement for the teachers to adhere to the display policy. On another occasion, I marked a number of students' workbooks during the lessons and after the classes. Having experienced marking and learning about the complex regulations that governed this task, I questioned teachers about the impact of marking on their work. These examples demonstrate how my observations provided a context for the development of the interview schedule.

Additionally, there was also a need to explore retrospective events in order to better understand the context of teachers' work and the setting. Both interviews and focus groups allowed me to gather information about past events that had shaped the school and teachers' work. They also gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on and express their views that would not be otherwise heard during periods of observation (Greener, 2011).

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There were numerous advantages of ethnographic interviewing. One of them was the genuine, on-going relationship that was established with all the participants because of the duration and frequency of contact with them. Due to my prolonged presence in the Academy, all staff members were familiar with me as well as with my research. Additionally, to develop better rapport with the participants, spending time in the researched setting provided me with the opportunity to familiarise myself with the jargon used in the school allowing to understand better the meanings the participants placed on certain events taking place in the Academy (Heyl, 2011).

Focus group interviews were used in order to learn about teaching assistants' views on the changing nature of teachers' work as well as the changing nature of teaching assistants' responsibilities in the Academy. For instance, as explained in section 4.4, I observed teaching assistants working with students, in particular with those who struggled in their learning. Therefore, one of the main duties of teaching assistants was to lead booster groups and to provide one-to-one support during lessons to the children who needed extra support with completing their tasks. However, on one occasion I observed a teaching assistant stepping in for the teacher during the teacher's absence. Such observations led me to enquire about the teaching assistants' duties and responsibilities in the school as this helped me understand better the nature of teachers' work.

Further to this, during the course of my research I learnt that nearly all of the teaching assistants had strong ties with Bricklane Primary Academy. This was due to them residing in the Oakcroft Valley and therefore attending the school as students. Most of them also had more years of experience of working in the school than any of the teachers employed in the Academy. Having such a long work experience in the school meant that the teaching assistants were able to provide comments about the changing nature of their work, the teachers' work

and also to share their observations about the changes that took place in the school following the school's conversion to an academy. Thus, my observations as well as informal conversations with teaching assistants guided the construction of the focus group schedule. All questions asked in the focus groups aimed to elicit information that developed further my understanding of teachers' work.

In line with Schensul's (1999) argument about efficiency of focus groups, nine participants were interviewed during two group interview sessions. Therefore, this form of interview allowed to elicit information from a larger number of participants in a relatively shorter period of time as opposed to individual interviews. Another advantage of focus group discussions was the opportunity to gain insights into multiplicity of opinions possible due to the interaction found in the groups (Morgan, 1998). Robson (2002) points at the group interaction as being a particular strength of group interviews. Participants made their comments while being stimulated by comments of other participants in the group. This encouraged lively group conversations in which the participants shared and compared their views between themselves as well as with me as the moderator of the discussion. In addition, focus group sessions provided teaching assistants with the environment in which they felt comfortable to talk about their views. This was due to the fact that the focus groups took place in the teaching assistants' room as opposed to unfamiliar location. In addition, teaching assistants expressed their reluctance to being interviewed on their own (Robson, 2002). Therefore, the experience of being involved in a group discussion with their colleagues enabled them to voice their opinions in a friendly setting. Thus, focus groups appeared to be preferred to individual interviews.

The executive principal of the Academy was the first interviewed member of staff. Prior to the interview, he requested an interview schedule justifying his

request with a wish to prepare beforehand. Therefore, he was provided with the interview schedule outlining the questions and themes to be discussed in the interview. Following his positive comments on the experience, the interview and focus group schedules were provided to all staff prior to the sessions. This allowed them time to reflect on the questions and recall past events. This was particularly appreciated by more apprehensive participants. For instance, Ms Williams commented:

'I liked it that you gave me the questions before because although I didn't plan exactly what I was going to say, I was just prepared for what you might ask. And I feel as if you would have asked me these questions and I didn't know them beforehand, I might have been put on the spot actually. So that time to think.'

Ms Williams, field notes, February 2015

Ms Williams' comment indicate the benefits of familiarisation with interview questions in advance of the interview. However, despite this there were also teachers whom Adler and Adler (2003) would call 'reluctant respondents'. For instance, during the interview, Ms Kelly frequently repeated that she could not comment on many questions as she did not have long experience of working as a teacher whereas Ms Taylor was very apprehensive about being recorded.

4.5.3 Documentary analysis

Additionally to field notes from observations and interview and focus group, throughout the duration of the research, I gathered various documents related to the school in order to complement other research methods. Documentary analysis included reading school policies, Ofsted reports, lesson planning sheets, league table data, and books from the local library about the area where the school was located. Documents enabled me to gather more details and

information on the history of the school as well as on the research context (Greener, 2011).

4.6 Making sense of data

4.6.1 Data generation and analysis

The field notes were generated through a combination of participant observations, interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis and photographs. A voice-recorder was used during interviews and focus groups in order to allow me to fully focus on the conversations with the participants (Robson, 2002). The interview recordings were transcribed and analysed along with the field notes and other artefacts gathered in the research process.

Through the research, a mass of data in the form of transcripts, research diary notes, observation field notes, and other textual and visual materials were generated. With the purpose of presenting the realities of teachers' professional lives in a primary academy, the findings from the study were organised and presented in chapters 6, 7 and 8. As with all ethnographies, the process of data generation and analysis was iterative (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010). In line with this, during the duration of the research, I was engaged in the process of analysing, making sense and ordering the data at each stage of the research by re-focusing the research aims and questions, choosing the research participants, deciding on methods to be used, making notes about my research experience in the research diary and typing transcripts and field notes.

As explained in sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2, my observations and interviews were guided by the broad research question: 'What is it like to be a teacher in a primary academy?'. Due to the limited opportunities for conversations with teachers and other staff during lessons and breaks, I set up interviews with them. This provided all research participants with an opportunity to comment on, explain and clarify their views about past events as well as the events that I

observed during my research. This in turn enabled me to develop a better understanding of their experiences. The initial process of making sense of the generated data was taking place at the time of the research (Brewer, 2000) starting at the stage of the research design throughout data collection and after data collection was completed (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

However, the formal data analysis stage started after the completion of the fieldwork. During the writing up period, all recorded interviews and focus group interviews were transcribed. During the transcription process, first observations and notes were made in the form of memos. The transcripts were organised in three columns: the first column indicated the interviewer's and the interviewee's initials, the interview transcription was presented in the second column and the third column was left for annotations as suggested by Crang and Cook (2007) (see Appendix 7: example of a transcript excerpt).

Next, I applied the principles of the framework analysis to conduct further data analysis using Frostenson's (2015) conceptualisation of teachers' professional autonomy (see section 3.2.5) as the thematic framework. The framework approach was developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) for use in social policy research although since then it has also found application in other fields such as health and educational research (Srivastava and Thomson, 2009). Gale *et al.* (2013) explain that the framework method is a type of a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis allows identifying commonalities and differences across data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006), generating themes and codes that are 'the building blocks for themes' (Clarke and Braun, 2017:297), and then drawing descriptive conclusions clustered around themes (Gale *et al.,* 2013). The defining feature of the framework analysis is its matrix output (see table 3) that provides a structure for data reduction (Gale *et al.*, 2013). The analysis process consists of five stages: familiarisation, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and mapping and interpretation (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994).

In line with the principles of the framework analysis, I first familiarised myself with my data. Thus, all field notes and interview data were read and re-read. Subsequently, I wrote a summary of each interview transcript. Once all summaries were written, I noted down the key ideas and themes such as school conversion, curriculum, the teaching profession, performance management and interactions in the Academy as these were the main themes that I focused on when conducting observations and subsequent interviews. Next, in an attempt to capture interesting features of the data that could potentially be relevant when answering the research question, I noted various codes in relation to the themes. These codes included, for instance, feelings, reactions, opinions, and events.

Subsequently, Frostenson's (2015) discussion of his three-levelled model of professional autonomy enabled me to develop a thematic framework as suggested by Srivastava and Thomson (2009) and Gale *et al.*, (2013). The thematic framework consisted of three main overarching themes namely general professional autonomy, collegial professional autonomy and individual professional autonomy (outlined in table 2) and also sub-themes (outlined in table 3). In addition, when reading the interview transcripts I identified additional themes related to the main themes and sub-themes presented in tables 2 and 3. This thematic framework helped to structure the presentation of the research findings and it guided the process of data analysis.

Frostenson (2015)		
Three levels of teachers' professional autonomy	**General professional autonomy**	the frames of professional work: organisation of the school system, curricula, procedures and ideologies of control
	collegial professional autonomy	collective freedom to influence and decide on practice at local level
	individual professional autonomy	one's opportunity to decide on pedagogy and the use of teaching materials, mandate to decide on the spatial and temporal conditions of work and a chance to influence the evaluation systems of teaching practice such as performance management

Table 2: Three levels of professional autonomy based on Frostenson's (2015) conceptualisation of professional autonomy

General professional autonomy	**Curriculum**	Views	Impact		Lack of freedom
	Academisation	Motives	Staff involvement		Knowledge
Collegial professional autonomy	**Collective decision making**				
	Exclusions from decision making				
	Collaborative work within the Trust	Best practice	Career	Staff development	Relations
	Inter-school collaborations versus isolation	Staff collaborations	Restricted nature of relations		
Individual professional autonomy	**Contents of professional work**	Pedagogy (F)	Choice of teaching materials (F)		Administrative tasks
	Frames of the teaching practice	Time		Space	
	Controls of the teaching practice	Performance management			

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes in data analysis

Next, I applied the thematic framework by indexing all transcripts using the categories developed earlier which is the next stage in the framework analysis identified by Gale et al., (2013). Once all transcripts were indexed, I created a matrix with all categories in a word document and I entered interesting and illustrative quotations from the transcripts as well as other relevant data such as photographs, information about relevant school policies and my research diary

notes. When charting the data into the framework matrix, I was interpreting the data by noting down ideas and interpretations to assist me with making sense of the data. Finally, when all the data were interpreted and presented in chapters 6, 7 and 8, I then re-read these chapters with an intention to draw descriptive conclusions (Gale *et al.,* 2013). The generated data will be kept securely for the period of 5 years after which it will be destroyed in accordance with all legal and ethical requirements (LJMU, 2010).

4.6.2 Trustworthiness

In the 1980s, Lincoln and Guba developed the concept of 'trustworthiness' in order to ensure the rigor and quality of naturalistic research as it was recognised that the nature of knowledge generated within the positivistic paradigm differs to the nature of knowledge in naturalistic studies (Morse *et al.*, 2002). This concept substituted reliability and validity, terms that were perceived to be pertaining to positivistic inquiries (*ibid*). Since then, trustworthiness has become a crucial concept that contains strategies for attaining research rigour (Given and Saumure, 2008). The concepts of generalisability, internal validity, reliability and objectivity were reconsidered for the purpose of naturalistic research. These included transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability respectively (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In relation to this, throughout the course of this research, a consideration was given to various strategies that ensure trustworthiness of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002; Maxwell, 2010).

Given and Saumure (2008) note that 'generalisability' in quantitative research is reconsidered as 'transferability' in naturalistic inquiries. Transferability reflects the need to describe the scope of the study; thus, allowing others to determine applicability of aspects of the study to other contexts (*ibid*). It is important to note that in ethnographic research, attempts to generalise from generated data are

not the main concern of ethnographers. This is due to the ontological assumptions underlying ethnography that allow for multiple interpretations of reality in the complex social world (Fetterman, 2010). Scott (1996) argues convincingly that generalisations from ethnographic research are limited because people behave differently in real life situations as opposed to experimental conditions. However, strategies to ensure transferability of naturalistic studies have been developed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Given and Saumure, 2008). Transferability of this research was established through the detailed description of the research context (see chapter 5) and the research process (see chapter 4) providing a deep insight into this research. Thus, certain aspects of the knowledge generated through this ethnographic research can be applicable to other contexts. These can include, for example, other primary academies or other types of independent-state funded schools located in different countries. Further to this, other researchers might relate to the difficulties experienced in the course of this research when searching for a research site or considering ethical implications of ethnographic or other naturalistic enquiry.

Credibility reflects the need to represent the data accurately (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Credibility of this research was established through the use of data triangulation (Robson, 2002; Tracy, 2010), respondent validation (Maxwell, 2010) and prolonged involvement in the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Data triangulation was established through the use of multiple methods of data generation in order to enhance the rigour of the research (Robson, 2002) and to present a more holistic understanding of teachers' work experiences (detailed in section 4.5). Further to this, responses were sought from participants with different roles in the Academy. This included the executive principal, principal, teachers and teaching assistants (detailed section 4.4) which added extra perspectives to the study of teachers' experiences. Additionally, respondent validation was used (Maxwell, 2010) as during interviews I asked questions to confirm that I captured correctly the meanings of participants' responses. Lincoln

and Guba (1985) suggest prolonged involvement in the research setting in order to generate richer data as a strategy to ensure credibility of research. Robson (2002) adds that prolonged involvement reduces reactivity and respondent bias (discussed in sections 4.4 and 4.5.1). Thus, my lengthy engagement in the researched Academy enhanced credibility of this research.

Dependability of an inquiry is achieved through strategies that enable others to attempt to collect data in similar conditions (Given and Saumure, 2008). Dependability of this research was ensured through the presentation of the detailed account of the steps taken during the research process (Tracy, 2010). This was possible due to the use of research diary where all the steps taken in the research process as well as reflections on research were made (Holly and Altrichter, 2011). Further to this, with a consideration given to ethics related to this research, relevant documents used in this research were made available. This includes the email sent to potential research sites and received responses, the interview and focus group schedules, participant information sheet, consent form, details of the interviews and focus groups with the research participants, extracts from field notes incorporated throughout relevant chapters, and relevant extracts from the Academy's documents.

Erlandson *et al.* (1993: 34) state that confirmability of research is defined as 'the degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher'. This indicates the need for reflexivity (see section 4.2.3). In this research, confirmability was ensured through my ongoing reflections on my preconceptions about various aspects of the research process and the research field. For instance, while interacting with the research participants, I reflected upon how I was perceived by them and my reflections were incorporated throughout this chapter (see section 4.4, 4.5 and 4.7). A discussion about my reflexive journey in which I considered my own positionality and my role in the research setting is presented in section 4.8. Additionally, I also reflected upon my prior knowledge and understanding of the Academies

Programme and how this affected my interpretation of the events in the case study Academy. It was not possible to eliminate my biases resulting from my upbringing, previous educational experiences, gender, age and socio-economic background. However, a high importance was given to reflections upon the possible implications of these factors upon the research process. For instance, having been educated in Poland eased the process of seeing the research site as an unfamiliar place (Erickson, 1984) and placing into question nearly everything that seemed to be unquestionable to the research participants (Schuetz, 1944). In addition, my foreign background and gender could have also worked toward my advantage as Walford (2012) argues that females are perceived as non-threatening and Grek (2011) adds that a 'harmless outsider' image could facilitate access to research setting and research participants.

However, my background could have also affected the research process in a less positive manner. For example, due to lack of background as a teacher, I had less in common with the teachers as opposed to other students on placement who were present in the Academy during my fieldwork. This could have possibly prevented teachers from sharing certain information and knowledge with me. In addition, being a researcher could have led to reluctance of some teachers towards me. For instance, after the interview, Ms Harris expressed to me her discontent with university academics who teach prospective teachers at universities despite themselves not experiencing the realities of working in primary schools 'for let's say ten years' (field notes, February 2015).

The discussion so far has presented the various strategies used in this research to ensure that threats to trustworthiness of this research were reduced. Next section discusses ethical matters considered during the research process.

4.7 Ethical considerations

In seeking to ensure this research was conducted in an ethical manner, I have considered both procedural ethics and 'ethics in practice' throughout all stages of the study (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). This two-dimensional distinction of research ethics encompasses both the day to day ethical issues which arise in the fieldwork, thus, referred to as 'ethics in practice' and the procedures required to be complied with by institutional ethics committees. Nonetheless, the institutional ethical guidelines, inspired by biomedical research (Atkinson, 2015), have been frequently criticised for being unsuitable for ethnographic studies. The 'ethics in practice' concept, although closely related to the procedural ethics, requires of the researcher a deep reflexivity. The notion of reflexivity is crucial in every aspect of the research process because there are a variety of ethical factors which influence the construction of knowledge and a reflexive researcher has to be aware of these factors. With regards to this, this section presents a discussion on the ethical considerations and its impact on the knowledge obtained through this research. This section outlines both the procedures that I complied with during the course of the study and the ethical dilemmas which arose in the process of the research.

The first procedural requirement of this research was the completion of the application for ethical approval. This enabled me to determine any ethical issues and to identify potential risks to the research participants and myself. It also ensured that this study was conducted in accordance with the Liverpool John Moores University Code of Practice for Research (2010) and with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011) ethical guidelines. The research commenced after the ethical approval was granted in April 2014.

In order to act in accordance with the ethical guidelines, the participant information sheet (Appendix 8) was prepared. The participant information sheet included information on the purpose of the research as well as the process of the study, its length, methods of data collection and the ways the research data

were going to be used. The participants were also informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. All this information was included in the participant information sheet in order to ensure the participants understood the research and were aware of their rights. Despite this, a number of problems associated with the participant information sheet arose upon a reflection.

Atkinson (2015) argues that the participants' right to end their participation in research at any time is not appropriate for ethnographic studies that are concerned with studying a culture of a particular community. The danger posed by this right is that one person's refusal to partake in the study can bring the whole research to a halt as the researcher is not allowed to observe the one particular individual who withdrew from the study but continues to be a member of the studied group. Nevertheless, the participants of my study had to be given the option to withdraw their participation in order to ensure ethical conduct of the research. Despite the slight risk of jeopardising the study, none of the participants withdrew their participation.

Further to this, the participant information sheets along with the consent forms (Appendix 9) were posted to Bricklane Primary Academy two months prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. The aim of this was to allow the research participants plenty of time to familiarise themselves with the study. However, this was not entirely an unproblematic matter. After enquiring about the consent forms on the first day in the school, the signed forms along with the participant information sheets were returned to me. The informal conversations with the research participants showed that although they received a copy of the participant information sheet, they did not pay attention to it. In order to check if the teachers had received the information about my study in the summer, I questioned one of the teachers about this matter. Her response was as following:

'We've seen the forms. He [the principal] gave them to us in the summer and asked to sign them. So we all signed them.'

Ms Jones, excerpt from research diary, 1st September 2014

The message conveyed in Ms Jones's short response about the participant information sheets raised a number of ethical concerns. One of the concerns relates to the level of the participants' knowledge regarding my study prior to the commencement of the research. I wondered if the teachers took time to read the information sheet or whether they signed the consent forms to comply with the principal's request. Related to this is the question of how informed their consent to participate in the study was. Another matter relates to the participants' free will to take part in the research. Granting access to the Academy by the Academy senior managers had many implications for the research. First of all, I wondered whether the teachers had the chance to refuse their participation in my study or whether they felt obliged and pressured to participate in it. Hammersley and Atkinson (2010) argue that ethnographers have limited power over participants' informed and free consent to get involved in research. This was clearly the case in this study. However, the ethnographic nature of this research provided a number of occasions to discuss the research with the participants and to answer any questions they had. Nonetheless, there were further implications resulting from the fact that access to the academy was granted by the people with authority. For example, under the consideration was the way the research was presented to the teachers by the principal and the executive principal. Were the teachers told how much information about the school's life they were allowed to share with me? Or were they given instructions on the level of their involvement in the study? All these questions will remain unanswered. However, being aware of these matters is crucial to acknowledging that this study is not free from many limitations. One of the limitations might be the fact that the teachers did not feel committed or devoted to the research; thus, unwilling and not interested in reflecting fully on their answers. They might not be also keen on sharing any information with me. These limitations impact

on the nature of the knowledge generated through this research. It is clear that the obtained knowledge is subjective and fragmented as the research participants might have disclosed only partial information that they felt comfortable sharing with me. This also exposes the power relations in the research field where it was the participants who had power over the researcher in respect to the amount of information and knowledge that they were willing to share.

Throughout the course of the research, additional participants such as the executive principal, the principal and the teaching assistants were identified and included in the study. Thus, in order to comply with the University's ethical procedures, the Notification of Major Amendments form was submitted to the LJMU Research Ethics Committee for consideration. After the additional ethical approvals were granted, signed consent forms were obtained from all the participants who participated in the voice-recorded interviews and focus groups. Including additional participants in the study helped to build a fuller picture of the teachers' professional lives and the context of their workplace. However, this also brought about challenges related to maintaining the participants' anonymity which has been a central consideration in reporting this research.

Anonymity constitutes one of the principles at the core of research ethics (Mills & Morton, 2013) which researchers adhere to but rarely question (Nespor, 2000; Walford, 2005). In fact, anonymity in qualitative research is profoundly problematic (Nespor, 2000) and according to Van Den Hoonaard (2003) it is not achievable particularly in ethnographic studies. This is due to the nature of ethnographic research which requires the researcher's prolonged involvement in the field (Walford, 2005). In the case of my study, one year long involvement in the research site meant that I came in contact with a great number of people. This includes the members of the Ofsted team, the administrative staff and the students undertaking their placements in the Academy. These people, although did not participate in the study, were present in the school and as a result of this

they were aware of this research. The interaction with people who were not involved in the research might potentially lead to the research setting being identified and the participants' identities exposed. Further to this, the commonly used anonymization technique such as pseudonyms has been criticised for being unreliable (Nespor, 2000). To illustrate this, Nespor (2000) reports on the case where a study's participants were located and tracked down 50 years after the original study was conducted. Nonetheless, despite the use of pseudonyms not being free from its drawbacks, this technique is used in this study as it is a foundation of ethically sound research. Thus, the school and the research participants were given pseudonyms. The Ofsted reports and other documentation used in order to inform the following chapter (see chapter 5) describing the research setting are not fully referenced in the reference list. Further to this, the participants' personal information such as their names, the name of their workplace as well as the location of the school are not disclosed in any research reports, articles, presentations and in this thesis.

All these techniques of protecting the participants' identities are used in order to avoid causing harm to the participants and to protect their privacy as examples from past studies show that participants of ethnographies can be easily identified. For instance, Cassell (1980) reports on the controversial ethnographic study that provided detailed descriptions of the research participants enabling them to recognise themselves and other members of their communities from the ethnographer's account. However, she argues that 'the greatest harm caused by that violation of privacy (…) appears to have been anger and hurt feelings' (Cassell, 1980:34). This indicates that the harm caused by that research was perceived to be trivial. Nevertheless, Scheper- Hughes (2000) discusses her own research that had a long term negative impact on both the participants and her as the researcher. She conducted an ethnography of mental illness in an Irish village in the 1970s. Despite her study being highly acclaimed and widely debated, the research participants felt betrayed as they believed their lives were presented in a negative manner with no accounts of the positive aspects of the

village's life. The village was easily identified by an Irish journalist and it became a tourist attraction. Twenty years after completing her research, Scheper-Hughes (2000) re-visited the village where she was greeted by the locals with hostility and was forced to leave. As shown through this example, identification of a research site can be harmful to individuals as it opens the researched community to public scrutiny (Guilleman & Gillam, 2004). Further to this, this example indicates the importance of reflecting on all possible consequences of our research and the long term harm that can be caused to the participants as a result of our portrayal of their lives. Reflecting on my study, the possible long term harm can be caused as a result of identification of the participants by their senior managers who are in the position of power over the participants. Therefore, to avoid the identification of individuals, in addition to the use of pseudonyms, the teachers' specialised roles in the school such as the ICT Coordinator or the EAL Coordinator, and the Year group that they teach will not be linked to the participants' pseudonyms. Linking the pseudonyms with the participants' roles would compromise the promise of maintaining the research participants' anonymity since this type of information would allow other school staff within the research setting to identify particular people. Nevertheless, maintaining anonymity of the principal and the executive principal appeared to be a challenging matter. As their distinguished roles in the school make them prone to being easily identifiable by people within the Bricklane Primary Academy's community, it was decided that their anonymity could no be fully maintained. Therefore, both the principal and the executive principal were informed about the risk of them being identified in the research by other participants.

However, as well as using pseudonyms and avoiding exposing too much information about particular individuals, it is important not to disclose too much information about the research site. Describing the research setting in a great detail can potentially enable the readers to identify the setting where the study was conducted (Walford, 2005).

Nevertheless, although the techniques of obscuring the participants' identities and the amount of information shared about the research site intent to protect privacy and maintain anonymity, these techniques also have implications for the interpretation of the data and for the nature of the generated knowledge. Omitting the participants' distinguished roles in the academy might lead to stripping this thesis's narrative from important information (Van Den Hoonaard, 2003). In order to develop a greater understanding of the studied school, it is necessary to learn about its geographical location, its history, facilities, student population and teachers. Van Den Hoonaard (2003) claims that readers want to know more about the participants in order to get a sense of the researched population. In addition to this, the way the school has responded to political change can be understood only in its historical and political context (Walford, 2005). Further implication of this is of epistemological nature. With the purpose of protecting the participants' privacy, similarly to Acker (1999), I have faced the dilemma over the amount of information I include in this thesis and the examples I decide to use to illustrate my arguments. This means that based on my personal judgments, I made decisions over what information can be perceived as potentially harmful to the individuals who agreed to take part in this study. This clearly indicates that the knowledge presented in this thesis is highly subjective.

With the purpose of complying with further ethical guidelines, raw data generated through this research such as diary entries, transcripts and recordings will be stored securely for the period of five years from the completion of the project. After the agreed period of retention has expired, the data will be destroyed in accordance with all legal and ethical requirements (LJMU, 2010). The raw data has not been disclosed to anyone as only I as the researcher have had the access to it.

Due to my research being conducted in a primary school setting, I was exposed to the contact with the children of primary school age between 5 and 11 years

old. In relation to this, a DBS clearance was performed prior to the commencement of my study. The school received a copy of the DBS clearance. In addition to this, I was required to attend a day long training session on Safeguarding Children organised and delivered by the member of the Bricklane Primary Academy's staff.

All the above steps were undertaken in order to ensure that the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of the research participants have been considered, and that no one suffered as a result of the participation in my research (Denscombe, 2010; LJMU, 2010; BERA, 2011). However, the discussion indicates that the ethical aspects of my ethnographic study are complex and problematic. The institutional ethical guidelines have reinforced deep reflections on whether it is ever fully possible to implement the fundamental ethical principles of obtaining informed consent, maintaining anonymity and avoiding harm in ethnographies. Despite all of the dilemmas that arose in the process of this research, Atkinson (2015) assures that ethnography is amongst the most ethical research.

4.8 Researcher identity and positionality

In ethnographic studies, the researcher is the main data generation instrument 'with which they must find, identify and collect the data' (Ball, 1993: 32). Therefore, scholars place a high value on the importance of reflexivity in the course of ethnographic research (Erickson, 1984) (detailed in 4.2.3). Ethnographers reflect on themselves as researchers in the course of their studies providing a deeper insight into their background, research interests (Acker, 1999; Salokangas, 2013, 2014), and small crises in fieldwork resulting from their role and positionality (Delamont, 2009). In the preface to Bronislaw Malinowski's (1989) diary, his wife, Valetta Malinowska argued for the need to present the researcher's biography and insights into their feelings and emotions experienced in the field. According to Malinowska, this information allows for a greater comprehension of one's work.

This research has also been a reflexive journey during which I stepped back from the fieldwork and reflected upon my positionality in the research site. Further to this, under consideration were the possible implications of my biography and personal characteristics for the research process (Chrostowska, 2015). These reflections related specifically to my Polish origin and educational experiences are discussed in this section. This reflexive journey unfolds the evolution of my researcher identity which had gone through the change from being a complete outsider to being both an outsider and insider at the same time.

My reflexive journey started prior to entering the research setting. During the period of preparations, I started to question whether I was the right person to conduct research in an English primary school. I wondered whether my knowledge of the English education system obtained through studying Education Studies at undergraduate level was sufficient to produce 'accurate' research. The feelings of being a 'legal alien', as Salokangas (2014) terms those researchers who cross national boarders to immerse themselves in unfamiliar cultures and educational systems, were particularly strong due to the lack of personal experience of schooling in England as well as the lack of teaching qualification along with experience of teaching in a primary school (see section 1.2).

When I entered the research setting on the first day of the school year, I was a complete outsider. I was not acquainted with any member of staff and my previous involvement in the school was limited to one meeting with the principal. Therefore, when I entered the research setting, I felt like 'the Stranger' described by Schuetz (1944). In his essay, Schuetz (1944) discusses a situation in which a stranger finds himself when attempting to make sense of the cultural patterns of a social group approached with the intention of being accepted by that group. As an example, he refers to an immigrant who moves to a new country. He explains that in contrary to the member of the social group who takes everything for

granted, the immigrant 'has to place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members of the approached group' (Schuetz, 1944: 502). This resonates my personal experiences.

Being an immigrant from Poland, I recalled moving to the UK where everything seemed to be new and unfamiliar to me. I questioned the events around me and I attempted to understand people's attitudes, their outlook on life, and their behaviours. In order to be accepted by the community in which I intended to live, I had started the journey of learning the language and the culture of this country. Although my learning journey has no end, after 10 years of living in England, what once seemed like the 'oddness' of this country has become a norm to me. Similarly, when this research began, I did not have the experience of teaching in an English primary school. Therefore, the culture of the primary school as well as the culture of the teaching profession were unfamiliar to me. The research setting was like a new country where I spent every day trying to understand the culture, social structure, power relations, social meanings, and activities that people engaged in (Brewer, 2000). I asked questions in order to understand why certain things were done in a particular manner. Being 'the Stranger' and a complete outsider arguably aided me to notice the aspects of teachers' working lives which they perhaps took for granted. Erickson (1984) argues that ethnographers are required to engage in the process of making the familiar strange. However, the researchers who research institutions of other societies do not have to do that because everything is already unfamiliar to them (Erickson, 1984). Thus, Wolcott (1975) advocates ethnographic fieldwork in cross-cultural settings. Further to this, based on her experience of conducting her research in a country different to her origin, Salokangas (2014) made an excellent case of addressing what Geer (1964) recognises as a 'familiarity problem' arguably experienced by researchers who undertake research in settings and within educational systems that the researchers are product of. Concerning this, being an immigrant and an outsider to the studied group

became an advantage for me. I perceived myself as the ethnographer who could see what was invisible to the teachers who were the cultural insiders.

