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Framing, explaining and forming the National Improvement Framework

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Declaration of authenticity and author's rights

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

Signed: 

Date: 7 January 2019

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List of abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
EdD	Doctor of Education
FE	Further Education
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
NIF	National Improvement Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEF	Pupil Equity Fund
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SFL	Systemic functional linguistics
SNP	Scottish National Party
SNPF	Scottish National Performance Framework
SSLN	Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy
SQH	Scottish Qualification for Headship
TODA	Textually orientated discourse analysis

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Abstract

The National Improvement Framework (NIF) is intended to bring together the Scottish Government's priorities for education into one source. It promotes educational improvement through two main aims: achieving excellence and equity. It was published in January 2016 and is updated annually.

Adams' (2016) original approach to policy analysis is used to examine how the NIF has been formed through discourse (for example, conversations) at the micro level *(policy-forming).* However, these do not occur outside the social, cultural, historical or economic sphere in which they take place (Gee, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to consider how policy ideas are framed through wider Discourse *(policy-framing),* and subsequently presented and explained in policy pronouncements *(policy-explaining).*

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis was used to examine *policy-framing* and *policy-explaining.* The literature was used as data to highlight wider Discourse that *framed* the NIF. The NIF is *framed* within Discourse that espouses a Scottish identity through education, education in a globalised society and as a means to achieve equity. The internal relations, organisation and structure of the NIF policy text was examined to understand how the NIF was *explained.* Words and images are used that position education as a top priority with children placed centre staged. There is a focus on improvement and numbers that has positioned data as a symbolic form of capital.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with seventeen primary school teachers and analysed thematically to show how the NIF was *formed.* Since the NIF was published, there has been an increase in formal assessment and data tracking. Teachers are engaging in discussions about data, and children are being referred to by their "data double" when achievement is reduced to colour coding on a spreadsheet. The distribution of pupil equity funding (PEF) is sometimes being prioritised for children in P1-P3. These practices are conceptualised as gaming by schools, although often resisted by teachers, which is not always commensurate with the aims of the Scottish curriculum.

It is recommended that the purpose of the NIF and its relationship to CfE is made clear to teachers. Schools need to examine the practices that have formed around tracking and the distribution of PEF. Local authorities and the Scottish Government need to examine the practices that have formed, and the increased sense of accountability felt by teachers, due to 'reaching into' schools' data.

Chapter 1 Introduction to the study

> What is now required is empirical research to examine how policy unfolds into practice 'on the ground', examining it not only from the perspectives of those instrumental in the formation of the policy but the recipients of it.
>
> (Mowat, 2018a, p.316)

The aim of this study is to examine the National Improvement Framework (NIF), through the lens of positioning theory and how it is *formed* at the local level by teachers. The NIF was published in January 2016 and aims to bring together the priorities for Scottish education.

This chapter outlines Adams' (2016) notion of policy as position and how policy is formed at the micro-level through discursive practices. My professional background is provided to understand my motivation for undertaking this study, as well as the curriculum and policy context in which it is based. The rationale for posing three research questions to address the aim of this study, along with the contribution it makes to knowledge, is provided. Finally, the structure of this twelve-chapter thesis is outlined.

1.1 Introduction

Adams (2016) suggests that policy is formed through *policy as position;* policy is formed at the micro level by the discussions and activities that take place at that level (Adams, 2011a). He argues that to understand policy requires acknowledgement of how professional selves are operationalised as positions. Policy as position is not a reaction to policy, but how policy is continually formed and re-formed through discursive practices for example, conversations (Adams, 2011a).

By examining 'little-d' discourse, the linguistic elements of language (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005) used in conversation, the policy researcher can employ positioning theory to reveal the positions that are offered, resisted and taken up by individuals at the micro level (Adams, 2016). Adams (2011a) argues that it is the aggregation of these positions that form policy.

Whilst ‘position calls’, the tacit allurement to take up different subject positions (Drewery, 2005), offered by the policy text and wider frames of Discourse (‘big-D’), attempt to position individuals and may limit the opportunity for action, individuals have the option to choose whether they accept, reject or modify such calls (Adams, 2011a). This does not occur in isolation to other factors (Gee, 2012).

1.2 Aim and research questions

Using the tripartite approach proposed by Adams (2016), the policy researcher can examine how policy is positioned, thus formed and re-formed through discourse (for example, conversations) at the micro level *(policy-forming)*. However, these do not occur outside the social, cultural, historical or economic sphere in which they take place (Gee, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to consider how policy ideas are framed through wider Discourse *(policy-framing)*, and subsequently presented and explained in policy texts *(policy-explaining)*.

The aim of this study is to examine the National Improvement Framework (NIF), through the lens of positioning theory and how it is *formed* at the local level by teachers. Three research questions have been addressed by the study:

1. What wider Discourse has *framed* the National Improvement Framework?
2. How is the National Improvement Framework *explained* in official policy texts?
3. How is the National Improvement Framework *formed* at the local level by teachers?

1.3 My background

I outline my personal and professional background to highlight the position in which I have approached this study. I am employed as a Curriculum Manager in a further education (FE) college in Glasgow, having started my career as a secondary school teacher. This study is therefore approached from an informed perspective that subsequently entails ethical and power considerations, as discussed in sections 5.5 and 9.4. I decided to move from secondary education to FE as I had studied at college and thoroughly enjoyed it. I would not have progressed to University if it were not for the support and encouragement received at college. My success in education has been based on interaction and relationships with peers and tutors; they have scaffolded growth in my

confidence and ability. I view education as powerful and something that can change lives. My position and its relationship to my research is discussed in section 3.2.

Before starting the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme, I viewed policy as something 'top down' and there to be complied with. I considered policy as *merely* a document that was filed away, prescriptive and contained steps to be followed. My experience was that policies often contained flow charts that provided instructions to teachers on how to deal with different situations. I had never reflected upon the fact that people can interpret policy differently. However, having conducted this study, my view has changed. People do interpret things differently and as this study demonstrates, I argue teachers are more powerful than they realise when it comes to forming policy at the micro level. Teachers are not passive subjects of policy as I initially thought.

My motivation for undertaking the EdD is varied and fits broadly with the motivators for undertaking a Doctorate proposed by Scott, Brown, Lunt and Thorne (2004). The motivators proposed by Scott et al. (2004) are two-fold: extrinsic and intrinsic. My extrinsic motivators include using the EdD to gain professional recognition and advance my own professional development. Despite being the first in my family to undertake an undergraduate degree, never mind a Doctoral one, my intrinsic motivation is primarily based on obtaining academic challenge and personal achievement.

Sikes and Wellington (2006) highlight that it is often 'critical incidents' in one's past which prompts them to undertake Doctoral study and I agree. For example, not being encouraged at school to pursue further or higher education, or to achieve my aspiration of becoming a teacher. This lack of encouragement has made me approach further and higher education with determination and has ignited my capacity to be resilient. I have always been determined to "show them", despite leaving school at 15 with few qualifications, that I can be successful in education. Scott et al. (2004) suggest someone undertaking a Doctorate may do so to enhance 'professional performance' and achieve career acceleration. However, this is not a motivator of mine. Rather, I agree with Sikes and Wellington (2006) that it is about developing confidence, a professional identity and disposition. It is about proving I can do it.

Although a Professional Doctorate can be viewed as a "PhD with coursework", (Maxwell, 2003, p.289), this is why I favoured an EdD compared to a PhD. The taught element of the EdD provided time to develop critical reading and writing skills, and my understanding of the challenges present when conducting research. It provided space in a 'safe' environment to propose suggestions and develop as a 'scholarly professional', rather than a 'professional scholar' associated with the PhD (Gregory, 1995). It also allowed me to develop theory through practice by undertaking 'engaged scholarship' (Boyer, 1990) and epistemologically, to generate knowledge based on practice, that has the potential to impact on practice[1] (Fulton, Kuit, Sanders, & Smith, 2012). I was keen to engage in research that can stimulate discussion and influence policy and practice. I view the EdD as a way of providing back to the education community that has helped me achieve my goals.

Finally, my decision to undertake the EdD compared to a PhD is commensurate with the argument that the EdD is better aligned to those working, and seeking development, of professional practice (Pratt, Tedder, Boyask, & Kelly, 2015). As Lee, Green and Brennan (2009) highlight, a professional doctorate allows for learning across multiple 'spaces': professional, work, university and personal, which I think is an advantage.

1.4 The policy context

Two key policies, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the National Improvement Framework (NIF), are discussed to provide context to this study.

1.4.1 Curriculum for Excellence

Scotland's curriculum, CfE, is a fundamental change to the structure and flexibility of its previous curriculum and has the potential to radically change the educational experience of learners (Priestley & Humes, 2010). From its inception in 2004, it aimed to improve learning and to bring together different curricula into one framework for 3-18 year olds (Scottish Executive, 2004).

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[1] Gibbons et al. (1994) terms this 'mode 2' knowledge, compared to 'mode 1' knowledge traditionally associated with the PhD; knowledge obtained through academic content, research which is homogeneous in scope compared to the diverse, practice-based and contextual nature of 'mode' 2 knowledge.

The former 5-14 curriculum[2] measured learner progress against pre-defined achievement levels, with teachers adopting assessment-driven practices and relying on national assessments (Hayward & Hutchinson, 2013). CfE however, contains broad learner-focused 'I can' statements, with emphasis placed on developing skills for learning, life and work, and providing opportunities for children to personalise and choose what and how they learn. CfE aims to provide teachers opportunities to develop assessment practices that promote, rather than restrict learning, and to plan the curriculum around the needs of their own pupils (Hayward & Hutchinson, 2013). This shift in emphasis is notable from the policy discourse that predated it (Keddie, Mills, & Pendergast, 2011) and thus represents, on the surface, a decrease of input regulation at the macro level (Leat, Livingston, & Priestley, 2013).

Scotland is not unique in its approach to the curriculum. Since the turn of the century, other English-speaking systems have also espoused a change of curriculum, termed the 'new curriculum' by Biesta and Priestley (2013). Whilst the 'new curriculum' varies from location to location, there are common threads (for example, a shift towards a skill-based curriculum, learner-centred approaches, greater autonomy to develop the curriculum by teachers) which run through each (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014).

1.4.2 National Improvement Framework

The Scottish Government published a new education policy in January 2016 called the National Improvement Framework (NIF). The NIF is positioned by the Scottish Government as a tool for achieving excellence and equity, by improving Scottish education and closing the poverty-related attainment gap (Scottish Government, 2016b). In Scotland, the attainment gap connected to socio-economic status begins before a child starting school, continues, and increases over their school journey (Mowat, 2018a). The NIF encompasses the plethora of policies and initiatives the Scottish Government have introduced to reduce the attainment gap. For example, the Scottish Attainment Challenge that provides funding directly to schools through for example, the pupil equity fund (PEF). This is supported by national Attainment Advisors, as well as the creation of an online resource for practitioners called the 'National Improvement Hub' (Mowat, 2018a).

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[2] The 5-14 curriculum was introduced in 1987 and consisted of a set of guidelines covering five broad curriculum areas that should be taught in Primary 1 – Primary 7 and Secondary 1 & 2.

The NIF sets out the Scottish Government's vision and priorities for children and young people's progress in learning. The NIF states that children and young people should:

- Be supported to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to be successful in learning, work and life, regardless of any barriers they may face;
- Achieve the highest standards in literacy and numeracy set against CfE levels[3];
- Be equipped with an appropriate range of skills, qualifications and other achievements to enable sustained, positive destinations after leaving school;
- Have equal opportunities to succeed, specifically in relation to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, between the most and least disadvantaged children.

(Scottish Government, 2016b)

The NIF aims to address some points raised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in its report on Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective in December 2015. The OECD has become an important and influential actor in the educational policy arena since the 1990s (Sellar & Lingard, 2013) and the influence of the OECD is part of a wider, growing international convergence of education policy making (Thompson & Cook, 2014).

As table 1.1 denotes, the NIF aims to provide new robust, consistent and transparent evidence against six key drivers of improvement. The evidence gathered for each key driver is intended to be used to examine what works in the Scottish education system and what improvements can be made (Scottish Government, 2016b). Data for each key driver will apparently be used for several purposes at different levels: child, parent/carer, school, local authority and National.

[3] A CfE level correlates to the level of learning across the broad general education phase (pre-school to Secondary 3): early, first, second, third and fourth. The annual NIF report documents the percentage of children achieving expected CfE levels in Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 3.

Key driver	What is it?
School leadership	Leadership quality and impact at all levels (including staff) in a school.
Teacher professionalism	The impact of professional learning on the progress and achievement of children, and the quality of the overall teaching workforce.
Parental engagement	Supporting children's learning through parents, families and professionals working together.
Assessment of children's progress	Evidence on what was learned and achieved by children during their time at school. This includes qualifications, awards and achievement of CfE levels.
School improvement	A school's overall quality of education, including how effective it is in driving future improvement.
Performance information	Data from each of the other key drivers, indicating how well Scottish education is improving as a whole.

***Table 1.1** - key drivers of improvement (Scottish Government, 2016c)*

Whilst a proportion of this thesis is focused on how the NIF is framed within wider Discourse (chapter 7), explained in relevant policy texts (chapter 8), chapter 10 is dedicated to how the NIF was at the micro level. In chapter 10, attention is paid to the 'assessment of children's progress' driver because of its close relationship to learning and my research interests. Data gathered for the assessment of children's progress driver will include at school, local authority and national level, the percentage of children achieving expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy in Primary 1 (P1), Primary 4 (P4), Primary 7 (P7) and Secondary 3 (S3) (Scottish Government, 2016b). There are five levels of learning: early, first, second, third and fourth. The data gathered, based on teacher professional judgement, was collected for the first time in academic session 2016/17 and from session 2017/18, includes data from standardised tests (Scottish Government, 2016a).

Since 2016, the annual NIF report published in December each year has detailed overall progress towards the six drivers of improvement. This report includes the percentage of

children achieving expected CfE levels in literacy and numeracy in P1, P4, P7 and S3: early level by the end of P1, first level by the end of P4, second level by the end of P7 and third and fourth level by the end of S3. The government has said this data is being collected to establish the National picture of attainment in literacy and numeracy to 'know the gap in order to close the gap' (Scottish Government, 2016a). It is intended that this data will be used at government, local authority and school level, to agree targets to attempt to reduce the attainment gap between those pupils from the lowest and highest socio-economic group.

Between 2003 and 2016, before the introduction of the NIF, data was published by the Scottish Government that had been collected from a sample of learners across the country who had sat the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) (OECD, 2015). Local authorities provided this data. The SSLN report alternated annually between literacy and numeracy and did not contain data relating to individual schools. However, before 2003, local authorities were required to submit school performance data to the Scottish Government, based on the results of National tests. This requirement was removed as it had a negative impact on teacher judgement and caused conflict with assessment for learning and accountability (Hayward, 2015). A Scottish Government circular at that time acknowledged that testing was influencing what was being taught (Hutchison & Young, 2011).

Assessment policy in Scotland since 2003 has concentrated on marrying assessment for learning and assessment for accountability (Hutchison & Young, 2011), through the assessment is for learning programme and use of formative assessment practices. However, there is the potential for Scotland to return to a regime it attempted to move away from over thirteen years ago with the introduction of standardised testing from 2017. At the time the empirical work for this study was conducted (spring/summer 2017), standardised testing was about to be re-introduced in schools. Therefore, the impact of this on policy-forming is not considered.

The NIF is a statutory requirement for Scottish schools, local and national government and was incorporated into the Education (Scotland) 2016 Act, through amendments to the existing Standards in Schools etc Act 2000. This Act aims to help provide an education system that focuses on improvement, reduces the attainment gap, and delivers excellence

and equity (Scottish Government, 2016g). Local authorities are required to use the priorities detailed in the NIF to plan their delivery of annual improvement activities in schools. These improvement activities will include the creation and publication of annual plans and reports that are submitted to the Scottish Government that detail:

- The way they are pursuing the priorities of the NIF;
- How they are attempting to reduce any inequalities experienced by children due to socio-economic disadvantage;
- The educational benefits for children from taking these actions.

(Scottish Government, 2016g)

It is intended that contributing towards the plans and reports produced by each local authority, is information obtained from schools through their own school improvement process. There is a duty on head teachers under the Act to produce plans and reports that detail past and future activity to drive improvement in their own school. At the time this study was conducted, a review into school governance was being undertaken and it was proposed that head teachers would be responsible for raising attainment in their own school.