The discussion so far has indicated that my biography and personal characteristics positioned me as an outsider in the research setting. In relation to this, the benefits of being an outsider were recognised and acknowledged. However, it was equally essential to recognise that being an outsider to the studied group appeared to be challenging in relation to building rapport with the participants, negotiating access to the group, and gaining the participants' trust (discussed in sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.7). Additionally, some scholars such as Clifford and Marcus (1986) recognise the danger of misinterpreting local practices and meanings by outsiders. Therefore, in an attempt to develop a better understanding of teachers' work, I continuously negotiated my role in the setting by providing my assistance with various tasks naively hoping to eventually become an insider (discussed in section 4.5.1). Reflexing on myself in the research, I began to recognise that over time being called 'Miss' by all children and staff became a norm to me and I also became more familiar with the layout of the school's building. In addition, apart from assisting teachers with their everyday tasks, I was also asked to support two Polish-speaking and one Spanish-speaking pupil with limited knowledge of English. Thus, not only did my linguistic skills provide to be helpful but I also felt that I was trusted in my work with these children. I recognised that my identity, my role and positionality in the research site were constantly evolving as I was 'engaged in messy, continuously shifting relationships' (Thomson and Gunter, 2011:18). Although my relations with research participants were becoming friendlier over time, I was always excluded from weekly staff meetings that could have provided an interesting insight into teachers' work experiences. When I was informed that some of these meetings were confidential in nature, I finally recognised that despite my prolonged engagement in the research site, I would never become a full 'insider' to the studied group. However, I recognised that I was no longer an outsider either. This mirrors Thomson and Gunter's (2011) reflections on their

experiences of research in a school where they rightly argue that researchers' identities in research settings are never fixed and stable but 'liquid' instead and constantly changing.

4.9 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology. It has explained how the study was conducted and how the research findings were analysed and presented. Additionally, ethical matters that were considered during the research process are discussed. Consideration is given to my positionality and role in the research setting. The following chapter presents a discussion about the school including the context in which the school operates, the governance structure of the Academy and some key events from the recent history of the school.

Chapter 5: Bricklane Primary Academy

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides background information about Bricklane Primary Academy and the Sky Education Trust, and this information is presented in two sections. The first section is a description of the Academy including information about the area where the Academy is located, the school's pupil profile, and the governance structure of the Trust. The second section of this chapter outlines some of the developments in the recent history of the Academy as highlighted by official available Ofsted reports. With regards to this, the section focuses on the main events in the school between the years 1997 when the first Ofsted Inspection was carried out and 2015 when this research was concluded. The information presented in this chapter sets out the context in which the research was conducted, it tracks the recent events that shaped the Academy and it develops an understanding of the teachers' place of work.

Due to limited official information about Bricklane Primary Academy, this chapter is informed by an analysis of reports by Ofsted and Department for Education, documents retrieved from the school's website and obtained upon my request from the school's staff. In order to maintain the school's anonymity, reports, articles and books that enable identification of the Academy will not be fully referenced or included in the reference list at all. In addition to this, pseudonyms are used in the place of real names of places and organisations.

5.2 Bricklane Primary Academy

Before moving onto a discussion of the recent developments in the school leading up to the conversion, I first outline information about the current state of the Academy in order to contextualise the research setting. With regards to this, in what follows I discuss the area where the school operates and the pupil population that the teachers work with in order to better understand the nature of the teachers' workplace. Further to this, by outlining some of the characteristics of a LA maintained school, I discuss the structure of the Trust in order to explain how the Academy is governed after its conversion from a LA maintained community school to academy status.

5.2.1 The neighbourhood of Oakcroft Valley

Bricklane Primary Academy was established in 2012 as a result of the school's conversion from a LA maintained community school to an academy. The Academy is an inner city school located in an industrial and mainly working class residential neighbourhood of Oakcroft Valley (pseudonym) in the North West of England. The Oakcroft Valley Historical Society (1993) recounts that traditionally agriculture was the dominant occupation of the local community. However, industries such as textile manufacturing, heavy engineering, glass making and the manufacturing of matches developed during the industrial revolution. This led to the growth of the population of Oakcroft Valley during that time as many working class people came into the area to find occupation in mills and factories. However, the 1960s and 1970s saw the decline of many industries across the city and more than half of the manufacturing jobs were lost contributing to high unemployment that continued in some parts of the city for years (Taylor, 1996). Textile manufacturing, glass making and coal mining industries were closed in Oakcroft Valley. Despite its prosperous past, nowadays the area is characterised by social deprivation and high level of unemployment.

5.2.2. Pupil profile

Bricklane Primary Academy lies at the heart of Oakcroft Valley and it provides education to the children between the ages of three to eleven years old living in the local area. Despite being one of the first primary schools in the area to convert to academy status, the school did not receive much public attention. Therefore, official information about the Academy that is publicly available is rather scarce and limited to Ofsted inspection reports and data on the school's performance published by Department for Education. Other data about the Academy that was made available to me is the RAISEonline 2014 summary report. This report presents various analyses based on contextual data on pupils taken from the Annual School Census and data on pupils' attainment sourced from the DfE performance tables. In relation to this, in order to present the characteristics of the school's student population that the Academy's teachers work with, this section relies on the available official data.

As mentioned earlier, the Oakcroft Valley neighbourhood is described in official documents as an area of high socio-economic deprivation. This is reflected in the large number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The Academy's data for the academic year 2014/2015 indicate that 69% of the pupils were eligible for free school meals at the time of this research. This figure was higher than the national average that in January 2015 was 17.6% for children attending primary academies (DfE, 2015). Further to this, the Academy's Ofsted inspection report (Ofsted, 2014) states that almost all of the pupils who enter the early year department display skills which are well below the national expectations for their age. Moving to Key Stage 1, these children are still at a disadvantage with skills below national expectations.

Further to this, according to the Academy's first Ofsted inspection report (2014), Bricklane Primary Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school. In

October 2014, the school's data on pupils' number showed there were 395 children on roll. This indicates that the number of children attending the school exceeded its' capacity of 315 and during this study the number of pupils joining the academy was growing. The following section discusses the structure of the Trust which further develops an understanding of teachers' workplace.

5.2.3 Sky Education Trust

Bricklane Primary School converted under a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) named in this research Sky Education Trust [pseudonym]. The Academy assumed a sponsorship of another local primary school which is assigned the pseudonym of Green Lane primary school which was made subject to special measures in January 2012 and converted to academy status a year after the inspection. Green Lane Primary School converted as a sponsored academy and has become known as Green Lane Primary Academy. This section explains what an academy trust is and it describes the structure of the Trust that operates both Bricklane Primary Academy and Green Lane Primary Academy in order to develop an understanding of the way the academies are governed.

Before academy conversion, Bricklane Primary School was a community school run by the local authority. The local authority owned the school's land and building, determined the admissions criteria, and employed the school's staff (Gov.uk, 2016). After the conversion to academy status, the school became independent of the local authority's maintenance as the responsibility for running the Academy was taken over by the trustees who set up the Sky Education Trust. This Trust was set up one year prior to the Bricklane Primary School's conversion. In the interview with the executive principal, Mr. Richardson explained that the trust is a 'charitable company limited by guarantee' that runs the schools that are under the company's direction. Prior to the conversion, the

trust's role, as recounted by Mr. Richardson, was to 'enact any legalities (…) such as the transfer of the land, the transfer of the contracts'. After the conversion was completed, the Trust has been in charge of its employees and of both Academies. Further to this, the teachers in this study reported that the Trust was perceived by them to have the same responsibilities as the school's local authority had prior to the academy conversion.

The Trust entered into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State to whom it is accountable. The academy funding agreement sets out the relationship between the DfE and the trust, funding arrangements for the academy and information on termination of the agreement (EFA, 2015). As the academies' funding is distributed to them by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) as opposed to the schools' local authorities, the governance structure of academies differs from the governance structure of maintained schools. The table below illustrates the governance structure of the Sky Education and the Academies under its direction. It shows that the Trust is accountable directly to the Department for Education. According to the academy's prospectus, the responsibility for day-to-day running of the Bricklane Primary Academy rests with the trustees, the executive principal and the local governing body (LGB). Local governing body consists of teaching and nonteaching staff, parents, LA representative and a co-opted governors. LGB is appointed in order to decide on the academy's curriculum, review the school's progress and targets, set standards of behaviour, recruit staff, and to decide on the school's budget. Local governing body reports to the Trust. In terms of academy's leadership team, according to Mr. Richardson's account, executive principal's role is a strategic one whereas the principal of each academy has an operational role which requires them to operate the academies.

Department for Education/ Education Funding Agency

↓

Sky Education Trust

Board of Trustees:

4 Trustees and Chairs of the LGBs (1+2)

↓

Executive Principal

Has a strategic role; holds the principals to account; ensures all the policies in the academies are in place

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Bricklane Primary Academy              Green Lane Primary Academy
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        LGB                                    LGB
         |                                      |
     Principal                              Principal
         |                                      |
Assistant Assistant Assistant      Assistant Assistant Assistant
Principal Principal Principal      Principal Principal Principal
         |                                      |
      Teachers                              Teachers
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Table 4: Schematic diagram of the hierarchical structure of the Sky Educational Trust

So far, I have provided background information about Bricklane Primary Academy. The next section discusses some of the developments in the recent history of the school prior to its conversion to academy status.

5.3 Recent history

The purpose of this section is to outline some of the developments in the recent history of the school prior to academy conversion in order to develop a better understanding of the research setting and the events leading up to the conversion. This section does not offer a comprehensive and complete history of the school. Instead, it presents some changes in the school based on the analysis of the school's Ofsted inspection reports from the period between 1997 and 2014. It is important to acknowledge that the Ofsted inspection reports present only a partial and biased story and image of the school. Nonetheless, they make note of and give a flavour of the changes that took place in the school from the time the first Ofsted inspection was carried out until the start of my involvement in the Academy. As indicated earlier, a detailed search for official information about the school provided limited relevant results. The available information includes Ofsted reports and data on students' educational outcomes from the DfE performance tables. Therefore, with this limited official information that is available about the school, a narrative was constructed that presents some of the developments that shaped the school and impacted on its current state.

Bricklane Primary Academy, first known as Bricklane Junior School, opened as a school nearly ninety years ago in an inner city located in the North West of England. Since its inception, the school has provided education to the children from the local community. The first published Ofsted inspection (Ofsted, 1997) provides an insight into the Bricklane Junior School's history. It claims that the school enjoyed a distinguished academic past but this started to change in the 1960s when the area where the school operates was influenced by the closure of many local industries that have never been replaced or reopened which led to depopulation of the area. The information about the closure of industries and its impact on local communities was echoed in the account of The Oakcroft Valley Historical Society (1993) on the history of the local area discussed earlier (see

section 5.2.1). As a consequence of the decline of local industry, the school's pupil population was not stable for many years and many pupils did not remain in the school for long periods of time as their families moved on to other locations.

However, the school started to grow in size again. This was indicated in the Ofsted reports that demonstrate that in 1997 there were just over 200 pupils on roll (Ofsted, 1997) while in 2015 the school recorded around 400 pupils (school data). At the time of this research, the school was described as being larger than the average-sized primary school (Ofsted, 2014).

Further to this, the consecutive Ofsted reports highlight that the school operates in the area of social deprivation and high unemployment and the pupils come from varied social and economic backgrounds (Ofsted 1997, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2010, 2014). This information was mirrored in the report on the English Indices of Deprivation that indicate that the school in this research is located in the 10 per cent of neighbourhoods that are most deprived nationally according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DCLG, 2015). Ofsted reports also state that throughout the years, the number of children on free school meals as well as children on special needs register have been higher in Bricklane School/Academy than in other similar schools.

In terms of the school's academic performance, the Ofsted reports paint a complex picture of the children's attainment placing blame for perceived underachievement on the teachers and the school's leaders. According to the first available inspection report (Ofsted, 1997), the Bricklane Junior School provided unsatisfactory level of education. The inspectors believed that the quality of teaching ranged from very good to poor and the leadership at all levels was unproductive. They noted that the curriculum in the school was not broad

and balanced and pupils' attainment was below the national averages in most of the subjects. Overall, the educational standards in the school were perceived by the inspectors to be very low with largely unsatisfactory progression of pupils. For instance, according to the report, the pupils entered the school with attainment in line with the national averages but left it with attainment well below the national averages at the end of Key Stage 2 (Ofsted, 1997). Her Majesty's Inspectors argued that the school was lacking the challenging, inspiring and effective learning environment that would raise educational standards with no account for the complex and difficult socio-economic environment in which the children lived. Both the head teacher and the governing body were blamed for failing to provide the school with a clear educational direction and strategic planning regarding the school's future. The unsatisfactory findings of the Ofsted inspection subjected the school to special measures (Ofsted, 1997). Following the inspection in 1997, the school was under strict monitoring processes from Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI).

In the meantime, another important event in the recent history of the school took place. Bricklane Junior School was developing stronger links with the local infant school that shared the site, building and the governing body with the Bricklane Junior School. Finally, in 2002, the infant and the junior schools were merged together creating Bricklane Primary School (Ofsted, 2001).

A few years later, in 2006, Mr. Richardson, the current executive principal of the Academy, took up the headship of Bricklane Primary School. Following his appointment, the successive Ofsted inspections praised his leadership skills highly attributing them to the school's rapid improvement in performance (Ofsted 2006, 2010, 2014). Her Majesty's Inspectors argued that although the legacy of the past long term underachievement was still felt in the school, Bricklane Primary School was on the path to improvement. The quality of teaching and learning improved leading to better tests scores. Rapid improvements under the

headship of Mr. Richardson were noted and led Bricklane Primary to being judged as good with outstanding features in 2010 (Ofsted, 2010). Following the inspection in 2010, the governing body along with Mr Richardson started to consider the conversion of the school to become an academy. Under the *Academies Act 2010* (DfE, 2010), a governing body of a maintained school in England could apply to the Secretary of State to convert that school to an academy status. At the time of this research, all maintained schools judged by Ofsted as outstanding or good with outstanding features were eligible to become academies (DfE, 2010b). Thus, the latest major development in the school was its conversion to an academy status.

In the interview, Mr. Richardson, previously the head teacher of Bricklane Primary School and currently the executive principal of the two schools within the Sky Education Trust, recounted the process of consultations with various stakeholders when the school's governing body decided to seek an academy status. He recounted that the staff, parents, teachers' unions, local community, and other local primary schools were involved in the consultation on the conversion plans, a matter that is discussed in more detail in the following chapter (see chapter 6). However, when converting as a MAT was recognised as being more beneficial than converting as a stand-alone academy, the consultations in place were stopped and a new consultation process over MAT was initiated. One of the conditions for converting as a MAT was the Bricklane Primary school's cooperation with another local school. Therefore, the fact that Bricklane Primary School was working with another school that was placed in special measures allowed Bricklane Primary to consider a MAT model. Additionally, being part of a MAT was presented as being beneficial to all of the stakeholders as explained by Mr. Richardson:

'Multi Academy Trust (…) means you convert on your own but you assume other schools within your trust to support them or to use their experience. It's a two way thing. It's not just to help the failing schools as academy status was seen initially. It is to have outstanding schools join the trust and (…) blossom under that trust.'

Mr. Richardson, executive principal

Here, Mr. Richardson explained that a MAT model allows for a greater collaboration between the family of schools under the same trust by using the stakeholders experience and expertise, and to help all schools improve faster. As upon a conversion to academy status an existing school closes and a new school opens in its place, Bricklane Primary School was closed and Bricklane Primary Academy started operating as a new legal entity from September 2012.

5.4 Conclusions

This chapter has provided background information about the Academy. This includes a discussion of the neighbourhood where Bricklane Primary Academy operated, student intake, information about the Trust, and some of the key events from the recent history of the school. All this information forms a foundation for further discussion of the teachers' experiences of working in a primary academy. The next three chapters present the findings of this research.

Chapter 6: Teachers' general professional autonomy

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the recent history of Bricklane Primary Academy and the context in which the school operates setting the scene for the presentation of the research findings. The subsequent three chapters discuss the professional lives of teachers in Bricklane Primary Academy through the analysis of three levels of professional autonomy as distinguished by Frostenson (2015). These include general professional autonomy, collegial professional autonomy, and individual professional autonomy (detailed in sections 3.2.5 and 4.6.1). The examination of the various aspects of teachers' professional autonomy presented in the following chapters provides an overall picture of teaching and working in a school that has been recently converted to academy status.

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the findings regarding teachers' general professional autonomy as discussed by Frostenson (2015) (see sections 3.2.5 and 4.6.1). General professional autonomy refers to 'the frames of professional work' (Frostenson, 2015: 22) including inter alia the organisation of the school system, curricula, procedures and ideologies of control. In relation to this, the discussion that follows is focused on the school's conversion to academy status and the school's curriculum. Each of these issues is discussed in relation to teachers' capacity to make decisions that influenced the academy conversion and the curriculum.

6.2 Academisation

Chapter 2 discussed the academies programme in terms of the policy enactment over the past thirty years. It explained a succession of reforms to the structure, organisation and governance in what became known as academisation which is understood as the process of converting LA maintained schools to independent-state funded schools known as academies (Forrester and Garratt, 2016). Building on that information, this section discusses how the conversion process was experienced at the school level from the perspectives of Bricklane Primary Academy's staff with an emphasis on teachers' involvement in decision-making regarding the school's conversion. As the focus of this research was on teachers' experiences of working in an academy, the views of other members of the school's community such as parents or pupils were not sought for the purpose of this research. Nevertheless, the views of other stakeholders such as executive principal, the Academy's principal and the teaching assistants who worked closely with teachers were ascertained during informal discussions and focus group interviews, and are included in the following analysis. Therefore, in what follows the conversion process is discussed as seen and experienced by different staff members.

During the past decade, scholars as well as the media have reported teachers', parents', students' and local communities' resistance and opposition to academy conversion plans (Hatcher and Jones, 2006; Hatcher, 2008, Hatcher, 2011, Wolfe, 2011; Keay, 2016; Rustin, 2016; Ward, 2016). Opposition to academisation took various forms including rallies organised in different locations across England, protests, and petitions to scrap academisation plans. However, in the case of Bricklane Primary Academy, its' conversion did not attract much public attention. What is more important, the school staff recalled that the conversion did not encounter any opposition from parents and school staff. For instance, in the interview, Mr Richardson explained that parents were not present at any consultation meetings despite being invited to attend (Mr

Richardson, interview data, January 2015). Therefore, the conversion of Bricklane Primary seemed to be unproblematic and a straightforward process.

However, before moving on to a more detailed discussion about the staff's initial thoughts and reactions to the news about the school's conversion as well as their involvement in the decision making regarding the conversion, first are presented the perceived motives for the conversion from the perspectives of different staff members.

6.2.1 Perceived motives for Bricklane conversion to academy status

When discussing the reasons for the school's conversion, Mr Richardson recalled the school's 'good' performance in the Ofsted inspection that took place in 2010 when Bricklane Primary was graded 'good with outstanding features' (Ofsted, 2014). He emphasised the importance of this rating to the school as Bricklane Primary 'caused concerns previously' (Mr Richardson, interview notes). According to the 1997 Ofsted report, the school was placed in special measures (Ofsted, 1997) and struggled with its performance in the following years (detailed in section 5.3). In the interview, Mr Richardson explained that following the positive results of the inspection, the senior management team including Mr Richardson and the school's governing body were happy to take advantage of 'the perceived freedoms' which academy status presented to the school. According to Mr Richardson, these freedoms were financial support and flexibilities around staffing, staff contracts, curriculum and also freedom from Local Authority's control. Cumulatively, these specific flexibilities were believed to provide a better support and opportunities for pupils' learning. In relation to this, in the interview Mr Richardson explained the reasons for conversion highlighting its benefits for the pupils:

'So the reasons for conversion- better support for the pupils in their learning. Financial support. Financial support will give us potentially more staff to support the learning of the children, more staff reduces the class sizes (…).'

<div align="right">Mr Richardson, executive principal</div>

He also elaborated on the financial benefits in more depth by explaining the sources of funding available to academies. First, Mr Richardson explained that 'depending on local authorities' across the country, 'between 4% and 10%' of money allocated to LA maintained schools would be retained by local authorities to be used on a range of central services. Whereas academies receive 100% of the funding allocated to them. Secondly, academies are eligible to apply for extra funding that can be used to improve the building infrastructure:

'So we get access as well to so called Academy Capital Maintenance Fund which is our fabric of the building. We can bid in for that. (…) We've put a bid in for the new windows for the front of the school, double glazed. Next year, we are going to put a bid in for the toilets to be refurbished around the school. And we are putting a bid for [Green Lane] for a sport pitch. Erm, we have access to that. As a maintained school you can't bid into that, you are not allowed to. The perceived freedoms are around finance, curriculum, staffing and contracts of staff.'

<div align="right">Mr Richardson, executive principal</div>

The statements above indicate that the senior management of the school saw a number of new opportunities opening up due to the school's conversion. Central to the motives for conversion appeared to be the financial assistance provided to academies. The financial aid could be used to reduce class sizes, employ more teachers and create a better learning environment for the pupils. However, in outlining the benefits of academy conversion, Mr Richardson simultaneously

highlighted what could be regarded as the unequal treatment between academies and schools maintained by local authorities. As indicated in his account, academies were given access to additional funds that could be used for schools' refurbishment whereas maintained schools had no right to apply for such funds. This shows the different opportunities presented to academies that were denied to the schools that remained under LA's maintenance.

Another change brought in due to academy status was the apparently new relation that Bricklane Academy enjoyed with the local authority. Mr Richardson indicated that his relationship with the LA had always been based on a mutual support and cooperation. For instance, he recalled being asked by LA representatives for his support in improving failing schools in the area on numerous occasions (interview notes). He explained the 'new' relation with LA following the conversion stating that:

> 'So I am having a great relationship with the Local Authority. It wasn't that I was moving away from them because I still have that relationship. But because we are an academy now, and an academy doesn't have that relationship, shouldn't have this relationship with the local authority, they don't come in and dictate what we should do. We do what we want to do. (…) We can now dictate what academy should have. And that's the important part of it.'

> Mr Richardson, executive principal

Mr Richardson's account indicates how it was regarded as important for the school to 'break free' from the apparent dictates and pressure of the local authority. He acknowledged that although following the conversion to academy status, Bricklane still maintained a relationship with the LA. However, the relationship now functioned on different terms and was 'less' intensive. For instance, Mr Richardson confessed that the LA's expertise via quality assurance

officers, for example, was still valued by the Academy. However, their visits were 'by invite only because we are an academy' (Mr Richardson, interview data, January 2015).

Further to this, Mr Richardson explained that the Academy continued to use the LA payroll department overseeing payment of staff wages. In relation to this, he noted that the Academy retained what it regarded as 'good quality' services provided by the local authority while it discontinued using services that were believed to be of 'poor quality'. This allowed the Academy to seek 'cheaper' providers of various services required by the school. In addition, having two academies under the Multi Academy Trust provided opportunities for economies of scale. For instance, Mr Richardson explained that the Trust purchased larger quantity of resources for both academies from one supplier who provided the Trust with 'a bigger discount' (Mr Richardson, interview data, January 2015) leading to additional financial advantages associated with academy status.

The Academy's principal, Mr Peterson, also noted that the Academy continued to maintain close links with the LA. He also explained that following the conversion, the Sky Education Trust's responsibilities were comparable to the ones of a LA. Therefore, he called the Trust a 'kind of your own local authority' (Mr Peterson, interview data). However, Mr Peterson also argued against the need for the academy conversion:

> 'There is so much money wasted with this conversion to an academy. The millions of pounds spent on converting schools to academy and we would be as good as we are now without becoming an academy.'

> Mr Peterson, principal

In his view, academy conversion was unnecessary for Bricklane Primary that prior to the conversion already provided a very good level of education to the children from the local area. He also believed that without changing the school's status, the school would continue to provide a good standard of education. This viewpoint is consistent with literature. For instance, Gorard (2009, 2015) and Bhattacharya (2013) suggest that academies did not necessary lead to an improvement in students' academic performance. In addition, Mr Peterson argued that the procedures involved in the school conversion to academy status led to large sum of money being spent on consultants and brokers who advised the school's senior managers instead of on the education of the children. Furthermore, Mr Peterson believed and argued convincingly that the Academies Programme was a 'politically' driven project:

'It has cost a lot of money and a lot of money has been wasted. And academies is a political, they are political. It's taking control from local authority. It's Conservative driven and it's all about that. That's what academies are about.'

Mr Peterson, principal

According to Mr Peterson, the underlying drive behind schools' conversion to academies was to weaken the role of local authorities. This claim is consistent with literature that suggests setting up schools outside of LAs' control has been an ideological move of the Conservatives since the 1980s (Gillard, 2008; Blunkett cited in Helm, 2016).

In addition, similar views regarding the impact of academisation upon local authorities were held by teaching assistants working in Bricklane Primary Academy. During the focus group interview with a group of teaching assistants,

Ms Owens presented her opinion on the reasons why the school converted to an academy:

> 'I think it will become a thing that most schools will become an academy and again I do think that's the government thing because the government will try to get rid of your local council. (…) I think Mr R. [executive principal] wanted to be like one of the first to set the wheels in the motion.'

> Ms Owens, teaching assistant

Similarly to Mr Peterson, Ms Owens believed that the evolving Academies Programme was the Government's strategic plan to reduce the role of local authorities. Further to this, her account indicated that according to her prediction the future direction of travel for the academies movement would be to eventually remove most of the schools from local authorities' jurisdiction. Therefore, according to her, Mr Richardson wanted Bricklane Primary to be one of the first schools in the area to convert to an academy. Some of the teachers also shared this view. For instance, Ms Erickson argued that all schools would eventually have to become academies. In relation to this, she claimed that in an attempt to avoid being forced to convert or being taken over by another school, Mr Richardson made the decision to convert the school to an academy under a Multi Academy Trust (Ms Erickson, interview data, June 2015).

Further on the topic of the relationship between the Academy and the local authority, Ms Jones recognised that the changed relationship with the local authority led to teachers' greater vulnerability:

'You no longer can go to the Local Authority. You've got a problem so you go to see your head or your executive head and sometimes that's not always the case because if you've got a problem with them then you can't go to them, obviously. Then, your next port of call would supposed to be your governing body and your Trust you go to but sometimes because you know people are friends of the governing board, it puts you in a predicament that you don't really want to go to them. Whereas when you were under the Local Authority, you could approach the Local Authority if you had a concern and you can't do that now. (…) nothing's really changed I would've thought apart from you feeling like sometimes you don't know who to go to if you did have an issue.'

Ms Jones, teacher

Ms Jones' account highlighted the level of uncertainty regarding staff options for seeking help or advice in cases when they wished to complain about a member of senior management team. Due to the lack of the LA's involvement in the Academy's affairs, she believed that teachers could no longer discuss their concerns with the staff at their local authority although this was an option before the school's transformation to academy status. Further uncertainty was caused by the absence of a teachers' union representative amongst staff which was recognised as an issue by Ms Collins who also argued that she felt 'like we don't have someone to go to if we have doubts about something' (Ms Collins, interview data, June 2015). Ms Collins shared her views on teachers' union:

'There's no union rep anymore, she left and so no one wants to take it on because they think 'oh, there will be more work'. Cause us all if you become a union rep are scared of being stigmatised then the principal will see that as a bad thing (…). Historically, in England the union reps are seen as the people who make trouble (…). So in my head, I still think that I wouldn't want to be that person just because I wouldn't want to be looked on as 'if we change this, she's gonna make a fuss'.

Ms Collins, teacher

Adding to the concerns raised by Ms Jones about the greater vulnerability of staff due to the lack of involvement from local authority, Ms Collins revealed that there was no teachers' union representative in the Academy making teachers feel unsure about who to approach in order to discuss their concerns and problems with. The teacher explained that staff were not willing to take up such a role due to the demands of their workload and in order to avoid being 'stigmatised' as a rebel against the senior management.

The discussion so far has presented various perspectives on the reasons why the school became an academy. The next section considers staff involvement in the consultation process on academy conversion.

6.2.2 Staff involvement in the consultations for academy conversion

As indicated in the discussion above, Mr Richardson perceived the conversion to academy status as having positive implications for the school's community due to the 'perceived' benefits associated with academy status. Contrary to this view, Mr Peterson argued convincingly that the Academies Programme was a political project that did not lead to school improvement and consumed large sum of money spent on consultants, for example, instead of the children's education (Mr Peterson, interview data, June 2015). However, despite this, staff interviews indicated that academy conversion was presented to them as leading to improved educational experiences for pupils. In relation to this, Ms Erickson stated that the information about academy status 'was put across very positively' to staff during the consultation process (Ms Erickson, interview notes).

From the point of view of the executive principal, Mr Richardson, the consultation process followed appropriate consultation procedures. In the

interview, he recalled the following steps that were taken prior to the school's conversion to an academy.

As discussed in section 6.2.1, following the 2010 Ofsted inspection that graded the school 'good with outstanding features', the governing body of Bricklane Primary school expressed their interest in academy conversion. Mr Richardson consulted the Department for Education (DfE) on the conversion plan. The DfE assigned the school a project lead who visited the school in order to provide Mr Richardson with all the necessary information regarding the conversion. This information was then shared and discussed with the governing body, and formal consultations with relevant stakeholders were initiated (see section 5.3). However, in the meantime, the decision was made to convert the school as a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) assuming a sponsorship of another local school (detailed in section 5.2.3). Following that decision, all previously initiated consultations were stopped and new consultation on a MAT began. The Sky Education Trust was set up in May 2011 and, as noted by Mr Richardson, the consultation period lasted 8 weeks. According to the DfE's (2016f) guide for schools converting to an academy, statutory consultations were required to be arranged with everyone who was believed to have an interest in the school's conversion. In line with this instruction, during the consultation period, consultation meetings with staff, parents, pupils, other local schools and the teachers' union were set up. The members of the teachers' union oversaw the transfer of the staff contracts and pensions, and Mr Richardson recalled providing constant reassurance to the staff that 'their contracts are not going to change, their pensions are the same' (Mr Richardson, interview data). Regarding the school's land, the DfE's (2016f) guidance on school conversion states that all community schools are required to enter into a long-term lease agreement with their LA. In accordance with this, Mr Richardson confirmed that a lease agreement for 125 years was set up between the Sky Education Trust and the local authority. When all necessary steps regarding the conversion

process were completed, the school re-opened as an academy in September 2012.