1.5 Rationale and originality

This thesis contributes to what Mowat (2018a) suggests is required, by providing an account based on empirical work, of how the NIF has come to be formed immediately 'on the ground' after a period of eighteen months since its introduction. However, in attending to such task, what is also required is an examination of how policy ideas are presented and explained, framed through wider Discourse, to examine how policy is formed 'on the ground' through discourse (Adams, 2016). Therefore, Adams' (2016) original tripartite approach to policy analysis, through *policy-framing*, *policy-explaining* and *policy-forming*, is used as a theoretical basis for this thesis. This is the first empirical study to apply Adams' approach to policy analysis, therefore demonstrating originality through utilising a new methodology to undertake a piece of research (Phillips & Pugh, 2010). This study is also likely to be one of the first pieces of empirical research conducted about the NIF, thus research is being conducted in a new context (Phillips &

Pugh, 2010). The study may be of interest to academics, the policy community and 'those on the ground' for example, teachers and schools.
The social interpretation and construction of policy 'enactment' is not always reported (Maguire, Braun, & Ball, 2015) and is therefore worthy of exploration. As Maguire et al. (2015) highlight, research often describes how policy is 'implemented' rather than helping to understand the 'roles' different people have and the context they are 'implemented'. These factors are important in shaping policy (Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011). The terms 'implementation', 'enactment' and 'roles' are used with caution. As this thesis argues, the term '*forming'*, rather than 'implementation' or 'enactment' and the term *'position'* rather than 'role' is more appropriate.

Adams (2016) uses positioning theory as a basis for his tripartite approach to policy analysis. Positioning theory offers a framework to consider, explore and understand the experiences and perspectives that individuals have (Willig, 1999) and a vehicle for explaining and understanding how social and psychic phenomena are 'created' (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Thus, enabling the social interpretation and construction of policy as Maguire et al. (2015) highlight, to be examined. Positioning theory can enable us to understand what people do, and the meanings attributed to what they do, and why they do it (Brinkmann, 2010). Positioning theory's value as a theoretical framework is yet to be fully realised (Zelle, 2009) and by using it in this thesis, provides an example of how it can be used to understand the analysis of education policy.

Finally, the NIF emerged as a policy pronouncement in draft form in autumn 2015, the year before I started the research stage of my EdD. I therefore began to consider how I might use the timing of the NIF coincide with the research stage of the degree. I had an opportunity to examine a policy that was new and potentially controversial. What a great basis for a Doctoral thesis! My interest in education policy, particularly in assessment stemming from work I conducted at Masters level, sparked my desire to use the NIF as a basis for my research.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis is not structured in a 'traditional' way i.e. literature review, methods, results and discussion, often in single chapters. For ease of the reader, it is structured in accordance with the approach to policy analysis adopted.

Chapter 1 introduces this study and the rationale for carrying it out.

Chapter 2 is a literature-based chapter that examines how policy is conceived by exploring models of policy implementation and policy enactment.

Chapter 3 explores the philosophical and theoretical basis of this thesis. The study is based upon a relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology. Positioning theory is examined, through the acceptance, resistance or rejection of 'positions', to shed light on the policy process.

Chapter 4 examines the notion of policy as position (Adams, 2011a); how policy is formed at the micro level through conversation. Adams' (2016) tripartite approach to policy analysis is used to examine how policy is framed through Discourse, subsequently explained in policy texts, and formed at the local level through conversation. This approach to policy analysis is overlaid by the 'position call', the tacit allurement to take up, resist or reject different subject positions.

Chapter 5 examines the methodology employed to conduct this study. Issues surrounding research design, ethics and research quality are considered. The methods used to collect and analyse data are identified, but are explored in the relevant methods chapter before results are presented.

Chapter 6 provides a rationale and discussion of the data collection and analysis methods used to undertake *policy-framing* and *policy-explaining.* NIF policy texts and the literature have been used as data and analysed using Fairclough's (1989) three-tiered approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Chapter 7 presents a discussion of *policy-framing* by attending to the position calls espoused by wider Discourse surrounding the NIF through using literature as data. It does this by attending to the third element, societal, of Fairclough's (1989) CDA. Three position calls examined: Scottish national identity and 'mythology'; social justice, equity and 'the gap'; globalisation and the international policy environment.

Chapter 8 presents the results of *policy-explaining*. By using the textual and interdiscursive elements of Fairclough's (1989) CDA, the position calls offered by the NIF are examined. Particular consideration is given to linguistic and semiotic features of the NIF, as well as the paradigmatic and syntagmatic choices that have been made.

Chapter 9 examines the methods (semi-structured interviews) used to undertake *policy-forming*. It provides a rationale for the choice of questions asked, the process that was undertaken to interview teachers, and the approach to thematic analysis used to identify the positions that were offered, resisted and taken up by teachers at the micro level. Ethical issues relevant to conducting interviews are also examined.

Chapter 10 considers how the NIF is formed at the micro level by teachers, eighteen months after its introduction, through a presentation and limited discussion of the results of *policy-forming.* It is through such process the policy researcher can make sense of how policy is subject to formation and reformation (Adams, 2011a).

Chapter 11 discusses the implications and significance of the findings of *policy-forming*, drawing on the work presented in *policy-framing*, *policy-explaining* and the literature.

Chapter 12 concludes this thesis by signifying its implications for policy and practice, how it has contributed to knowledge and the limitations it presents. Recommendations are made, as is acknowledgement of how the study has contributed to my professional and personal development. A letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Mr John Swinney MSP, is provided outlining my findings and inviting him to meet me to discuss. This letter was sent to him on Monday 7 January 2019.

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored my reasons for undertaking a Professional Doctorate and reasons for choosing the NIF, against the backdrop of CfE, as a policy for analysis. By using Adams' (2016) tripartite approach to policy analysis and the deployment of positioning theory as a theoretical foundation, there is an opportunity to conduct an original piece of research. Finally, the structure of this thesis was outlined.

Chapter 2 reviews two ways policy is conceptualised in the literature: policy implementation and policy enactment.

Chapter 2 What is Policy?

> Policy making has often been likened to making a sausage (Evans & Cvitanovic, 2018)…as it's ugly and grim and will be better liked if watched from afar (Klein, as cited by Evans & Cvitanovic, 2018)

2.1 Introduction

It is necessary to consider the way policy is conceptualised in the literature as policy as position builds on this. Two conceptions are considered: policy implementation and policy enactment. The former considers linear, objective approaches to policy development and the latter the contextual and human element on which policy is enabled through interpretation, translation and discourse. Whilst organising this chapter in this way implies policy definitions can fit into neat 'categories', they are delineated in this way for clarity and to show different perspectives on how policy is conceptualised in the literature. However, the term policy is broad and complex, and these neat conceptions could give a false impression that understanding policy is schematic (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

2.2 Defining policy

The word 'policy' is used in many contexts and tends to be a catchall phrase in different situations (Evans & Cvitanovic, 2018). It is used in everyday conversation at different levels for example, "we have a policy of openness in government…company policy is to buy from local suppliers…honesty is the best policy" (Colebatch, 2009, p.2). These catchall phrases do not capture the complexity of or power relations inherent in policy.

Policy can be viewed limitedly as a 'thing' written on paper that has "a statement of intentions or of practice…" (Trowler, 2003, p.95). Whilst there can be times that policy is a 'thing', for example, the actual policy document itself, it is more than this. This is because some policy researchers (Ball, 1993) argue it also considers processes and outcomes. It is important to describe what is meant by 'policy' at the outset of any study, as the researcher's interpretation of what policy is has a role to play in what is researched and how this research is then interpreted (Ball, 1993; Ozga, 2000); it is connected to the researcher's epistemology. In policy research, the term policy is often not defined and can be taken for granted (Ball, 1993; Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). The term 'policy'

can be used to describe different ‘things’ in the same piece of work (Ball, 1993). Although offering a definition is disingenuous, the literature (Jones, 2013) reveals a plethora of definitions that have developed over time and there remains a debate over how policy is defined.

Bell and Stevenson (2006) argue understanding the reality of policy and policy analysis requires acknowledgement of ‘it’s’ complexity and breath. What is not being suggested here is to offer a single or schematic definition of the term ‘policy’. As the term ‘policy’ can be used in a variety of situations and contexts, it should not be assumed that ‘policy’ has a precise definition or whether it is useful to have a specific definition (Colebatch, 2009). However, caution needs to be exercised so that the term ‘policy’ does not become all things to all people; without caution, the term can become meaningless through ubiquity.

Policies are not *only* formal texts that have policy stamped across them or included as part of the title of a document. Policies can include speeches and other artefacts that communicate the policy pronouncement (Ozga, 2000). These pronouncements are often perceived as the basis of which practice is then determined (Jones, 2013). In education there has been a growth in the policy climate since the 1980s, and policy is something that explicitly and implicitly, has an impact upon all aspects of learning and teaching (Maguire & Dillon, 2007).

2.3 Policy implementation

2.3.1 Linear models

Jenkins (1978) proposes a stagist approach for the creation and implementation of policy. This approach considers the policy creation cycle as a problem solving activity by following a set pattern of events (Adams, 2014). Each stage represents an 'event' that occurs as part of a chronological sequence that collectively, as figure 2.1 illustrates, form the policy cycle:

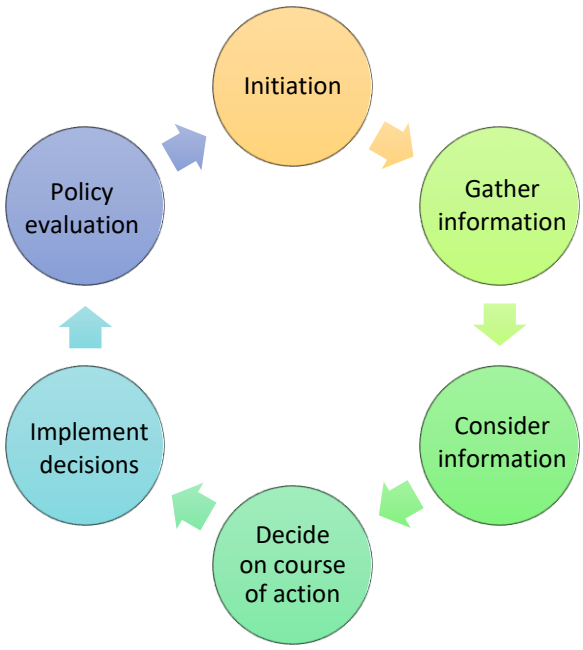

Figure 2.1 *- The stagist approach to policy (Jenkins, 1978)*

The stagist approach implies that if the sequence of events is followed in the order shown, it should lead to 'successful' policy creation. This is because suitable decisions, and actions, have been taken based on the information that was gathered as part of the process (Adams, 2014). The stagist approach offers a schematic illustration of the complex nature of policy making. It is an idealised conception that does not reflect reality (Colebatch, 2005). Policy creation is rarely systematic and the approach does not reflect that each stage may run in parallel (Fafard, 2008). It does not acknowledge interaction between multiple policies (Jann & Wegrich, 2007) or how multiple policies can unite together and bring unintended and unexpected consequences (Ball et al., 2012).

The rational policy making approach (Bates, Lewis, & Pickard, 2011) is similar to the stagist approach as it breaks down the policy process into a sequence of events. The rational approach, illustrated in figure 2.2, assumes each part of the process is distinct and separate from each other (Viczko & Riveros, 2015):

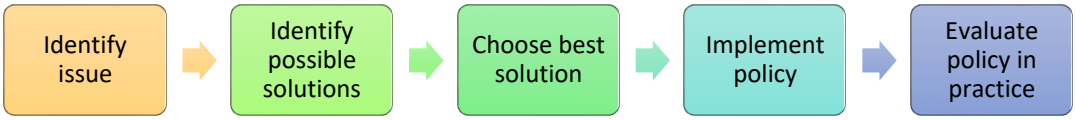

Figure 2.2 *- The rational model of policy making (Bates, Lewis, & Pickard, 2011)*

Colebatch (2006, p.6) refers to the rational approach as the "established way of thinking about policy" or the traditional view (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004). These views have the desired output or goal as the primary focus. A similar view is held by Blakemore (2003, p.10) who refers to policy as "aims or goals, or statements of what ought to happen". This particular view of policy, at a superficial level, can be seen to solve a problem (Ball et al., 2012) or how to act in a particular set of conditions (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

There are ontological and epistemological implications arising from the rational model. Policy formation arises from the identification of problems that are 'out there'; such problems can then be described objectively (Bacchi, 1999) and solved through policy implementation (Carusi, Rawlins, & Ashton, 2018). The reality of the problem 'out there' notion encompasses a *policy without humanity* approach as it is "limited by the scientific method for dealing with 'real' problems" (Carusi et al., 2018, p.344). It is associated with a positivist epistemology (Bacchi, 1999) and is termed 'policy science' by Fay (1975). Ball et al. (2012, p.5) suggests the rational approach implies teachers are "cardboard cut-out sense makers…too linear…too rational...too neat and asocial". It implies that policy is *done* to people by referring to the 'language of delivery' (Priestley, 2013). Priestley (2013) warns against using the 'language of delivery' as it portrays education as a product rather than a process[4].

[4] Priestley (2013) discusses the contradiction between language associated with *policy delivery* inherent in some CfE documentation, compared with its flexible and creative vision.

The rational model ignores how problems or set of conditions are constructed (as it is 'out there'), and the subsequent bias that maybe inherent (Jones, 2013); *policy with humanity.* In reality, policy decisions might be made that reflect specific political and organisational cultures, rather than those in the best interest of the optimal solution (John, 2012). As several solutions are presented and the 'best' one chosen in the rational model, there is a degree of negotiation present and therefore potential for minor conflict (Jones, 2013).

Kogan (1975) acknowledged that policy was ultimately a tool to help achieve political objectives and situated education policy in the field of values and politics (Jones, 2013). Since the 1960s, policy as values-laden action, therefore, was viewed as a model going beyond policy as simply 'a text', through "actions that assign value ideals" (Easton, as cited by Jones, 2013, p.5). This model of policy portrays what the view or goal of a particular, for example, political party is (Harman, 1984), and subsequent actions that need to be taken to achieve that particular view or goal are stated (Ball et al., 2012; Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Blakemore, 2003). However, during Kogan's study, there was social and political consensus regarding the expansion of educational provision (Simon, as cited by Bell & Stevenson, 2006) and arguably, the values underpinning policy at that time did not face the same conflict that could be seen today (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). During Kogan's study, conflict was not viewed as inevitable and was something that could to be managed (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

Viewing policy as a rational activity implies the policy process has a clearly marked start and end (John, 2012). It ignores the fact policy making can sometimes appear 'muddled' and unorganised (Trowler, 2003). Policy making has often been likened to making a sausage (Evans & Cvitanovic, 2018), as it is ugly and grim and will be better liked if watched from afar (Klein, as cited by Evans & Cvitanovic, 2018). Similar to making a sausage, policy is shaped during its development. Having a clear distinction between policy creation and implementation, as the rational model espouses, does not acknowledge how policy is created, modified and shaped during implementation (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). It does not acknowledge the complex political arena in which policy is developed (Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2009).

I argue the word 'implementation' needs to be used with caution when discussing the policy process. Bell and Stevenson (2006) note policy growth is organic and therefore the term policy 'development', rather than 'implementation', is more appropriate. The rational model of policy making ignores the 'policy activity' (Colebatch, 2002) of negotiation and coalition-building, that occurs amongst policy actors to enable policy development. By focusing on policy as an output or outcome, there is a failure to consider interpretation (Jones, 2013), the local context policy is embedded (Bell & Stevenson, 2006) and the bigger picture surrounding the policy process (Ball et al., 2012). This wider approach to policy analysis, rather than *merely* implementation, can be referred to as 'policy enactment' (Braun et al., 2011), and is discussed in section 2.4.

2.3.2 Technical-empiricist model

The technical-empiricist (technocratic) model illustrated in figure 2.3, highlights the policy statement (document) as a vehicle for communication between the policy researcher, the policy-maker and the intended policy recipient (Olssen et al., 2004). Policy documents are viewed as illustrating political purpose; the educational intentions and actions the policy-maker intends to undertake, derived from values and goals, along with facts derived from research by the policy researcher (Olssen et al., 2004). The policy statement is interpreted by those who are involved in its implementation, or who have an interest in discussing its implications and consequences.

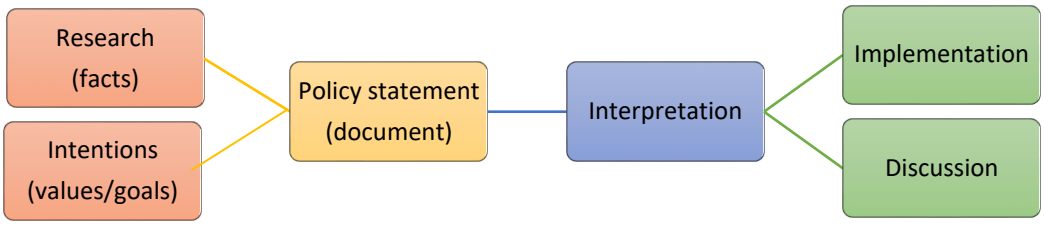

Figure 2.3 *- technical-empiricist model (Olssen et al., 2004)*

The technocratic view of policy invites the possibility of attempting to produce something definite, showing underlying truth and real meanings (Adams, 2011a).