At a first glance, Mr Richardson's account of the conversion process as well as the staff recollections of it suggests the consultation meetings, where the conversion proposal was introduced, were inclusive of the opinions of all of the stakeholders. Further to this, all the statutory meetings also seemed to be conducted in what might be regarded as a fair manner due to the fact that staff were encouraged to research the Academies Programme and put forward their opinions on the matter. This could be interpreted; therefore, as an attempt at carrying out fair and inclusive consultations. According to Mr Richardson, the staff were also given opportunities to ask questions and voice any concerns about the conversion. In addition, according to the staff recollections, members of the teaching unions were present at the consultation meetings providing staff with opportunities to seek guidance and advice regarding the conversion. Nonetheless, a closer analysis of the staff recollections of the conversion process revealed a contrasting picture of the consultation process.

Discussions and interviews with various staff members indicated that the staff felt they were not truly involved in making decisions on whether or not the school should convert to academy status despite their attendance at the consultation meetings. In fact, it became apparent that during the meetings, the staff were simply informed about the conversion plans while the decision about academy conversion was actually already made for the school. This is demonstrated through the recollections given by teachers about the consultation meetings. For example, Ms Smith said:

'I remember they brought us to the staff room and they said about the possibility of becoming an academy.'

<div align="right">Ms Smith, teacher</div>

In this brief account, Ms Smith indicated that decisions were made by people other than the teachers. This is evident in her narrative in which she clearly distinguished between two groups: 'us' and 'them'. Another teacher, Ms Williams, recalled attending meetings during which the staff were informed about the conversion and what the conversion would involve:

'[Mr Richardson] did do quite a few meetings about it, and erm, he did go over what it entails and he made us feel better about it.'

<div align="right">Ms Williams, teacher</div>

Ms Collins also remembered attending a meeting that presented an opportunity to learn about academies:

'We had a meeting where we were able to ask questions and things.'

<div align="right">Ms Collins, teacher</div>

Ms Davies's recollection of the consultation meetings was as follows:

'[Mr Richardson] told us about it beforehand so we knew we were up to it before it happened, what is going to happen. He had staff meetings with us and he briefed us about things, and he told us about the changes, he told us when it was going to be happening basically.'

<div align="right">Ms Davies, teacher</div>

All the comments presented above made by different teachers who experienced the consultation process and then the academy conversion indicate that the staff were invited to consultation meetings in order to be merely informed that the school was going to convert to an academy. Further to this, the meetings served as a forum to provide the staff with information about the possible changes that academy status would bring and about the steps to be taken during the conversion process. However, the teachers' recollections seem to demonstrate that during these meetings staff were not expected to play an active role in the decision-making process on whether the school should convert despite being asked to research the Academies Programme, ask questions and voice any concerns. Their role appeared to be limited to passive participants who attended meetings during which they were recipients of the information about the academy conversion that was already decided for the school. Due to being given the opportunity to raise concerns and ask questions, the staff were perhaps led to falsely believe that they were somehow involved in decision making process about the school's future when in fact it appears they were not actually involved in that process.

Further to this, despite being offered the opportunity to ask questions related to the academy conversion process and to provide their views on it, the teachers did not feel they had a real choice to oppose the conversion plans. Below, the extract from my research diary illustrates this point:

'Today I had a chat with [Ms Jones] and I asked what it was like when they were told that the school was going to convert to an academy. She said that before the school converted to an academy, a staff meeting was organised and the teachers were presented with the proposal for the school's conversion. They were also asked to do their own research and reading in order to find out about academy status and then to give feedback on the proposal. When I asked what their response to that was,

Ms Jones said: 'we felt that we had no say because they would go ahead with the conversion anyway so we agreed for the conversion'.

Ms Harris made the same point about her feeling that she had no or little choice apart from accepting the decision that was already made regarding the school's conversion.

'To be honest, we've got quite younger staff base anyway. And really, what can you do about it? You are told that you are going to convert. Other than quit and find a different job somewhere else, what's your option?'

Ms Harris, teacher

Both accounts indicate that some of the teachers felt powerless and unable to oppose the plans for the school's conversion. They agreed to the conversion because they did not think they had any other choice as the decision was already made by the senior members of staff. In addition to this, Ms Harris highlighted the young age profile of the staff working in the school indicating that younger staff might have felt more vulnerable and less prone to opposing senior staff's decisions. Further to this, Ms Harris pointed out that as a newer teacher she was appreciative of the fact that she managed to secure a teaching job after completing her teacher training:

'To be honest, I remember being told about it but it didn't really make much difference because I am so young into teaching anyway. It was, at the time it was more well, either way it was still a job. (…) because I was a newer teacher, I don't think, erm, it didn't affect me. (…) It was a matter of we are making a change in the school, you're still going to teach a

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class, you're still going to be working the same hours, everything is still the same.'

<div align="right">Ms Harris, teacher</div>

This indicates that for newer members of staff the fact that the school was converting to an academy was not as important as the fact that they had a job. The same could be argued was true for Ms Kelly who explained that she was glad to have a job after completing her placement:

'Marlena: Did it matter to you that the school was an academy?

Ms Kelly: I just enjoyed working here when I was here [on placement] and then obviously when I was offered the job, I thought, yeah!'

<div align="right">Excerpt from an interview with Ms Kelly, teacher</div>

The consultation process in Bricklane Primary could be argued to had been deceiving in nature. This is due to the fact that teachers' union members and the union representatives were present at the meetings and therefore they created an atmosphere of trust. During the consultations, the management team was seen by the teachers and TAs as being very supportive and comforting. The teachers recalled being reassured that no changes would be introduced as a result of the school's transformation. This reassurance during the time of its transformation was a reoccurring theme in the informal conversations I had with those who worked in the school (field notes, research diary). The statement made by one member of staff illustrates this:

'(…) they were very supportive cause they got like, the Unions were all in, we had support from the Unions making sure that everything was done correctly. They [the management team] also made it very explicit that nothing was going to change (…).'

Ms Smith, teacher

Teachers reported that the presence of the teachers' unions' representatives during the academy consultations helped to ease the staff's fears of the unknown and unfamiliar situation they were placed in. The statement above indicates the teachers' trust in the teachers' unions as the unions' representatives' presence was associated with protection and security. However, despite a conversion of a LA maintained school to academy status presenting major and irreversible changes to the school's community, the Bricklane Primary management team appeared to trivialise it by frequently claiming that nothing was going to change after the conversion. This reassurance was apparently internalised by teachers and teaching assistants who, when questioned, always argued that nothing changed in the school following the conversion. Only when given the opportunity to reflect during conversations with me did they discuss a number of aspects of their working lives that were affected by the conversion. These included, to name a few, higher wages in comparison with teachers from the LA maintained sector, new management structure, lack of LA involvement in the Academy's affairs, and increased workload. One member of staff appeared to be critical towards the information which was presented to the school's staff prior to the conversion. She said:

'I think they were quite canny really how they put it across because I don't think they were quite truthful with how it can actually change your job and how things can still change within an academy. And things have changed to be honest and not for the better.'

Ms Erickson, teacher

The analysis of the research findings so far has demonstrated that the staff had no real opportunity and scope to oppose the senior management's decision about the school's conversion to an academy. Contributing factors that could be attributed to the unequal division of decision-making power in the school was teachers' young age and fewer years of experience of working as qualified teachers. In relation to teachers' demographics, Ms Collins implied the link between teachers' young age and possible manipulation tactics employed by the school's management team:

> 'When I started, there were two older teachers and they soon left. (…) And then everyone since then is 32, 33 or younger, I think, a lot of them. Since I started, there's been so many NQTs and they are all young. I understand why people who have done placements get jobs here (…)But that doesn't necessary mean that they should be young and that makes me think, erm, is it because it's easier to manipulate if you are young and you don't know how to stand up for yourself?'

> Ms Collins, teacher

It is evident that Ms Collins recognised that the teaching workforce in Bricklane Primary Academy consisted of relatively young teachers (see table 1 in section 4.4). Her account indicated that she suspected that this could have been a deliberate tactic used by senior management who could arguably exert their power over younger and less experienced teachers with greater ease. However, there is no definitive evidence to prove this speculation. Nonetheless, it is important to note that literature regarding teachers' demographics in schools similar to academies such as Swedish free schools and the US charter schools reveal that these schools also tend to employ younger teachers with less years of work experience (Burian-Fitzgerald and Harris, 2004; Fredriksson, 2009; Stuit and Smith, 2012; Wiborg, 2015) (see section 2.2.3).

6.2.3 Knowledge about the academies programme and initial reactions

It can be argued that in order for one to be able to make an informed decision and a meaningful contribution to the consultation process, those involved in the consultations should have an understanding of the implications of an academy status for the school and its community. In relation to this, in what follows is the analysis of teachers' understanding of the Academies Programme at the time when they were informed that the school would become an academy. In addition to this, their initial reactions to the news about the conversion are also presented and discussed.

During the fieldwork, it became apparent that when teachers were first presented with the proposal for the academy conversion, they had little or no prior knowledge of what academy status could possibly mean for their professional work. Many teachers admitted that they did not understand what becoming an academy meant. Ms Collins described her surprise at the plans for conversion and her initial fears stating that:

> 'At first, it was a surprise to me. I didn't know what was going to happen so I was unsure about it. In the news, everyone talks (…) that schools are being forced to become academies so I thought it was for that reason. But then I learnt that we actually, it was a good thing and our head wanted us to do well. (…) So it made me happy about that. I was still a little unsure about what changes would happen. (…) I didn't really understand to be honest.'
>
> Ms Collins, teacher

Ms Collins's account indicates that she experienced mixed feelings about the news that the school was going to become an academy. The feelings ranged from 'unsure' and 'surprised' to being 'happy about' the conversion. Her account also demonstrated the impact of media coverage of academisation on her initial

reaction to the news that her school was also converting. This could have been due to the fast pace of change in the legislation regarding the Academies Programme in the early days after the passing of the Academies Act 2010. Yet, Ms Collins also admitted that she still did not understand what academies were. Ms Smith who worked in the school during the time of consultations described how the staff were informed about the conversion highlighting that similarly to Ms Collins she too did not understand what academy status was:

'I remember that we had a meeting to initially discuss that they were thinking of becoming an academy and what our initial responses were for it. (…) Erm, so first I wasn't really sure what an academy was, erm, so we were asked to go away and have a look, what we thought.'

Ms Jones, teacher

And another teacher, Ms Davies, expressed the feeling of uncertainty and vagueness surrounding the conversion:

'At the time I didn't really know what to expect because we didn't know what was going to change and what wasn't going to change.'

Ms Davies, teacher

All the comments presented above stress further the argument that teachers were merely the receivers of the senior staff decision about the school's conversion. When the news about the conversion was broken to them, the staff did not know what the Academies Programme was and how it would materialise at the school level. Some teachers appeared to be confident that the information they were provided with during the consultation meetings was exhaustive whilst others felt they still did not know enough about the academy conversion. For

example, Ms Taylor admitted that the staff were not fully informed about the implications of the conversion. The quote below illustrates how Ms Taylor remembered the consultation phase of the process:

'I didn't really know much about it when I first started [working here]. I just heard we are changing to an academy but no one really told us much information about what was actually gonna happen.'

Ms Taylor, teacher

Ms Taylor's experience resonates with the experiences of various stakeholders in one secondary school discussed by Hatcher (2011) who researched the consultation meetings there. Hatcher (2011) reported that many participants of the meetings were provided with little information about the academy status and how it would improve standards. Therefore, their experiences did not allow 'meaningful popular participation in local policy-making' (*ibid*: 49) which corresponds with Ms Taylor's account.

A number of teachers, in particular those with more years of work experience in teaching, expressed anxiety concerning their future in the school. The teachers shared their concerns regarding possible changes to their working hours, contracts, pay and enforcement of rules that the staff were not happy to comply with. One teacher, Ms Williams, recalled her worries:

'I didn't know a great deal about it to be honest. But one thing I was very very nervous, cause I thought the pay would change, I thought it would be harder (…) I thought they will make it harder to go up the scale with like unachievable targets (…) And also I was a bit worried about pensions. (…) Then I was a bit worried about working hours, holidays (…) because I

thought, well they've got the freedom now, they've got the control really to do whatever they want. So it was mainly nerves, really.'

<div align="right">Ms Williams, teacher</div>

In addition to worrying about the possible changes to their contracts and working conditions, Ms Smith recalled wondering whether they were at a greater risk of losing their jobs in the future.

A few teachers in the school were offered their teaching positions upon the completion of their university placements. In relation to this, it became apparent that those with less work experience viewed the change differently. They seemed to be more relaxed about it and they displayed less concerns about the conversion. The interviews indicated that young and unexperienced newly qualified teachers were not aware of the 'realities' of teaching until they gained more experience in the school workplace. Thus, learning about the school's plans to convert to an academy did not cause them major concerns. This is illustrated by Ms Taylor who commented as following:

'It was my first year so I feel like I didn't really know what to expect anyway (…). I was a student here (…) so in my fourth year this was my last placement and then I knew everyone here and I liked it. I got offered the job and I stayed.'

<div align="right">Ms Taylor, teacher</div>

Ms Taylor's comment highlights further the important point made earlier by Ms Collins (section 6.2.2) regarding the link between teachers' young age and fewer years of teaching experience and the possible exploitation of their position.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the teachers who were present at the Academy during its transformation and those who worked there on a full time basis, Ms Clark, a supply teacher who had been in the school for a few months at the time of this research, presented a different account on her knowledge about the Academies Programme:

> 'Probably I am more aware of academies and how they are run than the other teachers here because I am a newly qualified teacher so I just did my training and while we were training, they talked about the Academy Programme (…). Before I trained, when I was thinking about becoming a teacher, I read TES. You know the Times Educational Supplement? There was a lot of stuff on the news at that time. It was when Michael Gove was like talking about the image of free schools and expansion of academies programme so there was a lot of articles about it then. Not recently have I read much but before I had that time when I was a student to read all of that. So probably I am aware of what the Academies Programme is and how it's changed than the other teachers.'
>
> Ms Clarks, supply teacher

In her account, Ms Clark assumed she had a better understanding of the matters related to academies than her colleagues in the school due to her recent association with a university where she completed her teacher training. When discussing her student status, she revealed that she had more time to read about matters relating to education whereas whilst in full time employment, she had less opportunities to follow the news and reflect on the developments in the educational policy. This is a very important remark about the nature of the teaching profession as it indicates that teachers, being preoccupied with the demands of their jobs, are unable to read and reflect on the developments occurring in the education system. This is perhaps indicative of teachers' job intensification as discussed by Larson (1980) and Hargreaves (1994) (outlined in section 3.2.4). Further to this, Ms Clarks's account suggests the importance of university training for the development of teachers' understanding of matters

related to educational policy and their criticality towards these matters. This is particularly significant at the time when developments have been made in terms of teacher training (Whitty, 2014). Whitty (2014) rightly points out that the *Importance of Teaching* White Paper 2010 encouraged development of more school-led routes into initial teacher training in England. Commentators such as Brown, Rowley and Smith (2014) argue that this move undermines the training provided by universities that enables the development of high-level academic and professional qualifications. Further to this, learning to teach by observing teachers that are more experienced resonates with teaching apprenticeship of the pre-professional era as discussed by Hargreaves (2000) (see section 3.3.1). University education is also crucial for the development of extended professionalism as discussed by Evans and Hoyle (1975) who distinguished between restricted and extended professionalism where extended professionalism described teachers who hold a wider vision of education and whose practice and pedagogy are underpinned by theory (outlined in 3.2.1).

6.3 The National Curriculum

Greater freedom, flexibility and autonomy are the central themes identified in the policy discourse on academies since the Academies Act 2010 (DfE, 2010a; Keddie, 2014, see chapter 2). One of the 'flexibilities' granted to academies is the option to opt out from following the National Curriculum (DfE, 2010a; Gov., 2016). The justification for this is to provide academies with room for innovation in terms of curriculum design and delivery (DfE, 2010a). However, in accordance with Section 1 of the Academies Act 2010 (DfE, 2010:2), academies are required to provide a 'balanced and broadly based curriculum' that includes English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education (Gov., 2016). The right to opt out from the National Curriculum supposedly allows academies to develop their own curriculum creatively which is presented as leading to enhanced

educational experiences of their pupils; hence, ultimately to better results in examinations (DfE, 2010a). Despite this, this research revealed that Bricklane Primary Academy did not have the capacity to design its own school curriculum and as such it was obliged to follow the National Curriculum. It should be noted that this research was carried out following the comprehensive review of the whole National Curriculum announced in 2011 by the Coalition Government and implemented in state maintained schools in England from September 2014 (Forrester and Garratt, 2016). In relation to this, this chapter explains why Bricklane Primary Academy chose to follow the National Curriculum and why it implemented the new revised National Curriculum. It also explores teachers' views on the revised National Curriculum and its impact on their professional lives. Where relevant, a discussion of teachers' involvement in the decision-making process concerning the curriculum is presented in order to determine the scope of teachers' professional autonomy with regards to the Academy's curriculum.

6.3.1 'The freedom that you don't really get'

Due to the option for academies to opt out from the National Curriculum, it was of paramount interest to the research inquiry to learn how Bricklane Primary Academy innovated in terms of its curriculum design and delivery. However, in the early days of the research (filed notes, September 2014), it transpired that not only did the Academy decide to continue to follow the National Curriculum but it also decided that the new, revised National Curriculum was going to be implemented in September 2014. It is worth noting that the revised National Curriculum came into effect from September 2014 and it applied only to state maintained schools under LA jurisdiction in England while academies were exempt from this requirement (Adams, 2013).

With regards to the Academy's curriculum, all members of staff agreed that the decision to continue to follow the National Curriculum and to implement the revised NC requirements in September 2014 was inevitable and essential to ensuring that the Academy continued to be perceived as successful. In the account below, Ms Jones explained why, in her view, the Academy's decision makers decided to follow the National Curriculum:

> 'They wanted to play safe still because if our results, if they just decided not to follow the National Curriculum, our results might just plummet and then they can say, oh well, you wasn't following the National Curriculum so it's still safer to follow the National Curriculum.'

> Ms Jones, teacher

Ms Jones's account conveyed two messages. First of all, she explained that the Academy's decision makers felt it was 'safer' to follow the National Curriculum than to create the school's own curriculum. Ms Jones clearly indicated that this decision was motivated as a means of avoidance of potential accusations of falling results in case the Academy's examination results did not meet the national standards. Thus, Ms Jones suggested that the right granted to academies to opt out from following the NC could also be potentially used against them as a blame in case of lower examination results. Secondly, Ms Jones also suggested that the decision about following the National Curriculum was made without the teachers' active participation in the decision making process. This is indicated by Ms Jones's use of the pronoun 'they' in her account. In line with this argument, when stating that 'they wanted to play safe', Ms Jones suggested that as a teacher she did not belong to the group that made that decision. However, she did not explicitly specify who stood behind that decision. An explanation for that can be found in Mr Richardson's statement:

'You are still judged nationally with the EYFS profile, the phonics in year 1, Key Stage 1 Statutory Assessment Tests and Key Stage 2 Statutory Assessment Tests. So if you are judged on those, you are still going to address the National Curriculum that the children need to have in order to progress later in life.'

Mr Richardson, executive principal

Mr Richardson's account suggests that the decision regarding the National Curriculum was actually imposed onto the group of decision makers at Bricklane Primary Academy themselves by the national government's expectations. The following comments made by teachers explain further the reasons for following the NC from teachers' point of view:

'We do still follow the National Curriculum because it would be silly not to if we still get formally assessed according to the new National Curriculum.'

Ms Smith, teacher

And Ms Collins explained that:

'As an academy we still have to keep with the other schools in the league tables. So we wouldn't be able to go completely our own way because we wouldn't be able to prove that we're being as good as other schools so we would look bad.'

Ms Collins, teacher

The comments presented above demonstrate that teachers viewed the governmental scrutiny and accountability measures as the reasons why the Academy did not take up the opportunity to design its own curriculum. Ms Smith indicated that pupils at Bricklane Primary Academy were formally assessed. In England, all students in state maintained primary schools are required to sit Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) in Year 2 and 6, and their examination

results are published in league tables (Ball, 2017). Although academies have a status of independent schools (NUT, 2014a), similarly to LA maintained schools they are required to participate in SATs (Roberts, 2017). Further to this, academies are subject to Ofsted inspections (Roberts, 2017) one of which I experienced personally during the research at Bricklane Primary Academy (field notes, September 2014). Because of these accountability measures, teachers at Bricklane realised that their school, even as an academy, did not enjoy 'extended autonomy' (DfE, 2010a:52) in terms of devising their own curriculum promised by policy makers in numerous policy documents and speeches. Therefore, one of the rights given to academies, namely the right to opt out from following the National Curriculum, was constrained by external accountability measures. This is illustrated further in the comment made by Ms Williams:

'It's funny really because it's like saying you can teach what you want to but you still have to do these tests. And you still have to get your children to these levels (…) So you have still got this kind of pressure, haven't you? So you haven't got that freedom.'

Ms Williams, teacher

In her comment, Ms Williams pointed at the contradictory nature of the rhetoric surrounding the Academies Programme. While academies supposedly enjoy extended autonomy, they are simultaneously subject to accountability measures that restrict that autonomy by limiting teachers' capacities to innovate with the curriculum due to the standardised tests.

The discussion so far has demonstrated that the implementation of the National Curriculum was a necessary requirement for Bricklane Primary Academy and Ms Smith even argued that 'it would be daft not to' follow the National Curriculum (Ms Smith, interview notes). Similarly to Ms Williams, Ms Erickson

argued that in relation to the school's curriculum, the Academy did not enjoy any 'newly found freedom' that other state-maintained schools did not have:

'You haven't got really that freedom because you've still got those tests to get in and you are too worried as an academy to kind of be the black sheep of the bunch and do something different in case you don't get those results. Because if you don't get those results, you know, you've got Ofsted and HMI and everyone else knocking on your door and they are going to pull you straight back and do what you've got to do, what were you told to do as if you weren't an academy anyway.'

Ms Erickson, teacher

Ms Erickson also recognised that the content of the National Curriculum had to be taught at Bricklane due to the scrutiny and monitoring the Academy was placed under. In fact, she complained about the rather limited freedom and autonomy due to the strong governmental influence over the Academy's and the teachers' working practices. Her account demonstrated that regardless of the school's status as either an independent-state funded academy or a school maintained by Local Authority, the governmental scrutiny was the same. Therefore, innovation and doing 'something different' was not an option due to the fear of lower examination results. Thus, a fear of being seen as 'the black sheep of the bunch' discouraged the Academy from designing their own curriculum.

In addition to this, Ms Erickson also identified other far-reaching implications of opting out from the National Curriculum:

'I think you are constrained a lot. You don't have a lot of freedom at all because if you do trying do freedom and do what you think is best for the children, you too worried. Will it work, will it have an impact, and if it

doesn't have an impact, you've got Ofsted on your door. You haven't got your performance management which means you don't get any pay rise.'

Ms Erickson, teacher

Ms Erickson's account illustrates the restricted nature of the teaching profession. In her view, teachers were unable to make their own decisions regarding the content of their lessons even though they believed that they were well equipped to recognise what was best for the children they taught. They felt constrained by the governmental expectations and too worried to innovate in their teaching practices as this would have far-reaching, negative consequences for their professional careers. Ms Erickson recognised that lower results in the standardised tests could lead to teachers failing their performance management and as a result lack of progression on the pay scale (see section 8.4). In addition to this, she highlighted that any novelty implemented into teaching had to have a measurable outcome. Ms Erickson indicated that any teaching that did not lead to measurable outcomes was not desired by the government even if teachers believed it was beneficial to their pupils.

This feeling of restricted opportunities in terms of teaching and the content of lessons was shared at all levels in the Academy's hierarchical structure including the executive principal. Mr Richardson argued that a curriculum based around the history of the city in which the pupils lived would be more beneficial to the students. Such a curriculum would provide them with more relevant knowledge and experiences that the pupils could easily relate to. However, the standardised National Curriculum that the Academy was required to adhere to with its targets for specific age groups completely overlooked the local history, architecture, the infrastructure and all the important events that took place in the area where the Academy operates (Mr Richardson, interview notes). Mr Richardson argued that:

'You are not studying it because you've got to study the National Curriculum, you've got to study Greece….so we are doing nothing that is relevant.'

Mr Richardson, executive principal

The conversations about the curriculum revealed that due to the national tests and league tables, all the teaching in the Academy was geared toward teaching to the test. The accounts by Ms Jones and Ms Kelly demonstrate this point. Ms Jones said that:

'We still will have testing in Year 2, there is new SATs test that is coming out next year which will monitor the grammar and spelling, writing and maths so you still have got to be able, they will have to be able to sit that test and if you don't teach a lot of the National Curriculum, then you might not cover what's going to be on that test.'

Ms Jones, teacher

Ms Kelly presented her understanding of why the Academy followed the National Curriculum by also referring to the tests as an ultimate goal of teaching, saying that:

'It [the National Curriculum] is a base what the children need to know especially when preparing them for the SATs.'

Ms Kelly, teacher

However, it can be argued that the Academy was placed under even greater pressure since the time it had been converted. The reason for this was that the school was converted after being judged as 'good with outstanding features'; thus, the staff felt that they were under the pressure to keep up the 'good' rating from Ofsted. Ms Erickson illustrated this matter drawing on her experience, saying:

'People were focusing on you even more because we were new into academy (…). So obviously people thought 'oh, they are becoming an academy so what kind of results are they going to get'. So it is a very stressful thing so we've got to give these results there. Plus we were due for Ofsted anyway anytime (…) so the results had to be good to be fair because you know if you've just become an academy by choice and your results are rubbish then it would be like 'oh, what is going on'. And it was very stressful (…).'

Ms Erickson, teacher

The evidence presented so far has demonstrated that the Academy could not design its own 'innovative' curriculum that could be more relevant to the experiences of the pupils at Bricklane. This was perceived by staff as due to governmental expectations and the constant fear of inspections by Ofsted. It became apparent that the Academy was judged by the same criteria as other maintained schools in England. It was also compared with other schools in league tables. Therefore, it was 'safe' to follow the governmental guidelines and that is why it can be argued that the decision not to opt out from following the National Curriculum was imposed onto the Academy's staff by the governmental expectations.

6.3.2 Views on the National Curriculum

As indicated by the discussion on National Curriculum so far, it transpires from the interview data that all members of the Academy's staff had little capacity to decide on whether the Academy should follow the National Curriculum. In addition to the staff's accounts on their involvement in the decision-making on the Academy's curriculum, the analysis of field notes revealed teachers' opinions about the National Curriculum.

When the National Curriculum was introduced following the Education Reform Act 1988, scholars such as Simons (1988) and Coulby (1991) warned against the possible consequences of tightly prescribed National Curriculum for teachers' professionalism. They suggested that the National Curriculum would be determined by people external to the teaching profession which would undermine teachers' professional judgment over what children should learn. Further to this, teachers' pedagogy would be restricted by testing and schemes of work. Research by Pollard *et al*. (1994), Woods (1994) and Acker (1999) explored how teachers reacted to the introduction of the National Curriculum in its early stages of implementation. For instance, Pollard *et al*. (1994) reported teachers' initial responses to the implementation of the National Curriculum that revealed that teachers welcomed and accepted the National Curriculum despite the hard work involved in its implementation. However, over time, teachers identified the issues of curriculum overload and over-prescription and they began to see their roles as being more constrained by the National Curriculum. Similarly, Acker (1999) reported that teachers in her research recognised an increase in their workload but also greater collegiality required to meet all the administrative obligations such as planning school activities and developing school policies. This ethnographic study, conducted nearly thirty years after the introduction of the National Curriculum, revealed that most of the teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy welcomed the requirement to teach within the framework of the National Curriculum. Most of them also spoke in

overwhelmingly positive ways about their experience of the National Curriculum. Ms Jones's comment is illustrative:

> 'We're following the National Curriculum and we've been told that we have to, which I think the teacher to be honest wants to because it's a safety barrier for us as well erm because you don't want to get until the end of the year and they can't do anything so you want to be able to teach them the National Curriculum so it's peace of mind for yourself.'

> Ms Jones, teacher

Ms Jones's account indicated that teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy were requested to follow the National Curriculum, and that they were inclined to comply with that instruction without signs of opposition. In fact, it became evident that Ms Jones believed that the National Curriculum was actually desired by teachers. She explained that the National Curriculum served teachers as a general guideline for what children should be able to do and know at each stage in their learning. As such, it gave teachers the security of knowing that all required material was covered during lessons throughout the year. Therefore, the National Curriculum was seen as a 'safety barrier' that provided teachers 'peace of mind'. Regarding this, the staff interviews revealed that most of the teachers were happy to teach in accordance with the guidelines of the National Curriculum. Similarly to Ms Jones, another teacher, Ms Taylor, also viewed the National Curriculum as a guideline which assisted her in planning her lessons:

> 'I like it because I like to have everything set up for me. I know what I have got to cover and I can use that to help me plan. And we are allowed the freedom to change it slightly, we don't have to stick by it as long as we are covering our topics, we can do what we want so you've got freedom but you also have guidelines to follow to help you.'

> Ms Taylor, teacher

From the point of view presented by Ms Taylor, the National Curriculum was a helpful tool for planning lessons. She also emphasised her need 'to have everything set up' for her suggesting her appreciation for and positive attitude towards predetermined guidelines. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Ms Taylor also stressed her 'freedom' to make slight changes to the guidelines provided by the NC. This suggests that she adopted a proactive role in seeking to incorporate her own ideas into teaching the content of the NC.