Therefore:

> …policy documents are constructed as *expressions* of particular information, ideas and intentions and the task of analysis becomes one of establishing the *correct* interpretation of the text.
>
> (Olssen et al., 2004, p.60)

The technocratic view "…represents [educational policy] in an objective and value-free way, intended by the author/s" (Adams, 2011a, p.58). Therefore, power (apparently) rests with the policy's authors. The formation of policy is based upon factual explanations and casual connections made between alternative actions provided by the policy researcher (Codd, 1988). It is assumed the research conducted by the policy researcher, through objective methods, produces scientific knowledge that can be used to determine the effectiveness of different actions in different situations (Codd, 1988).

There is the assumption that what is presented in the policy document is the truth, is simply understood and subsequently applied (Adams, 2011a). This is known as 'intentionally fallacy' (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954), whereby the policy text is viewed as meaning what the writer intended. However, the meaning of the text that communicates the author's intention "[does not] extend beyond the literacy object itself" (Codd, 1988, p.239). Critics have termed this 'the autonomy of the text' (Simonson, 1971) and argue "nothing can be said about an author's intentions apart from various features of the text itself and the context in which it is interpreted" (Codd, 1988, p.239). I agree, because the interpretation of a policy text is not straightforward as it sounds because "for a text a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings" (Codd, as cited by Ball 1993, p.11). There is an element of sense-making (Spillane, 2004) and 'interpretation of interpretations' (Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987). Policy texts may not accurately portray the intentions of policy makers and these intentions may also be at conflict with other intentions or unknown to policy makers (Jones, 2013). When it is not clear or certain what is meant by something in the policy document, there is an assumption the reader has wrongly interpreted what was meant (Olssen et al., 2004). Thus, emphasis is on interpretation of the policy text by readers, who therefore hold power, rather than by those who wrote the policy, and is described as 'literacy deconstruction' (Bacchi, 2000).

2.4 Policy enactment

Policy enactment considers the social, cultural and emotional construction and interpretation of policy (Maguire et al., 2015). Two conceptions are considered: policy as text and policy as discourse. The former considers policy interpretation and translation, and the latter how individuals are invited to respond[5] to policy (Ball, 2015). The wider process experienced by individuals, the different positions and roles that different policy actors can adopt, as well as idiosyncratic contextual factors surrounding policy that may shape enactment (Braun, Ball, Maguire, et al., 2011) are also recognised. Agency, sense-making and embodiment by policy actors is also considered (Viczko & Riveros, 2015).

Policy is interpreted in context; the framework that forms, frames and limits the interpretative and practical response of policy actors to policy (Braun, Ball, & Maguire, 2011). It is argued by Braun, Ball and Maguire et al. (2011) that policy is shaped and influenced by localised, for example, school-specific constraints, pressures and enablers, although these factors tend to be marginalised in Government policy making and policy research.

On the surface there can appear to be similarity between schools, but there may be slight variation in local context that cumulatively, results in significant variation to, for example, school processes (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). Ontologically, the policy enactment view posits that multiple realities exist (Carusi et al., 2018); policy is not something "done to schools or implemented…but rather [an emphasis is on] schools doing policy" (p.347). It is important to acknowledge that some contextual factors will not be 'school-caused', but are 'school-based', and strategies, for example, for improving learner achievement, may not always be easy to reproduce in other contexts (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). This is significant as policy makers often assume the environment in which policies will be enacted will be the 'best possible' (Braun, Ball, Maguire, et al., 2011). However, what the 'best possible' environment is, if this exists, is unclear.

[5] Respond is used to describe how individuals are permitted and constrained to "speak, listen, act, read, work, think, feel, behave and value" (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996, p.10) through discourse.

Studies that explicitly consider 'contextualised policy responses' between similar schools are scarce in policy and education studies (Braun, Ball, Maguire, et al., 2011). Context usually only appears as part of the background section (Gilbert, as cited by Braun, Ball, Maguire, et al., 2011). Policy analysis literature exploring differences in the same school, as opposed to across schools, is scarcer. However, this is another layer of analysis that is required to understand the development of policy at a deeper level (Gowlett et al., 2015). Strength is provided to researchers when attempting to understand and illustrate some of the complex ways policy enactment takes place in and between schools when context is acknowledged (Singh, Heimans, & Glasswell, 2014). However, this needs to be considered as part of the policy analysis process rather than superficially as part of 'background' information. Singh et al. (2014) highlight that context can be used as a conceptual lens to contribute significantly to the development of literature in policy studies.

2.4.1 Policy as text

Jones (2103) conceptualises policy as text as a traditional and simplistic model, based on the production of a policy text, focused on solving a problem or issue that subsequently determines action. However, the conception of policy as text presented here is more than the production of the text itself; it concentrates on how policy is interpreted and translated (Ball et al., 2012). This is largely based upon the work of Ball (1993). Policy is communicated through texts and artefacts (Maguire et al., 2015) and is encoded in complex ways by those who authored it, subsequently decoded *(interpreted)* and recoded *(translated)* by policy actors[6] (Ball et al., 2012):

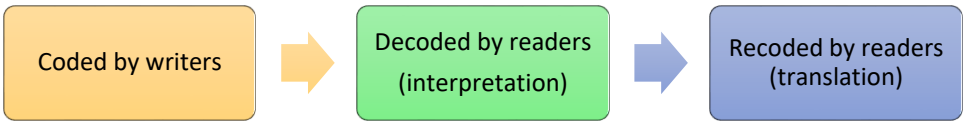

***Figure 2.4** - policy coding, decoding and recoding*

[6] Ball et al. (2012) refers to eight policy actor positions in their work and emphasise that each position is fluid and not fixed. Actors may change their 'position' during interpretation and translation. The positions are: narrators, entrepreneurs, outsiders, transactors, enthusiasts, translators, critics and receivers.

Ball (1993, p.11) reminds us that coding of the policy text by its authors has involved "struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations" and subsequently, it is then decoded "via actors' interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context". Throughout the coding and decoding process are inherent power relations. As policies have many authors and many readers (Bell & Stevenson, 2006), there will be multiple interpretations of the same policy. Trowler (2003) refers to policy as text as a 'bottom-up' approach as people can change words, meanings of words and the significance of words, as they interpret policy; power can be exercised through the agentic responses invited by interpretation (Ball, 2015). Although writers of policy texts cannot control the meaning of the text they espouse, they do attempt to limit the action and thus power readers have, via the discourse they employ (Ball, 1993). Policy as discourse is examined in section 2.4.2.

The policy process is diverse, frequently contested and subject to interpretation (Braun, Ball, Maguire, et al., 2011). Interpretation involves making sense of policy and considering what it means for the reader (Ball et al., 2012). Interpretation is:

> The way in which policy actors initially 'read' and respond to policy. This will be situated and contextualised. Does the policy have to be done? Who will enact it? What does it really mean in practical terms?
>
> (Maguire et al., 2015, p.486)

The task of decoding and recoding is not as simple or linear as it sounds. Interpretation and translation may be subtle, implicit and more complex than a two-step process implies (Ball et al., 2012).

Spillane (2004) argues that policy work is complex and requires a process of sense making by policy actors "using the lenses they have developed through experience to filter their awareness" (p.7). Thus, interpretation of policy by actors account for what occurs in practice (Maguire et al., 2015). For example, policy could be used to change behaviour of people to achieve certain outcomes (Shore & Wright, 2011) through translation by those 'enacting' the policy for example, head teachers. Ball (1994) reminds us:

> The physical text that pops through the school letterbox, or wherever, does not arrive "out of the blue" - it has an interpretational and representational history – and neither does it enter a social or institutional vacuum.
>
> (Ball, 1994, p.17)

This quote illustrates two things: policy has a history before it 'arrives' and does not enter for example, schools in isolation to other factors including other policies. There is an obligation on schools and teachers to be familiar with and respond to a plethora of policies, some of which may be contradictory to others (Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010). Policy texts can change existing practices, for example, the reallocation of power relations or reinforce the status quo, which might be out with the intentions of its authors (Ball, 1993). Whether policy is mandatory, strongly recommended or simply suggested by those who authored it, will impact upon its enactment (Wallace, 1991). The extent to which policy can be enacted also depends on whether it can "fit or can be fitted" (Ball et al., 2012, p.10) into a school's ethos and culture.

During the policy recoding (translation) process, the policy text interpreted is 'put into action' through for example, meetings, events, plans, the borrowing of ideas, the purchasing and production of necessary materials (Ball et al., 2012); translation gives policy symbolic value (Ball, Maguire, Braun and Hoskins, 2011). Thus, ideas are communicated in policy are read, written and spoken about, in contextualised and institutionally determined practices (Braun et al., 2011). Policy actors have to make choices about how to interpret and subsequently embed policy in their own particular milieu (Trowler, 2003). In schools, authoritative interpretations by the head teacher and other members of staff responsible for enacting policy ('peopling policy') are presented to the wider school to focus institutional activities (Ball et al., 2012). Therefore, putting policy into practice is a complex and sophisticated, yet constrained, process.

2.4.2 Policy as discourse

> We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do.
>
> (Ball, 1993, p.14)

Policy as discourse is concerned with specific 'discourses' being used in policy texts and processes (Ball & Exley, 2010). Discourse is not the same as language as discourse is what allows writing, speaking and thinking, but also constrains it (Mills, as cited by Ball, 2015). Studies of discourse consider where the language of text originates (Jones, 2013). As the quote by Ball highlights, has links with power. This is because discourse establishes what can be said or thought, and by whom (Ozga, 2000); it constrains and limits what policy actors can do to shape policy (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Subsequently, policy as discourse is referred to as a 'top-down' approach (Trowler, 2003). As Ball (1993) notes:

> Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority…words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded.
>
> (Ball, 1993, p.14)

Discourse does not only include for example, conversations or discussions, but also material artefacts for example, school handbooks, school websites, posters and notices in school (Maguire, Hoskins, Ball, & Braun, 2011). These artefacts are the "instruments and effects of discourse" (Ball, 2015, p.307) and subsequently, "we do not *do* policy, policy *does* us" (Ball, 2015, p.307). These artefacts carry discourse, and the power prevalent (Ball, 2015), that show how policy is interpreted and translated in that particular school context; discourse thus "forms the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p.49).

The word discourse has changed meaning over time (Jones, 2013) and the term policy as discourse is one that does not have an agreed description (Bacchi, 2000). The word 'discourse' derives from the Latin term *discursus*, meaning to run to and fro (Rogers, 2004). Discourse analysis is a field itself and it is not the purpose of this thesis to examine this field. However, it is important to consider how policy is viewed through the policy as discourse lens. This is because it allows for an examination of the relationship between policy creation and response by policy actors, rather than the simple linear process of policy author - intent to reality - and subsequent action (Adams, 2011a). Policy as discourse creates a space where social practice, interaction and interpretation processes can be examined (Jones, 2013) as "policy is a social construction given

legitimacy through the permission it gives to speak" (Adams, 2011a, p.60). Thus, it allows for an examination of structure and social relations (Ozga, 2000). Policy as discourse challenges the idea of unchangeable knowledge or truth, associated with implementation models, as claims of truth are opposed in different discourses (Bacchi, 1999). Thus, it is necessary to dissect and examine what was said about a particular policy construction historically and in the current climate, rather than assuming what was said about it is all there is to say (Bacchi, 1999).

Foucault (1971, p.49) emphasises that discourse is not "irreducible to language and to speech", and draws attention in his work to how discourse limits and shapes our view of the world (Trowler, 2003). This is because discourse can constrain the way we think about for example, education, through the language being used to frame particular policies. Trowler (1998, p.133) provides examples of how discourse drawn from business, can shape the way people view education for example, "credit accumulation, delivery of learning outcomes and possession of skills and competences". As Trowler (1998) notes, this then forms part of everyday discourse and can subsequently prohibit other ways of conceptualising education.

Foucault (1972) dismisses the Saussurean view that language is separated into two pre-existing systems of codes (langue) and how individuals choose to use it (parole). He along with other Socio-linguists for example, Fairclough (1989), posit the view that language-use and constructs that consist of language (for example, policies), is not solely down to how an individual chooses to use them, but also social factors for example, the individual's identity, roles and the context they are based. As Gilbert (1992, p.58) notes, "[people] enter into relations with each other as they engage in the process of producing and interpreting meaning", thus, discourse is not simply a "logically structured meaning system" (Jones, 2013, p.11), but rather, a social practice that illustrates the need for interpretation and human interaction in any conception of policy as discourse (Jones, 2013).

Whilst acknowledging that Foucault has contributed greatly to understanding discourse (Olssen et al., 2004), Fairclough (1989) argues that his work fails to acknowledge textual analysis; the analysis of what is said or written. To overcome this perceived limitation of Foucault's work, Fairclough developed a three-dimensional conception of discourse, in

which three forms of analysis are integrated: text, discursive practice and social practices (Fairclough, 1989). This three-tiered framework is one of the methods used for data analysis and is explored in section 6.4.

Power is threaded throughout social networks of teachers and their position is constructed by the way they make meanings through the discursive avenues available (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011). Thus, the policy as discourse view considers the ways that individual positions are formed and re-formed by policy (Ball, 2015), the relationship between policy text and the "discursive practices involved in the production, distribution and consumption of policy" (Adams, 2011a, p.60). These discursive practices relate to and impact upon the policy context (Jones, 2013), the history and culture rooted in how the world is viewed (big-D Discourse) (Adams, 2011a), and thus represents the 'bigger' picture that illustrates what policy makers think and subsequently embed in policy (little-d discourse) (Ozga, 2000).

The policy as discourse view is the basis of social constructionism, the concepts of problematisation and argumentation (explored in chapter 3), and policy as position (chapter 4) which together form the theoretical basis of this thesis.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined how approaches to policy are presented in the literature. Models of policy implementation for example, stagist, rational and technical-empiricist offer an objective and scientific way of viewing the policy process, whereas enactment considers the contextual nature of policy and the ability readers of policy have to interpret and translate policy into their own context. Finally, the role discourse has to permit or constrain policy responses was considered. Whilst these can shed light on the policy process, there is a need to consider that action can be taken out with the intentions of the policy text and discourse. Therefore, something else is required and I propose Adams' (2011a) policy as position as a way of examining this. However, before exploring policy as position, it is necessary to consider the theoretical basis on which it is based – positioning theory.

Chapter 3 examines the philosophical and theoretical framework on which this thesis is constructed – positioning theory.

Chapter 3 Research Philosophy and Positioning Theory

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores why this study is embedded in a relativist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology. It examines how positioning theory can be used through the interplay of positions, storylines and the social force of language, to make sense of the instant individual positions a person adopts because of Discourse and conversation. It does this by exploring the difference between 'role' and 'position' and how different modes of positioning can reveal an acceptance, resistance or rejection of a position call espoused. This chapter provides the foundations for the approach to policy analysis: *policy-framing*, *policy-explaining* and *policy-forming*, used in this thesis that is subsequently presented in chapter 4.

3.2 Research Philosophy

To help readers understand and assess why a particular research design is chosen, Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue researchers need to make clear the philosophical stance espoused. This is because it influences the way a study is conducted and operationalised. Although this is not always reported in for example, journal articles, to report this study's contribution and limitations, the philosophical basis, namely the ontological and epistemological basis of this thesis, is examined in this section.

Guba and Lincoln (1989; 1994) draw a distinction between ontology and epistemology. They suggest the epistemological position is limited by the ontological position adopted (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), thus ontology informs epistemology. Crotty (1998) however, does not draw such a distinction and proposes that only epistemology needs to be considered; he argues these "tend to emerge together" (p.10) and that ontology would sit alongside epistemology to inform one of the theoretical position positions (for example, positivism and interpretivism) that he espouses. However, ontology and epistemology sit separately in this thesis because of the arguments at the epistemological level that are made; I argue 'constructionism' is what describes the epistemology of this study, rather than 'constructivist' at an epistemological level, or Guba and Lincoln's (1994) use of 'constructivist' to describe a philosophical position.

3.2.1 Ontology

A realist ontology is not commensurate with the theoretical basis of this thesis as context is important; policy is interpreted in context (Braun et al., 2011) and it is not the purpose of this thesis to describe cause-effect scenarios, as espoused by a realist ontology. Realists posits an assumption that an objective reality exists entrenched by natural laws with research being reported in context-free generalisations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The NIF espouses a realist position with a focus on gathering and reporting on 'the number of…' without any reference to context. A focus on numbers reaffirms Hardy's 'logic of enumeration' (2015a), yet the NIF is embedded in and affects a large range of individualistic contexts: schools, teachers, pupils and local authorities. However, to require 'excellence', as espoused by the NIF, requires a way of being able to measure whether this was achieved (Adams, 2016). Such a position is commensurate with the features of the Evaluative State and as way of measuring performance against government aims (Adams, 2016). There is tension here between the realist position espoused by the NIF, and the contextual nature of policy.

Each element of the tripartite approach to policy analysis being adopted in this thesis is overlaid by position calls. These are the tacit allurements to accept the specific position being offered (Drewery, 2005). However, these does not occur outside of the social, cultural, historical or economic sphere in which they are embedded (Gee, 2012). Policy writers and readers are positioned, and can be positioned by, the forces of Discourse in policy pronouncements to position certain problems because of wider social, cultural and political forces (Adams, 2016). These are discussed in chapter 7. Teachers have been asked to make sense of how the NIF is formed, by positioning it in their own professional context and therefore, at both the micro and macro level, context is acknowledged. Therefore, a relativist ontology is relevant to this study. A relativist ontology emerges from the shift away from realism in response to internal and external critics to the 'conventional' position (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This new 'constructivist' position, was an attempt to offer an alternative paradigm in response to the ontological shift from realism to relativism (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Constructivists believe that what people believe to be true comes down to perspective; knowledge and truth is not *discovered* by the mind, but rather *created* (Schwandt, 1998). There are therefore as many realities constructed as there are individuals (Pring, 2000).

This relativistic view posits multiple and sometimes conflicting social realities that are context-based and specific, although can be shared, in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructions can change, as can realities, as 'constructors' become more enlightened (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This is commensurate with the argument of 'position', the "cluster of disputable rights, obligations and duties" (Harré, 2012, p.193), that individuals have. Positions allow us to examine the fluid and changing identities that individuals have during discursive activities. As examined in chapter 4, policy as position emerges from the correlation between policy and practice (Adams, 2011a), with policy being formed at the micro level through moment-by-moment conversational acts and activities.

3.2.2 Epistemology

At an epistemological level, the conventional paradigm rests upon a duality between the observer and the phenomena being observed; the observer is based 'outside' of the space they are observing (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Meaning therefore exists independently of an individual's consciousness and is thus objective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Objectivism in this sense stems from ancient Greek philosophy (Crotty, 1998). Scott and Usher (2011) suggest the objective approach espoused by the conventional paradigm represents a distorted view of reality, as it does not allow for the freedom to interpret different and individualistic representations of reality. However, positioning theory is based upon the dynamic and changing positions that individuals have and is therefore individualistic.

The conventional paradigm is penetrated by a dual and objective epistemology and therefore, researchers can claim they have discovered the way things work (Pring, 2000). Such claims are justifiable as long as a rigorous process for carrying out the inquiry is followed, thus preventing bias and the researcher's values to penetrate meaning (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Research is apparently value free and etic (Bryman, 2016). However, no research is *really* value free; values permeate research from beginning to end, particularly as a researcher embedded in the context being investigated.

Constructivism rests upon what Guba and Lincoln (1989), have termed a monistic, subjective epistemology with knowledge being constructed, rather than discovered, by individuals as they make sense of their world around them. Guba and Lincoln (1994) acknowledge the divide between ontology and epistemology in a constructivist paradigm starts to fade as the researcher and what is being researched are linked; thus, "findings are

literally created as the investigation proceeds" (p.111). Values therefore play a fundamental and pivotal role in the creation of knowledge, more than the conventional paradigm, and consequently, ethics is internal to inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Values are pertinent through for example, the initial choice of 'problem' to be researched, the decisions made to examine such problem and how findings are interpreted and conclusions reported (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Weber (1949) classically argued that research should be value-free. However, given I am interested in pursuing this study is a value commitment and as Hammersley (2000) notes, this together with what the researcher believes to be of value to society, should direct the choice of research topic and subsequent questions posed. I agree and believe this study can contribute to what Mowat (2018a) suggests is required by providing an account of empirical work of how the NIF is formed immediately 'on the ground' after a period of eighteen months since its inception. However, Hammersley (2000) also argues the choice of data collection and analysis methods should not be driven by values, and therefore, my justification for these is provided in the relevant methods chapters. The research questions I have posed have not made any evaluative assumptions or judgements, nor am I espousing a view that I am 'better qualified' as Hammersley (2000) notes to "make the everyday moral decisions that the people they are studying have to make" (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2006, p.145). However, I do not agree with Hammersley (2000) that the researcher should not make recommendations from their research findings, unless for political or ethical reasons. I believe that undertaking a professional doctorate has the potential to benefit and can help develop professional practice (Pratt et al., 2015).

Although Guba and Lincoln (1989; 1994) use the term 'subjective' to describe the epistemology espoused by the constructivist paradigm, Crotty (1998) refers to this as 'constructionism'. Care has to be taken here as Crotty (1998) uses, at an epistemological level, the term 'constructivist' to describe (<u>emphasis</u> added) "meaning-making…of the <u>individual</u> mind" (p.58) and 'constructionism' to describe the "<u>collective</u> generation [and transmission] of meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p.58). Crotty's use of the term 'constructivist' should not be confused with Guba and Lincoln's (1989; 1994) use of the term to describe a philosophical position (paradigm). Therefore, a distinction needs to be made between constructivist and constructionism at the epistemological level, as well as the use of

constructivist by Guba and Lincoln (1994) to describe a philosophical position. As Schwandt (1998) notes, these terms are shaped by their users and therefore, there use them needs to be made clear; these are examples of sensitizing concepts (van den Hoonaard, 2008). As positioning theory is founded upon a social constructionist position (Slocum & van Langenhove, 2003), as examined in the subsequent section, constructionism will be used to describe the epistemology of this study.

The subjective epistemology espoused by Guba and Lincoln (1994), has a different meaning for Crotty (1998). Crotty (1998) refers to subjectivity as meaning being created from nothing (although he does acknowledge that in reality, humans do make meaning out of something for example, from dreams and their unconsciousness) and thus imposed upon what is being researched by the researcher. Whereas Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to subjectivism that "sees knowledge as created in interaction among investigator and respondents" (p.111) and is therefore a transactional process. The key distinction between subjectivism and constructionism highlighted by Crotty (1998), is that the former "comes from anything *but* an interaction between the subject and object" (p.9), whereas the latter is based upon such interaction. My understanding of constructionism is based upon this interaction and is relevant in this thesis as meaning is generated through interaction with both the literature (for policy-explaining and policy-framing) and interview participants (policy-forming). In case of the former, I have interacted with the literature through Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the position calls espoused the NIF policy text and how such texts are framed by social, economic, political and historical Discourse that pre-date and come out of policy. Furthermore, this thesis argues that policy is formed and reformed through discursive activities at the micro level; the notion of policy as position (Adams, 2016) as discussed in chapter 4. The social constructionist position I espouse in the next section relies upon interaction between what is being researched and the researcher.

3.2.3 Social constructionism

Social constructionism is a broad term (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) and has several different forms (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001). For example, one view posits that everything is socially constructed and there is no scope for objectivity, whereas another view posits that the physical world is a construction as much as social institutions are (Harré & van

Langenhove, 1999). The purpose of this section is to examine my understanding of social constructionism and how it relates to this study.

The 'social' in social constructionism is concerned with how meaning is constructed, rather than the specific object that may or may not have meaning (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) argues that in constructing such meaning, acknowledgement has to be made of the historical and social background conferred on us as humans. Rather than focusing upon the minds and cognitive processes of individuals, attention is paid to the "world of intersubjectively shared, social constructions of meaning and knowledge" (Schwandt, 1998, p.240). There is an assumption that "the terms by which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people" (Gergen, 1985, p.267). Such accounts [usually] take place within the realms of spoken or written language (Gergen & Gergen, 1991).

Bradley (1998) argues that social constructionist theory prevents a reality beyond representation as the world is reduced to discourse. However, as Edley (2001) highlights, any attempt to create knowledge of or to describe reality are portrayed in discourse, hence without the medium of language, reality does not exist. However, that is not to say social constructionists do not see discourse as the only reality (Edley, 2001).

Social constructionism allows researchers to analyse and examine the aims, intent and activities that take place in the social world (Adams, 2014). Adams (2014) suggests that social constructionism allows for an examination on what basis decisions about policy and policy-making are made. It is not as important *why* something happens, but rather, *why it is possible* for something to happen and the meanings subsequently attached to such (Bacchi, 2009); the social unconscious which form problem constructs.

The concepts of problematisation and argumentation are at the root of social constructionism (Adams, 2014). The former is based on the principle that problems are socially constructed, with the latter concerned with framing of possible solutions to the problem. The defining of a problem is communicated by policy texts which then offers evidence and argument to guide a particular policy towards 'implementation' (Byrne & Ozga, 2008). As I believe reality is founded upon rules of social phenomena, the policy text represents and can change the direction of reality (Jones, 2013).

The concept of problematisation can be used in two ways: as a verb or noun (Bacchi, 2015). The verb form depicts what policy makers, researchers and governments tend to do, through interrogation of an issue or stance, or in 'labelling' and by doing so, giving form and shape to something that is a problem. Thus, a problem becomes a problem because of the way it is perceived and subsequently defined. The noun form describes the product of problematisation for example that communicated through policy texts. The act of assigning a number to a problem, for example, a certain percentage of learners have not achieved a certain level, is a way of communicating the problem to the population. The number is not the problem, but rather the value assigned to it. A policy may then be introduced or developed to 'solve' this socially constructed problem - argumentation. What is defined as a problem is rooted in our culture, our society and history (Adams, 2014):

> The lenses offered by history, culture and economics through which 'problems' are to be solved are identified determine not only the mechanisms by which 'reality' might be understood but also the very 'problems' themselves.
>
> (Adams, 2011a, p.60)

Problems are therefore, and crucially, created by how the world is viewed through its history, culture, social identity and economic background (Adams, 2011a). How language is embedded in the social, cultural, historical and economic roots of society, thus creating distinctive ways of speaking, listening, reading, writing and subsequently behaving, interacting, thinking and feeling, is referred to as 'big-D' Discourse (Gee, 2012). Such broader social, cultural and political phenomena need to be examined to be able to subsequently link them to local occurring practices (Brockmeier & Harré, 1997) - 'little-d' discourse.

From a social constructionist epistemology, researchers play a role in the creation of knowledge through interaction with the subject, in this thesis through interaction with policy texts, the literature and data from semi-structured interviews, and the understanding extracted through such interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It is necessary for the researcher operating from such a position to highlight, and acknowledge the experience and beliefs they hold, as I have done in section 1.3 and in this section, as these can shape the identification and construction of knowledge being examined (Wahyuni, 2012). Thus, what is deemed as important by the researcher will be largely dependent on

the values and beliefs they have. Research therefore relies on the views of those being examined, and the researcher's own views, in the specific context they are based (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The task of the researcher is to represent and report the meanings individuals have about the world. Thus, the aim is to provide a representation of how individuals make sense of a particular situation at a specific point in time (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2010). Whether such representations are 'true', if they ever can be, depends on the level of trustworthiness and authenticity commensurate with the representation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), as discussed in section 5.6.

3.3 Positioning theory

Discourse, or the examination of everyday language use, has become a major component of study in social psychology (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Positioning theory offers a means of analysing how people *position* themselves and others, in conversation, an example of a symbolic exchange through words (Harré, 2004), or are 'forced' into, through discourse (and Discourse) (Brinkmann, 2010). Positions are a "cluster of short-term disputable rights, obligations and duties" (Harré, 2012, p.193), and can change, be challenged and are often ephemeral (Harré, 2004).

Positioning theory is concerned with the shared assumptions that individuals have in respect to rights and duties, and how these can position individuals during conversations (Harré, 2004), specifically, during moment-by-moment interactions at the local level (Adams, 2011a). Fundamentally, it allows for an examination of the constantly changing, common and challengeable patterns of rights and obligations during local acts of speaking and action (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Positioning theory can reveal the explicit and implicit reasoning patterns that individuals display towards others (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009).

3.3.1 Positioning theory and social constructionism

The social field consists of three discursive practices: conversations, institutional practices and social rhetoric (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). It is here that social acts are viewed as the basis of social reality (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) and at the heart of this lies people (Howie & Peters, 1996). To gain insight into, understand and articulate social phenomena, the researcher has to analyse at society, institutional and conversational level (Brockmeier & Harré, 1997). Conversations are the most basic

ingredient of the social world, as they produce and reproduce social acts (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). It is for these reasons that positioning theory sits in a social constructionist epistemology (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999); i.e. discursive practices are 'where' social phenomena are created. Examining discursive practices has become a major component of study in social psychology and it is also the primary methodological approach to the application of positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991).

Cultural embeddedness of meanings

Mental phenomena for example, emotions and attitudes can be found in discursive practices (Howie & Peters, 1996). Harré and van Langenhove (1991, p.395) highlight, this does not mean that "discursive activities cause mental phenomena to come into existence", but rather "[they] are immanent in the relevant discursive activities themselves". Harré and van Langenhove (1991) & Howie and Peters (1996) note, this resonates with the work of Bakhtin and the 'author's utterance' or 'word'; a discursive activity that has an expression of meaning (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin (1981) notes that utterances, when chained together form discourse, are espoused by an individual in relation to other people, their words and expressions, and embedded in a lived cultural world at a specific time and place. Thus, 'words' or 'utterances' are always embedded in a history of expressions with other people and are only formed through one's relation to 'otherness' for example, other people and other words (Bakhtin, 1986). They are always *addressed* to someone and an *answer* is anticipated; thus 'words' or 'utterances' are dialogic, contingent and inextricable to history and a specific place (Bakhtin, 1986).

Vygotsky (1978) notes the cultural development of a child firstly occurs typically at social level, influenced by culture and history, between adult-child (interpsychological) and then internally in the child's thought processes (intrapsychological). Subsequently, this is then conveyed internally (as private language) and then externally (Vygotsky, 1978). The primacy of Vygotsky's work to positioning theory rests on the fact that conversations, the most basic substance of the social world (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991), includes the language that individuals display to themselves as well as publically (Vygotsky, 1978). The development of the individual is thus dependent on both interpersonal and intrapersonal relations (Vygotsky, 1978).

Harré (2004) draws on Vygotsky's work to highlight and signify the relationship between the assignment and appropriation of rights and duties associated with completing a task. Harré (2004) reminds us that when a task is in the zone of proximal development, if a 'junior' member of a duo is trying to accomplish a task and is unable to do so successfully, a more skilled 'senior' member will attempt to support them to bring the task to a successful end. Subsequently, the next time the task arises, the 'junior' member will replicate what they have learned from the 'senior' member. The distribution and acknowledgement of rights and duties amongst the 'junior' and 'senior' member is of prime importance (Harré, 2004). Since positioning theory is "…based on the principle that not everyone involved in a social episode has equal access to rights and duties to perform particular kinds of meaningful actions at that moment and with those people" (Harré, 2012, p.193), the link between Vygotsky and positioning theory is clear.

The argument that discursive activities have embedded in them both cultural meanings and mental phenomena, has large cultural origins in the humanistic tradition of Russian culture (Howie & Peters, 1996), thus the relevance of Bakhtin and Vygotsky. Harré and van Langenhove (1991) note, positions that exist at a specific moment in time and in a specific place, will not necessarily be present at other times and in other places. Thus, the context in which positions are found has to be considered with *where* and *when* they are found. This is examined in section 5.3.

Wittgenstein's influence on the development of positioning theory rests on the fact that he treats language as a social process; it is 'publically' acquired and is embedded in a culture or 'form of life' (Wittgenstein, 1953). A 'form of life' consists of a particular set of cultural norms that incorporates a moral order comprising of "rights, duties, obligations and evaluative conventions (i.e. rules)" (Howie & Peters, 1996, p.54). These rules provide, and constrain, the plethora of positions (Howie & Peters, 1996) that can be adopted in what Wittgenstein refers to as a 'language-game' (Wittgenstein, 1953) i.e. conversation. Humans live their lives through participation in many language games and the meaning of a word generally depends on its use in a particular language game (Wittgenstein, 1953). Thus, the meaning of a word is bound in the material practices in which it is embedded (Howie & Peters, 1996). Wittgenstein's (1953) game analogy allows for the diversity of language to be illustrated. In attending to this, Wittgenstein (1953, p.66) highlights the need to "*look* at how the word is used in various contexts"

rather than guessing or thinking about the meaning of a word i.e. the need to consider how words are used in specific contexts (Howie & Peters, 1996):

> To understand a sentence means to undertand a language.
> To understand a language means to be a master of technique.
>
> (Wittgenstein, 1953, p.66)

In isolation, words have no meaning. The undertstanding of one sentence is dependent on understanding other sentences (Howie & Peters, 1996). Positioning theory, scaffolded around Wittgenstein's ideas, endorses the relationship between the discurive event and the moral order (rules) associated with a particular culture (form of life) (Howie & Peters, 1996).