Despite many teachers highlighting the importance and usefulness of the National Curriculum, one teacher, Ms Adams, appeared to be more critical of it demonstrating that the responses to the National Curriculum varied between teachers in one school. She presented her contrasting view on the National Curriculum indicating that guidelines in the form of the National Curriculum degraded teachers to 'obedient followers'. The excerpt from my research diary illustrates this:

> The lunch break ended and Ms Adams had to leave the room where I was interviewing her. However, when I turned off the recorder, she told me more regarding her views on teaching nowadays. She said: 'We are not teaching, we are sheep. It's all about data. We are programmed not to think. We are programmed to follow the guidelines.'
>
> Research diary excerpt, June 2015

This brief excerpt indicates that in Ms Adam's view, teachers were not expected to use their own initiative and take charge when teaching. Instead, they were expected to comply blindly with guidelines such as the National Curriculum. She painted a rather gloomy picture of a modern day teacher who was 'programmed not to think'. According to Ms Adams, the teacher's job was reduced to following pre-designed guidelines and producing desirable results in pupils' assessments. Therefore, in her opinion, teachers were not teaching as such due to the

emphasis on performance data. Such a vision of teaching presented by Ms Adams is indicative of what Braverman (1974) saw as proletarianisation (detailed in section 3.2.3) where teachers' professional autonomy was reduced leading to lessening of teachers' authority, in this case, over the content of the curriculum. It also resonates with literature such as Helsby and McCulloch (1997:4) who suggested that due to 'tightly prescribed National Curriculum' teachers' role would be comparable to a 'mere technician carrying out the plans of others and held accountable for (…) pre-specified outcomes'. Further to this, in the interview, Ms Adams expressed her dissatisfaction with the 'prescriptive' nature of the NC and with the requirement to follow the guidelines that were devised by people other than the teachers themselves:

'We are ticking boxes. Half of the time we are ticking boxes. You know, we are not teaching from the heart. We are not teaching from the soul. We are teaching by books. We are teaching by legislation. We are teaching by 'This is what we want!' Why am I teaching my class something that somebody else wants me to teach them?'

Ms Adams, teacher

Ms Adams revealed that teaching was governed by various rules, policies and legislation designed by 'somebody else' but teachers. Teachers' role was to merely comply with the rules according to which teaching had to be conducted. Therefore, Ms Adams claimed that teaching was not inspired 'by their heart and soul' but instead was a 'box ticking' exercise. Further on the topic of teaching, Ms Adams also criticised the National Curriculum in terms of what she viewed as its overemphasis on teaching English and Mathematics. She believed that the focus on these particular subjects undermined the importance of other curricula subjects that could be equally valuable:

'Literacy and Numeracy is, yes, religiously followed but do we really need Literacy and Numeracy in the world or do we need right and wrong? Half of the problems in school is right and wrong, and manners. What is the right choice and what is the wrong choice? What are the consequences of a right choice and of a wrong choice? Why are we not told to respect cultures? If you ask anybody, they can't tell the difference between a Muslim and a Hindu. They can't tell you the difference between Sikh and Buddhist. Why are those things not more important? And as an academy we have that, why are we not focusing on that? Why are we still following…if we have broken free from that, what have we exactly broken free from? If we are an academy, we should be given the freedom to teach them more general knowledge, more about the world, more about the different cultures.'

Ms Adams, teacher

In her account, Ms Adams questioned the content of the National Curriculum and what she perceived to be its shortcomings. Speaking from her teaching experience, she recognised that her pupils would benefit from learning more about the world and different cultures in the world which she felt was not incorporated well into the National Curriculum. However, she believed that the attention given to English and Mathematics devalued the importance of imparting 'more general knowledge'. Ms Adams pointed at the Academy's lack of capacity to exercise the apparent 'freedom' to design its own curriculum that could have been more relevant to the children she taught. Therefore, she wondered 'what have we exactly broken free from?' highlighting that she did not see academy status as bringing unshackling from the reins and the anticipated improvement to the school's results.

6.3.3 The impact of the revised National Curriculum on teachers' work

This section explores the implications of the revised National Curriculum for teachers' work. It has become evident that the majority of teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy acknowledged the importance of the National Curriculum to

their teaching practice viewing it as a useful framework and planning guideline. Further to this, teachers welcomed the revised National Curriculum that the Academy began implementing from September 2014 (fieldwork notes).

Conversations with staff revealed teachers' positive opinions regarding the revised National Curriculum. The following statements on the new NC in general and on specific subjects illustrate their views:

'I feel like the new National Curriculum provides the children with the skills they need in real life because we do money and time (…) in Numeracy. And in Writing, we do writing for different purposes, leaflets, newspapers, stories (…). Geography is not one of the best but it still provides the children, I think, with the knowledge they need for life really, their understanding of the world.'

Ms Williams, teacher

'I wasn't sure about the computing side of it first mainly because it was new to me as well. Having seen and tried it and understand it now, I think that the computing side of the National Curriculum is brilliant. I think it's much better. I think beforehand it was (…) really dull, the children could do what it was expected of them really easily. There was not much challenge involved. Whereas now they are being taught how to programme things. It's preparing them for the job.'

Ms Davies, teacher

'The actual subjects, Science would be better because there is more structure to it and there's not so much repetition. (…) there's different topics of investigation that weren't in the curriculum before (…) which are quite interesting for the kids. In Literacy, I think the curriculum is better (…). There's more focus on poetry which I think is a good thing, erm, and

the grammar obviously that's necessary and we seem to missed out, my generation didn't get taught that basic grammar that the generation before did so that's really good that's coming.'

<div align="right">Ms Collins, teacher</div>

These comments suggest that there was a shared consensus amongst teachers that the revised National Curriculum was more 'challenging' and 'interesting for the kids' in comparison to the previous version of the National Curriculum. The subjects were seen to be improved and 'better' with 'new' and 'interesting' topics, 'a better structure' and 'not so much repetition' within subjects year by year. In particular, Ms Collins praised the new Curriculum for bringing back the teaching of grammar that in her view her generation was deprived of. The overwhelmingly positive comments on the NC provided an insight into the teachers' functionalist view of education (Durkheim, 1974). In particular comments concerning the NC such as: it 'provides the children with the skills they need in real life' and 'It's preparing them for the job' were indicative of teachers' appreciation of teaching children the skills necessary for future employment.

There were also some less positive comments regarding the new NC. For instance, teachers recognised that the change in some names of subjects was unnecessary. Ms Collins commented on this:

'I think it's silly that they changed silly things like names, so calling it Computing instead of ICT, Maths instead of Numeracy and algebra instead of numbers. Seems like very small changes that don't do anything significant at all.'

<div align="right">Ms Collins, teacher</div>

Other unfavourable comments were around the implications of the revised National Curriculum for teachers' work. For instance, Ms Smith pointed out at the increased workload resulting from the implementation of the new Curriculum. Ms Smith argued that the NC 'got harder' (Ms Smith, interview notes), in Ms Kelly's view 'The work is a lot harder; they [pupils] need to know a lot more, more in depth' (Ms Kelly, interview notes), and Ms Dixon explained that 'We are expected to be more rigorous, to challenge the children more and to expect more of them' (Ms Dixon, interview notes). Further to this, Ms Smith recognised that adaptation of the new terminology used in Literacy and Numeracy was time consuming leading further to increased workload (Ms Smith, interview notes). Related to this were the concerns around staff performance management. Ms Jones identified the link between the new National Curriculum, staff performance management and their progression on the pay scale:

> 'You might have to get your children, they might have to move five points and if they don't move five points then you might not get your performance related pay, erm, so that is, it's harder to move the points sometimes now because the expectations are greater. So it is linked, it's linked to pay in that respect.'

> Ms Jones, teacher

Ms Jones's account demonstrated the interconnection between teachers' wages and the new National Curriculum which in addition to the programmes of study, also set out attainment targets for pupils in each year group. Ms Jones explained that teachers were required to demonstrate that their pupils were progressing in their learning by meeting the pre-determined targets. However, teachers argued that these targets were 'greater' and more difficult to achieve than previously:

'There is much higher level Maths. They are doing equivalent fractions in Year 3 which we would normally do in Year 5. It's a lot harder so it's going to be difficult to have the grades'.

Ms Collins, teacher

'So some of them are unrealistic targets and it's just hard and they can even stop them [pupils] from going up a level so we've got to try to meet these targets and it's hard'.

Ms Taylor, teacher

As indicated in teachers' comments, the new National Curriculum was perceived to be more challenging due to the higher attainment targets for each year group set by the government. Ms Taylor complained about the targets being 'unrealistic' to meet, in particular by her 'lower ability children' (Ms Taylor, interview notes) whereas Ms Collins emphasised that the revised National Curriculum expected younger children to learn topics previously taught to much older children. This affected teachers' work who were required to adapt their teaching styles in accordance with the new requirements regarding the 'greater' and 'unrealistic' attainment targets. Associated with this was the risk of not meeting the set targets and no increments on the pay scale leading to some teachers feeling extra pressure:

'Performance management has changed. So you have these targets, and if you don't meet these targets, you don't go up on the pay scale. So you've got the pressure of that as well.'

Ms Williams

It can be argued that the expectation that teachers had to ensure that their pupils met the attainment targets in order for the teachers to progress on the pay

scale had implications for teacher professionalism. For instance, it suggests that teachers teaching should be focused on ensuring that children are taught the topics that would be tested in SATs indicating the importance of teaching to the test (Coulby, 1991, Osborne *et al.*, 2000; Webb, 2006). Their performance management would demonstrate whether teachers met their targets and in turn whether or not they could move up on the pay scale.

6.4 Conclusions

This chapter focused on the analysis of teachers' professional autonomy on a general level (Frostenson, 2015). The evidence presented so far has highlighted issues regarding the nature and extent of limitations imposed upon teachers' decision-making regarding 'the frames of professional work' (Frostenson, 2015:22) including organisation of the school system and the school curriculum. The next chapter analyses the second level of teachers' professional autonomy, namely collegial professional autonomy.

Chapter 7: Collegial professional autonomy

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses collegial professional autonomy as defined by Frostenson (2015). According to his definition, teachers' collegial professional autonomy 'concerns the teachers' collective freedom to influence and decide on practice at local level' (*Ibid*: 23). In relation to this, along with the analysis of the Bricklane Primary Academy's teachers' collective decision-making with regards to their professional practices, other themes related to teamwork, collaboration and collectiveness are also considered. The purpose of this chapter is to present one of the many aspects of teachers' work in a primary academy alongside their capacity to make collective decisions concerning their professional practice.

7.2 Collective decision-making

As established in section 3.2.5, collegial professional autonomy refers to teachers' collective freedom to make decisions over their working practices, and to define the contents and pedagogy at the school level based on teachers' professional competences (Frostenson, 2015). Arguably, such collective forms of work were encouraged within the Academy where the importance of teamwork was demonstrated in the Bricklane Academy's motto which central idea was encapsulated in the following message: 'working together helps to achieve more'. This motto was displayed on the Trust's logo in order to manifest the values that guided the Trust's working practices. Further to this, teamwork was highlighted by the staff as the central characteristic of the culture of the Academy. In this thesis, culture is taken to mean the shared system of values, beliefs and attitudes in the organisation (Acker, 1999; Forrester, 2005). Teachers' comments about the school's community reflect the importance of teamwork to the staff at Bricklane:

> '[it is a] very close knit community, I think all of the teachers are very friendly and everyone works well. It's very much about team work. Everyone helps each other.'

<div align="right">Ms Davies, teacher</div>

Similar point was made by another teacher, Ms Jones, who in her description of the school's culture claimed that team work was placed at the heart of everyone's work:

> 'We have a very good team work culture in the school. I think that a lot of the staff here are quite up for helping each other when you need help. There is not anyone who sort of turns the back on you or doesn't want to help if you are struggling. They are quite close in that respect. Erm, and they get, everyone seems to get on really well. We do have a good relationship. I don't know if that's because we all are the younger generation, maybe, I don't know. But we do seem to, to get on well.'

<div align="right">Ms Jones, teacher</div>

As illustrated through these accounts, teamwork and support was indicated to be the central feature of teachers' relationships in the Academy. Further conversations with teachers revealed that they worked together on specific tasks that required a whole team approach. For instance, Ms Smith pointed out that every fortnight there were Key Stage meetings to discuss any problems that had arisen in the particular department. The teachers also discussed how they worked with their colleagues on implementation of the new National Curriculum that the Academy decided to follow (see section 6.3). it was revealed that when the revised National Curriculum was introduced in September 2014, teachers were required to decide on a long term plan to cover the content that needed to be taught to their pupils. They were also required to devise new assessment framework based on the learning objectives included in the new National

Curriculum (field notes). To illustrate teachers' experiences of working with their colleagues, Ms Smith gave a brief account of the work that teachers undertook when devising a new assessment framework:

> 'We have to come up with the assessment because the DfE didn't provide any way of assessing cause it is assessed without levels. So the schools had to come up with their own. So we spent a lot of time last year, subject coordinators, getting together and trying to come up with the new [assessment], what they should be assessed on based on key learning in the new curriculum. In English, it is more of a team approach because we all got together as a staff and we were like 'ok, there is too much here, what's more important, what do we need to keep in, what do we need to take out'.'

> Ms Smith, teacher

In her response, Ms Smith discussed how teachers organised themselves into specific groups of either subject coordinators or as a whole team in order to develop assessment guidelines for the school. Considering the examples of collective work presented so far, it can be argued that teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy valued the importance of teamwork and were afforded collegial professional autonomy to decide jointly on specific aspects of their work.

7.3 Exclusion from decision making

Despite the fact that teachers stressed the importance of teamwork and presented examples of collective work that took place in the Academy, some teachers argued that in fact they did not have a real collective decision-making power to influence the decisions that affected a number of areas concerning their working practices. One example of this was provided by Ms Collins who discussed the process of revising the marking policy. Ms Collins recounted that teachers were invited to a meeting during which they were supposed to work together in order to make 'the marking policy less prescriptive' (Ms Collins,

interview data, June 2015). However, it transpired that when they all gathered for the meeting to share and discuss their ideas, teachers were in fact presented with already amended version of the marking policy. It became apparent that the Key Stage leader made changes to the marking policy which she just simply presented to the teachers expecting everyone to comply with her ideas. As a consequence, Ms Collins felt frustrated and complained about the lack of consideration for teachers' ideas:

> '[She] had already chosen what she wanted to happen and she just told us. And said: 'would you all agree with this?' (…) you get the feeling that they wanted us to feel involved and make us feel placated. (…) Yes, you've been involved in a change so yeah, you've had a say in this but we didn't, no. We are given the pretence that we are but we are not fully.'

> Ms Collins, teacher

Ms Collins expressed her frustration at being made feel 'placated' by the senior member of staff who failed to listen to teachers' suggestions and ideas. This led to teachers feeling of not being fully involved in making decisions on matters that affected their work as some decisions were simply made for them with no incorporation of their ideas. It is important to highlight that the various policies in the school guided, shaped and regulated teachers' classroom practices. In addition, these policies affected directly teachers' work experiences. As it is discussed in section 8.2.2, teachers recognised that the school-level policies led to an increase in their workload and contributed to the surveillance of teachers' work as adherence to policies was monitored through different observations. However, Ms Collins revealed how the practices of introducing new ideas into teachers' work changed in the school over the past years:

> 'I think in the past, we tried things and give feedback to the staff and another people would try it before it became a policy. But I think now it becomes a policy and everyone has to do it and then in a term if you've

not done it then you get into trouble. So it's like you have to do this now whereas before there was more time to learn how to do it, adapting your methods, we weren't penalised for not following it straight away.'

<div align="right">Ms Collins, teacher</div>

Ms Collins' comment highlights the change in the senior leaders' attitudes towards listening to teachers' voice in implementing new initiatives in the Academy. It became apparent that in the past, teachers were allowed time to try any new initiatives and give their feedback before the initiatives were incorporated into their practice. However, this clearly changed since teachers observed that any new ideas presented by the senior staff were required to be almost immediately incorporated into teachers' daily working practices while lack of compliance would 'get them into trouble'. Reflecting further on her experiences, Ms Collins discussed other examples of practice in the Academy which made her feel restricted in her working practices. For instance, she discussed how she was not allowed to create personalised displays in her classroom in order to aid the learning experience of her students:

'I decided to take it down [the old display] and put something new up but I knew I would be told off so I had to ask [the head of the Key Stage]: 'please, can I change my display in my classroom and try something new with grammar?'; and then she saw it said 'oh, this bit needs to change, this bit needs to change'. Surely, it is my classroom, my children. I know what would help my kids. Why can't I try something new? You don't get to do that.'

<div align="right">Ms Collins, teacher</div>

In the 1980s, Alexander (1984: 165) asserted that the teacher was 'the dominant influence' in the classroom stressing that while the head teacher ruled in the school, the teacher ruled in the classroom. However, the teachers' experiences

at Bricklane Academy disclosed by Ms Collins demonstrated that teachers were no longer 'the dominant influence' in their classrooms. It became evident that the prominence of various guidelines in the form of school policies devised by senior academy staff undermined teachers' power and influence in their classrooms. As opposed to being the rules in their classrooms, teachers felt restricted by the policies.

7.4 Collaborations across the Trust

Collaboration of staff across the Sky Education Trust appeared to be a reoccurring theme discussed by all members of staff. As discussed in chapter 5, Bricklane Primary School converted to an academy status under the Sky Education Trust assuming a sponsorship of Green Lane Primary Academy. The Coalition Government's rationale behind a multi academy trust model was to encourage the academies under the same MAT to work collaboratively in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The benefits of working under a MAT model were presented to me soon after I embarked on my research. On the first day in the research setting, I was greeted by a members of the staff who expressed her contentment with my presence in the Academy. She informed me that according to her, since the conversion took place, many positive changes occurred in the school and she was confident that a researcher would bring a different perspective to reflect on these changes. She specifically highlighted the benefits resulting from the partnership between the Academies within the Trust. In the weeks that followed, my initial impressions of the partnership between the two Academies were clarified as in addition to all the apparent benefits of such a cooperation, I also learnt about the somehow problematic and less friendly nature of the relations between the Academies within the Sky Education Trust. The section below discusses the areas where collaborative work between the Academies occurred including best practice sharing, career opportunities and staff development opportunities. In addition, the nature of the relationship between the Academies is also discussed.

7.4.1 Best practice sharing

As indicated in section 5.2.3, Bricklane Primary Academy and Green Lane Primary Academy were managed by one board of trustees and the same executive principal. This allowed both schools to work collaboratively within the Trust enabling teachers to conduct lesson observations, provide each other with feedback on their practice, share lesson plans and share and implement good practice across both schools. Working under one Trust offered the opportunity to transfer staff across both schools with greater ease that was highlighted in the conversations with various staff members. For instance, in the early days of Green Lane operating as an academy, Mr Peters, who previously worked as a deputy head teacher at Bricklane Primary, assumed the role of the Green Lane Academy's acting principal for the period of two and a half terms until a new principal was appointed (Mr Peters, interview data, June 2015). During his time at Green Lane, he was responsible for the implementation of the school improvement plan. He put into practice procedures and policies that were perceived to be effective at Bricklane. Along with Mr Peters, four teachers were transferred across to Green Lane to support the changes there.

In addition to this, Ms Harris provided another example that illustrated the opportunities that working within one Trust offered to its staff. She recalled that:

> 'For [my subject], we've been down there and we've worked with them to see how they are doing for like being the subject coordinator. So the link there- that's been good. I know when I was in the early years, we did a lot with the early years down there, to do with learning journeys and what they found was a good practice for us to have good practice as well or vice versa to share.'
>
> Ms Harris, teacher

In her recollection, Ms Harris explained that she worked collaboratively with the staff from Green Lane when the National Curriculum was introduced. She

revealed that discussing matters regarding her subject area with teachers from the other Academy allowed for an exchange of ideas and eased the process of translating the new guidelines and expectations of the National Curriculum into classroom teaching. However, that collaboration experience discussed by Ms Harris took place when Mr Peters was in charge at Green Lane. Since the new principal took headship of Green Lane and Mr Peters was transferred back to Bricklane, Ms Harris noted the lack of any work being done in partnership with the subject leader from Green Lane.

7.4.2 Career prospects

The majority of teachers interviewed in this study recognised that the partnership between the two Academies provided additional opportunities concerning career prospects for the staff members. My field notes below present the main points made by Ms Jones who explained the benefits of being in a MAT in terms of progressions and promotions:

> 'There are some opportunities to progress within the school; [Ms Jones] said that since these schools work together there are more opportunities to progress and to apply for jobs at the second school- this was not the case when the school was a stand-alone LA school; teachers move across these schools- there were a few teachers who already have done so; many jobs are advertised only internally by email that is sent to all of the members of the schools in the partnership.'

> Field notes, September 2014

Similarly to Ms Jones, a number of other teachers noticed the improved career opportunities resulting from the partnership with Green Lane Academy. For instance, Ms Harris recalled receiving emails that drew the staff attention to job advertisements within the Trust. This indicates that the staff in both Academies are being notified and encouraged to apply for job vacancies within the Trust. Further to this, Ms Fisher commented on being offered additional teaching hours

as a result of working across both schools whereas Ms Adams and Ms Hudson were both hired by one of the Academies after completing their university placements in the other school. When asked whether she was in an advantaged position when applying for a job within the Trust after completing her placement in one of the Academies, Ms Adams believed that she was in advantaged position explaining that:

> 'Because they have seen what I was like. They have seen what sort of work I was doing there. They were happy with it so obviously they knew, they understood that that person was competent so that they can transfer any one from anywhere so it is easier.'
>
> <div align="right">Ms Adams, teacher</div>

In fact, Ms Adams's suppositions could be claimed to reflect the practices used by the Trust to select staff for employment as nearly all of the teachers in this research completed their placements within the Trust prior to securing a permanent teaching position in one of the Academies. A few months prior to the interview with Ms Adams, Mr Richardson explained why this practice of employing students who completed their placements was seemingly beneficial to the Academy:

> 'We knew them because we are linked to teacher training institutions: Edge Hill, Cumbria University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester University. And we are doing Initial Teacher Training here. So we train people when they are in their 4th year or in their PGCE final placement. We can watch them and we can say: 'O, you are good. We'll have you. We can use you somewhere across the Trust. (…) as long as you pass the interview.' Other people apply but we know these people.'
>
> <div align="right">Mr Richardson, executive principal</div>

In Mr Richardson's view, employing past students was beneficial to the Academy. The students' performance during their placement could be observed and those students seen as 'good' performers were selected for employment in the Academy. However, this practice could be also interpreted as an attempt by the Academy to mould their future workforce and ensure that those who were offered teaching positions were willing to obey the Academy's rules and meet its' expectations.

7.4.3 Staff development

In addition to improved job prospects, teachers in this study also commented on opportunities to attend joint staff development sessions with the staff from Green Lane Academy. During my involvement in the researched Academy, I attended the joint training day on Safeguarding children in October 2014 (field notes). During that training, I had the opportunity to meet and speak to the staff from Green Lane Primary Academy. The Safeguarding children training session like a number of other joint trainings was organised for the staff from both Academies because it was more efficient and effective. Joint staff development sessions were perceived to be beneficial as they provided an additional opportunity for the teachers to meet their colleagues, exchange ideas or discuss any matters related to their working practices.

7.4.4 Relations between the Academies

Despite the optimistic picture of the partnership and collaboration that was presented by some members of staff, it became obvious that not everyone viewed this relationship between the Academies so positively. When Mr Peters was transferred across to Green Lane, both Academies followed common procedures and working practices implemented by Mr Peters. However, since

the appointment of the new principal at Green Lane, the Academies were believed to have 'drifted apart' in terms of the previously shared practices. Moreover, according to some teachers, the nature of their partnership had also changed. Ms Jones noted that initially a team approach was employed to the partnership between both schools. Nevertheless, this approach was believed to had disappeared. She commented on the collaborations with Green Lane stating:

> 'We helped out the other school a lot because obviously when we first took them on, they were in special measures so we did go and did a lot of work down there. I think it was supposed to be more of a kind of a team approach with these two schools and it's not really worked out that way. I don't think. I think we do a lot of our training separate where I think the overall picture was for us to come together. Now that might change in the future, I don't know. But as it stands up at the moment, we, even though we are connected in some ways, there is still a lot that we do on our own.'
>
> Ms Jones, teacher

Ms Jones highlighted that the intended 'team approach' to the nature of work between the Academies in the Trust was not achieved although initially the staff from Bricklane provided support to their colleagues at Green Lane when their school was in special measures. Since the departure of Mr Peters from Green Lane and following the appointment of a new principal at Green Lane, the relationship between the Academies changed. This was evidenced in the different practices employed in both Academies. For example, it was pointed out that due to her personal preferences, Ms Jenkins, the principal of Green Lane Primary Academy, revised and amended some of the policies implemented previously by Mr Peters. This was the case, for instance, with the approach to the delivery of the curriculum, as illustrated by Mr Richardson:

> '[Mr Peters] wants to operate particularly subject base curriculum and that is operating at Bricklane Lane whereas at Green Lane, [Ms Jenkins] still

has got Numeracy and Literacy and Science going on with ICT as bespoke subjects which is also they are operating the creative Curriculum for the non-core subjects so History, Geography, Art, Music, PE are all blended in together.'

Mr Richardson, executive principal

The critical voices as well as disappointment with the changed nature of the relations between the schools were expressed by teachers who claimed they would had liked more opportunities to collaborate with the staff from Green Lane. This is illustrated in Ms Fisher's account:

'[Mr Richardson] always tries to make sure that especially in September everybody is together. And you know, we are doing our meetings at the beginning, on our first day the staff training together which is good. But I would like to see as together more often. (…) just to mix a bit more because I think, not just for me but for everybody else, because people are always asking what it's like at [Green Lane] and what are the people like. And then they need to have first-hand knowledge more than me saying 'everybody's sound' which everybody is.'

Ms Fisher, teacher

Ms Fisher, who works across both Academies, explained that she would like the Academies to organise more joint meetings for the staff from both schools as this would provide more opportunities to share ideas and improve their practices. However, Ms Erickson pointed out at the rather unfriendly relationship between the Academies that prevented the development of the intended 'team approach' across the Academies:

'We don't work together. The schools are like loggerheads. They don't want to work together. This is supposed to be this ethos, you know, you become an academy, you work together. (…) It's not like that. The schools don't really like each other. You supposed to work together, share ideas, share kind of resources, you know, erm, you know, if you've

got someone who is extremely good at Literacy or Numeracy, you share knowledge. And it's very much still like two separate schools.'

<div align="right">Ms Erickson, teacher</div>

7.5 Inter-school collaborations versus isolation

Despite the interpersonal nature of teaching and the great emphasis on teamwork, this research revealed that teaching at Bricklane Primary Academy was in fact a rather isolated job where teachers spent most of their working hours behind the closed doors of their own classrooms. Due to the excessive workload they dealt with, it became evident that outside of formally organised meetings their opportunities for professional interactions with other teachers both within the Academy and across the Education Sky Trust were restricted. Regarding this matter, this section discusses teachers' professional interactions at Bricklane Primary Academy.

7.5.1 Collaborations within the school

As already indicated, teachers in this study highlighted the strong teamwork culture in the school. Regarding this, the collaborations between the teachers with their colleagues in the Academy were analysed and discussed in this section. This research found that the professional interactions between teachers were reciprocal and interconnected. In each department, there was a deputy head assistant who was responsible for managing the work of the teachers in their key stage department as discussed by Ms Williams:

'The main staff that I do see in [my key stage] is [the key stage head] mainly because I go to her if I have any problems, I see her for

performance management. If she needs me to do a job then she comes in to see me. So I see [the key stage head] probably, I probably interact with [the key stage head] the most out all of the teaching staff.'

<div align="right">Ms Williams, teacher</div>

Ms Williams stated that the key stage head was the main person that Ms Williams interacted with' out of all the teaching staff' in the Academy. This was due to the fact that the head of the key stage was responsible for conducting observations for performance management three times during a school year. Further to this, the key stage head was the first port of call for teachers as she was responsible for managing teachers' work and for dealing with any problems that occurred in the department.

In addition to this, Ms Hudson stated that all teachers attended key stage meetings 'every fortnight to discuss any problems'. Ms Davies made a similar point stating that:

'You have got the Key Stage meetings so you are talking and liaising with all the people in your key stage but you don't often get to see the people from [the other key stage]. Obviously I would see [Ms Harris] because we are both [subject] coordinators together.'

<div align="right">Ms Davies, teacher</div>

In her comment, Ms Davies indicated that the formally organised key stage meetings provided staff with an opportunity for collaborations and discussions about matters concerning their work. However, she also stressed the fact that while teachers would meet their colleagues working in the same department, they would not have any opportunities to meet the teachers in the other department, a matter that is discussed further in the next section (7.5.2).

Further to this, a teacher in each year group had a partner teacher who taught the same year group. All teachers in this research indicated that they worked closely with their partner teacher. They hold weekly meetings in relation to lesson plans and other matters regarding teaching in their classrooms. In addition, all teachers in this research highlighted their special relations with the teaching assistants who worked in their classrooms.

Finally, each teacher was a designated subject leader for a specific subject. This meant that teachers worked together with other teachers across both key stage departments to ensure that the particular subjects that they were in charge of were taught in accordance with the objectives and targets for that subjects. Below, Ms Williams described her collaboration with the other subject leader:

> "We won't see each other every week but we'll get together and do book scrutiny together, erm, position statement together so targets for the year and will look at planning together. But it's mainly once a term. Or we might do a staff meeting and plan it together. Last year, I did see [Ms Smith] quite a lot because of the new curriculum. We've come up with the new assessments for the new curriculum. But again because she is in the [other department], I never get to see her apart from erm staff meetings."