3.3.2 Emergence of positioning theory

Positioning theory emerged within social sciences during the 1980s because of the work undertaken by Hollway (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Hollway's work considered how individuals 'position themselves' and 'take up positions' during conversations related to gender (Hollway, 1984). The development of positioning theory since the 1990s lies predominantly with psychologist Rom Harré and sociologist Luk van Langenhove (Harré & Slocum, 2003). Although emanating in social psychology, positioning theory is applied in a wide range of contexts (Moghaddam & Harré, 2010), for example, education, management studies and politics.

The terms 'position' and 'positioning' have several origins, but were specifically known to be used in marketing (Zelle, 2009), to communicate and differentiate a product from its rivals (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Discourse was used to establish a product's identity by creating a position towards particular features of the product that are appealing to those who may buy it (Zelle, 2009). In social and psychological writing, the term 'position' was used in many different ways (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991), as discussed in the following section.

Positioning theory is distinct from the former 'role theory' (Harré, 2004); 'position' is a dynamic and fluid concept whereas 'role' is static (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Roles indicate stability and do not capture the changing ways in which people perceive themselves and perceive others (Baert, 2012); roles highlight an element of rituality and

tradition (Davies & Harré, 1999). It is insufficient to say that someone's role defines the action they will take as role is simply a label that someone has, for example, the perceived role of a teacher, and is not a way of understanding individual action (Adams, 2011b). Critics of role theory have also expressed concern that it fails to capture the complexities that are often apparent across roles (Jackson, 1998). The distinction between positions compared to roles is consistent with the emerging growth of ideas about the ontological nature of social phenomena (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Such social phenomena is built by humans as they interact with the world they are subsequently interpreting (Crotty, 1998). Thus, positioning theory can illuminate the dynamic and changing elements of social reality (Brinkmann, 2010). In role theory, an individual is separable from the role or roles they take up, and the analysis of a specific conversation is based upon the role they have; the words that are spoken and subsequently interpreted, is largely influenced by the role the individual has during that conversation (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991).

Positioning theory has mainly been used as a tool to explore relationships and alignment between people in conversations, rather than a way of analysing policy (Adams, 2016). Although originating outside educational research, positioning theory was used by researchers to explain interactions in educational environments. These studies have focused on interaction between teachers and their students, researchers and participants, and between peers (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001). However, Adams (2011a) argues that positioning theory, through the development of policy as position, offers a way of understanding how policy is formed and re-formed at the local level, though the aggregation of moment-by-moment interactions, as examined in chapter 4.

A conceptual and methodological framework is provided by positioning theory, based on the interconnectedness of the positioning triangle (shown in figure 3.1), that takes into account the specific dynamics of a particular social episode as well as patterns of interaction within it (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). It offers a framework to consider, explore and understand the experiences and perspectives that individuals have (Willig, 1999) and a vehicle for explaining and understanding how social and psychic phenomena are 'created' (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Positioning theory's potential as a theoretical framework and a qualitative analysis tool is yet to be fully realised (Zelle,

2009), yet it can enable us to understand what people do, and the meanings attributed to what they do, and why they do it (Brinkmann, 2010).

3.3.3 The positioning triangle

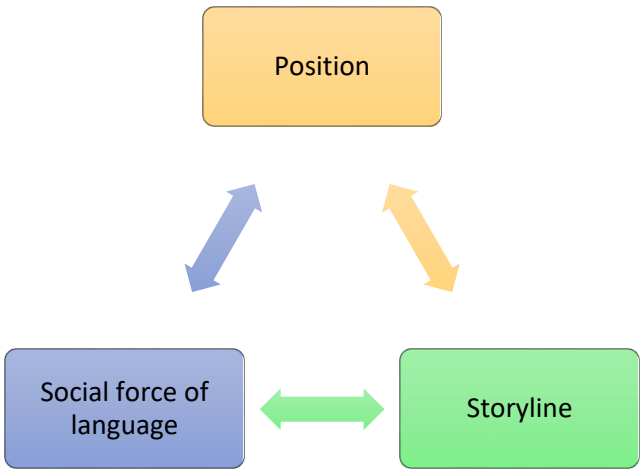

Figure 3.1 *- the positioning triangle (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p.18)*

Positioning theory is based on the interconnectedness of three elements: positions, storylines and the social force of language (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Each element is interdependent and influenced by it. As figure 3.1 illustrates, this can be represented by the 'positioning triangle'. The positioning triangle represents the fluid stability between the different positions actors can occupy, the social movement of what they say and do, and the storylines that unfold because of what is said and done in each conversation (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999).

Positions

'Positioning' to explore possibilities for, and actual action, generally falls into two frames in the literature (Adams, 2011b): one focuses on how conversations construct positions in discourse (Harré, 2004) and the other, how Discourse itself constructs positions (Willig, 1999).

The first view of positioning considers how individuals position themselves, and others, which can be accepted (with or without reluctance), argued or undermined in conversation (Burr, 2003). This is dependent upon on the multifaceted combination of

personal attributes that can allow or prevent action because of the rights, duties and obligations associated with a particular position (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Individuals in a social encounter do not have equal rights or duties to carry out specific actions, at that specific moment, with those specific people (Harré, 2012). Thus, positions ultimately define the limits individuals have to take action in a conversation (Zelle, 2009) and can be challenged (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). The position each person adopts in a particular conversation is distinct from them as an individual entity. Davies and Harré (1999), makes this distinction to emphasise these positions are momentarily and can consist of many different parts. Each person brings to a conversation a history as they see it, and therefore, have been 'holders' of multiple positions (Davies & Harré, 1999). Such history consists of a construction of events, based on past remembrances from outside the brain (exterograms), as well as indicators of the past situated in someone's long-term memory (engrams) (Harré, 2004).

The other view of positioning considers how Discourse (big-D) constructs positions that confers our identities (Burr, 2003) and subsequently, how this alerts an individual to listen and act as a person with that particular identity (Adams, 2011b). For example, individuals may be positioned to act or behave in a certain way because the way Discourse positions them, for example, teachers to dress in a particular manner or to use language in particular ways (Adams, 2011b). The individualistic nature of the person, their subjectivity, is thus constrained because of the availability of particular Discourses available to them (Willig, 1999). The notion of the subject composition is commensurate with the idea espoused by the philosopher Althusser and how we come to subscribe to different ideologies:

> …ideologies 'interpellates' or 'hails' individuals as subjects. It shouts to us 'Hey, you there!', and makes us listen as a certain type of person. When we recognise ourselves as that person hailed in the ideology, we have already become that person.
>
> (Burr, 2003, p.111)

Whilst an individual can try to withstand the position espoused, once accepted or if unable to be resisted, the individual is then subscribed to the rights and obligations associated with that position (Burr, 2003). Whilst this may allow us to explore particular experiences and points of view at a particular time (Willig, 2000), it implies "the death of the subject" (Adams, 2011b, p.471), as it promotes Discourse as being fundamental,

language is key and creates who we are. As Adams (2011b) notes, it does not acknowledge that an individual can decide for themselves; action can occur out with intentions of Discourse (Adams, 2016). Here lies the act of agency subsequently developed by Drewery (2005).

Drewery (2005) offers an alternative that essentially combines the two views of positioning, thus identity is created in conversation and Discourse, but not only one of them (Adams, 2011b). This view espouses that Discourse provides 'position calls' that individuals can choose to accept, amend or reject in conversation with others (Drewery, 2005). The term 'position call' refers to the "invitation" to accept the specific position being offered by others (Drewery, 2005, p.314). The word 'invitation' is significant in Drewery's description of the position call, as it invites an agentic response; people have the opportunity to decide as they see fit in conversations and thus "participate in the creation of the narratives of their lives" (Drewery, 2005, p.315). It is this view of positioning, as explained in section 4.2, which is relevant to this study and the basis of the tripartite to policy analysis being used.

Storylines

A storyline is a "compendium of the on-going social episode" (Hirvonen, 2016, p.2); the "the narrative which is being acted out in the metaphorical drama" (Barnes, 2004, p.1). The positions held by individuals in conversations are dependent on the storyline in play; there may be one or multiple storylines (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Storylines are often implicit and taken for granted (Harré, 2004) and reflect the context and specific situation unfolding (Zelle, 2009).

Knowledge of cultural structures and the 'roles' occupied in these structures will ultimately shape any narrative unfolding (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001). The positions held by individuals in a storyline can conflict with each other and may also be contradictory in a different storyline (Adams, 2011a). Storylines can change during conversation, and therefore alter the positions adopted and the social force of language emerging (Zelle, 2009). Storylines can be viewed differently by different people, because of differences in culture understood by each individual, that is subsequently embedded in the discursive narrative (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001). Individuals are continually engaging in positioning themselves and other people as storylines unfold (Ritchie & Rigano, 2001). In contrast to

speech-act theory of conversation, conversations uncoil through the action taken by each individual as they make, or attempt at making, their own and other individual's actions known (Davies & Harré, 1999).

Social force of language

The social significance of what is said or done, at a specific moment, is referred to as the social force of language. It can be considered on three levels: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary (Austin, 1940).

Locutionary refers to the actual utterance of speech and can be broken down into three acts: phonetic (the act of expressing certain noises which are phonologically distinctive), phatic (words uttered that sound as if they conform to the rules of a particular vocabulary) and rhetic (using words in a way to achieve a certain meaning) (Austin, 1940). The three acts occur simultaneously.

Illocutionary refers to the way language is used; the intended *meaning* and *significance* of what is said and done, and is often referred to as 'speech acts', which is distinct from the act of simply *saying* something (Austin, 1940). Thus, to express a locutionary act also performs an illocutionary act (Austin, 1975). The *force* in which something is said for example, whether it is a request, an order, a challenge or a plead, will determine the meaning and significance of what was said (Austin, 1940). Speech-acts are largely influenced by the positioning of those taking part in a conversation; these positions are also a product of the social force a conversation may have permitted (Davies & Harré, 1999) and may change. The existence, or nonexistence, of positions, can permit or not permit certain speech acts (Zelle, 2009). The significance of what is said may change as time passes and in different situations as language is 'unstable'. Thus, the illocutionary force depends on who is using it, for what purpose and where (Harré, 2004).

Finally, the perlocutionary force is what is *gained* by saying something; the impact of the illocutionary force on thoughts, feelings and actions (Austin, 1940). This can be intentional or unintentional and may not be under those who said its control, as it is dependent on the specific circumstances in which it was said (Austin, 1940). What is said, who said it and for what purpose, can have a variety of meanings (Harré, 2004), thus the perlocutionary force depends on the storyline at play.

Both the work of Bakhtin and Wittgenstein, examined in section 3.3.1, is of note here. For example, Bakhtin (1981) notes that discourse is encapsulated in a specific cultural world at a specific time and place, and is espoused in relation to others. Wittgenstein (1953) treats language as a social process; it was 'publically' acquired and the meaning of it depends on its actual use. Discourse is thus embedded in culture or 'form of life' (Peters & Appel, 1996). The cultural embeddedness of discourse, therefore, influences the social force of language in any given storyline. For Wittgenstein (1953), it permits and constrains, the range of positions that can be adopted in a 'language-game'.

3.3.4 Positioning modes

Different forms of positioning can occur in discourse and conversation, and have been coined "modes" by Harré and van Langenhove (1991, p.395). These modes are referred to when analysing the empirical work in chapter 10:

- First, second and third order positioning
- Performative and accountive positioning
- Moral and personal positioning
- Self and other positioning
- Tacit and intentional positioning

Modes of positioning emerge since humans, unlike products in the application of positioning theory to marketing, can exercise agency (Zelle, 2009). Individuals have the capacity to position themselves, to position others and to be positioned.

First, second and third order positioning

How a person locates themselves and/or others in a storyline is referred to as first order positioning and has an instant perlocutionary impact i.e. something is achieved by saying something. If the first order position is challenged in any way, for example, by being rejected, questioned or subject to negotiation, this is referred to as second order positioning. As figure 3.2 illustrates, first order positions can be challenged in the original conversation (second order positioning) or in another conversation about the original conversation (third order positioning). Third order positioning may involve the original individuals in the conversation or other people who are now taking part in conversation.

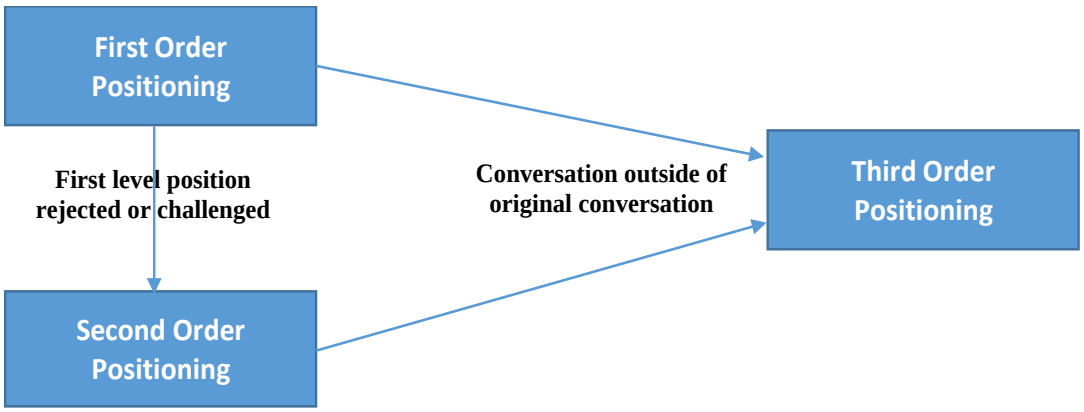

Figure 3.2 *– first, second and third order positioning*

Performative and accountive positioning

Performative positioning occurs when an individual has positioned themselves or others and this has not been challenged i.e. second order positioning has not occurred and thus the position has had an instant perlocutionary effect. This is not to suggest an individual is content with the first order position they have been given, but crucially, it has not been challenged.

Accountive positioning occurs during second and third order positioning, the former in the same conversation, and the latter when a conversation about the original conversation takes place; "talk about talk" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p.397). Those participating in third order positioning, are also first order positioning themselves.

Moral and personal positioning

Moral positioning occurs when one's role, and the rights and duties associated with it, are implicated in understanding the position held. Personal positioning involves reference to individual attributes and situations or individual particularities. There will always be an element of both moral and personal positioning during a conversation. However, actions that cannot be fully understood by links to his or her role will trigger a more dominant personal positioning.

Self and other positioning

In conversation, each individual will position themselves, reflexive positioning, as well as others simultaneously. The intended meaning and significance of what is said by an individual, the illocutionary force, is restricted by how that individual positions themselves (Moghaddam, 1999). How a person privately positions themselves, through discourse to themselves, might be different from how they position themselves to another individual about the same matter (Moghaddam, 1999).

How an individual positions themselves, for example, through stressing own agency (through pronouns), reference to their own biography or point of view during conversation, will change and shift as they hear themselves speak. This is because there is a constant movement of the reflexive position as new experiences emerge and the present storyline evolves (Moghaddam, 1999). Such positioning of oneself and others is defined by an individual's personal and moral attributes, and will vary depending on culture and the specific context they are based (Moghaddam, 1999). Thus, reflexive positioning is fundamentally based on local systems of cultural ideals which act as markers for individuals as they position themselves (Moghaddam, 1999).

Tacit and intentional positioning

Most first order positioning that occurs unintentionally and perhaps unconsciously, is referred to as tacit positioning and occurs in everyday interaction and conversation. Intentional positioning because of devious, crafty or machiavellian behaviour (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991) or to create an impression to another person (Goffman, 1959), can occur during first, second and third order positioning. As figure 3.3 illustrates, second and third order positioning is always intentional as the first order position is challenged.

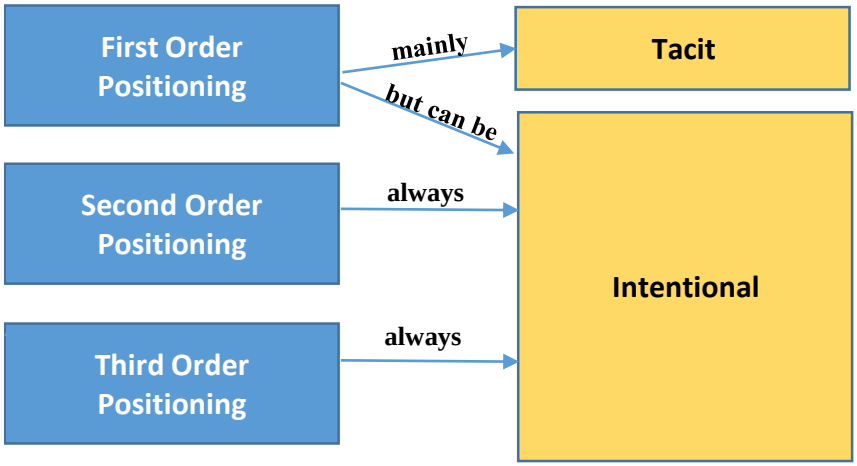

Figure 3.3 *– tacit and intentional positioning*

Intentional positioning consists of four types and is linked to performance/accountive positioning and self/other positioning already discussed.

	Performative positioning	**Accountive positioning**
Self-positioning	Deliberate self-positioning	Forced self-positioning
Other-positioning	Deliberate positioning of others	Forced positioning of others

Table 3.1 *– types of intentional positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p.400)*

Deliberate self-positioning, or reflexive positioning, occurs when individual's attempt to portray their identity, often in pursuit of a particular goal they have in mind. This can happen in many ways: firstly, by highlighting their capacity to act in a particular way from a range of alternatives by signifying one's agency, for example, by using pronouns. Secondly, by commenting on their own individual point of view by presenting themselves as unique through and finally, through reference to their own personal experiences i.e. their own biography of what they have seen, experienced and done. By highlighting an individual's biography provides a sense of validation to the claims they make, as they are seen as experienced. Deliberate self-positioning has also been referred to as 'strategic positioning' as it implies the desire to achieve specific goals (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991), and links to Goffman's (1959) concept of 'impression management' that an individual is intentionally trying to persue.

Forced self-positioning occurs when somebody else has asked an individual to position themselves for example, by asking a question. The degree of 'force' maybe mild or strong depending on the specific context the positioning is taking place and the specific question being asked.

Deliberate positioning of others takes place when an individual intentionally positions another individual. This can happen when the individual is present or not present. If this occurs when the other individual is not present, this is known as ‘gossiping’, although there may be times were this is not the case. Those involved in the deliberate positioning of others are also positioning themselves. The latter can be viewed as a form of strategic positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991).

Forced positioning of others happens when an individual is forced to position another person. This can happen in the individual’s presence or absence.

Simultaneous positioning

The modes outlined above serve to provide a way of describing analytically how individuals position themselves or others in conversation. Regardless of what positioning occurs, these will be occurring simultaneously (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). A visual representation is provided in figure 3.4 for clarity and to assist the reader in understanding the variety and combination of positioning modes available.

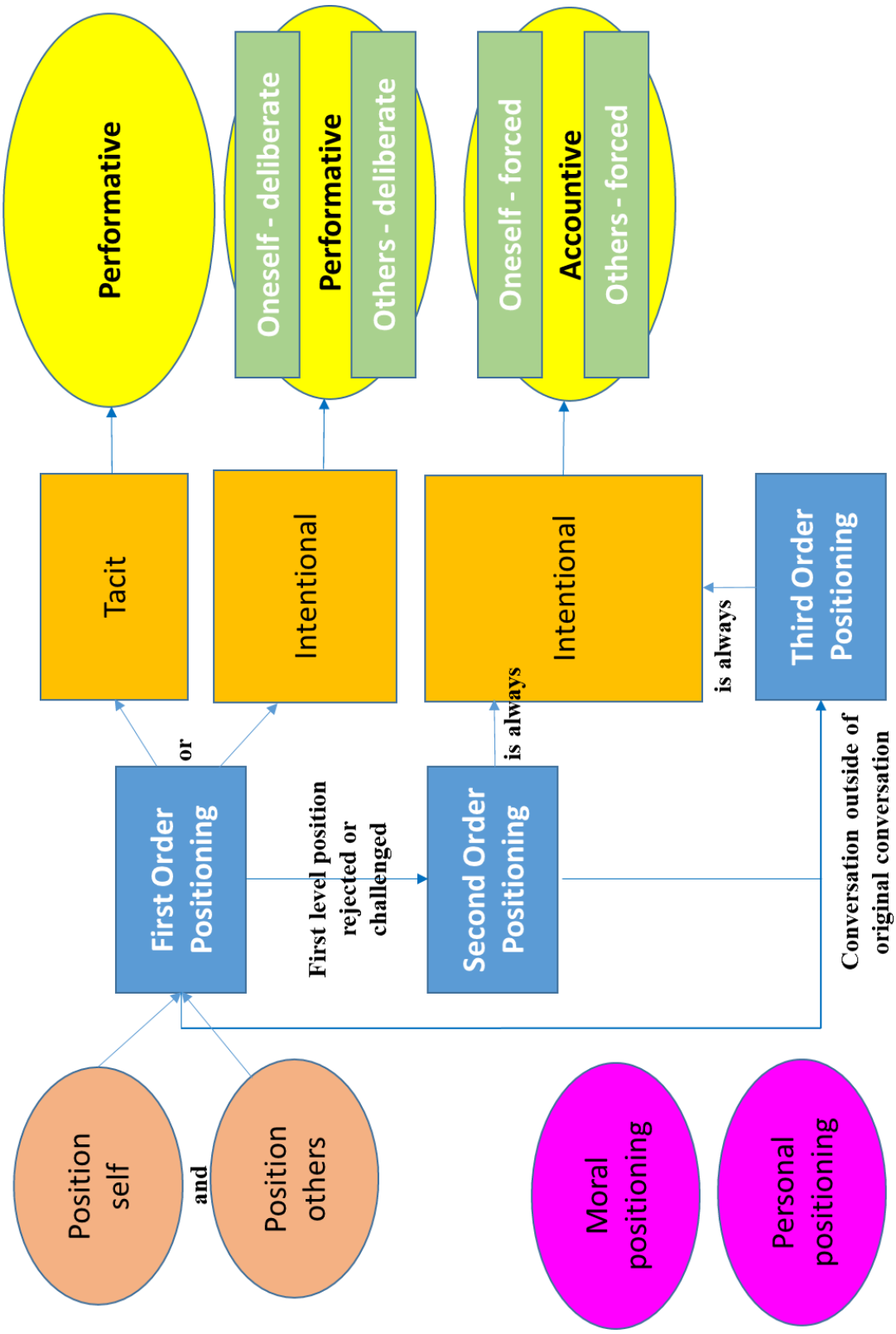

Figure 3.4 *– simultaneous positioning modes*

3.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the philosophical basis of this study, ontologically on relativism and epistemologically on social constructionism, as well as exploring the concept of positioning theory. The latter was achieved by considering positioning theory's use as a theoretical framework, the positioning triangle and the variety of position modes that occur in conversation. This is important as positioning theory is at the heart of policy as position, and the position modes outlined are used when analysing the empirical data for this study in chapter 10.

Chapter 4 examines the notion of policy as position to conduct policy analysis using the tripartite approach proposed by Adams (2016): *policy-framing*, *policy-explaining* and *policy-forming.*

Chapter 4 Policy as Position

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 examined the philosophical basis of this study; ontologically based on relativism and epistemologically on social constructionism, as well as exploring the roots and use of positioning theory. The latter was achieved by considering positioning theory's use as a theoretical framework, the positioning triangle and the variety of position modes that occur in conversation. This chapter examines the notion of policy as position which uses positioning theory as its basis to conduct policy analysis using a tripartite approach proposed by Adams (2016): *policy-framing*, *policy-explaining* and *policy-forming.* This approach is used as it is original and unique, as highlighted in section 1.5 and throughout this chapter.

4.2 Policy analysis using a tripartite approach

Policy as position builds on and complements policy as discourse by considering the correlation between policy and practice (Adams, 2011a). Policy as discourse considers how policy is not simply a representation of true meaning and intent (Olssen et al., 2004), but rather how knowing comes about through the social process of language (Adams, 2011a). It does this by considering how policy, created through problematisation and argumentation, is then mediated into local spaces through wider Discourse to produce meanings that penetrate policy (Adams, 2016).

Adams (2011a) offers a perspective on the relationship between policy and practice by suggesting that policy is formed at the micro level by the discussions and activities that take place at that level. He argues that to understand policy requires acknowledgement of how professional selves are operationalised as positions. Individuals position themselves, and others, which can be accepted (with or without reluctance), argued or undermined in conversation (Burr, 2003). This depends on the multifaceted combination of personal attributes that can allow or prevent action because of the rights, duties and obligations associated with a particular position (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991).

Adams (2011a) is not suggesting that policy as position is a reaction to policy, but rather a vehicle by which policy is subject to formation and reformation through continual

discursive practices. He argues that it is through this on-going discursive practice that positions to policy are communicated and understood, and by using positioning theory, the relationships and connections between the three elements of the positioning triangle: 'storylines', 'positions' and 'social force of language', can be examined (Adams, 2016). I illustrate this in figure 4.1:

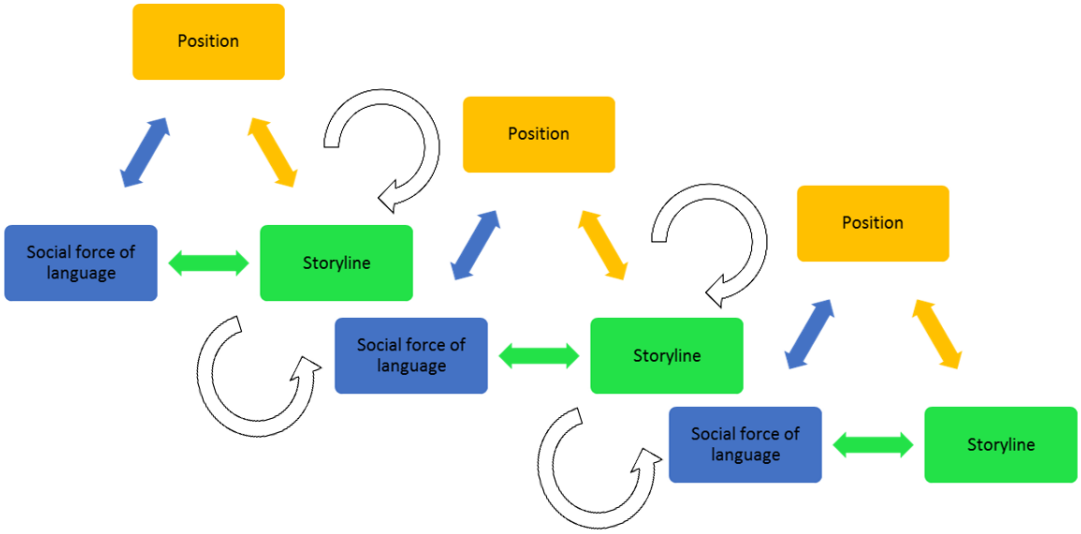

Figure 4.1 *– policy formation through continual discursive practices*

Policy as position represents the reality of discursive events at the local level that together form policy, rather than, simply, the 'weight' of the policy pronouncement mediated into practice (Adams, 2011a). These local discursive events are not only where policy is understood by those involved, but rather, where it is formed; as he notes, "the very discursive practices undertaken in an attempt to 'understand' policy mandate are the very acts which confer upon policy its tangible form" (Adams, 2011a, p.66). However, such discursive practices do not occur outside the social, cultural, historical or economic sphere in which they are embedded (Gee, 2012).

There are three points to consider. As Adams (2016) notes:

- The wider Discourse that pre-dates and emerges from policy pronouncements requires examination - ***policy-framing***
- Policy pronouncements themselves do not constitute policy but rather, espouse options and opportunities that require dissection - ***policy-explaining***
- The moment-by-moment discursive activities that attempt to understand policy actually constitute policy formation - ***policy-forming***

By taking these three points as its foundations, this thesis will analyse, discuss and interpret data using a heuristic device proposed by Adams (2016)[7]. This heuristic device uses positioning theory as its lens to examine and explore policy, as figure 4.2 illustrates. I consider other frameworks that were subsequently discounted in section 5.3.

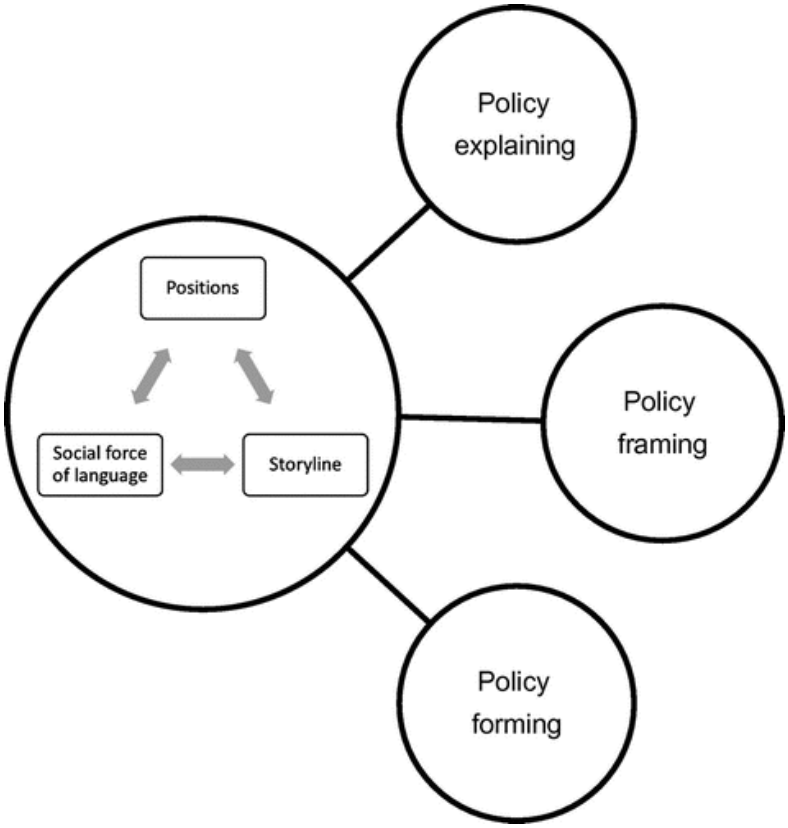

Figure 4.2 *– a tripartite approach to policy analysis (Adams, 2016, p.303)*

[7] Chapter 7 policy-framing, chapter 8 policy-explaining and chapter 10 policy-forming

Each element of this tripartite approach is overlaid by 'position calls', the tacit allurement to take up different subject positions (Drewery, 2005). Position calls offer a way of exploring the relationship between macro level Discourse (Gee, as cited by Adams, 2016) and discursive processes at the micro level. These discursive processes at the micro level are formed by "stretches of language which 'hang together' so as to make sense to some community of people, such as a contribution to a conversation or story" (Gee, 2012, p.112). However, these discursive processes do not occur outside the social, cultural, historical or economic sphere in which they are embedded (Gee, 2012). Therefore, by using the tripartite approach proposed by Adams (2016), the policy researcher can examine how ideas are presented and explained, through wider Discourse, in an attempt to analyse how policy is positioned, formed and reformed at the micro level.

Adams (2016) does not stipulate any particular methods that should be employed to operationalise his approach, thus it enables methodological eclecticism (Ozga, 2000). The decisions taken to operationalise his approach, and the limitations of these, are discussed in the two methods chapters[8] of this thesis. Using Adams' (2016) device has provided an opportunity to use an approach, together with the choice of methods, which have not been used in this way. The methodology and combination of methods are therefore original.

Although this approach to policy analysis was proposed by my primary supervisor[9], I do have criticisms of it. These criticisms mainly relate to policy-explaining and policy-forming and are discussed in section 4.4 and 4.5 respectively. However, I have two criticisms that relate to the heuristic generally that I discuss on the following page. I felt able to criticise my supervisor's work because I was able to justify my views. It was important I was able to discuss with him the criticisms I had to show my development as a scholar, rather than accepting his approach at face value. Thus, as my development as a researcher progressed, power relations between us changed.

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[8] Chapter 6 Methods for policy-framing and policy-explaining
Chapter 9 Methods for policy-forming

[9] Dr Paul Adams, University of Strathclyde

The diagram (figure 4.2) used to illustrate the approach separates the realms of policy-framing, policy-explaining and policy-framing. It does not show the interconnectedness of these elements or the iterative nature of operationalising the approach. Although I have separated each element for the purpose of constructing this thesis, carrying the study out was 'messy'. Indeed, the structure of the thesis was changed as it was written and I had to take care to avoid repetition as I was writing different chapters. The process is not as 'neat' as the diagram implies.