> Ms , teacher

7.5.2 Restricted nature of staff relations

The discussion in section 7.5.1 demonstrated that the subject leaders had various opportunities to work with their partner teachers across both key stage departments. However, it was found that beyond formally organised meetings, teachers had limited opportunities to interact with their colleagues, specifically the ones who worked in other key stage department. Some staff members even

talked about 'a key stage divide' in the school. This apparent divide was illustrated in the following exchange with the teaching assistants who was one of the longest serving members of staff in the school:

> 'TA: As staff, there is a split. And it shouldn't be. Because when I came, it wasn't a [Bricklane] school, it was just juniors. (…) Because when we amalgamated, everyone was to be together, everyone should be at the staff meetings, and everyone should be like team. I just think it's gone back to being two schools
>
> Marlena: When has this happened?
>
> TA: I think it just accumulated over the past few years itself. I think in the last three years, four years, it's been this divide between the KS1 and KS2 and EYL. We should all be connected but we are not.'
>
> (field notes, February 2014)

Regarding the account presented above, both teachers and teaching assistants argued that there was a clear division between the various departments within the Academy while there was also a strong view that all departments should work more closely with each other. In addition to this, the majority of teachers in this study expressed their concerns about the lack of interactions with their colleagues from the same department. Ms Dixon, for instance, pointed out at the design of the building as being an obstacle to her collaborative work with the other partner teacher whose classroom was located on the other side of the building (field notes, March 2015). However, another teacher, Ms Williams, complained even about the lack of time to speak to the teacher who was based in the classroom next to hers (field notes, January 2015) indicating that in addition to the design of the building, 'the lack of time' was another reason why teachers had restricted opportunities for interactions with their colleagues. Consequently, this contributed to teachers' feelings of isolation, a concern reflected in the account below:

'It's an isolated job really. So when I come in to school, I go to my classroom and it's just really the adults in my classroom who I see. There's sometimes, there's been times when I've not seen some of the teachers [from another department] for like weeks because you just don't get to see them because we don't like use the staff room so there's been times when I've not seen some of the staff for a long time.'

<div align="right">Ms Williams, teacher</div>

Ms Williams' account present a rather gloomy reality of her experiences as a teacher demonstrating that teachers were deprived of opportunities to meet their colleagues despite the interpersonal nature of their profession. It became evident that during their teaching hours, teachers worked mainly with the adults who were in their classrooms that included teaching assistants and students on placements. Regarding this, all the teachers in this study highlighted the role of teaching assistants in the classrooms as pivotal. Ms Williams discussed the strong bond that teachers form with the teaching assistants who work in their classrooms:

"Obviously the adults in your classroom will turn in what you see as your family. Because you are in the school every day, aren't you? Apart from weekends. And you do form quite good bonds with people in school because you see them so so much. (…) But it would be nice if we could go to the staff room."

<div align="right">Ms Williams, teacher</div>

Further on the important role that teaching assistants played in the professional lives of teachers, my research diary presented the following notes made after my conversation with Ms Taylor:

'Ms Taylor said: I interact mostly with the people who work in this classroom. So these are the teaching assistants and students on their placements. So, for example, you'. Pointing at the pupils' workbooks she was marking while chatting to me, she added: 'But you can see what I am

doing during breaks. I can't even leave the classroom because there is always something to do'.

In explaining the reason for these limited interactions between professionals in the Academy, all of the teachers in this research identified excessive workload as the factor restricting their collaborations and contributing to their feelings of isolation. In addition to the comment presented above made by Ms Taylor about her inability to leave her classroom at breaks due to the demands of her work, this view is also illustrated in the following accounts:

'I would say it's a demanding school. And I don't mean like demanding because of all of the challenges but it's demanding because a lot is asked of you in this school. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing to ask a lot from your teachers but you know everyone works so hard here and there is no interactions at break time.'

Ms Dixon, teacher

'You don't often like go into the staff room at lunch time. That doesn't tend to happen. (…) I think there is so much work to do. You are trying to get your marking done. If you get your marking done at lunch time then you've got one set of books less to mark after school in which case you can then probably get home a little bit earlier and get some work done at home rather than having to sit at school until late and do your work.'

Ms Davies, teacher

The comments presented above demonstrate that teachers identified their excessive workload as the factor affecting their professional interactions in the workplace. Ms Dixon argued that interactions between teachers at break times

did not exist while Ms Davies indicated that teachers did not go to the staff room during lunch-time due to their workload. This account presented a contrasting picture of staffroom interactions to the ones depicted in the literature about teachers' work from the earlier periods where staff rooms played a prominent role in teachers' working lives (for instance, Nias, 1989, Acker, 1999). Comments by other teachers provided further evidence to suggest that staff room did not play any role in teachers' professional lives at Bricklane:

> 'We don't get to go to the staff room because of all of the work that we have to do at lunch time.'

> Ms Williams, teacher

Ms Williams clearly stated that teachers were required to undertake work-related activities during lunch time; therefore, going to the staff room for a break was never an option for them. The following statement made by Ms Hudson suggested that completing her tasks was more important to her than the time for relaxation during her working day:

> 'Marlena: How do you feel about not going to the staff room for breaks?
>
> Ms Hudson: I just want to get my work done so that my weekends are free. So if that means sacrificing breaks and lunches then I just do it.'

> Ms Hudson, teacher

Teachers appeared to be overwhelmed by the demands of their workload which is illustrated in the following comments:

> 'You feel like you are running around constantly.'

> Ms Dixon, teacher

'You never have a minute, do you, to yourself. You never have a break. Sometimes you would be on a playground duty and you'd have a lunch but it's not really a lunch so you are constant all day.'

Ms Parker, teacher

'Break time, no. It's either supervising children who were naughty or not brought their homework or a monthly duty or marking books or setting up the classroom for the next lesson so no break time. I barely have time to go to the toilet.'

Ms Collins, teacher

The accounts presented above are indicative of what Hargreaves (1994: 118) recognises as a 'chronic and persistent overload' caused by teachers' job intensification. It became evident that teachers in this research had no time for relaxation during their working hours and they seemed to have 'no time at all for lunch' (*ibid*). In addition, their opportunities to interact with other teachers were greatly restricted and constrained by the demands of their workload. With regards to the matter of staff interactions, collaborations and teamwork, Ms Smith proudly admitted that she enjoyed working in the Academy due to its ethos: 'team and working together'. Nonetheless, upon a reflection, she came to the realisation that she actually tended to avoid her colleagues in the school indicating that teamwork could be only a catch phrase used by every member of the school community to manifest their belonging to that community:

'Even though there is a good ethos- team, there is time when you do struggle to be a team. (…)This is because of time constrains and the workload. (…) Now I try to avoid people a little bit because I haven't got time for conversations. It's horrible as it sounds.'

Ms Smith, teacher

The fact that the teachers avoided speaking to their colleagues might have had a number of implications for them and their professional practice. This could, for example, include limited opportunities to exchange ideas and restricted development of collegiality in the workplace. In addition, this research revealed that the limited interactions between teachers also contributed to the creation of a less friendly working environment in the view of the supply teachers who were employed in the Academy on short, fixed term contracts:

> 'In here, it's not like we don't get on, we just don't see each other. You know, you are in your classroom and you work in your classroom and you forever running around getting stuff done, eating on the go erm. They want you to eat with the children, I think it's twice a week at least if you are having a hot dinner. (…) You constantly are rushing around. You never have time to see anybody. (…) everyone is very nice but it's not the friendliest of schools to come in to and I think that it's just because the people don't have the time because they are all, you just could just not have time to speak to anybody. They are always pushing around doing something. So it's not very friendly, really."
>
> Ms Dixon, teacher

The fact that Ms Dixon was one of the supply teachers who joined the Academy for a short period enabled her to provide a different perspective on the interactions taking place in the school. As demonstrated, her observations and remarks regarding the lack of interactions at Bricklane reflected the views of permanent members of the Academy's community. However, those who worked in the Academy before its conversion recognised that prior to the conversion, the nature of teachers' interactions was different:

> 'But we did used to come in and it was a laugh and you had a break, and you just don't seem to have a break now. (…) you just don't seem to see anyone. It's like passing sheep 'Hiya, you alright' sort of thing.'
>
> Ms Erickson, teacher

Similar observation was presented by another teacher, Ms Smith, who recalled that 'Everyone used to come in to this staff room to sit down and chat. There used to be books to mark and lessons to prepare. But everyone used to come in' and 'on Friday we would go to the chippy' (Ms Smith, interview data, June 2015). The comments made by Ms Erickson and Ms Smith demonstrate that in the past, teachers seemed to be able to socialise with their colleagues and to enjoy breaks. However, the weakening of interactions between teachers in the school appeared to change as explained further by Ms Smith: 'I don't know how this has happened. It's just progressively happened over a period of time without realising' (Ms Smith, interview data, June 2015).

7.6 Conclusions

The discussion of the findings presented above indicates that teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy were afforded only a partial collegial professional autonomy. This means that they were allowed a say over some aspects of their working practices but they were also excluded from other decision making processes on matters that directly affected their work. Despite the strong emphasis placed on the culture of team work and collaboration, it became evident that teachers had limited opportunities for staff collaborations outside of formally organised meetings. The next chapter presents an analysis of teachers' professional autonomy at individual level.

Chapter 8: Individual professional autonomy

8.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters considered teachers' general and collegial autonomy. The purpose of this chapter is to examine and discuss teachers' individual professional autonomy. Frostenson (2015) explains that individual professional autonomy refers to teachers' opportunities to influence and decide on the following three aspects of their work: the content of their professional work which encompasses their choice of teaching materials and pedagogy; the frames of their professional work which includes the spatial and temporal conditions of work; and the control over teaching-related processes such as performance management. Frostenson's ideas are built upon and used to structure this chapter in order to analyse various aspects of Bricklane Primary Academy's teachers' individual professional autonomy. The primary data sources informing this chapter include the Academy's policies, interviews with members of staff and my field notes made as a participant observer in Bricklane Primary Academy.

8.2 Contents of professional work

Frostenson (2015) claims that in Sweden teachers have traditionally enjoyed a degree of autonomy in relation to making decisions on how to teach the content of the curriculum. In terms of the English context, Hargreaves (2000) argues that teachers enjoyed unprecedented level of autonomy between the 1960s and the middle of the 1980s. During that period, which he termed 'the age of the autonomous professional', teachers made decisions regarding curriculum development and methods of teaching. However, Day (2002) states that the 1970s saw reforms in education influenced by the 'new right' ideology which eventually challenged teachers' monopoly in education. Troman (1996) agrees with Day's (2002) point stressing the fact that teachers' work has been under gradual restructuring. According to Gray (2006), the Education Reform Act 1988 was the culminating point in the reorganisation of the teaching profession

leading to erosion of teachers' classroom autonomy. Regarding teachers' professional autonomy related to classroom practices, this section discusses the Bricklane Primary Academy teachers' pedagogical autonomy and their freedom to choose teaching materials in order to determine the extent of their professional autonomy on the practice level. In addition, this section considers various administrative tasks that teachers were required to complete alongside their teaching commitments. Administrative tasks were identified as a factor that greatly increased teachers' workload and thus limited their capacity to undertake their teaching in the manner desired by teachers.

8.2.1 Choice of teaching materials

Since the introduction of the National Curriculum, teachers' capacity to decide what to teach their students has been limited (Gray, 2006). This point was corroborated by this research (see section 6.3). Although teachers might not be involved in developing their schools' curricula, this research found that teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy reported having freedom to develop teaching materials and to decide on the tools they wanted to use in order to teach the content of the National Curriculum. Ms Dixon's comment is illustrative:

> 'I've been given a list of things that's on the curriculum that they need to learn for this topic in this year. But then how I teach and the lessons I do and the investigations I do are up to me. So it's good in that way. We get to be in charge of our own lessons and come up with your own ideas. And it also makes it hard in other ways because you are trying to think of things to do all the time and keep interesting. But I like it that way.'
>
> Ms Dixon, teacher

In her comment presented above, Ms Dixon acknowledged that she had to teach the content determined by the National Curriculum but she was allowed to decide how she wanted to deliver her lessons. Ms Dixon highlighted that this

gave her the feeling of being in control of her teaching. It was also evident that she found the task of developing her teaching materials challenging but she admitted to enjoying this challenge. Ms Dixon's point was stressed further by another teacher, Ms Erickson:

'You are a bit flexible in terms of how you teach, you know, whether you want to use guided reading as a tool. So tools of teaching, you've got flexibility within that.'

Ms Erickson, teacher

Ms Erickson explained that teachers had the freedom to use their professional judgement regarding the tools of teaching. The tools of teaching could include, for example, guided reading task. Other teachers in this research also reported to have autonomy over tools of teaching. For instance, Ms Hill discussed using drama, short video clips, poems, guided reading or games in order to teach what was required by the National Curriculum.

Further on the topic of developing teaching materials, Frostenson (2015) argues convincingly that the most visible method of constraining teachers' individual professional autonomy is by imposing on them the requirement to use ready-made modules or tutorials for teaching. However, this was not the case at Bricklane Primary Academy where teachers could decide whether or not to use ready-made tutorials called 'schemes of work':

'When I got here, the other class teacher told me that we had to use Abacus planning for Maths and Hamilton for English. So I was doing that and I didn't like it. But then I was talking to another teacher and I found out that we didn't have to use that. So that we have autonomy with that. We are able to create our own schemes of work. (…). When I was trying to use another scheme of work last year, I was finding it really hard

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because that's not written for my class. And I know what my class can do and I know what they enjoy. And so be able to plan for them, it's better [to create own scheme of work]".

Ms Dixon, teacher

In her account, Ms Dixon indicated that she had autonomy over decisions regarding the schemes of work she wanted to use in her teaching. She explained that she could either choose a ready-made scheme of work with room to decide on the one that she deemed to be the most appropriate for her pupils or to design her own scheme of work. This appeared to be a very important flexibility given to teachers at Bricklane as Ms Dixon explained that certain schemes of work might not be appropriate for her pupils. Thus, it was crucial for teachers to be able to use their professional judgment and skills as well as their understanding of their pupils' needs and interests in order to prepare interesting lessons that met the needs of their students. Therefore, due to teachers' freedom to develop teaching materials for their lessons, teachers reported enjoying a degree of professional autonomy on the practice level. The next section considers in great detail teachers' pedagogical autonomy.

8.2.2 Pedagogy: planning, teaching and assessment

This section provides an insight into the pedagogical autonomy of teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy. In this research, I adopt a broad definition of pedagogy proposed by Alexander (2004:11) who suggests that pedagogy is 'the act of teaching together with its attendant discourse'. In this study, the attendant discourse was identified as encompassing planning, teaching and assessment. Regarding this, the research findings revealed that teacher's pedagogy at Bricklane Primary Academy was regulated by the school-level policies. These policies, designed by the Academy's senior staff, provided teachers with certain

regulations on how to plan lessons, teach them and assess pupils' work. Observations conducted in various year groups across the infant and junior departments demonstrated clear patterns in the way teachers went about completing the above tasks. To illustrate this, based on my field notes, conversations with teachers, and the analysis of the Academy's policies and the photographs taken in the research setting, a brief discussion of lesson planning, teaching and assessment of pupils' work in the Academy was constructed. The following analysis highlights the scope of regulation of teachers' pedagogy in the Academy as it emphasises the various guidelines that governed teachers' work.

As discussed in chapter 7 (section 7.1), teachers prepared collectively the long-term plans for the core and foundation subjects in accordance with the requirements of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Next, considering the long-term plans, teachers prepared weekly lesson plans that included details of the learning objectives for each teaching session, success criteria for the different ability groups and the tasks to be completed during the session. Success criteria were targets within the lessons' learning objectives set for children in accordance to the ability group to which these children were assigned. The ability groups were marked by the following colours: yellow, orange, red, blue and green, and the number of ability groups varied between year groups. Such grouping of children, a practice well documented in the literature (see Broadfoot *et al.*, 1993; Hallam *et al.*, 2003), allowed for task differentiation that depended on pupils' skills. The differentiation was required to be incorporated into teachers' lesson plans during the planning stage. Regarding lesson planning, Ms Smith revealed that lesson plan sheets had to be detailed:

> '[the lesson plan] has to be detailed because it is all about challenge, the New Curriculum. So in previous years it would have been like you do your whole class teaching and teacher works with a group and teaching

assistant works with a group. Now, it is all about challenging. So teaching assistant can start off working with one group, so you are planning activity for that. Then, your teaching assistant goes and work with another group. You start with one group. And it's all these different activities. So during your teaching, other teaching is going on that you've got to plan and resource. But it's challenge as well to try and plan it as well. Like last night I was planning the Maths for next week and I had 4 lessons to plan and it took me about 2 hours before lessons (…) So you are looking to make sure that the work is appropriate and that's what is taking the time.'

Ms Smith, teacher

In her comment, Ms Smith compared her experience of planning lessons before and after the revised National Curriculum was implemented in the Academy. Ms Smith explained that in her view the new National Curriculum required teachers to prepare more 'challenging' tasks for their students. This was related to higher targets set for each year group within the new National Curriculum in comparison to the previous version of the National Curriculum (see section 6.3.3). What is more, according to Ms Smith, there was a new requirement for classroom teachers as well as teaching assistants to move around their classrooms and work with each ability-group during one lesson. Therefore, Ms Smith revealed that during one lesson, at least two teaching sessions were taking place simultaneously, one led by the teacher and another one led by the teaching assistant. This meant that teachers were expected to prepare activities and resources for these teaching sessions by writing detailed lesson plans. Due to the level of detail required by lesson plans, teachers believed that preparation of lesson plans was time-consuming and it increased their workload.

Further to this, based on the daily observations of teachers' work in Bricklane Primary Academy, the research revealed that the Academy placed a greater emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy than on teaching foundation subjects. As

established in chapter 3 (section 3.3.4), following the implementation of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies under the New Labour Government at the end of the 1990s, the consecutive UK Governments have been focusing on teaching Maths and English (Alexander, 2009; Brehony, 2005). This emphasis on Maths and English, also evident at Bricklane, was criticised by some of the teachers and discussed in more detail in section 6.3 2. However, due to the emphasis on Maths and English, the weekly planner for English and Maths included detailed plans for each day of the week. In addition to this, Literacy and Numeracy books were required to be marked on a daily basis by teachers.

During lessons, pupils used exercise books called 'workbooks' to write stories, solve maths problems and to complete other tasks. Each student was given a separate workbook for different subject and all workbooks were colour-coded depending on the subject. On the front cover of each workbook, there was space for students' name, the name of the subject and the name of the class teacher. Further to this, each workbook included the Academy's emblem on the front cover. Depending on the subject, workbooks contained lined paper and squared paper. Workbooks constituted a crucial element of students' learning process. The Academy enforced rules regarding the way the workbooks were used by the children and the teachers were required to monitor this. For example, during one lesson, a teacher in KS2 pointed out to the pupil that his workbooks were the school's property and therefore she reminded him to 'treat the workbooks properly' (field notes, February 2015). This is an example indicating that pupils were required to adhere to certain rules regarding the use of the workbooks.

On Mondays, children wrote their weekly targets in their English and Maths workbooks. The targets were written using a green pen while any other writing was done using a pencil or a blue pen. A teacher explained that green colour

indicated 'growth' (field notes, March 2015). The targets had to be written on the sheet stuck on the reverse of the front cover of the workbooks. The school's marking policy clearly stated that the targets had to be 'child friendly, short and measurable' (Marking Policy: Appendix 10) and that the pupils had to be reminded about their targets throughout the week.

However, some teachers in both Key Stages noted that there was too great emphasis on targets and on ensuring that these targets were met. Ms Erickson argued that the emphasis on targets constrained teachers' creativity although she did not provide an explicit definition of what she meant by a creative lesson:

> 'You know, you are going into teaching because you love working with children, because you love teaching them (…), you want to do it through a creative way but you just feel like you can't be creative because you've got just too many targets to meet and being creative somehow takes away the time that you have because you don't have a lot of time. Sometimes you feel like, well if I do this creative lesson, they will enjoy it and will probably learn but there is nothing in the books so I need to get something in the books…'

<div align="right">Ms Erickson, teacher</div>

In addition, teachers expressed their frustration at the requirement to provide evidence for children's learning. Regarding this, Ms Smith argued that 'teaching has become prove, prove, prove' (interview excerpt, June 2015). She added:

> 'In Literacy and Numeracy you've got to have four pieces of work in a book every week. (…)There are always ways around it with your little games but it's got to be recorded in the books for evidence because you've got to collect evidence to prove why you think that they performed that way.'

<div align="right">Ms Smith, teacher</div>

In the examples provided above, both Ms Smith and Ms Erickson pointed at the requirement to document students' learning. Thus, it could be argued that the only learning that was valued in the Academy was the one that could lead to measurable outcomes that could be proved to had taken place. Further to this, Ms Erickson complained that 'creative' lessons which would not lead to meeting the national learning targets would not be appreciated even if children learnt new skills and knew knowledge. Similar point was made by Ms Williams:

> 'I thought it was going to be less paper work and more freedom to have a little more fun. But because when I was a student, I could do all these creative lessons and take a lot of risks. But in reality, when you are in school, it's hard because you've got that pressure above you to take these children to a level so you can't afford to take any risk sometimes because you are scared that they are not going to make as much progress as you need them to.'
>
> Ms Williams

Ms Williams's account indicates the disjuncture between her expectations and the reality of her job as a teacher. She expressed her frustration at her inability 'to do creative lessons' because of the pressure of meeting the nationally set targets within the National Curriculum. Throughout the research process, it became evident that teachers aimed at ensuring that their students met their targets. There were various targets that children were required to work towards. After writing down their weekly targets, pupils moved onto writing the learning objective (L.O.) for the lesson as well as the date and the success criteria (S.C.). The pupils had to comply with certain rules in relation to the order and the presentation of the L.O., S.C. and the date in their workbooks. The rule required the following presentation:

D date
U underline
M miss a line
T title
U underline
M miss a line

S - Secure
↑ +
D - developing
↑ +
B - beginning

Callum / Tim Break

Success criteria
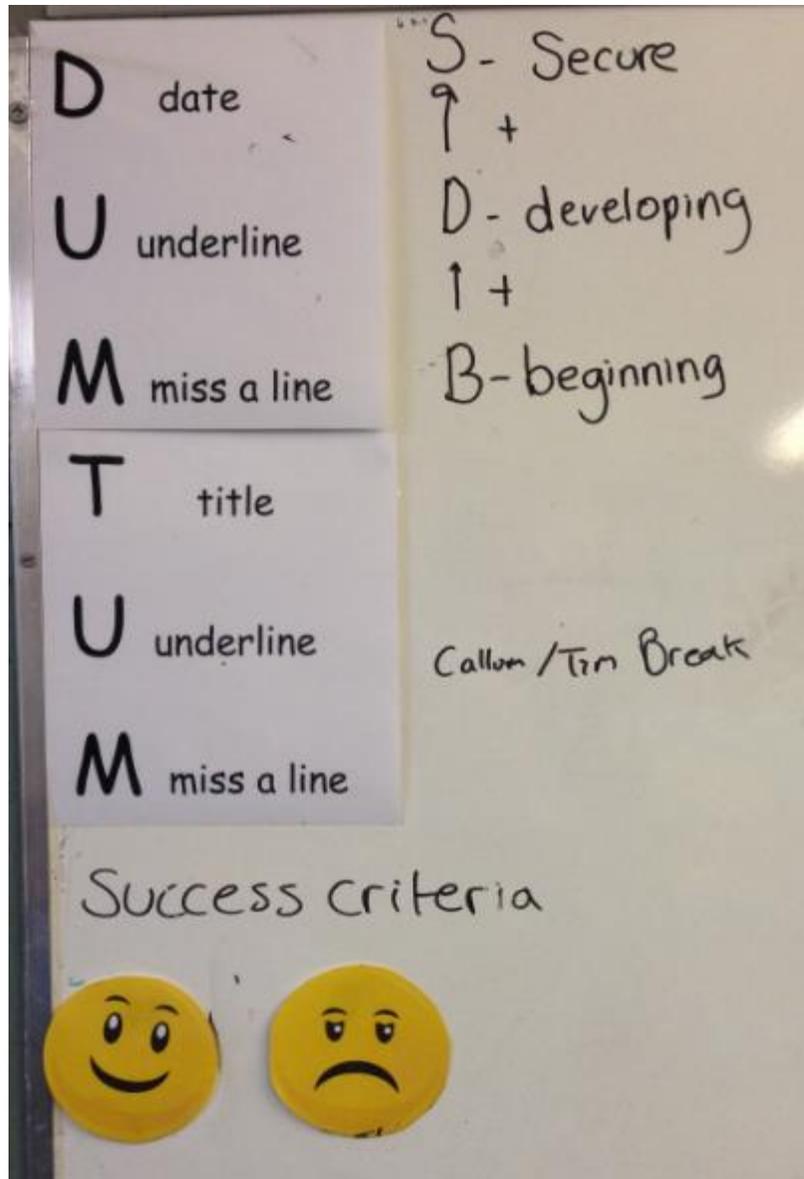
Photograph 1: Photograph of the white board in one of the classrooms

Through my observations, I recognised a structure that was being followed in the conduct of lessons. The structure was as following: the teacher introduced the topic, explained the learning objective of the session, and the task assigned to each group. This part of the lesson was called 'whole class teaching'. Next, the pupils started working on their tasks. Some of them worked independently whereas others were assisted by the teacher and the teaching assistant who rotated between the different tables throughout the day. The lesson ended with

a plenary during which children shared their work with others; they self-assessed their work, or they peer assessed the work of their colleague. Children were also encouraged to evaluate their work by reflecting on whether they achieved the previously stated L.O. and S.C. In some of the year groups, children were asked to additionally evaluate their work by leaving their workbooks in certain trays which indicated their progress (field notes, January 2015). At the end of the week, pupils evaluated their work against the previously agreed targets for the week by writing a short sentence that provided evidence of when the target had been met and by highlighting the smiley face as illustrated below:

Figure 6: Extract from the marking policy

According to the teachers, this ensured that the children were actively involved in their learning and they understood their progress as well as the targets towards which they were working. However, Ms Dixon, expressed her concerns about the constant focus on targets that could be a burden on the children in her class:

> 'In Math lessons they will have a weekly target plus they have their termly target which is down there [points at the boards on the wall under the white board]. And they've got their learning objectives and success criteria that they are trying to meet in a lesson. So there is a lot for the children to always be working towards. I don't think they always remember to work, it's a lot to do when you are [at such a young age].'
>
> Ms Dixon, teacher

In addition to the pupils' evaluation, the teachers were also required to evaluate their own lessons by writing comments on how the lesson went in the lesson planning sheet.

Teachers indicated that in their teaching, they were required to implement the 'features of outstanding lesson'. Regarding this, Ms Smith explained that: 'There are certain elements that you've got to have in your lessons so you've got to tick that the features of outstanding lessons are there which is drilled in' (Ms Smith, interview data). The features of outstanding lesson were clearly specified and displayed on the board in the staff room (photograph below). This guideline was not used only as a frame of reference but its implementation was enforced and monitored through various observations conducted by subject leaders or senior management team. These observations included learning walks, subject co-ordinator observations and observations conducted for performance management purposes.

Features of outstanding lessons

Excellent use of assessment to support learning

Excellent subject knowledge/prior knowledge of children

Rigorous monitoring and targeted provision/differentiation

Excellent pace

Child led opportunities for learning

Children assessing their own learning/self assessment/peer assessment

Learning and progression taking place

exciting

Photograph 2: Features of outstanding lesson

After teaching took place, teachers were required to mark their students' workbooks. However, there was an expectation that some books were marked during the lessons. Both the teacher and the teaching assistant (TA) in each classroom were required to mark the work of the pupils in their groups during lessons, and their guided groups' books had to be marked in detail. Detailed marking meant that the marked work had to have '1 star and 1 wish' for the day. Marking had to be done in pink and green pens. All positive responses were marked in pink and all responses that required improvement were marked in green. This is illustrated in the comment made by Ms Dixon based on an example of marking Creative Writing books:

'So the writing assessment is weekly and we have to go through it, assess it against the learning objectives and success criteria plus erm find two tickled pink points of pink for positive, green for growth. So it's like two stars and a wish.'

<div align="right">Ms Dixon</div>

Further to this, if a pupil met their L.O, the full L.O. had to be highlighted in pink. If the L.O. was partly met, then just the letters 'L.O.' were highlighted. Finally, when the L.O. was not met, none of the L.O. were highlighted and a comment written in green was made as to why the pupil had not met the learning objective. It was a requirement that different codes were written in the top right corner of each pupil's work to indicate whether the pupil worked either independently: ('I'), with the teacher: ('T'), the teaching assistant: ('TA'), or whether they required extra support: ('S'). When the marking was done, the teachers had to encourage their pupils to read their feedback because as Ms Smith explained: 'if they don't read it then you've just done that for nothing basically' (excerpt from interview, June 2015). The teachers were required to complete marking of the English, Maths and Foundation subjects' workbooks in the school (Marking policy). They were allowed to take the Creative Writing books home (field work notes). As indicated in this analysis of the marking process, marking of the children's work was a crucial aspect of teaching and learning in Bricklane Primary Academy. The importance of marking was emphasised in the marking policy that explained that: 'Marking is an essential part of planning, teaching and learning. Responding to pupils' work through constructive comments acknowledges achievement, promotes positive attitudes and behaviour and leads to an improvement in standards.' (Marking policy, appendix 9). The marking policy detailed all aspects of marking and dictated the way marking had to be conducted.

I was involved in marking of pupils' workbooks in each classroom that I visited as I was assigned to work with groups of children assuming the role of a teaching assistant. I found the rules governing marking to be complex at first but they became clearer along with my growing experience. However, teachers expressed their frustration complaining that marking was too detailed. Adding to this the large volume of work, marking was seen to be a time consuming activity. For instance, Ms Erickson explained that teachers were required to mark around 120 books each day:

> 'You have 30 children in your class, you've got Literacy, Numeracy, you know, that's 60 books with these two subjects. Then you also have at least three other subjects to do in that time, so you are looking at about 120 books maybe a day to mark.'