The heuristic does not include a feedback loop. Given a Professional Doctorate aims to seek development of professional practice (Pratt et al., 2015) and create knowledge based on practice that can impact on practice (Fulton et al., 2012), I feel this is important. Regardless of whether I was undertaking a Professional Doctorate, I feel anyone engaging in policy research should feedback to the community they are investigating. Ethically, providing feedback is part of research dissemination.

4.3 Policy-framing

Policy-framing identifies the ways in which wider forces, emerging through problematisation and argumentation, can position Discourse to produce meanings that penetrate policy (Adams, 2016) i.e. meanings that penetrate policy explanations. 'Big-D' Discourse examines how language is encapsulated in social institutions and society, in particular circumstances and at particular times, which can be accompanied by semiotic signs and influenced by values, attitudes, beliefs and ideologies (Gee, 1990).

Foucault believes that Discourse limits and shapes our views of the world (Trowler, 2003) and while such Discourse is not "irreducible to language and to speak" (Foucault, 1971, p.49) and may seem insignificant, it does have connections with power; it establishes what can be said or thought, and by whom (Ozga, 2000). Dominant Discourses are understood with respect to, for example, law, education and the media, and subsequently are reinforced and reproduced by these; consequentially, however, less powerful Discourse can become marginalised and ignored (Foucault, 1972). However, the (Critical) Discourse Analyst operates in both the powerful and marginalised forces of Discourse in an attempt to explain and how and why certain discourses work (Rogers, 2004). Therefore, policy-framing uncovers the ways that policy writers and readers are positioned, and can be positioned by, the forces of Discourse and how policy texts and

such constructs use language, and specific semiotic signs (Gee, 1990), to position certain problems because of wider social, cultural and political forces (Adams, 2016).

By examining Discourse, we can explore how certain perspectives and stances are taken as 'normal' and also others that appear to be 'deviant' from the 'norm' (Gee, 2012). Such broader social, cultural and political phenomena need to be examined to be able to subsequently link them to local occurring practices (Brockmeier & Harré, 1997) - 'little-d' discourse. Chapter 7 considers how the NIF was *framed.*

4.4 Policy-explaining

Policy is communicated through texts and artefacts (Maguire et al., 2015) including those prevalent in modern society for example, blogs, web-based texts and video broadcasts and *seek* to communicate *unequivocal* meaning and intent (Adams, 2016). However, such policy pronouncements are encoded in complex ways, subsequently decoded and recoded by policy actors (Ball et al., 2012), as discussed in section 2.4.1.

Behind the policy lies a repertoire of discussion as to what is believed to be correct and what is believed to be incorrect, viewed through the historical, cultural, political and social lenses of those involved (Adams, 2016). Despite this, by interrogating the policy text in whatever format it is produced for example, physical documents, web-based artefacts, speeches and broadcasts, the purpose and significance of the policy can be examined to begin engaging with the policy-making process (Adams, 2016). However, this is limited to what can be espoused through policy-explaining as I highlight below.

Adams (2016) highlights the policy researcher can examine changes made between draft and final versions of policy texts, the style adopted in documentation, as well as examining the ways the policy text offers opportunities, and constraints opportunities for action, through the position-calls they espouse and the mechanism by which key messages are reinforced. He concludes that policy as text is therefore, positioned as a vehicle for policy-explaining; such constructs are not the formation of policy, but rather the product of events, discussion and negotiation. Chapter 8 examines how the NIF was *explained*.

Policy-explaining however, does not shed light on the *actual* events, discussions and negotiations, and the balance of power held by particular actor(s) that occurred to produce the policy pronouncement. Whilst a revised policy text may provide reasons why something changed, without further investigation into these, who instigated the changes and what their interests were, would be speculation. Thus, there is a need to consider the *process* by which the product of policy-explaining (i.e. policy pronouncement) was made. Adams' (2016) approach does not do this.

4.5 Policy-forming

Adams (2011a) suggests that policy is formed at the micro level by the discussions and activities that take place at that level. He argues that to understand policy requires acknowledgement of how professional selves are operationalised as positions. By examining 'little-d' discourse, the linguistic elements of language (Rogers et al., 2005) used in moment-by-moment interactions (i.e. conversations), the policy researcher can try to make sense of how policy is subject to formation and reformation through the positions that are offered, resisted and taken up by individuals at the micro level (Adams, 2016).

Adams' (2016) approach assumes that individuals verbalise their position through conversation with others and thus conversation is key. However, individuals may position themselves and others privately and act on such positioning. As Vygotsky (1978) notes, language is first conveyed internally privately before being conveyed externally. Given that teachers may work privately in their own classroom, or simply choose not to communicate language publically, this is notable.

Action can occur beyond the aims of policy-explaining and policy-framing (Adams, 2016); the act of agency. Agency is an imprecise and poorly articulated concept in the literature (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). Therefore, as Priestley et al. (2015) note, it is often not clear whether agency refers to the sociological perspective of an individual's capacity, competence or ability to act, usually in response to a problematic situation (Biesta & Tedder, 2006), or to the growth of the 'ecological' concept of agency, linked to an individual's interaction with their environment (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2013) argue it is important to view agency as something achieved through engagement in specific, contextual conditions, rather than something

that lies with individuals. The former emphasises that individuals will "…act by *means* of their environment rather than simply *in* their environment" (Priestley et al., 2013, p.188)

Existing sociological theories of agency tend to focus on *routine* (expertise brought to work by teachers), *purpose* (what guides what teachers do) or *judgement* (decisions made by teachers about the course of action to take, how to take it in the here and now) (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2017*).* In the ecological view, agency is not something that 'people have', but rather, something they achieve through the interplay of particular conditions and circumstances (Priestley et al., 2015). In this view therefore, agency is both "…a temporal and a relational phenomenon…it occurs over time and is about the relations between actors and the environments in and through which they act" (Biesta et al., 2017, p.40). The quality of the *engagement* of actors in this temporal-relational context is key and not simply the quality of the actors themselves (Priestley et al., 2015). Whilst the interplay *of routine, purpose* and *judgement* as noted above is present, as is "how this interplay varies within different structural contexts of action" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.963). Different structural contexts of action depend on influence from the *past*, views towards the *future* and partaking with the *present* (Biesta et al., 2017). Thus, to achieve agency depends on for example, experience, personal and professional biographies (short and long-term aspirations), as well as engagement with the here and now, where such engagement is bounded by cultural, structural and material resources (Priestley et al., 2015).

Whilst the position calls offered by the policy text itself, and wider frames of Discourse, attempt to position individuals and may limit the opportunity for action, individuals have the option to choose whether they accept, reject or modify such positions (Adams, 2011a). Rogers et al. (2005, p.369) explains, "as language users, we choose from the meaning-making potentials that are available to us and represent and construct dialogue". Therefore, by examining the empirical data collected via semi structured interviews with teachers and applying the positioning modes discussed in section 3.3.4, how the NIF is positioned, and subsequently formed at the micro level by teachers, can be examined. This is undertaken in chapter 10.

Policy-forming does not consider *where* policy-forming takes place. I would argue from reading Adams' (2016) work there is an implicit assumption that conversations take place orally and in real time. However, conversations can take place electronically in writing and *not* in real time. For example, by e-mail or collaboration on a cloud or network based document[10]. The policy researcher could examine electronic stretches of discourse to examine how policy is positioned and thus formed. This would be an interesting way to develop Adams' (2016) model given the use of technology in schools.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined policy as position, and how policy is subject to formation and reformation through discursive practices at the local level. By using positioning theory as its lens, a tripartite approach to policy analysis (Adams, 2016), namely *policy-explaining* through the interrogation of the policy pronouncement, *policy-framing* through position calls espoused by wider Discourse and *policy-forming* through discursive practice at the local level, is proposed as a vehicle for analysing policy.

Chapter 5 examines the methodology employed to conduct this study.

[10] In my own context, policy documents are frequently discussed and commented on via a shared network.

Chapter 5 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

Having a clearly chosen and rigorous research design is fundamental to research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Therefore, this chapter examines what methodology is and the decisions that were taken to operationalise an appropriate research design. The methods that were employed for data collection (review of relevant policy texts & relevant literature and semi-structured interviews) and analysis (Critical Discourse Analysis and thematic analysis) are examined, as well as ethical issues that had to be considered. Finally, issues surrounding research quality, namely trustworthiness and authenticity in keeping with a constructionist approach (Crotty, 1998), rather than reliability and validity, are discussed.

The aim of this study is to examine the National Improvement Framework (NIF), through the lens of positioning theory and how it is formed at the local level by teachers. Three research questions have been addressed by the study:

1. What wider Discourse has *framed* the National Improvement Framework?
2. How is the National Improvement Framework *explained* in official policy texts?
3. How is the National Improvement Framework *formed* at the local level by teachers?

Each research question addresses a specific element of Adams' (2016) approach to policy analysis: policy-framing (RQ 1), policy-explaining (RQ 2) and policy-forming (RQ 3).

5.2 Methodology

Cohen et al. (2018) argues that methodology stems from the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018). Grix (2010) argues that for research to be meaningful, the link between the philosophical foundations of a study and the methodology to be employed, is fundamental. The ontological and epistemological position of the researcher in this study was therefore explored in section 3.2.

Defining methodology is not straightforward, however, as the term is not universally agreed or accepted. For example, Crotty (1998, p.3) describes methodology as "the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes". I agree with Crotty's definition, and this chapter outlines the methodology to be employed in this study and what decisions were taken to answer the research questions.

Crotty (1998) does not refer to qualitative or quantitative in his discussion of methodology, whereas, Silverman (2017) states that methodology can be viewed as quantitative or qualitative. Crotty (1998) does not believe the "great divide" (p.14) between qualitative and quantitative occurs at the methodological level, but rather the choice of methods to be used. Care has to be applied as it is not a slight nuance in language being adopted, but rather, different views are held. Methodology is therefore distinct from methods; the tools used for data collection and analysis (Cohen et al., 2018). Silverman (2017) notes qualitative methods include interviews, focus groups, observation and documentary analysis. Quantitative methods are associated with questionnaires, testing and structured observations (Bryman, 2016). Neuman (2014) argues against a rigid dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative approaches. Whilst these terms can serve as a label to help us understand the phenomena being examined, "by nature it defines boundaries which perceptions and activities are encouraged not to cross" (Symonds & Gorard, 2010, p.122). Mixed methods can represent a way of uniting these two methodological stances (Symonds & Gorard, 2010). This approach involves combining qualitative and quantitative methods, rather than simply subscribing to the methods often inherent with one methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), if we accept Silverman's (2017) view.

Neuman (2014) argues the researcher should consider the strengths and limitations of different methods and make an informed choice on what is the most appropriate for the task at hand. I agree and whilst this study adopts methods associated with qualitative research, I did employ a quantitative technique by counting the number of times words were used in different versions of the NIF policy text as part of my data analysis. Crotty (1998) suggests that rather than having at polar opposites the quantitative/qualitative divide, it is possible to combine these and what is important is that the researcher is consistent epistemologically. Burke-Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue some

researchers tend to treat epistemology and methods as being closely associated, yet there often is no relationship between one and the other. As they highlight, "the logic of justification (an important aspect of epistemology) does not dictate what specific data collection and data analytical methods researchers must use" (Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.15). As explored in section 3.2, this study adopts a constructionist epistemology. It is possible for constructionists to adopt quantitative approaches, for example, I did by counting the number of times words were used. However, to be consistent with a constructionist epistemology, the claims and justifications used to support these claims, will be different (Crotty, 1998) i.e. they will subscribe to a constructionist epistemology rather than an objective one, and the criteria in which research quality will be judged, as explored in section 5.6, will be different.

5.3 Research design

I had initially planned to conduct a case study of how teachers in one particular authority were positioning the NIF. I had chosen to do this to construct an in depth picture of how the NIF was being formed in one particular locale. However, I was unable to because of problems gaining access to a single local authority, which I shall discuss shortly. From this local authority, a smaller number of primary schools, for reasons of manageability, would have been used as a basis for research.

A case study has boundaries on what it will not cover and traditionally focuses on a single case, for example, person or organisation, and allows for in-depth investigation of that case (Hart, 2005). They allow for an examination, snapshot and subsequent production of 'thick description' of the reality and experiences of participants (Cohen et al., 2018). Since a case study approach requires data to be collected from a variety of sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008), different teachers in one local authority would have been used to construct the case study.

At the start of my Doctorate, I was particularly interested in the work of Bourdieu, and had intended on using his thinking tools of 'field', 'habitus' and 'capital', to examine what was happening in the 'field of schooling practices' (Hardy, 2015a). I had clearly marked boundaries; the NIF, primary teachers, and a defined theoretical framework, which is consistent with a case study approach. However, problems gaining access and the development of my own knowledge of policy, specifically Adams' (2011a; 2016)

work, changed the landscape of what I wanted to research. I was interested in for example, the wider frames that position policy, and how policy is formed at the micro level through the positions that are offered, resisted and amended, rather than simply how it was being 'implemented' or 'enacted' at the micro level. Ultimately, I was keen to add to the existing literature by taking policy as position as my focus, rather than merely a policy implementation or enactment study. The tripartite approach to policy analysis offered by Adams (2016) provided a unique and original way to conduct policy analysis that has not been carried out before. Positioning theory provided an opportunity to understand what people do, the meanings attributed to what they do, and why they do it (Brinkmann, 2010). Using Adams' (2016) tripartite approach to policy analysis, that encompasses positioning theory as a theoretical basis for this study, was explored in chapter 4.

Following ethical approval by the University, the first local authority I approached denied access; this reveals the power a gatekeeper has for example, the local authority in permitting access (Bryman, 2016). The local authority responded to my request by indicating it would be "too resource intensive", but did not elaborate further. As gatekeepers interpret what they are being asked to do in their own social context (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003), I am left to assume the local authority felt my study would have required too much "resource", possibly teacher time, although there could have been other reasons for refusing access. I therefore approached another local authority who agreed to take part.

Once agreement from this local authority was provided, I contacted each primary head teacher in the authority asking for permission to conduct interviews with teachers in their school. This permission was initially sought by e-mail and followed up by letter. Both e-mail and letter yielded no responses whatsoever, so therefore I telephoned each school. Unfortunately, each head teacher either refused to allow permission or did not respond to my request. Although the local authority allowed access, the head teacher of each school subsequently acted as gatekeeper and refused it. I had successfully negotiated access at one level, but not at another; as Feldman et al. (2003) highlight, researchers do usually have to negotiate access at multiple levels.

Although problems gaining access to teachers in schools via local authorities and head teachers could have been due to resource constraints, it could have been because of the way the NIF is positioned by the local authority, head teacher or teachers. For example, it was perhaps positioned as a controversial issue, one they felt they did not know much about or one not worthy of exploration. I did also have to accept the time of the school year I was requesting access was busy (between March – June 2017) and some teachers who I later spoke with said this was probably a factor for head teachers refusing access. Although gatekeepers knew they could see the study's findings, illustrating Patton's (2002) idea of reciprocity to gain access, this did not prove successful on this occasion.

I was keen to conduct interviews before the end of the school year, so that teachers could reflect on their experiences that academic year. I was concerned if I left interviewing until after the summer break, teachers might not be able to recall as easily specific examples from their own practice or offer as insightful reflection, thus hampering the credibility of the data gathered. I felt that I therefore, had to widen my approach to data collection, as explored in chapter 9, through opportunistic sampling by allowing teachers who met the inclusion criteria from any local authority to participate, via telephone, if necessary. As I was not going to be able to collect as much context specific information from a small number of schools within the same authority, and as my choice of theoretical framework had evolved from when I initially embarked upon my thesis, a case study was no longer an appropriate choice of research design.

Following problems with access, I did consider undertaking a literature-based study that would have looked at the wider frames positioning the NIF. As much as this would have avoided the problems of gaining access to suitable participants, I would not have been able to fully employ Adams' (2016) tripartite approach and use of positioning theory to policy analysis. I was particularly keen to do this because of its originality. I was also keen to conduct empirical research for my own development as a researcher, rather than undertaking a literature-based study.

As I had a theoretical framework I wished to work with, and my set of own values and beliefs, phenomenological research was not an appropriate research design. For example, this type of research is founded on the view that knowledge is based on our immediate experiences, and the researcher's task is to capture, interpret and explain these (Cohen et

al., 2018). As phenomenological research requires the researcher to "put to one side any prior concepts or suppositions, and seek to understand how everyday events and 'common knowledge' are as they are, how they are perceived and sustained by the participants" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p.27), using positioning theory, which makes many assumptions as explored in chapter 3, would not have been consistent with this type of research.

5.4 Data collection and analysis

As table 5.1 indicates, this study was conducted in two stages to address three research questions.