> Ms Erickson, teacher

Although teachers acknowledged the importance and the benefits of marking, there was unanimous agreement between them that the marking policy was demanding and it caused unnecessary workload which took away teachers' time from other activities deemed to be more important by teachers such as planning lessons and teaching them. The Academy attempted to reduce the teachers' workload by revising the marking policy. The revised policy was re-introduced in June 2015 (field notes, June 2015). However, teachers still did not believe that the amended policy alleviated their workload. Ms Collins commented on the revised marking policy stating that:

> 'There were two or three things which meant you write a line less. Like Creative Writing marking, rather than doing two stars and a wish now we only do one star and a wish. That doesn't save time at all. And the kids highlight their targets rather than us highlighting their targets. That saves 5 minutes. That's nothing. It hasn't helped at all.'

Ms Collins's comment demonstrates that although the senior management team was convinced that their amendments to the marking policy would make marking process less demanding and less prescriptive (field notes, July 2015), teachers believed this goal was not met. In addition to this, Ms Collins also added that she felt that teachers were 'checked up on' whether they were following the marking policy which added another scrutiny layer to the job that was already highly scrutinized.

Teachers who had experience of working in other schools that were not academies shared their comments on their contrasting experiences of marking policies in their previous workplaces indicating that the level of prescription in the marking policy was higher at Bricklane Primary Academy in comparison to other state-maintained schools. For instance, Ms Dixon made the following comment:

> 'The marking policy is more in depth than any I've seen. (…) I mean, some schools on a day to day basis, you just kind of, you know, reading it, ticking it, marking any corrections if they're not right, you know, if it's wrong then you obviously address it, if it's right then tick, well done. You might mark it in your APP. I've done that before. It's only this school where I've seen APP so [in depth]…'.

Ms Dixon, teacher

In her comment above, Ms Dixon compared the marking policies in the Academy with other schools where she worked at indicating that the marking policy in the Academy was far more in depth than in other schools. Therefore, it could be argued that teachers' workload at the Academy was heavier than in LA maintained schools.

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In addition to this, Ms Dixon also noted that certain aspects of assessment were undertaken more frequently at Bricklane Primary Academy than in other schools where she worked at:

> 'With the writing in another schools, you've got a monthly writing assessment where you'd level the writing that they've done, erm, in order to track the progress. Whereas here that is weekly.'
>
> <div align="right">Ms Dixon, teacher</div>

The comparison of the assessment and marking regulations between the Academy and other schools where Ms Dixon worked at previously indicated that Bricklane Primary Academy employed very structured and detailed marking and assessment policies that were more rigorous than the marking and assessment policies used in schools maintained by local authorities. This further suggests that such strict regulations were particular for this specific setting that was an academy. The reason why teachers' work was so heavily regulated and scrutinised could arguably be explained by what Ms Erickson saw as the senior leaders' desire to ensure that Bricklane Academy continues to deliver good results to prove that the school deserved the academy status and to avoid being taken over by another academy chain:

> 'You are not exempt from anything. If anything, you are made more of a target because you are more vulnerable. [you have to show] that you belong as an academy and not to be taken over by anyone for support.'
>
> <div align="right">Ms Erickson, teacher</div>

Therefore, she explained that teachers felt the pressure of 'giving these results, so the results had to be good because you know if you've just become an

Academy by choice and your results are rubbish then it would be like 'oh, what is going on' (Ms Erickson, interview data, June 2015).

Further on the matter of policies that regulated and governed various aspects of teachers' pedagogy in the Academy, some teachers recognised that 'policies are mad in this school' (Ms Smith, interview excerpt, June 2015). Commenting on this, Ms Collins expressed her frustration at the scrutiny surrounding the requirement to adhere strictly to the Academy's various policies:

> 'The display policy and thing, going around and making sure that is centimetre and then you've got to, oh, that is not a centimetre, that's not straight so you need to change it. You need 6 pieces of writing on that….Yeah, there is policy for everything and one of your performance management is sticking to the policy so you've got to really make sure that you know all of these policies. Because there is a policy for everything.'
>
> Ms Collins, teacher

Similarly to Ms Collins, Ms Erickson also claimed that there was a policy for every aspect of teachers' practice in the Academy. This is illustrated in her account:

> 'You've got your written methods policy so certain methods of calculations you have to follow to teach Maths (…). You've got your guided reading policy so you have to teach guided reading in a certain way. We have to teach Literacy in a certain way. We have an assessment policy, we have health and safety policies that we have to fill and follow through, you know, for the trips. Erm, you have safeguarding policy to know how to keep children safe, you will have Literacy policy and you will have a policy for every other foundation subject as well what to teach within that.'
>
> Ms Erickson, teacher

Ms Clark identified an additional constraint that has implications for teachers in this study namely the timetable which dictated the order in which the lessons were delivered. Reflecting on her experiences of working in Bricklane and in other schools, Ms Clark argued that as a teacher 'You have a lot of freedom although not actually in this school. But in other schools. You have lots of freedom with what you do with your timetable' (Ms Clark, excerpt from the interview, June 2016). She elaborated on her claim arguing that she had never worked in a primary school where a timetable was structured in the same way as timetables in secondary schools.

8.2.3 Administrative tasks

As indicated earlier, there were a number of school-level policies that provided rigid structure and regulation to the teachers' practices in their workplace. Although the aim of these policies was, as explained by the principal, Mr Peterson, to ensure consistency within the Academy, these policies also created extra administrative tasks for the teachers adding to their already heavy workload. Frostenson (2015) argued that teachers' individual professional autonomy could be undermined by various administrative tasks. In relation to this, this research found that the teachers dealt with large volumes of administrative work that hindered their individual professional autonomy. Administrative tasks took up valuable time that could have been spent on preparing teaching resources and on actual teaching. This is clearly conveyed in Ms Davies's account:

> 'There is plenty of paperwork and sometimes you can get quite bogged down by all the extra paper work instead of focusing on teaching the children which is what we are here for and you can get side-tracked by all the paperwork.'

> Ms Davies, teacher

Ms Davies's claim that paperwork distracted teachers from teaching resonated with the experiences of Ms Collins. Ms Collins argued that paperwork consumed 60% of her time in work while only 10% of her time was actually spent on teaching (interview with Ms Collins, teacher, June 2015). Ms Collins regarded behaviour management as being the central problem in the school and the related paper work that the teachers were required to complete added to the amount of administrative task. In relation to this, Ms Smith added that the behaviour management policy had recently become more detailed; hence increasing the amount of paperwork that had to be completed following each behaviour-management related incident (interview with Ms Smith, June 2015). The detailed report that the teachers were required to complete invoked feelings of despair as illustrated below:

> 'When something happens you are like 'oh no!' not just because it's bad but because you have to do all the paper work and then you have to follow it up and then you have to go and tell somebody else about it and then you have to ring the parent. And you just wish that behaviour issue hadn't have happened because you wouldn't have extra hours of work to do. It's just writing everything down which is necessary because it can back you up when needed but it's extra work.'
>
> Ms Collins, teacher

Ms Collins acknowledged the importance of keeping records of the incidents for the teachers' own protection but she also realised that having to write detailed notes down was time consuming. Therefore, she believed it would be more beneficial and time-effective for the teachers to be able to use computers as opposed to paper to write reports.

Further to this, the discussion so far has indicated that the teachers were required to complete a number of various admin-related tasks as the Academy

placed great emphasis on the importance of keeping evidence of teaching, learning and other activities. When discussing the teachers' pedagogy, I have outlined some tasks the teachers were expected to complete including filling in lesson planning sheets, marking and completing assessment grids. Ms Collins also added that she had to reply to a number of emails every day. All of the teachers were expected to change their classroom displays which had to be presented in a certain way in accordance with the display policy. All these administrative tasks created additional workload impacting on the teachers' capacity to teach in the way they preferred. For instance, Ms Smith complained about feeling 'guilty' when she sometimes realised she could had had prepared a better lesson but she just did not have enough time for that (interview with Ms Smith, June 2015). Ms Adams showed her critical attitude towards the workload and the need to document evidence that she deemed to be unnecessary claiming that:

> 'Half of the time we are just ticking boxes. Half of the time is just for the sake of it.'

> Ms Adams, teacher

The discussion so far has indicated that the various administrative tasks that the teachers were expected to complete they believed had serious implications for their professional working lives in terms of spending less time preparing lessons and teaching pupils.

8.3 Frames of the teaching practice

According to Frostenson (2015), one of the aspects of the teachers' individual professional autonomy relates to their capacity to influence their spatial and temporal conditions of work (detailed in section 3.2.4). This suggests that the professionals have relative autonomy over the place where their work is

performed and the times when they perform their tasks. However, Frostenson (2015) recognises that nowadays teachers are expected to be available to work at certain times and days in order to meet the expectations and needs of their institutions and pupils. This indicates that the teaching practice is bound by time and space and therefore time and space are the central themes of the discussion below along with matters related to these themes.

8.3.1 Spatial conditions of work: space

Traditionally, primary teachers have performed their work in school settings and this was the case for the teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy who were required to be present in their workplace during the Academy teaching and inset (in-service) days. As indicated by the discussion earlier, the teachers' work included a number of tasks. Just to name a few of them, teachers were required to plan lessons, prepare resources, deliver teaching sessions to their pupils, mark books, prepare displays, answer emails, participate in staff meetings, deal with their students' behaviour and prepare reports on students' progress. Although this list is not exhaustive, it provides a sense of the nature of teachers' work. In relation to this, it was obvious to expect the teachers to deliver their lessons to their students in the school setting. However, this research found that the demands of teachers' work required them to work extended hours and the teachers admitted to having to work at home in order to meet the demands of their job. There were certain tasks that could be completed outside of the school setting and, as indicated earlier, teachers were making use of this possibility. Nevertheless, some tasks, specifically marking of English and Maths books was required by the school marking policy to be completed in the school. This was also confirmed further by the principal, Mr Peters, who claimed that he did not want the teachers to take large number of books home with them. Therefore, he expected them to do their marking in the school (interview with Mr Peters, June 2015). Although it can be argued that Mr Peters had the teachers' welfare at heart when forbidding them from taking certain books home, this rule implied

that a restriction was placed on the teachers' autonomy to decide where some aspects of their work should be performed. This meant that the senior management could place restrictions on the teachers' spatial condition of work.

8.3.2 Temporal conditions of work: time

The school calendar marked the start and the end of the school's autumn, spring and summer terms highlighting the various breaks and holidays when the school was closed. It also specified the 5 inset days when the teachers attended training sessions (analysis of the Calendar for school year 2014/2015). The calendar was determined by the senior management team and during the course of this research, a change to the school calendar was made as explained by Ms Jones below:

> 'Next year, they are having two weeks in May and they are taking a week of the summer. So they will have 5 in the summer and two in May instead of one in May.'

> Ms Jones, teacher

As indicated in Ms Jones's account, the decision was made to shorten the summer break from 6 weeks to 5 weeks and to add an extra one week of holiday to the break in May. The change to the school calendar was planned to take effect in the following year that was the school year 2015-16. Despite this change not having any impact on the number of the working days for the teachers on this occasion, some of the teachers expressed their ambivalence towards the news:

> 'I don't know how I feel about [it] because I like having a long summer and that's one of the reasons why I joined the profession.

> Ms Collins, teacher

Further to this, it is important to note here that when being told about the school's transformation to an academy, a number of teachers expressed their fears about the various changes that could possibly be made to their working conditions following the academy conversion. For instance, Ms Harris recalled feeling nervous about the potential implications of the conversion for her working hours:

'I was a bit worried about working hours, holidays, whether we would be entitled to our 6 weeks at summer or two weeks at Easter because I thought, well they've got the freedom now, they've got the control really to do whatever they want.'

Ms Harris, teacher

Ms Harris's account suggests that teachers were aware of the extend of power enjoyed by the Academy's senior management team as a result of the school's conversion to academy status. When discussing their initial fears and concerns over the school's conversion plans, the teachers claimed that despite their initial worries no drastic changes occurred since the school opened as an academy. However, they also acknowledged that there was a danger that various changes could be implemented in the future affecting their professional work (field notes, June 2015) and the change to the school calendar could potentially be lying the foundations for the future amendments to the teachers' conditions of work.

Another aspect related to the theme of 'time' is the teachers' day at the Academy. At Bricklane Primary Academy, the teaching day started at 8.50am and it ended at 3.15pm. However, the teachers were arriving in the school much earlier in order to start the preparations for the day and were leaving long after the children were dismissed. They would leave the school after attending staff meetings and completing various tasks in their classrooms only to continue working at home. This clearly indicated the intensification of teachers' work (A.

Hargreaves, 1994), a matter with far reaching implications that are discussed in more detail later in this section. Despite teachers' long working hours, Ms Harris shared her assumption about the public's view on the teachers' working hours saying that: 'I think a lot of people think it's 9 to 3 and it's not. I used to do 7 o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock at night' (field notes, February 2015).

As already indicated, teachers reported having to work long hours. The demands of the job increased teachers' working hours reducing their time for relaxation both at school and outside of it. One teacher's account is indicative:

> 'I don't get a lunch break. In my first year, everyone said 'make sure you stay in the staff room and make friends' so I sat in the staff room and (…) in my first year everyone was there. That was before it was an academy. But not anymore. No one has time.'
>
> Ms Collins, teacher

Similar view was expressed by another teacher, Ms Smith:

> 'When I first came in to this school, this staff room used to be full. Everyone used to come in to this staff room to sit down and chat. I don't know why, there used to be books to mark and lessons to prepare, but everyone used to come in and like on Friday we would go to the chippy or something. (…) but now it's like this pretty all the time really. (…) I don't know how this has happened. It's just progressively happened over a period of time without realising'.
>
> Ms Smith, teacher

Teachers' work intensification following the school's conversion was evident in the comments above regarding the gradual change in teachers' practices

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concerning socialising in the school. Both accounts demonstrated teachers' apparent lack of time to take a lunch break during working day despite this being a norm before the conversion. Teachers working hours also extended beyond the usual office hours. Teachers claimed that they worked at home in the evenings, at weekends and during holidays in order to keep up with the demands of their work. This had various implications for their work-life balance leading them to having to develop various coping strategies. Conversations with teachers revealed that they believed that working at home was compulsory for them. Otherwise, managing their workload would be impossible. Ms Collins reported that:

'I work every evening and usually one weekend day. That's because I have to cause I can't keep up with the workload if I don't. If I missed a day in school then I have to catch up and there is always more to do. Your amount of work you do expands to how much time you have. So if I have some spare time at home, I do some work. I could work all day.'

Ms Collins, teacher

Similar point was made by Ms Erickson who argued that there was not enough free time dedicated to the teachers' preparations. Therefore, they had to search for ways to meet the expectations of their workloads by coming into school during summer holidays and using the spare time during the sessions they did not teach like Drama or PE lessons:

'People think it's an easy job. But it's not. (…) we are starting a new year so we have to prepare our classrooms. So you have to come in during your 6-week holiday. You get a bit of time but there is no time in the Curriculum anymore to have this spare…you know (…). So there are these PE lessons or Drama lessons when the teacher doesn't have to go in so that gives you a bit more time for your PPA. But 2,5 hours a week is

not a lot of PPA really. So you have to take staff home, you have to do things during your holiday.'

<div align="right">Ms Erickson, teacher</div>

Ms Davies also highlighted that she tended to work at home to avoid staying in the school until late:

'I think there is so much work to do. You are trying to get your marking done. If you get your marking done at lunch time then you've got one set of books less to mark after school in which case you can then probably get home a little bit earlier and get some work done at home rather than having to sit at school until late and do your work.'

<div align="right">Ms Davies, teacher</div>

The accounts above indicate that the teachers accepted working at home as a necessary component of the teaching profession. The teachers' comments also demonstrate that their workload was heavy making it impossible for them to complete the required tasks during their usual office hours leading them to having to take work home. Therefore, the teachers identified their workload as causing stress and adding extra pressure on them. The demands of their workload led to the teachers constantly thinking about their jobs. For example, Ms Collins said:

"It's a stressful job and I don't go home and stop thinking about the job."

<div align="right">Ms Collins, teacher</div>

And Ms Smith added:

"When you go home, you dream about it and think about it all the time."

<div align="right">Ms Smith, teacher</div>

The comments above demonstrate that the teachers' work never stops and Ms Jones explained that once one chooses a career in teaching 'it is part of your life' (excerpt from interview with Ms Jones, June 2015). The teachers identified various implications of their workload for their private lives. Below, I present the accounts of two teachers who described their day-to-day family lives indicating the difficulties they faced in achieving a work-life balance. Below, Ms Erickson describes her typical working day after school saying:

> "We get home five thirty. Between 5 and 5:30. Make tea, children to bed, half past seven-tidy up. Eight o'clock-laptop out until 10 o'clock and then bed. And that's every day.
>
> Ms Erickson, teacher

And Ms Dixon describes her working hours emphasizing the impact her work had on her family life:

> "[My children] are very demanding and at the moment I feel like am hardly seeing them at all (…). Well we leave the house quarter past seven so then, you know, I do a full day here from quarter to eight until five. Pick them up. We are getting home just before six and then they go to bed. And then the weekends come and I have the day time with them which always seems to be very rushed because I am trying to do the housework and shopping and all the other jobs that I feel like I should have got done but I haven't been able to because in the evening when they've gone to bed, I am straight back on the computer. I straight sat down with books doing more marking, more planning, more work. So teaching really does just take up everything. Every moment. It really does."
>
> Ms Dixon, teacher

The accounts above demonstrate the challenges faced by the teachers who had families. However, there was a consensus amongst the teachers in this research

that achieving a life-work balance was unachievable since they had to make various sacrifices to keep up with their workload. Ms Taylor explained that the first year of teaching was the most difficult one so far in her teaching career because her social life was completely taken away from her. Now, as years passed by, she became accustomed with the workload:

> "That's one thing of being a teacher- working at home is hard cause you feel like your social life, you can't. My first year was hardest because you feel like your social life was taken away from you cause you are marking every night, planning lessons every night whereas it's got a bit easier as I've got a bit used to it."
>
> Ms Taylor, teacher

Due to the excessive workload that impacts on the teachers' personal lives, they developed coping strategies that helped them to organise their time and manage their work-life balance. For instance, Ms Hudson shared her strategy that allowed her to see her child at weekends which involved coming in to the school at around 6am every day in order to be able to have quality family time at weekends (field notes, March 2015). This allowed her enough time to prepare for the day. However, this also meant that she did not see her child in the mornings. During the interview, she complained saying:

> 'I sacrifice a lot. I don't see my child in the morning and I get like half hour at night so I want to have the weekend completely free. Whereas other people don't have that kind of responsibility so they can do things at weekends.'
>
> Ms Hudson, teacher

Ms Hudson's comment highlighted the challenge of meeting the demands of work and family life and acknowledged further the fact that teachers need to work outside of their office working hours. In her account below, Ms Collins described the various organisational strategies she uses in order to keep up with work:

> "You have to make a diary and stick to it. I found, like in my first year, no, not all, but in my last few years I've been able to say 'alright, if I work really hard this weekend, I can have the next weekend off and go away' or 'if I work Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday so I can have a Wednesday night out'. So I can organise. It's time management and prioritising but if you are not organised, you can't manage at all. I would not be able to do anything without my lists. I have a book of lists of things that I need to get done, like things to do today, on the weekend and at the end of the year."
>
> Ms Collins, teacher

Although other teachers complained about their heavy workload, Ms Adams expressed her frustration at the Academy's senior management lack of action that would alleviate the teachers' workload. She said:

> "Why can't they choose to do what they want to do in a way that they can make the lives of teachers easy? Look at everybody's circumstances. We have got single parents, we've got parents with kids, you know…and life is more important than this workload."
>
> Ms Adams, teacher

Ms Adams pointed out at some of the unnecessary tasks that the teachers had to complete as part of their work.

8.4 Controls of the teaching practice

In Frostenson's (2015) framework, the matter of controls of the teaching practice refers to various forms of monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of teachers' work. Frostenson (2015) stresses the importance of recognising who controls the evaluation systems and how the evaluation system is used. Further to this, Frostenson argues convincingly that the mere existence of an evaluation system of the teachers' practice does not constitute a threat to teachers' professional autonomy on individual level. However, what challenges teachers' individual autonomy is the use of the evaluation systems as the key criterion that determines the quality of the teaching practice. When the evaluation system of the teaching practice is believed to be the indicative measurement of a successful professional practice then there appears the risk that the professional will strive to adapt their practices to meet the requirements of the measurement system.

The evaluation system of the teaching practice in England is known as the 'performance management' system or 'teacher appraisal' (NASUWT, 2015). At Bricklane Primary Academy, the Pay Policy and the Academy's Appraisal Policy documents set out the appraisal process for teachers. The analysis of the research findings presented below demonstrates who controlled the performance management system in the Academy, the techniques used to assess teachers' performance and the implications of the use of performance management for teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy. Due to the lack of access to the Academy's Appraisal Policy, the analysis presented below is based on the analysis of the Pay Policy, my observations as well as informal and formal conversations with staff.

8.4.1 The control over performance management at Bricklane Academy

The performance management system is governed by the Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 and the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) (NASUWT, 2015). In tracing its origins, Forrester (2011) notes that performance management emanates from the practices of private sector. When adapted by the public sector, its purpose has been to improve 'the performance, productivity, accountability and transparency of public services' (*ibid*: 5). It was developed in the public services in the late 1980s and introduced into the education sector in 2000 under the New Labour Government. Since its introduction into schools, performance management system has been surrounded by controversies. While policy makers saw it as a step towards the modernisation of the teaching profession, others perceived it as an expression of 'managerial control of professional work' (*ibid*: 5).

The analysis of the Academy's Pay Policy revealed who was responsible for conducting the annual appraisal of teachers' work at Bricklane. According to the policy, the executive principal was responsible for appointing the appraiser whose task was to review teachers' performance. Staff interviews revealed that the role of appraisers was assumed by the heads of the KS1 and KS2 departments. The appraiser's responsibility included the assessment of teachers' performance against the 'Teachers Standards' published by the Department for Education and against the objectives set between the teacher and the appraiser at the start of the school year (Pay Policy) (discussed further in section 8.4.2).

Upon the completion of the appraisal process, the appraisers assessed teachers' performance and made appropriate recommendations for their pay progression or its lack to the Academy's principal. Next, the principal reviewed the presented evidence and pay progression recommendations before submitting them to the Pay Committee. The Pay Committee was a body established to review and

determine individual teachers' pay progression. It comprised of three members of the Academy's Governing Body with the principal acting as an adviser to the committee. As such, the evidence presented so far indicates that the criticism of performance management as being a form of managerial control is hardly surprising considering that the processes of apprising teachers' performance were devised in accordance with regulations set by the Government and monitored by the senior staff at the Academy. Aside from objectives agreed between a teacher and the appraiser, performance management process was conducted with a marginal input from teachers.

8.4.2 The process of performance management and its implications

The Academy's Pay Policy indicated that assessment of teachers' performance was based on evidence and it detailed that the relevant evidence included: self-assessment; peer review, lesson observations; and tracking of pupils' progress (Pay Policy). Self-assessment referred to teachers' assessing their performance at the end of each lesson that they delivered and it was done in the form of a brief reflection on their teaching noted in the lesson planning sheet. Peer reviews were observations of specific lessons by subject co-ordinators. There were also observations conducted by a head of Key Stage who acted as the appraiser (field notes data). Further to this, the task of tracking of pupils' progress referred to the requirement that teachers agreed their targets for the upcoming year with their appraiser regarding students' progress as illustrated by Ms Taylor:

> 'At the beginning of the year, we've got to pick about 10 children and target them (…) And they need to get that.'
>
> Ms Taylor

In her account, Ms Taylor explained that in the first term of each school year, teachers were required to identify about 10 children who were given specific

targets for progression by the end of the school year. In addition, another teacher, Ms Davies, stated that teachers' performance management tended 'to focus on the middle ability children and moving those up' (Ms Davies, interview data, March 2015). The targets were then agreed with the Key Stage leader who conducted lesson observations with a specific purpose for performance management once every term. This meant that teachers were observed three times every school year for performance management purpose (Ms Taylor, interview data, June 2015).

The Academy's Pay Policy stated that the aims of the annual appraisal of teachers' practice were: to highlight teachers' strengths, to provide them with information on future development and to enhance teachers' professional practice (Pay Policy). Some of the teachers' appeared to recognise and appreciate the benefits of observations. This is evident in the exchange below:

'Marlena: What is the purpose of these observations?

Ms Hudson: To identify strengths and weaknesses and maybe have a focus on how you can develop yourself as a teacher. (…) I actually wouldn't be teaching in the style I have now if I hadn't had observations and feedback. So I appreciate that. '

Ms Hudson, teacher

In the conversation presented above, Ms Hudson showed her understanding of the purpose of various observations and expressed her appreciation for observations she was subjected to arguing their importance to her professional development. Similar view was demonstrated by another teacher, Ms Davies who explained the process of lesson observations and presented her view on the usefulness of the appraiser's feedback:

'[the aspects the appraiser focused on included] that the children are hands on, they are engaged, differentiation that is challenging for the higher ability children, that you are using your TA in the classroom appropriately. (…) She [the appraiser] sits down and gives you feedback after [the observation], what was good and the way you can improve to make it better for the next time. (…) You keep all your feedback together and hopefully when you've got some good feedback you can obviously act on that and improve next time and put it into your lessons on a daily basis.'

Ms Davies, teacher

In her account, Ms Davies demonstrated how she used the appraiser's feedback to improve her professional practice presenting a rather positive perspective on lesson observations. Contrary to this was Ms Hudson's reflection on the impact of observations on her emotions:

'This school has a lot of observations. (…) so far I've had Ofsted in, I've had deputy principle twice, I had a science observation, I've had a Maths observation and I think that's it. (…) I get really stressed with observations so I don't really like them. I don't think that I will ever get used to them.'

Ms Hudson, teacher

Ms Hudson's account indicated that despite appreciating the usefulness of observations expressed in her previous comment, she also felt 'stressed' by the experience of being observed. Below, another teacher, Ms Jones, presented her perspective on observations in the Academy:

'There is supposed to be a limit to how much you are observed but it depends on for what purpose. Like for performance management, you are only supposed to be observed an hour over the year. If it's for a

different purpose, you can be observed as much as needed. Sometimes it's too much because this half term some teachers have ended up with like five or six observations in a space of two to three weeks which is a lot. Although some teachers it doesn't bother, other teachers it does bother and they shouldn't necessarily always be scrutinised that much really. You feel you are under scrutiny, I suppose. (…) Erm, again that increases your workload because you want your lesson then to be perfect so you put a lot more time and effort into planning and resourcing that one lesson when in every day to day life is not always that way so not every lesson is that way.'

<div align="right">Ms Jones, teacher</div>

In their accounts, both Ms Hudson and Ms Jones expressed their frustration at the large volume of observations in the Academy. Ms Johnson recognised that some teachers did not seem to mind being observed while others were not in favour of observations. She also complained about the feeling of being 'under scrutiny' which according to her, teachers 'shouldn't necessarily always be scrutinised that much'. In addition to the increase in stress level, an increase in workload caused by observations was identified as another implication of observations for teachers' work.

Further on the topic regarding performance management, it is important to highlight again that based on lesson observations and on meeting other targets, the appraisers of teachers' performance made recommendations for pay progression or its lack (see section 8.4.1). This demonstrates that teachers were under performance related pay system (PRP) which was explained by them:

'At the end of the year, if all your observations are either good or outstanding, you are able to move up to the next point scale. It's all performance related pay. So all your observations have to be good or outstanding to be able to move up the pay scale. If it's not good or outstanding, you will not be able to move up the pay scale.'

<div align="right">Ms Davies, teacher</div>

In her account, Ms Davies highlighted the importance of gathering 'good' or 'outstanding' feedback implying that the observed sessions had to be prepared and conducted to teachers' best abilities as their performance in the observed sessions affected their pay. Additionally, this links with the comment made by Ms Jones who complained about the 'increased workload' caused by the observations conducted for performance management. She argued that teachers tended to 'put more time and effort' into preparing the lessons that were observe. This indicated that the observed lessons might not be a true reflection of teachers' everyday lessons as she stated that 'in every day to day life is not always that way'.

Teachers recognised that since the introduction of the revised National Curriculum, the attainment targets that children were expected to meet by the end of each school year were recognised by staff to be higher in comparison to previous years (see section 6.3.3). This was highlighted by teachers as having implications for their PRP:

> 'You might have to get your children, they might have to move five points and if they don't move five points then you might not get your performance related pay, erm, so that is, it's harder to move the points sometimes now because the expectations are greater.'
>
> Ms Jones, teacher

As already indicated, the outcome of teachers' performance appraisal was crucial in determining their pay progression and the level of teachers' pay. One of the aspects of teachers' performance management was to ensure that a 'targeted' group of pupils made required progress in their learning and met the targets that a teacher set out for them at the beginning of the school year. This clearly resembles the nineteenth-century 'payment by results' system where teachers' salaries were linked to the performance of their pupils (Forrester,

2001). However, in her account above, Ms Jones explained that due to the 'greater expectations' and hence higher targets that pupils were required to meet, teachers were aware that it would be 'harder' for them to ensure that pupils met their targets. Thus, this created a degree of insecurity over teachers' pay and added extra pressure on them:

> 'So you have these targets, and if you don't meet these targets, you don't go up on the pay scale. So you've got the pressure of that.'
>
> Ms Williams

Despite the potential risk of the lack of pay progression in cases when pupils did not make sufficient academic progress, all teachers in this research appeared to be content with the level of pay in the Academy (field notes). For instance, Ms Williams made the following comment: 'The pay scale here is good' (interview data, February 2015) indicating that she was content with her pay.

The Academy's Pay Policy outlined a nine spine points scale for class teachers which started at £22,688 at point 1 with a possibility to moving up to £38,056 at point 9 (Pay Policy for the school year 2014-2015). During formal and informal conversations with staff, they all highlighted the fact that their pay at the Academy was higher than in other local schools (field notes). In the interview, Mr Richardson, the executive principal, explained the reasons behind the Academy's decision to increase the national level of teachers' salary:

> 'I increased that salary, the national salary, I improved it by £1,100 each point. And there is 4, 5, 6. So it's 1 to 3: £1,100; 4,5,6- £1,200 and then upper pay scale 1,2,3 by £1,300. So we've got an increase in national pay scales to entice people to come to the school with the same teachers' pay and conditions document. (…) If you are good and if you are in school here and you are getting a £10,000 a year and if you are good and

you are getting £11,100 a year with the same responsibilities that encourages you to come to my school. So that's what I've done to teachers' conditions.'

Mr Richardson, executive principal

In his account, Mr Richardson argued that a higher pay in the Academy served as a means of 'enticing' and 'encouraging' the existing employees to remain at the Academy and the potential employees to apply for jobs at Bricklane Primary Academy. Nonetheless, due to the higher wages that teachers received at Bricklane Academy, there was an expectation that their performance had to be of exceptional standards set by the Academy's senior team. This was clearly stressed in the Pay Policy that stated: '(…) the quality of education provided to pupils depends to a large extent on the recruitment and retention of a capable and high performing teacher workforce' (Pay Policy: 3). This message was further reiterated in Mr Richardson's statement:

'So they are getting an improved salary conditions, improved pension conditions and also those improvements need to have results. If they don't get the results, they don't get to move up the scale. (…) Because if you get the increase, you have to be good or above. And that then improves the learning in the school. And it encourages a high quality of staff to apply.'

Mr Richardson, executive principal

According to Mr Richardson, higher wages offered by the Academy would attract 'a high quality of staff' who would continuously strive for and demonstrate 'good or above' performance. Teachers were aware of these expectations regarding their performance and they also understood the implications of lower performance. In her account, Ms Collins explained that since the school became

an academy, teachers' sense of job security was lower as it was believed that there were procedures in place which made the process of dismissing teachers much easier:

> 'When the teacher is performing less well, erm, in the old days it was harder to get the person to leave whereas now I think there's things in place to make it much swifter and quicker to get rid of less well performing teachers which is a good thing because the children's education is important (…) But as a teacher is also worrying because I think if I slip up somehow erm I could be rid of very quickly and it's scary because you want a job security.'

> Ms Collins, teacher

However, some teachers' reflections on the higher pay scale implied that they felt that in reality the senior staff had an entirely different agenda when offering an increase in teachers' wages. The following statement illustrates this point:

> 'It's an extra 1,300 pounds on each pay scale that they increased by. Erm and I think it was a nice gesture. (…) But I think it was a bit of a buffer because they knew they would increase the class sizes so they started off nicely 'oh, we are becoming an academy. Here is a pay rise', 'wow, that's fantastic' and then, you know, a year later here is a class of 30.'

> Ms Erickson, teacher

In her account, Ms Erickson accused the Academy's senior leaders for hiding their future plans of increasing the class sizes across the Academy. Therefore, she believed that the pay rise was 'a buffer' before the true intentions of senior leaders were revealed to teachers. It is important to note here that the matter of increased class sizes was identified by all teachers in this research as

problematic as it led to a heavier workload. In addition, another teacher, Ms Jones, argued that the initial 'unwritten rule' which the Academy took pride in was a class size of no more than 25 children (field notes). Regarding this, the excerpt from my research diary states: 'She [Ms Jones] explained that this policy was not written anywhere and that since the school is an academy, such changes can happen and they do happen suddenly' (excerpt from research diary, September 2014).

Further reflections on pay in the Academy revealed teachers' contrasting perspectives to the ones presented earlier by Mr Richardson:

> 'I think there is a slight difference in pay. The pay is a little bit higher. But having said so, I don't feel that, erm, yes the pay is a bit higher but I feel like you still do the same amount of work if not more. I think we do work a lot. We work hard. We work more.'
>
> Ms Adams

In her recollection on the changes to her work after the school's conversion to an academy, Ms Adams pointed out at 'a little bit higher' pay offered to teachers. However, upon a short reflection, she recognised that in fact teachers' pay was not higher at all because since the academy conversion, they appeared to actually 'work more'. Ms Jones came to similar conclusions:

> 'You end up doing a lot of hours and a lot of more than you think you are gonna do. (…) If you actually reckoned it up to an hour rate, it would be probably lower [the wage], the amount of hours you do at nights and Saturdays and Sundays.'
>
> Ms Jones

Given the heavy workload that led teachers to working longer hours since the conversion, Ms Jones recognised that in reality teachers' pay at the Academy could in fact be even lower than in other local schools. As such, the reflections made by Ms Erickson, Ms Jones and Ms Adams contradicted the claims made by Mr Richardson who argued that teachers at Bricklane Academy earned higher wages.

Considering the findings presented in this section and linking them with the claims regarding 'controls of the teaching practice' made by Frostenson (2015), it can be argued that the performance management system was seen by staff at Bricklane Academy as indicative of the quality of the teaching practice. The evidence presented indicated that teachers attempted to adapt their teaching practices to the requirements of the performance management in order to progress on the pay scale. Regarding this, it can be argued that the performance management system at Bricklane constituted a threat to teachers' individual professional autonomy.

8.5 Conclusions

This chapter analysed teachers' individual professional autonomy at Bricklane Primary Academy as discussed by Frostenson (2015). The analysis highlighted the extent to which teachers' decision-making capacities regarding the contents of professional work, frames of the teaching practice and controls of the teaching practice were bound by both school-level regulations and national expectations. These regulations and expectations left little scope for teachers' individual professional autonomy. Drawing on the findings from chapters six, seven and eight, the next chapter brings together and discusses the main themes that I identified during the process of the analysis of teachers' three-levelled professional autonomy.

Chapter 9: Interpreting teachers' work in a primary academy

9.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters presented the analysis of research findings on the three levels of teachers' professional autonomy using Frostenson's (2015) conceptualisation of teacher professional autonomy as a heuristic tool. The examination of teachers' professional autonomy allowed presenting the realities of teachers' work in a primary academy. The purpose of this chapter is to bring together and make sense of this study's findings in relation to the following themes: change and power, work intensification, performativity and the proletarianisation of teaching.

9.2 Change and Power

The central theme that I identified during the data analysis process is the theme of 'change' and related to it teachers' perceptions of and responses to change. One of the major changes in the recent history of Bricklane Primary Academy that this study's participants encountered was their school's transformation to academy status (see section 5.3). The academy conversion appeared to have implications for teachers' professional work (see chapters 6, 7 and 8) and it also revealed issues around spheres of power dispersal and matters relating to control in the Academy. The matters of change and power appeared to be closely interlinked and therefore are discussed together in this section.

All teachers who worked in the school during its conversion to an academy seemed to be unaware of the potential implications of the Academies Programme for their work (see section 6.2.3). They claimed to not understand what academies were and to have insufficient information about the proposed school transformation provided to them. When considering this in the light of Foucault's (1977) claim that knowledge and information constitute power, this

could be interpreted as lack of power for teachers. With little understanding of the Academies Programme, teachers could not make any meaningful contribution to the decision-making about their school's conversion. This indicates that they were excluded from what Hatcher (2011) views as meaningful participation in policy-making process.

Further to this, it was found that teachers' responses to the proposal for academy conversion varied depending on their age and length of teaching work experience. It became evident that those teachers with more years of work experience presented rather negative initial emotional reactions to the news about the school's conversion. Their emotional responses included mostly anxiety, worries and fears about an uncertain future which is consistent with the findings of research by Evans (2000) who argues that educational change can 'create a sense of loss' for some people thus giving rise to negative emotions. Contrary to this were the responses presented by the younger teachers with less years of teaching experience who did not appear to be concerned by the conversion. To stress this point, Ms Harris explained: 'I think it affects more older teachers that are kind of set in their ways' (Ms Harris, teacher, interview data, February 2015) while another teacher, Ms Taylor, stated: 'For me it didn't matter that the school was converting. It was different for the teachers who worked here longer. But I was just starting and I was new so it wasn't stressful for me at all' (Ms Taylor, teacher, interview data, September 2014). The findings regarding teachers' responses to change in their workplace resonate with Hargreaves's (2005) claims that teachers' age and stage of career affect their responses to educational change. He emphasises that teachers who have less years of work experience tend to be more open to change in contrast to their more experienced and older colleagues because the younger teachers 'may be less competent and confident in implementing and even understanding' change (*ibid*: 982). Regarding this point, it could be argued that teachers in this research were not concerned with the school's transformation because with no previous

teaching work experience, they could not predict the possible changes that academy status could bring to their professional lives. In addition, they were just starting their teaching careers and the data revealed that any concerns or apprehensions they had were largely related to their own personal situations. All aspects of teaching were new to them and therefore any organisational change in the school would not necessary be comprehended and the implications appreciated by teachers with less experience.

Further to Hargreaves' (2005: 982) assertion that younger teachers might be 'less competent' and 'less confident' in understanding change, Ms Collins suggested that younger and less experienced teachers might be more susceptible to manipulation from the side of more powerful senior figures in the Academy. In her view, this was due to the less experienced teachers' inability 'to stand up for' themselves in order to protect their interest. She added: 'I definitely didn't know for the first few years, and you don't know when to say 'no' to workload. You can't! You don't know your right' (Ms Collins, interview data, June 2015). Therefore, pointing out at the high number of teachers at early stages of their careers who worked in the Academy, Ms Collins highlighted the apparent managerial preferences over employment of younger staff which was evident at Bricklane Primary Academy. Of significance here was the declining role of teachers' union in the Academy which contributed to teachers' sense of insecurity. The research found that since the leaving of the teacher who acted as a union representative in the school, teachers refused to replace her due to their fear of 'being stigmatised' for becoming a union representative and thus being perceived by senior staff as rebels. Due to the lack of union representative in the Academy and also no involvement of the local authority in the Academy's affairs, teachers felt 'more vulnerable'. Ms Jones also added that the new relationship the Academy had with the local authority deprived teachers from the possibility of approaching the local authority in case they wanted to express any

concerns about senior members of staff which put teachers in a difficult position (Ms Jones, interview data, June 2015).

Another finding of this study that incorporates the themes of change and power in relation to teachers' responses to their school's conversion is concerned with teachers' apparent lack of power to oppose the conversion. Teachers confessed that they 'felt they had no say' over the academy conversion plans despite being encouraged to research the Academies Programme and to provide feedback, thoughts and any concerns on the proposed conversion. This could be interpreted as an opportunity for teachers to contribute to the consultation process; however, there was general agreement by teachers that they were denied the opportunity to object the academy conversion plan. They also expressed feeling 'powerless' to actively resist the school's change in status. In fact, the analysis of the data revealed that the decision to convert the school to an academy was already made by other stakeholders such as the executive principal and the governing body when the consultation meetings were set up. During these meetings, teachers were merely expected to receive and accept that decision rather than to influence it. As such, arguably the consultation meetings took place to demonstrate compliance with the regulations set out by the Department for Education regarding schools' academy conversion (DfE, 2016f) and not to seek stakeholders' views on the conversion proposal.

When exploring further the changes that occurred in the school following its conversion, there was a general consensus amongst teachers that nothing had changed. Their responses regarding this were illustrative: 'Nothing has changed really' (Ms Harris, field notes, November 2014); 'Everybody thought things would be different but then, no, everything seems to be the same' (Ms Jones, interview data June 2015). Interestingly, after claiming that nothing has changed in the school as a result of the conversion, prompted by my questioning and upon a reflection, teachers ultimately listed a number of changes resulting from the

conversion. Teachers' reflections and recollections demonstrated that some changes were less tangible and also occurred gradually what made them harder to be recognised as over time they became a norm to teachers (see section 7.5.2).

In terms of the changes identified by teachers, it became evident that a number of these changes had a major impact on teachers' work. It was outlined in section 5.3 that upon academy conversion, Bricklane Primary School was closed and Bricklane Primary Academy was opened in its place in September 2012. One of the implications of this was the Academy's new relationship with the LA (see section 6.2.1) where the Academy was no longer under the LA management (West and Bailey, 2013). This highlighted a further weakening of LAs' role in the provision of education initiated under the Conservative Party since the 1980s (Gillard, 2008; Blunkett cited in Helm, 2016). This can be seen as a trend in educational reform as Ball (1990: 68) argues convincingly that the Conservative Party has had the intention to turn schools into business-like organisations 'run and managed like businesses with a primary focus on the profit and loss account'. Since the conversion, the Academy was overseen by a multi-academy trust, The Sky Education Trust, which according to the research participants played a role similar to that of a local authority. This led to the change in the management structure in the Academy (discussed in section 5.2.3). Further to this, it was found that the school received financial incentives associated with conversion. This allowed the Academy to invest in the building's infrastructure, free uniforms and free trips for the pupils, as well as an increase in teachers' wages. Further to this, this research found that in accordance with the right given to academies to set working conditions and pay for their staff (), a few changes were made to the working conditions of teachers at Bricklane. All teachers in this research highlighted that their pay was increased following the school's conversion making their wages higher in comparison to the national teachers' pay scale which was welcomed by all teachers in this study. However,

teachers also identified some undesirable changes that occurred in the Academy, one of which was the increase in the class sizes. Teachers who were present in the school during its transformation to an academy pointed at the 'unwritten policy about small class size of 25 pupils' that the senior staff promised to adhere to. Nonetheless, the class sizes increased soon after the conversion which was commented on by one of the teacher who noted: 'This policy or this ethos of small classrooms has gone out of the window because we have gone up to class of 30' (Ms Erickson, interview data, June 2015). When questioned about this change in the Academy's policy, one teacher explained that as this was an 'unwritten policy', she believed it could be changed without any notice being given to the school's employees regardless of the impact it had on teachers' work. Finally, a change was made to the Academy's calendar that led to a shortened summer break by one week and extended May half term holiday by one week which was met with voices of disapproval by some teachers.

9.3 Performativity

The analysis of the research findings demonstrated that teachers in this study worked in a highly performative environment. The increasingly performative work culture has been a trend for teachers' work arguably since the late 1980s. In Ball's (2000: 1) terms, performativity can be understood as 'a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation'. It utilises both judgments and comparisons in order to provide information on productivity of individuals or institutions (Ball, 2000; 2003). In the case of this research, it was revealed that the performative culture at Bricklane Primary Academy was reinforced by the various accountability measures employed in the Academy in the form of targets, assessment of pupils' progress, performance related pay for teachers, various awards for students' good work, publication of students' performance in league tables, and Ofsted inspections of the Academy. In addition, performativity was

also evident in what Jeffrey (2014: 68) views as 'the targeting, goal oriented discourse' used in the school by teachers and other staff.

Staff at Bricklane Primary Academy appeared to place a great importance on targets and similarly to Jeffrey's (2014) research, the discourse about targets was prominent at Bricklane Primary Academy. For instance, setting targets for progression for 'about ten children' from the 'middle ability' group was identified as one of the first tasks that each teacher was required to undertake at the start of the school year for the purpose of performance management process. Regarding this, it was of paramount importance for teachers to ensure that 'the targeted children' met their targets because this affected teachers' pay progression. While only a group of children was identified for teachers' performance management activities, all children in each classroom were given specific termly targets in Numeracy, Reading and Writing. In addition, they were also given weekly targets for Maths and English, and then targets for each lesson called 'the success criteria' that depended on the ability group that children were assigned to. Children were constantly reminded about their targets by the requirements to write their targets down in their workbooks and by reviewing them at the end of lessons and at the end of the week. This arguably ensured that pupils understood the objectives for their learning. However, some teachers were concerned about the difficulty of understanding and remembering about targets at such a young age. The comment made by one of the teachers, Ms Dixon, reflected this perception: 'So there is a lot for the children to always be working towards. I don't think they always remember to work, it's a lot to do when you are [at that age]' (Ms Dixon, interview data, April 2015). Despite this, there was evident focus on targets that was supposed to guide teaching and learning in the Academy. In case children struggled with any aspect of their learning, they were encouraged to seek help through consulting the different displays in their classrooms which demonstrated examples of 'excellent work'. One of such displays was called WAGOLL-'What a good one looks like'.

Further to this, children were divided into ability groups and their levels of attainment were clearly identified and displayed on a board in their classroom. Teachers monitored children's progress and when pupils did not make the expected improvement in their learning, they attended 'booster groups' led by a teaching assistant. The aim of 'booster groups' was to speed up children's learning and 'boost' their progress to enable them to meet their targets. In relation to this, this research found that all teaching at Bricklane was geared toward preparations to the tests. The matter of 'teaching to the test' has been well documented in the literature published following the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988 (Coulby, 1991, Osborne *et al.*, 2000; Webb, 2006; House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2008; Alexander, 2009; Stotesbury and Dorling, 2015). The requirements to meet targets and improve children' attainment were given a great prominence in the Academy because of the use of league tables as indicators of the Academy's performance which was made publically available during the publication of test results every year in November. In addition, one of the teachers explained that there was a belief amongst the Academy's community that since the school was one of the first primary schools in the area to convert 'by choice', the Academy was under a greater pressure to demonstrate 'good results'.

However, the majority of teachers were highly critical of the overwhelming emphasis on targets. Some of the teachers argued that the requirement to meet various targets put pressure on them. This in turn led teachers to putting pressure on their students to improve their attainment. This finding resonates with the observations made by Webb (2006: 34) who in her investigation of the impact of targets, tests and league tables on schools' communities found head teachers, teachers and pupils to be under 'unremitting pressure' exerted by targets. In addition, at Bricklane, teachers observed that many lessons seemed to be 'rushed through' as the amount of material that had to be covered in lessons allowed little time for children to complete their tasks. This left many

pupils feeling frustrated and distressed as they could not finish their work during lessons. Teachers felt frequently equally frustrated and their frustration came from the lack of opportunities for expressing their 'creativity'. This perception was reflected in teachers' complaints about 'too many targets to meet', 'that pressure above you to take these children to a level' and the requirement to document the learning that was taking place in the classroom as teachers recognised that the only valued experience of learning was the one leading to meeting targets. Thus, the pressure to meet targets squeezed out the time for preparation of 'creative lessons' and did not allow to 'take a lot of risks' because teachers were 'scared' that their pupils would fail 'to make as much progress as you need them to'. Consequently, the majority of teachers in this research described the disparities between their expectations of what the teaching profession would be like and the reality that they faced in their everyday work. This led to disappointment with the experiences of teaching amongst some of the teachers in this research and this disappointment was reflected in the following comment: 'I think a lot of teachers probably think that if they could turn the clock back and if they knew what is involved, then they might actually chose not to do it' (Ms Jones, interview data, June 2015).

Jeffrey (2014) identifies the use of awards and rewards as indicators of a performative culture. Regarding this, awards and rewards for both teachers and students were an integral part of staff and students' experiences at Bricklane Primary Academy. An example of this was the 'Well Done Assembly' that took place every Friday morning in Key Stage 1. At the assembly, the 'Writer of the Week', the 'Mathematician of the Week' and the 'Star of the Week' were announced and presented with certificates. Further to this, during the same assembly, one child was selected from a group of children who achieved 100% attendance during the week to receive £10 voucher. According to the Academy's Staff Handbook, this was to encourage children's attendance and punctuality in order 'to raise attainment'. For teachers, their reward for 'hard work' was in the

form of pay increments linked to their performance as discussed in sections 8.4.1 and 8.4.2. Forrester (2005, 2011) highlights that performance related pay and performance management were introduced into the education sector in order to enhance teachers' performance and productivity. However, the prominence of financial incentives for achievements and performance amongst students and teachers, presented by the Academy as 'rewarding hard work', could be in fact seen as transforming 'teaching and learning into performing' (Forrester, 2005: 275); therefore, reinforcing the performative culture in schools. This in turn leads to creation of 'performative learning identities' amongst students (Jeffrey and Troman, 2011: 499) and to 'a new kind of professional teacher' (Forrester, 2005: 275).

9.4 Work intensification

The findings of this research demonstrated that although teachers dealt with heavy workload prior to their school's conversion to an academy, their reflections on their experiences of working at Bricklane Primary Academy provided evidence to suggest that their work had intensified further since Bricklane Primary transformation to academy status. Regarding this, this section considers the issues arising from the data analysis that offer support for the intensification thesis discussed in section 3.2.4.

One of the indicators of the growing intensification of teachers' work at Bricklane Primary Academy was teachers' reflections regarding their increasingly heavier workload. Throughout the research, teachers pointed at various activities and tasks they were required to undertake that increased their workload. The source of many of these tasks, as suggested by Hatcher (1994), was governmental initiatives. These included the requirement to deliver the National Curriculum, ensuring that students met their age-related targets, preparation of documents for Ofsted inspections and administering the SATs. All these tasks caused

heavier workloads and led to the increasing intensification of teachers' work that has been the subject of academic debates since the 1988 Education Reform Act (Hargreaves, 1994; Hatcher, 1994; Webb, 2006).

However, this research found that in addition to governmental initiatives, tasks devised by the senior staff at the Academy also caused an increase in teachers' workload. Regarding this, in addition to teaching, teachers discussed the growing number of nonteaching administrative jobs that they were expected to undertake. For instance, teachers complained about behaviour management policy that required them to produce detailed reports on all behaviour-management incidents. They also pointed at the great importance being placed on the documentation of teaching and learning which was evidenced in teachers' preparation of lesson planning sheets and completing pupils' assessment grids. Moreover, there was a general agreement amongst the participants that 'in-depth' marking policy caused 'heavy workload' as teachers were expected to follow rather 'strict' and 'detailed' rules on how to mark students' work. One teacher confessed to spending '60%' of her working time on admin-related tasks. The same teacher also complained about the little amount of time she actually spent on teaching-related activities. 'All the paperwork' caused great disappointment with the realities of the teaching profession amongst teachers who believed teaching children was 'what we are here for'. Instead, they noticed that they tended to 'get side-tracked' and 'bogged down' by 'paperwork'.

With regards to the overload with various non-teaching responsibilities experienced by teachers in this research, Hatcher (1994) draws accurate parallel with Tomaney's (1990) observations of the production workers in industry where 'the aim is to load as many tasks as possible onto direct production workers' (Hatcher, 1994: 47). Tomaney (1990: 48) points out that in order to ensure that the production workers cope with the demands of their workload, they are required to put 'heightened effort levels' into completing their

tasks. This in turn leads to the need for constant improvement of workers as 'there is constant and continuing attempt to find ways of doing things faster' (Hayter, 1993: 50; cited in Hatcher, 1994). In this research, such attempts to improve teachers' practices were also evident in particular in the expectation from teachers to continuously 'improve' their practices, 'act on feedback', 'do well' and 'get better'. Examples of these practices can be found; for instance, in the requirement for teachers to video-record their lessons in order to 'watch and evaluate' their performance and 'to start looking at our strengths and things to improve on'. Numerous observations conducted in the academy present another example of attempts to 'improve' teachers' practices. One of the teachers strongly argued that receiving feedback from their managers and other teachers was beneficial to her working practices as this encouraged teachers to 'act on that feedback and improve next time and put it into your lessons on a daily basis' which clearly indicates her apparent subjugation to a constant need for improvement.

Another indication of teachers' work intensification was teachers' increased working hours. As indicated, teachers in the study identified the increasing amount of administrative duties to be affecting their workload. In addition, undertaking their numerous duties required substantial time commitment which brought many implications for teachers' preparation time, relaxation, work-life balance and time to keep up with teachers' field. As noted by Hargreaves (1994: 118), intensification leads to a 'chronic and persistent overload' which in this research was clearly illustrated in teachers' comments presented in section 7.5.2 that stated that they felt like they were 'running around constantly' or that they 'never had a minute to themselves'. Staff interviews indicated that teachers felt frustrated at 'not having enough time' for completing their tasks. For instance, one teacher argued that she had no time to read about matters relating to the development in educational policy because of the demands of her work which is consistent with Larson's (1980: 166) assertion that intensification leads to reduction of time 'to keep up with one's field'. Further to this, teachers were

strongly of the view that two and a half hours a week dedicated for their 'Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA)' activities was not enough to undertake all the necessary duties. Therefore, all teachers in this study confessed to working at home which seemingly became a norm to them. They claimed they worked every day in the evenings, during weekends, and even during school holidays. This finding corroborates with Hatcher's (1994: 47) assertion that teachers' work 'is increasingly colonising their time at home'. This led to obvious implications for teachers' work-life balance. In addition to working extended hours, teachers complained about lack of social life or no time for quality time with their families which also suggested a considerable reduction in time for relaxation after work. Despite working extended hours and putting a lot of effort into their lesson preparations, teachers still expressed feelings of 'guilt' for not making their lessons even better. They also admitted to feeling 'stressed' due to extensive workload which implied that intensification caused negative emotions in teachers.

In addition to reduced time for relaxation after work, it became evident that teachers' time for relaxation as well as for socialisation during the working day was also drastically reduced. This is in line with the claims made by Hargreaves (1994) who strongly argues that the lack of time for relaxation and 'no time at all' for lunch were the consequences of teachers' work intensification. As highlighted in section 7.5.2, teachers admitted to not having any breaks during the working hours including breaks for lunch when they were actually expected to undertake work-related duties. In addition, they also pointed out at the difficulty with socialising or meeting other teachers outside of formally organised meetings due to lack of time. Some teachers recognised that there was 'no interaction between teachers during breaks' or that teachers 'just don't seem to see anyone' in the school. One teacher confessed to 'avoiding' her colleagues due to high demand of her workload while another teacher described the limited

interactions between teachers who only said 'hello' when passing each other on the corridors (see section 7.5.2).

Lack of informal interactions between teachers had negative consequences for them because it contributed to teachers' feelings of isolation. It also did not allow for development of collegial culture and it prevented opportunities for collaborative work and exchanging ideas in informal situations. Further to this, it became apparent that the lack of socialisation between teachers created a less friendly work environment for teachers who worked in the Academy on short-term contracts. Staff room, described in many school-based studies as a place of teachers' interactions (Nias, 1989, Acker, 1999), was always empty providing a further evidence to suggest that teachers did not use it during breaks as a meeting place for informal chats with other professionals. However, those teachers in the study who worked in the Academy prior to its conversion recognised that in the past the staff room was a lively place where everyone would come in to have 'a laugh and a break' (see section 7.5.2). Some teachers claimed that although changes occurred progressively, they could recognise the time following the conversion as a point where their workload started to gradually increase. One way of explaining the intensification of teachers' work at Bricklane Primary could be the argument made by Ms Erickson who claimed that due to the school's conversion to an academy, teachers felt the pressure of getting the best results.

9.5 Proletarianisation

As discussed in section 3.2.3, the proletarianisation thesis refers to a process that leads to 'devaluation of labour power' (White, 1983: 55) that can occur in all forms of work, including teaching. Ozga and Lawn (1988) explain that the process of proletarianisation takes place when the worker's right to both initiate and perform the work is taken away from them. As a consequence of this, the

worker is being deskilled and their autonomy is reduced while the managerial control over the worker increases. Regarding this, this research found evidence to support the proletarianisation thesis in relation to teachers' experiences at Bricklane Primary Academy. The process of proletarianisation of teaching was evidenced in the activities that demonstrated that teachers were de-professionalised; standardisation was incorporated into their work and the three-levelled analysis of professional autonomy (Frostenson, 2015) revealed that teachers' autonomy diminished.

It can be argued that teachers in this research were deprived of their chance to both initiate and execute their work as they were required to work to the agendas of others. For instance, teachers were obliged to work to the government's dictates which were in the form of the National Curriculum, national testing and publication of test results in league tables that directed teachers' practices towards the specific requirements of testing (Forrester, 2005). This finding was consistent with literature concerning the impact of such initiatives on teachers' work highlighting the issue of 'teaching to the test' (Coulby, 1991; Pollard *et al.*, 1994; Osborne *et al.*, 2000; Campbell, 2001; Forrester, 2005; Webb, 2006; House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2008; Alexander, 2009; Perryman, Ball and Maguire, 2011; Stotesbury and Dorling, 2015). In addition to this, this research revealed that teachers at Bricklane also worked towards the expectations and in accordance with the directives of the Academy's senior leaders. The analysis of the three levels of teachers' professional autonomy (Frostenson, 2015) presented in chapters 6,7 and 8 clearly demonstrated the limited scope of teachers' decision-making power regarding various aspects of their work. For instance, this research demonstrated that teachers had no decision-making powers over the school's academy conversion and the implementation of the revised National Curriculum in the Academy (chapter 6). It was also evident that teachers were expected to comply with various policies such as marking policy and classroom

display policy that were devised by senior staff at the Academy without teachers' input into the formation of these policies (chapter 7). It was revealed that while these policies aimed to ensure consistency in relation to teachers' practices within the Academy, they also led to what Mac an Ghaill (1992: 181) terms 'routinisation and standardisation of classroom practices' where teachers were required to abide by one set of rules that replaced their professional judgment. This in turn led to teachers' frustration at their lack of scope to decide on aspects of their classroom practices that were important to them, for instance, on the type of classroom display that would be beneficial to their pupils. The prescriptive nature of the policies devised by the senior staff at the Academy meant de-skilling of teachers who were not expected to use their own initiative to decide on their practices. While this research provided evidence to suggest teachers' professional autonomy was diminished, it also showed the increased managerial control over teachers' work (Ozga and Lawn, 1988) indicating the process of proletarianisation of teaching at Bricklane Primary Academy.

Further to teachers' diminished professional autonomy, another evidence to suggest proletarianisation of teachers in this research was de-professionalisation. Amongst many aspects regarding the process of de-professionalisation, Jeffrey and Woods (1996: 328) point at 'compartmentalisation' of work that replaces holism of teachers' work. In relation to this definition, de-professionalisation of teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy occurred through the use of less-qualified teaching assistants for the tasks that would be otherwise undertaken by teachers. For instance, teaching assistants were responsible for supporting groups of children during lessons. As they were assigned to a particular group for each lesson, they were also required to mark their group's workbooks. Further to this, teaching assistants were also leading 'booster groups' aimed at improving the skills of children who were identified as needing extra help in order to meet their learning targets in particular subjects. It was also observed that in some cases, teaching assistants

covered teachers' absences. Focus groups with teaching assistants revealed that they recognised drastic changes into their work over the years. One of the teaching assistants who worked in the Academy for over 10 years recognised that initially her tasks included simple activities like preparing brushes for art classes. However, with time, her workload increased and it actually resembled more the work of teachers than the work that teaching assistants used be required to undertake. This finding corroborates the research by Webster *et al.*, (2011) who highlight the growing number of teaching assistants being employed in schools in England since the late 1990s as well as the expanding roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants in classrooms. Stevenson (2007: 245) argues convincingly that the increased use of teaching assistants to deal with tasks previously undertaken by teachers contributes to the creation of a new teacher professionalism whereby teachers' focus is only 'on the core task of teaching and learning'.

9.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, the findings from the research about teachers' lived experiences of working in a primary school that had recently been converted to an academy were interpreted in relation to the main themes identified during the data analysis. These themes included change and power which encompassed teachers' perception of and responses to change as well as issues around power, the performative culture of the Academy, the intensification of teachers' work and the apparent proletarianisation of the teaching profession. The next chapter summarises the research findings and provides recommendations and concluding remarks about this doctoral study.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and reflections

10.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' work and capture the changing nature of the teacher professionalism in the new educational setting that is a primary academy. Regarding this, this concluding chapter summarises this study by revisiting the research question and the key findings of this research. Moreover, this chapter also presents my reflections regarding the contribution to knowledge this thesis has made as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, building on from the findings of this study, I offer recommendations for further research, policy and for practice.

10.2 Summary of the main findings

The analysis and discussion of various aspects of the Bricklane Primary Academy's life is presented in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, and it addressed this study's objectives by shedding light on the lived experiences of primary academy teachers, providing insights into their perceptions and experiences, and by examining teachers' professional autonomy from the three-levelled perspective proposed by Frostenson (2015). In this section, I bring together all the key findings of the study and discuss them in relation to the following research question:

> What is the impact of a primary school's conversion to academy status upon teachers' work and their notion of professionalism?

As I have argued in chapter 1, in investigating the implications of a primary school's conversion to academy status, this study focused on teachers' professional autonomy. The notion of autonomy was identified to be at the centre of the Academies Programme (DfE, 2010a) and it also constitutes a

defining feature of teaching as a professional occupation (Larson, 1977). Commentators argue that reforms in education impact on the nature of teachers' work (Ghaill, 1992) and the nature of the notion of teacher professionalism (Menter, 2009). The discussions about the changing nature of teaching have led many to claim that teachers' professional autonomy was diminishing (Day, 2002; Day and Smethem, 2009; Evans, 2011) leading to de-professionalisation of the teaching profession. However, Frostenson (2015) challenges this assumption suggesting a novel way of looking at teachers' professional autonomy. His approach requires examining the three levels of teachers' professional autonomy that include general professional autonomy, collegial professional autonomy and individual professional autonomy. With respect to each of the three levels of teachers' professional autonomy, the key findings of this research demonstrated that:

General professional autonomy

1. Decisions regarding the school's conversion to academy status were made without explicit request for that development by teachers and without teachers' active and meaningful participation in the decision-making process regarding the academy conversion.
2. Although academies are exempt from following the National Curriculum and are allowed to design their own curriculum, this research revealed that the national accountability measures such as Ofsted, SATs and league tables thwarted this Academy from creating its own curriculum. It was found that neither teachers nor the Academy's senior managers considered they had the mandate to design the Academy's 'innovative curriculum' as promoted by the policy makers (DfE, 2010a).

These findings led me to argue that teachers' professional autonomy at a general level was further diminished.

<u>Collegial professional autonomy</u>

3. In terms of collegial professional autonomy, teachers reported working collaboratively and collectively on certain tasks that required a whole team approach implying that they enjoyed collegial professional autonomy. For example, teachers reported working with their colleagues when devising long-term plans for the Academy or new assessment framework based on the revised National Curriculum.

4. However, this research revealed that teachers recognised working increasingly more in isolation since the school's conversion to academy status. Teachers were in agreement that they had limited opportunities for informal meetings and socialising with other teachers outside of formally organised meetings due to the evident intensification of their work.

5. Further to this, teachers also discussed situations when their shared views concerning development of school policies were not taken into consideration by the senior staff at the Academy indicating limited decision-making capacity over certain aspects of their professional practice.

These findings indicate that there were aspects of teachers' professional practice over which teachers enjoyed a collective decision-making capacity while there were also decisions made regarding teachers' practice without teachers' collective involvement. This leads me to argue that teachers' collegial professional autonomy was partially lost.

<u>Individual professional autonomy</u>

6. Teachers at Bricklane Primary Academy reported having capacity to decide on the choice of teaching tools which included: drama; short video clips; poems; guided reading or games; and to develop teaching materials when delivering the content of the National Curriculum to their students.

7. Teachers' pedagogical autonomy appeared to be regulated by various policies and guidelines developed by the Academy's senior staff. These school-level policies and guidelines provided teachers with clearly defined expectations on how they should plan their lessons, how they should teach them and how they should assess their pupils' work. It was highlighted by the research participants that these policies became more rigid following the school's conversion. This was to ensure that all teachers adhered to and maintained the Academy's high standards in an attempt to prove that Bricklane Primary Academy belonged to the group of converter academies.

8. Senior staff at Bricklane Primary Academy had the power to decide on the spatial and temporal conditions of teachers' work. For instance, the principal put forward rules that certain books had to be marked in the Academy indicating teachers were not allowed to take them home to complete their marking. Further to this, the Academy's senior managers made amendments to the Academy's calendar. As a result of this change, summer break was shortened to five weeks while the length of half-term holiday in May was extended to two weeks. This change to the school's calendar was possible due to the school's status as an academy. This indicated the extent of senior leaders' powers over the school's calendar suggesting that further changes could be made in the future without consultation with teachers.

9. In terms of the evaluation systems of teaching practice, teachers had no capacity to decide on the rules governing performance management in the Academy.

These findings suggest that teachers' professional autonomy at individual level was greatly constrained. This research found that the only aspect of their professional practice which teachers' felt they had control over was the development of teaching tools and materials. Other aspects of their professional autonomy on individual level were regulated by school-level policies developed by senior members of staff.

In relation to the research question, the key findings of this research indicate that the Bricklane Primary school's conversion to an academy had an impact on teachers' professional autonomy. Researchers have argued that the loss of professional autonomy leads immediately to de-professionalisation of the teaching profession (Evans, 2011). However, considering the findings of this research, I argue that the Academies Programme did not cause a complete de-professionalisation of the teaching profession. A careful examination of the three levels of teachers' professional autonomy demonstrated that teachers' professional autonomy on a general level was diminished. However, as argued by Frostenson (2015), this did not immediately mean that the loss of professional autonomy at the general level result in lost autonomy at the level of practice that encompasses both collegial and individual autonomy. The findings provided additional insights into teachers' collegial and individual autonomy suggesting that in fact there were aspects of teachers' professional practice over which they had restricted decision-making capacity but there were also aspects of their professional practice over which teachers exercised their professional autonomy. It is important to highlight that the aspects of teachers' professional autonomy which were identified as being restricted by either national or school-level policies and regulations would be affected regardless of whether the school had academy status or was under a LA control. Regarding this point, this research challenged the commonly held view by the academies' proponents that the Academies Programme extends autonomy of the school-level actors (Gove, 2010; DfE, 2010a). In fact, the findings of this research suggested that many aspects of teachers' work became controlled more as a direct result of the school's conversion to an academy. This was mainly due to the Academy's leader's drive to keep up the highest possible standards, to maintain the Academy's good results and to prove that Bricklane Primary deserved the academy status. For instance, teachers were excluded from decision-making about matters that affected their work such as the Academy's calendar. Teachers recognised that such changes could occur unexpectedly due to the extended powers of the executive principal making the teachers feel more

vulnerable. Further to this, teachers did not have any opportunities to design a new and innovative curriculum for their pupils and their teaching was heavily scrutinised and regulated by various guidelines that arguably ensured high standards in the Academy. As a result of strict guidelines that governed teachers' work, teachers' workload at the Academy was evidently heavier than in LA maintained schools. Therefore, this led me to argue that autonomy associated with academies is an illusion created by policy makers who tend to present the Academies Programme as leading to empowerment of the professionals at the school level. As this research demonstrated, the term autonomy exists in the discourse about academies rather symbolically as suggested by Edelman (1964, 1977; cited in Poulson, 2006: 420) who argued that 'some words and phrases operate symbolically within a political context, and within them are condensed a range of referents'. In the case of Bricklane Primary Academy, autonomy meant that the Academy was no longer under financial control of the Local Authority, it was free to set working conditions and pay for the staff, and make amendments to the school's calendar. However, the school's conversion to academy status did not increase school-level decision-making.

10.3 Contribution to knowledge and strengths of the research

The key findings of this research indicate that this ethnographic study offers important contributions to knowledge which are highlighted and discussed in this section.

The research reported in this thesis concentrated on teachers' professional work and their views on and perceptions of working in a primary academy. Regarding this, the principal contribution of this research is that it provided teachers with an opportunity to voice their opinions, to reflect on their professional practice and to communicate their experiences of working and teaching in an academy. In addition to this, although limited to one particular academy and individuals in the

research, the findings presented in this thesis provide invaluable insights into the nature of the professional lives of primary academy teachers. These insights offer other teachers who work in all types of state maintained schools information about the realities of working in an academy. Further to this, this thesis also enables the teachers who already work in academies to corroborate and contrast their experiences with the professional experiences of the teachers from Bricklane Primary Academy.

Further to this, in chapters 1 and 2, I have indicated that the number of teachers working in primary academies has been growing since 2010 when the Coalition Government (2010-2015) permitted the creation of primary academies. Although there is a growing body of literature on various aspects of academies, there is yet still limited independent research that examines teachers' experiences of working in academies. What is more, researchers such as Gunter, Woods and Woods (2008), Dee (2010), Hatcher (cited in Beckett, 2012) and Salokangas (2013) have argued that academies are under-researched. Additionally, they also identify various difficulties that researchers face when trying to access academies. Given the view that academies are under-researched and there is limited research about teachers' experiences of working in them, my doctoral study makes an important contribution to the body of research about academies, and in particular primary academies, contributing to our overall understanding of the experiences of those working in this type of school.

Another contribution of this thesis is the conceptual contribution. This research used Frostenson's (2015) three-levelled conceptual model of teachers' professional autonomy that enabled a detailed consideration of various aspects of teachers' autonomy in the context of academies. This then enabled me to provide insight into the extent to which teachers had the capacity to make decisions concerning their professional work on both general and practice

levels, and the extent to which teacher professionalism has been diminished by the Academies Programme. Regarding this, this thesis also makes an important contribution to the existing body of literature which focuses on primary teachers, on teachers work during times of far-reaching and rapid structural change in education, and the impact of the Academies Programme on teacher professionalism and the teaching profession.

Furthermore on the use of the conceptual framework developed by Frostenson (2015), it is important to highlight the usefulness of this model to this research and to any further research that aims to explore matters surrounding teachers' work, teachers' notion of professionalism and teachers' professional autonomy. Frostenson (2015), writing in the context of educational reforms in Sweden, proposed the examination of the three levels of teachers' professional autonomy in order to avoid drawing too hastily conclusions on de-professionalisation of the teaching profession based on a general analysis of implications of educational reforms for teachers. I adapted Frostenson's (2015) ideas to the English context and I utilised his model in this research as a heuristic tool to analyse the data and structure chapters 6, 7 and 8. I also developed the framework further by adding a discussion of the themes broadly related to each of the three levels of autonomy demonstrating that it was possible to adapt the framework for the needs of this research.

Another contribution of this study are the insights offered by my research that contradict the rhetoric associated with the Academies Programme concerning greater autonomy of school-level actors. *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper argued that 'academy status should be the norm for all state schools, with schools enjoying direct funding and full independence from central and local bureaucracy' (DfE, 2010a:52) and that 'Devolving as much decision-making to school level as possible ensures that decisions are being made by the

professionals best able to make good choices for the children and young people they serve' (DfE, 2010a: 51). Despite these claims, my research demonstrates that the Academies Programme does not necessarily increase teachers' decision-making capacity. Indeed, in terms of the Academy's curriculum, it appears to bound the managerial autonomy of the Academy's senior leaders.

Finally, my research adds new insights into research about primary school teachers in England, and builds on and corroborates previous research into teachers' professional lives regarding such themes as the intensification of teachers' work, continuously increasing performativity, and proletarianisation of teaching.

Considering the contributions my doctoral study makes, it is also possible to identify the strengths of the research. One of them is the prolonged period that I spent in the research setting. Visiting the Academy over one school year allowed me to build relations with teachers, became familiar with their day to day activities, and it also enabled me to develop a more holistic view of the environment in which teachers worked.

10.4 Limitations of the study

This research is not free from its limitations that were identified and discussed below. In terms of the methodology chosen for this research, it is crucial to highlight that this research was based on a single case study primary academy. Thus, given the small-scale of the study, this research is prone to criticism for being non-generalisable and biased. Regarding this point, in section 4.6.2 I have argued that due to the ontological assumptions underlying ethnography, making generalisations from data is not the main concern of ethnographers who allow for multiple understandings and interpretations of reality. Moreover, section 4.6.2

discussed the strategies that were used to attain research rigour through ensuring trustworthiness of my research (Given and Saumure, 2008). Therefore, throughout the research process, consideration was given to the strategies that enabled to establish transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of this research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This provided counterargument to the potential criticism of this research for lacking generalisability and for being biased. However, as this research was focused on one case-study academy, future research should encompass all primary academies that work under one trust as this would develop an understanding of within-chain variations regarding teachers' professional experiences. This would also allow to determine the extent to which teachers' professional autonomy is restricted by national policies, trust policies or individual academy's policies.

Further to this, this ethnography offered an insight into the situated experiences of Bricklane Primary Academy's teachers from the teachers' perspective focusing on their own views, understandings and interpretations of events, as well as experiences of working in an academy. In addition to teachers, the views of the executive principal, the Academy's principal and teaching assistants were listened to and incorporated into the research. Nonetheless, this research did not include the opinions of other members of the school's community such as pupils and their parents, administrators and trustees. Although the study focused on teachers, ascertaining the views and perceptions of other stakeholders could have provided a more holistic view of the school's academy conversion and the impact it has had on the wider school community.

Another limitation of this research is related to ethical matters that were identified during the course of the research and during the write-up of this thesis. As outlined in section 4.7, I have considered the potential long-term consequences of teachers' participation in my research and I recognised the importance of protecting their anonymity. Regarding this, in an attempt to ensure

that teachers remained anonymous and unidentifiable through the thesis's narrative, I decided not to link teachers' pseudonyms with their specialist roles in the school, the department in which they worked and the year group they taught. This led me to exclude detailed information about the participants under their quotes that were used in this thesis. The implication of this decision was that the thesis might be limited by a lack of important information about the research participants that might have given a fuller sense of the researched population. Nevertheless, the need to protect the participants' privacy was of greater importance.

The final identified limitation of this research relates to my role and positionality in the research setting as well as my ability to build rapport with the research participants. Although there were numerous benefits associated with my prolonged presence in the Academy (see section 4.5.1), it is important to acknowledge that I do not make claims of having attained a complete knowledge and understanding of the teachers' professional lives as there were many aspects of their daily routines that I did not participate in. For instance, there were staff meetings to which I was not invited due to the meetings' confidential nature. Further to this, as discussed in section 4.4, some teachers displayed their reluctance towards my presence in their classroom. This had implications for the nature of data generated as some teachers were not willing to commit the necessary time to share information with me.

10.5 Recommendations

Building on the key research findings and on the contribution to knowledge this research makes as well as considering the limitations of this study, it is possible to identify recommendations for further research as well as recommendations for practice resulting from this study although I acknowledge the small-scale of this research.

1. Considering the findings of this research, senior managers at Bricklane Primary Academy should review the Academy's policy regarding observations of teachers' work and place a limit on the number of observations conducted during a school year. This research found that teachers, although acknowledged some benefits of observations, found them too stressful and time-consuming.

2. For academy senior managers, I recommend that they should ensure that teachers are given more opportunities for informal meetings with their colleagues outside of formally organised staff meetings. This means that the senior managers should seek ways to alleviate teachers' workload through, for instance, reviewing certain policies such as the marking policy that caused heavier workload according to the teachers in this research.

3. A further recommendation for the senior managers at Bricklane Primary Academy is to ensure that teachers are more extensively and meaningfully consulted about matters that affect their work and their working conditions. Further to this, senior managers should ensure that teachers' opinions are taken into consideration and are acted upon. This research demonstrated that teachers' views were not taken into account on a number of occasions, including the school's conversion to an academy, the change of the school calendar and during the review of school policies.

4. A final recommendation for the senior managers at Bricklane Primary Academy is that they should ensure that teachers are given more opportunities to make decisions on all aspects concerning their teaching practices. As this research demonstrated, teachers' capacity to decide on the content of their lessons was greatly determined by the National Curriculum which teachers in this research perceived as a useful and helpful guideline. Nevertheless, teachers were also provided with various guidelines such as marking policy, features of outstanding lesson and guidelines on how to conduct their teaching sessions, to name just a few. These regulations left little scope for teachers to make their own decisions on their professional practice.

5. Policy makers should be made aware of the fact that accountability measures including Ofsted inspections, meeting age-related targets set within the National Curriculum, and preparing students for their Statutory Assessment Tests bound academies' autonomy. Specifically, these accountability measures affect academies' right to design their own curriculum because the national expectations determine the content of the curriculum that academies should teach to their students.

6. Considering the limitations of this research, there are also recommendations for further research that could enhance the findings of this study. Further research could involve a case study on both academies that were working under the Sky Education Trust. Such a research would provide comparative data on within-chain variations on professional experiences of teachers. Further to this, examining professional autonomy of teachers in both primary academies under one Trust would also allow for revealing the variations in involvement of senior managers in teachers' professional practice in both academies, and then determine whether the extent to which teachers' professional autonomy was bound was a result of national expectations or expectations of individual academy's senior managers.

7. Review of literature indicated that research into the views and experiences of teachers who work in academies is limited. Regarding this, there is a growing need to conduct more studies into various aspects of teachers' experiences of working in academies. Such studies could involve ethnographies of individual academies, case studies of group of academies or even surveys conducted in all academies in England.

8. Additionally, further studies could incorporate the views of students and their parents, as well as other people affected by schools' conversions to academies.

9. Finally, further research could involve longitudinal studies that could provide teachers' changing views over time on matters regarding their work in academies, both primary and secondary.

10.6 Final personal reflections

This PhD was a journey which offered me a number of new opportunities. Through my doctoral studies, I deepened my knowledge and understanding of various research methods and in particular I explored ethnography in depth. My experience of conducting my own study sparked my interest in this research methodology and led me to start up The Ethnographers' Club at LJMU together with a fellow PhD student. The Club has brought together researchers from a wide range of disciplines who are at various stages of their careers and it has served as a platform for discussions about challenges, opportunities and dilemmas of conducting ethnographic studies. Such discussions extend beyond the context of school settings; therefore, they provide me with new insights into ethnographies in various fields. The Ethnographers' Club has also provided me with a learning experience of organising meetings and initiating inter-departmental and inter-institutional collaborations.

Further to this, my research enabled me to gain insights into the experiences of teachers in a primary academy, and the review of literature increased my understanding of the history of teachers' work in England. I was privileged to share my knowledge about teaching and working in an academy setting at various conferences and talks both at Liverpool John Moores University and at other institutions. The conferences that enabled me to disseminate the earlier findings of my research included the Annual Ethnography Symposium (Chrostowska, 2015), the British Education Studies Association conference (Chrostowska, 2015a), the British Educational Research Association conference (Chrostowska, 2015b), and the Australian Association for Research in Education conference (Chrostowska, 2016). In addition to the opportunity of presenting my research findings at national and international conferences, I received invaluable feedback on my study from the audience.

In addition to attending academic conferences, I also attended the Academies Show in London and in Birmingham. The Academies Show is an annual event dedicated to the academies and wider education sector. Participation in these events provided me with a different perspective on the matter of academisation given the Show's agenda was on encouraging school leaders to convert their schools to academies, and providing the stakeholders from the education sector with information about legal and financial support related to academy conversion.

Besides my development as a researcher, my doctoral studies has undoubtedly taught me the importance of perseverance. I spent four years attempting to understand various point of views regarding the Academies Programme in England, and I feel that this research is only the first step in my further explorations of teachers' complex and rich professional lives which I find extremely interesting.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Email sent to select research setting

Dear Mr xxxx,

I am a first year PhD student at Liverpool John Moores University and your contact details were passed onto me by Ms x.

I am writing to you because I would like to conduct an ethnographic study in a primary school that has recently acquired an academy status. As your school acquired an academy status in December 2013, I would like to kindly ask you whether you would be interested in taking part in my research. The focus of my research is on teachers' experiences and perceptions on working in a primary school that is now an Academy. Through my research, I would like to engage teachers in the process of reflecting on their role as Academy teachers.

Due to the nature of an ethnographic study that requires a researcher to spend a substantial time in the setting that is being researched, I would like to ask you whether it would be possible for me to spend one year in your school. If that was possible, I would like to offer my help, for instance as a school assistant, in return for your permission to conduct my study.

I have a previous experience of working with children in different settings. In the past, I worked as a live-in au-pair looking after children age 5 months to 10 years old. I also worked with children in a community centre as a part of my University placement when studying Education Studies and English for my undergraduate degree. Further to this, when studying for my degree, I worked part time in a primary school where my duties included helping with food preparation, assisting teachers during school trips and working as a teaching assistant (please find attached a reference letter from the xxx School).

I attended a Safeguarding Children training conducted by both Liverpool John Moores University and the xxx School. Further to this, I will obtain current, valid clearance from the UK Disclosure

and Barring Service (DBS) prior to accessing your school.

I hope that my previous experience of working with children would assist me in providing my help in your school during the course of my research.

If you would like to request more information regarding my study, or if you would like to speak to me about it in person or over the telephone, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Marlena Chrostowska

Appendix 2: Responses from the contacted schools

A.

24.05.2014

Dear Marlena,

Apologies for taking so long to respond. Your request was complicated in that we are in the process of inducting a number of trainee teachers for next year. Our capacity to accommodate other interested professionals who wish to assist at the school is therefore severely limited. Consequently, I am having to say no to your request and kind offer of support.

I hope that you find a worthwhile placement.

Best wishes,

[name]

B.

9.06.2014

Dear Marlena

Thank you for your email and taking an interest in [school's name] *Primary School.*

Unfortunately we are not taking on any students or extra volunteers. Places have been allocated to others.

Kind regards

[name]
Headteacher

C.

14.06.2014

Marlena,

Thank you for your enquiry regarding research work at [school's name]. *Unfortunately, we have a full schedule of newly appointed staff who will need monitoring and support all year in addition to a new Headteacher from September. It is not something we can offer at this time, although I do appreciate your studies provide an important evidence base for informing practice in schools.*

Please accept my very best wishes & I hope that you are fortunate in gaining a placement in another northwest Academy.
Kind regards,
[name]

D.

> *10.06.2014*
>
> *Hi*
>
> *Thanks for your emails and apologies for not replying sooner. I have consulted with our Executive head teacher and we don't think it's possible for your research to be completed within our schools.*
>
> *Wishing you success for your project.*
> *[name]*

E.

> 20.06.2014
>
> *Dear Ms Chrostowska*
>
> *Thank you for your email of 17th June.*
>
> *At the moment, the school does not wish to be part of this research*
>
> *Thank you*
>
> *[name]*
> *Office Manager*

F.

> *13.06.2014*
>
> *Hi Marlena,*
> *It was lovely to meet you yesterday. Unfortunately on reflection we are not going to be in a position to support you next year. With other variables at stake we do not feel that we are in a position to offer such a placement in our current situation.*
> *If ever we can be of assistance in the future however then please do not hesitate to contact me.*
> *Regards,*
> *[name]*

Appendix 3: Pseudonyms given to school staff

Pseudonym	Role
Ms Jones	Teacher
Ms Williams	Teacher
Ms Harris	Teacher
Ms Davies	Teacher
Ms Hill	Teacher
Ms Hudson	Teacher
Ms Dixon	Teacher
Ms Fisher	Teacher
Ms Clark	Teacher
Ms Parker	Teacher
Ms Taylor	Teacher
Ms Collins	Teacher
Ms Smith	Teacher
Ms Erickson	Teacher
Ms Adams	Teacher
Ms Kelly	Teacher
Mr Richardson	Executive Principal
Mr Peters	Principal
Ms Evans	Teaching Assistant
Ms Robinson	Teaching Assistant
Ms White	Teaching Assistant
Ms Hughes	Teaching Assistant
Ms Lewis	Teaching Assistant
Ms Turner	Teaching Assistant
Ms Ward	Teaching Assistant
Ms Moore	Teaching Assistant

Appendix 4: Participants who took part in interviews and focus groups

Name	Role in the Academy	Interview
Mr Richardson	executive principal	Interview January 2015
Ms Williams	teacher	Interview February 2015
Ms Harris	teacher	Interview February 2015
Ms Hill	teacher	Interview Feb/March 2015
Ms Davies	teacher	Interview January 2015
Ms Hudson	teacher	Interview March 2015
Ms Dixon	teacher	Interview April 2015
Mr Peters	principal	Interview June 2015
Ms Parker	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Clark	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Taylor	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Jones	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Collins	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Smith	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Erickson	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Kelly	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Adams	teacher	Interview June 2015
Ms Fisher	teacher	Interview March 2015
Focus group 1	Teaching assistants	Focus Group June 2015
Focus Group 2	Teaching Assistants	Focus Group July 2015

Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview schedule

Interview Schedule

<u>**Questions:**</u>

1. Do you remember the time when you were informed that the school was going to convert to an academy? What did you think about it? How did you feel about it? Do you know what the other teachers thought about the conversion? Why, in your opinion, it was decided the school would convert to academy status?

2. Has the conversion process affected you and your work in any way?

3. Has anything changed in the school after the conversion?

4. Do you think that you have any freedoms resulting from the school's conversion?

5. What are the characteristics of an academy school? How does an academy differ from a LA school?

6. Why, in your opinion, the school decided to follow the National Curriculum?

7. How do you feel about teaching the NC?

8. What are your thoughts about the new NC?

9. Can you describe the interactions between the teachers?

10. How can you characterize and describe a teaching profession nowadays?

Appendix 6: Semi-structured focus group schedule

Focus Group Schedule

Semi-structured focus group schedule with the Teaching Assistants

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Interview Protocol
- Remind the participants of the area of my research focus.
- Remind the respondents of their rights (Participant Information Sheet) and collect the Consent forms
- Remind the respondents that the focus group will take maximum one hour.
- Remind the respondents that I am asking them for permission to audio record.
- Remind them that their names will not be attached to the data. If anyone does not give permission to be recorded, I will ask them if they are happy to attend a separate interview session during which I will only take notes. If this is refused, that person will not take part in the research.
- Ask the respondent if they have any questions before the interview goes ahead.

</div>

Please comment on:

- How long have you worked in this schools for?

- What are your duties and responsibilities?

- How do you support teachers?

- What are your perceptions of the teaching profession?

- has the teachers' working practices changed after the school's conversion?

- Have you observed any changes in the school after the school's conversion?

Appendix 7: Example of a transcript excerpt

M	You are still ok to be recorded?	
C	Yes	
M	Have you got any questions?	
C	No.	
M	Ok, that's great. So we can start. So do you remember the time when the school converted to an academy? Do you remember what you thought, felt, and what other people were thinking about it. what was happening?	
C	At first, it was a surprise to me. I didn't know what was going to happen so I was unsure about it. In the news, everyone talks about academies being forced, that schools are being forced to become academies so I thought it was for that reason. But then I learnt that we actually, it was a good thing and our head wanted us to do well. So he wanted us to become an academy for good reasons. And there are benefits about it. So it made me happy about that. I was still a little unsure about what changes would happen. We had a meeting where we were able to ask questions and things. But still I was a bit unsure, I didn't really understand to be honest. The teachers, we did talk a little bit ourselves about it but normally when people talk about things outside of school, they concentrate on the bad things about it. So we were like 'oh, the money is going to be bad, we are going to have to work in the holidays, the school day is going to be longer' but actually none of that has happened.	The image created by the media The impact of the media on her views Reasons for becoming an academy- head's influence on her views Feelings- happy&uncertain Meetings Lack of understanding of the academies programme The fears

Appendix 8: Participant Information Sheet

     LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

Primary School Teachers' Experiences of and Perspectives on Working in an Academy

Miss Marlena Chrostowska
Faculty of Education, Health and Community

You are being invited to take part in a research that is a part of my PhD study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of my research is to learn what it is like to be a teacher working in an Academy. Through my research, I would like to learn about the culture of your school as well as your thoughts, perceptions and experiences of working in a school that has converted to academy status. I am also interested in finding out how you experienced the transition your school went through and your response to that transition.

2. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in my study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. However, you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

3. What will happen to me if I take part?

As part of my study, I will volunteer as a school assistant for the period of one year in the school where you work and I will use different ways of learning about your perceptions and experiences of working in an academy school. These will include observations, informal conversations or formal interviews and group interviews.

4. Are there any risks / benefits involved?

Although the nature of my research is not controversial, there is always a possibility that you may have some negative experiences to share. Therefore, this type of information will be dealt with sensitivity and you have the right to state that you do not wish to comment on any questions that you may feel uncomfortable with.

However, my research will give you the opportunity to reflect on your role as a teacher in a changing environment that is your school.

5. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Any information received will be treated confidentially. You will not be named within this research. It will not be possible to identify you. All information collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you will not be disclosed to anyone. All the collected data will be kept secure and will be destroyed five years from the completion of the project. Only the researcher will have the access to the recordings.

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee on 10th April 2014 and the REC number is *14/EHC/032.*

Contact Details of Researcher and Academic Supervisors

If there are any issues concerning the study that you wish to discuss further, you may contact me by sending me an email at M.Chrostowska@ljmu.ac.uk or you can contact my research supervisors
Dr Gillian Forrester at G.Forrester@ljmu.ac.uk and Dr Caroline Bath at C.M.Bath@ljmu.ac.uk.

Appendix 9: Consent Form

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

Primary School Teachers' Experiences of and Perspectives on Working in an Academy

Miss Marlena Chrostowska
Faculty of Education, Health and Community

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.

3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential

4. I agree to take part in the above study in which I will be observed by the researcher

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Note: When completed 1 copy for participant and 1 copy for researcher

Appendix 10: Extract of the Academy's marking policy

Marking Policy

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