Stage	**Research Question**	**Source of data**	**Method of data analysis**
1	RQ 1 - What wider Discourse has *framed* the National Improvement Framework? RQ 2 - How is the National Improvement Framework *explained* in official policy texts?	Literature review Analysis of draft, 2016 and 2017 NIF texts	Critical Discourse Analysis
2	RQ 3 - How is the National Improvement Framework *formed* at the local level by teachers?	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis

Table 5.1 *– link between stages of the study, research questions, source of data and methods of data analysis*

The terms 'critical policy analysis', 'critical policy scholarship' and 'policy sociology' are used to describe the field of policy analysis, and are attributed to a variety of scholars (Gale, 2001). Whilst we could critically examine the differences between these three terms, Troyna (1994), argues the difference is little. The latter approach, policy sociology, attributed to the work of Ozga (1987), is rooted within social science and employs qualitative techniques as a basis for policy analysis. Policy sociology allows the researcher to "employ whatever theoretical or methodological approach is most suitable to the problem or issue under investigation" (Codd, 1988, p.235). As Adams' (2016)

tripartite approach to policy analysis, the framework this study is based, does not subscribe any particular research design or specify specific methods for data collection or analysis, it permits *theoretical eclecticism* (Ozga, 2000). Thus, making a connection between methods of data collection and analysis explicit, and presenting this coherently and consistently is important (Ozga, 2000).

Data analysis allows the researcher to move from having raw data, to a scenario where they can understand, explain and interpret the phenomena being explored (Cohen et al., 2018). Although data analysis turns data into findings, the process is complex and reflexive, and there is no single approach this can take (Patton, 2002); the approach employed however, has to be "fit for purpose" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.643).

> [Data] analysis is a bit like taking apart puzzles and reassembling them…however, puzzles cannot be completed if pieces are missing, warped or broken.
>
> (LeCompte, 2000, p.146)

Data analysis should not be seen as a separate stage from data collection (Bryman, 2016). The task of analysis also constructs data as the researcher makes notes, writes reflections and thoughts (Cohen et al., 2018). Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) recommend not separating data collection and analysis, as this could restrict the potential for collecting new data. In reality, data collection and analysis took place concurrently; similar to policy analysis, the process is messy!

The rationale behind the data collection and analysis methods are provided in the chapter before the relevant chapter for each stage of the study i.e. chapter 6 for policy-framing and policy-explaining and chapter 9 for policy-forming.

5.5 Ethics

Ethics is central to all research, and is concerned with "the principles and the rules of behaviour that act to dictate what is actually acceptable or allowed within a profession" (O'Leary, 2017, p.70).

Ethics permeate every stage of a study and not only the data collection and analysis stages. For example, the choice of research design, reporting and dissemination are also

ethical issues (Cohen et al., 2018). During the research design stage, it is necessary to only identify a research area that requires investigation and would be worthwhile and meaningful (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I wrote in section 5.3 about the issues I had gaining access to the one local authority, and therefore had to change my approach to sampling by employing opportunistic sampling, as explored in chapter 9. During data collection, issues surrounding using participants are prominent, as is storage of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Ensuring anonymity, confidentiality and an accurate record of interpretation is provided, is relevant during data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, ethical issues surrounding data collection, analysis, reporting and using semi-structured interviews are explored in chapter 9. Research quality is also related to ethics and is discussed in section 5.6.

In this study a universal stance, whereby ethical principles should never be broken (Bryman, 2016), is followed. The research proposal that I submitted during the taught component of the Doctorate, was the first step in operationalising an ethically sound study. Bowling (2014) states the research proposal is a prerequisite for beginning an ethically sound and credible study. This is because it detailed the choices I had made, justified the research gap, and explored my own personal, professional and academic interest in the area to be studied (Bryman, 2016).

The University of Strathclyde's ethics procedures, which follow the British Educational Research Association's guidelines, the University's Code of Practice on Investigations involving Human Beings and Faculty-specific ethics procedures were always followed. I am also required to behave professionally and conduct myself in an ethical way as a registrant of the General Teaching Council for Scotland. Ethical approval was sought and gained from the University's School of Education's Ethics Committee, as it did not satisfy the criteria necessary to be considered by the University's Ethics Committee. There was no harm or deception associated with this study and no incentives were offered.

5.6 Research quality

Bryman (2016) discusses the importance of validity and reliability as two of the many indicators of quality for those working within a positivist, conventional perspective. These terms *could* be retained for constructionist research, with a 'playing down' of the

prominence of measurement (Bryman, 2016), and writers such as LeCompte and Goetz (1982) & Kirk and Miller (1986) favour this approach.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) offer the terms 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' for assessing constructionist research quality, although these are not simply replacements for the terms validity and reliability. Along with the unique contribution made by the piece of qualitative research, they are the indicators of a quality constructionist study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), and thus more appropriate.

Anney (2014) suggests that novice researchers tend to favour using the quantitative terms, reliability and validity, as they are overwhelmed by the sheer nature and complexity of qualitative research, and lack understanding of the language associated with a qualitative methodology. It is for the reasons suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989), and to avoid potential criticism for using the terms associated with quantitative terms suggested by Anney (2014), that the terms 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' are therefore used. Whilst threats to undertaking a quality piece of research can never be completed eradicated, they can be minimised by giving them consideration (Cohen et al., 2018).

5.6.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness encompasses the 'traditional' criteria used in positivist studies of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In a constructionist study Guba and Lincoln (1989), however, adopt the terms *credibility, transferability, dependability* and *confirmability* respectively. They are called 'parallel criteria' as they mirror the criteria used within positivist work.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with confidence the reader can have in the research findings and how recognisable they are to them (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The aim is to ensure the respondent's view matches the representation presented by the researcher (Tobin & Begley, 2004). To achieve credibility, at frequent points during each interview, I would summarise how I had interpreted what someone said and asked them to confirm if my interpretation was accurate. Additional questions were asked to unpick a topic or idea if I was unsure of what the participant was referring to. Interviews were audio recorded to

ensure the accuracy of transcription and hand written, reflective notes were made during each interview as an aid during interpretation. Interview participants were offered the opportunity to view and comment on their interview transcript before coding. Four participants chose to see it but no comments were received.

Triangulating findings through ideas (theoretical) and experience (empirical), a dialogical relationship (Dowling & Brown, 2010), occurred between the literature review, policy analysis and interview data, as well as between interview findings, to elicit different perspectives on a question (Richards, 2009). I had to take care to ensure claims were warranted and justified; warrants being the cogent link between data and proposition, data and conclusions (Andrews, 2003). Thick description of the context and situation being investigated is provided to see if findings 'ring true' (Shenton, 2004) for readers. 'Hedges' for example, 'in my opinion', 'some', 'it would appear that', qualify and limit the certainty of a claim being made (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008) and are therefore used.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of findings in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). What is not meant here is generalisability, but rather, as Tobin and Begley (2004) note, the transfer of findings from one case to another. Whilst the researcher does not necessarily know when findings may wish to be transferred from the original piece of inquiry to another (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), it is their responsibility to provide thick description so that transferability can be achieved if desired (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The concept of *ecological validity* through documenting and reporting how policies are "happening at the chalk face" (Brock-Utne, 1996, p.617), is also relevant. Consequentiality, appropriate contextual information needs to be considered (Cohen et al., 2018). Rich descriptions of interview participants and the school they work in were gathered in each interview. However, an ethical dilemma can occur if such description is reported and therefore a participant, the school and/or local authority they work in, was identified. Therefore, interview participants are only identified by a number.

Dependability

Dependability is concerned with the extent to which the research would produce the same results if repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By describing in detail the research process,

tracking progress and changes to the study, strengthens the argument the study was done with care (Miles et al., 2014). Regular contact with my supervisors during each stage of the process, and keeping them up-to-date with decisions being made during the study, enhances dependability. I also kept a diary documenting the decisions I made, along with a brief commentary on my progress and feelings towards the research, as it progressed. Whilst changes in the design of a study from a positivist perspective might be seen as a threat, it is seen as a sign of a 'maturity' in a constructionist study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), provided they are documented and made explicit. Piloting interview questions with two colleagues before using them also aided dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability aims to ensure accuracy in the reporting of findings and the conclusions reached clearly stems from the research conducted, whilst minimising researcher perception and bias (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability equates to objectivity and neutrality in qualitative research. This occurs by aiming to minimise bias and not reporting from, for example, "figures from the [researcher's] imagination" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.235). From a positivist stance, the researcher's values and beliefs are divorced from the research process, they are not in a constructionist one. Koch (1994) argues that including reasons for the choice of theoretical, methodological and analytical decisions, readers can assess the choices made. Confirmability was therefore strengthened by stating my own ontological and epistemological view in section 3.2 and throughout this chapter. By making the research process explicit, and available for scrutiny, credibility can be gained (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

5.6.2 Authenticity

Authenticity is concerned with respecting the rights of those involved in research and in ensuring that participant views have been collected and fairly portrayed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The criteria suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989), for achieving authenticity are fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity. Whilst I can comment on fairness, and do so in the next paragraph, the remaining four criteria of authenticity are less well documented in the literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Shannon & Hambacher, 2014), and Bryman (2016) suggests

they have not been influential. Shannon and Hambacher (2014) found no published articles that focused on assessing authenticity during a search of qualitative studies and suggest researchers wishing to employ such criteria would have to construct and test their own methods for doing so. Whilst this would have been an opportunity to develop originality, it was outside the scope of this thesis to do so.

Fairness is achieved by representing different viewpoints (Shannon & Hambacher, 2014; Bryman, 2016). This was achieved by providing a true representation of the study findings and in interviews, not excluding something from being reported as it runs contrary to my own beliefs or the beliefs of others. Fairness is also achieved through informed consent (Shannon & Hambacher, 2014), stressing to interview participants their participation is voluntary and can be revoke.

5.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the methodological basis of this study, along with a justification for the choice of research design adopted. Ethical consideration and measures of research quality, namely trustworthiness and authenticity, associated with a constructionist study have also been explored.

Designing and operationalising a research study is not straightforward or linear as it may sound. As noted, a variety of decisions had to be taken that contain ethical issues as well as issues of power. Undertaking research is messy and not linear as some textbooks imply!

Chapter 6 explores the data collection and analysis methods that have been employed to conduct policy-explaining and policy-framing. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is used to undertake policy-explaining through an analysis of relevant policy texts and by using the literature as data, policy-framing.

Chapter 6 Methods for Policy-explaining and Policy-framing

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 considered methodology, including the choice of research design, ethical issues and criteria for research quality, that were employed to operationalise this study. This chapter considers the choice of data collection and analysis methods used to conduct policy-framing and policy-explaining. Relevant literature and policy texts are used as data to undertake the investigation of policy-framing and policy-explaining respectively. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is used for data analysis at societal level (for policy-framing), and textual and interdiscursive levels (for policy-explaining). This chapter considers how readers and writers are positioned, and can be positioned by, the forces of Discourse (big-D).

6.2 Policy analysis using policy texts

The primary policy texts that were used in this study were the draft (Scottish Government, 2015a), 2016 (Scottish Government, 2016b) and 2017 (Scottish Government, 2016c) NIF. The 2018 framework was not used as this was published during write-up. The Programme for Government (Scottish Government, 2015; 2016d; 2017) and the Scottish National Performance Framework (Scottish Government, 2016f), along with a review of the literature, were also examined to shed light on wider Discourse that framed the NIF. It is important to note a single policy is often not reducible to one text, but rather an assemblage of a variety of pronouncements for example, announcements, statements and guidelines on application (Taylor, 1997). However, it is impossible to examine all such pronouncements within the constraints of a doctoral study, and consequentially, in keeping with Taylor's (1997) recommendation, a key number of texts have been chosen which represent the policy at large. The government publications used in this study, as indicated above, are not 'just' the providers of context or background information; they are part of the research, the web of policy enactment, or in this study, positioning.

The publications listed above are examples of official documents, deriving from the state (Bryman, 2016), that often aim to influence public perception as well the veracity and credibility of a policy text (Scott, 2000). The latter can be achieved by using semantic,

grammatical and positional devices to position the reader into viewing them as authoritative (Scott, 2000). For example, by downplaying the ideological basis of the policy. This occurs in order to represent the world in a way that is seen as common sense and thus, the only way the world should be viewed. However, the very nature of portraying a policy in this manner is ideological (Scott, 2000). Whilst governments often produce a significant amount of quantitative information, there is also a significant volume of textual information that can be of interest to social researchers (Bryman, 2016). Policy texts are publically available, easily accessible and are a useful source of information in researching policy (Ozga, 2000). My reference to policy texts here is not in the sense of 'policy as text' (Ball, 1993) that was explored in chapter 2. Rather, what is of concern here is using policy texts as a resource for policy analysis (Ozga, 2000); the position calls they espouse and the subsequent possibilities for action they attempt to permit or constrain. A distinction needs to be made between 'formal' policy texts for example, White and Green Papers, Bills and pieces of legislation, and the texts that researchers choose to see as policy texts (Ozga, 2000). As Ozga (2000) argues, policy texts are those government publications that are deemed significant within the boundaries of a study as they contribute to the wider policy narrative.

6.3 Policy analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis

Adams (2016) provides some examples on how to conduct policy-framing and policy-explaining. I have used these and explain in this section how I have built on them using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This is in keeping with McGregor's (2010) argument that CDA does not have a unified framework; it encompasses a range of approaches. Using the capitalised term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is deliberate and will be explained shortly.

Before considering the specifics of CDA, it is necessary to distinguish between it and simply 'discourse analysis'. The latter approach was used by education researchers to make sense of and provide meaning to educational contexts (Rogers et al., 2005). In such contexts, discourse analysis is a way of describing classroom talk and interactions, and mainly involves linguistic analysis. Around the same time as discourse analysts were examining classroom interaction, scholars from cultural studies and sociology were exploring how social structures were being produced through institutions including schools (Rogers et al., 2005). There was an attempt by these scholars, drawing on critical

social theory, to explore ways that macro-phenomena come to impact upon micro interaction and classroom dynamics. CDA, therefore, aims to reconcile social theory and discourse analysis. Taylor (2004) drawing on Fairclough's work, notes CDA aims to:

> …[link] discursive practices, events and texts; and the wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes…and how texts construct representations of the world, social relationships and social identities, and there is an emphasis on highlighting how such practices and texts are ideologically shaped by relations of power.
>
> (Taylor, 2004, p.435)

It is important to make the distinction between the capitalised term Critical Discourse Analysis, used in this thesis, and the non-capitalised term critical discourse analysis; the former informed by scholars including Fairclough, and the latter by scholars for example, Gee (Rogers et al., 2005). Whilst Gee is concerned with language that represents relationships and identities, Fairclough's approach exerts attention to the linguistic properties of texts, textually orientated discourse analysis (TODA), as well as social theory approaches largely influenced by Foucault, that focus on the social and historical context of texts (Taylor, 2004). It is this combination of TODA and social theory that makes CDA a particularly suitable approach in comparison to others (Fairclough, 2001).

CDA allows the policy researcher to link language and other social processes, and subsequently go beyond simple speculation, to demonstrating how policy texts actually work (Taylor, 2004), thus 'Critical'. CDA is 'Critical' as it reveals the non-explicit ways language is framed in social relations of power and ideology (Fairclough, 2001), and is distinct from those non-critical approaches that simply provide description and interpretation of language (Taylor, 2004). CDA therefore can reveal how negative hegemony, mechanism of power, is constructed through the language used to portray policy writer's thinking as common sense or the 'norm'; thus resulting in 'naturalisation' (Fairclough, 1992).

As Taylor (2004) highlights, Fairclough stresses his approach to CDA is not a blueprint for policy analysis but can be used selectively depending on the particular research study being conducted. This study offers an analysis of the external relations of the policy text (chapter 7 policy-framing), and the internal relations of the policy text (chapter 8 policy-

explaining); these chapters show by using CDA, "how the semiotic, including linguistic, properties of a text connect with what is going on socially in the interaction" (Fairclough, 2001, p.240). I unpack this in the following section.

6.4 Fairclough's three-tiered framework

CDA brings together textually orientated discourse analysis (TODA) along with social theory evolving from the work of Foucault. TODA is based upon linguistic theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), drawing on Halliday's work (Rogers et al., 2005). SFL examines language use in the form and function of interactions, and theorists adopting this approach argue these interactions occur on three levels: textual, discursive and societal (Rogers et al., 2005). This provides a link from the micro level (text) to the macro level (society), via the meso level (discursive practice), upon which the text was constructed. This therefore provides a three-tiered analytical framework, illustrated in figure 6.1, for the application of CDA (Fairclough, 1989):

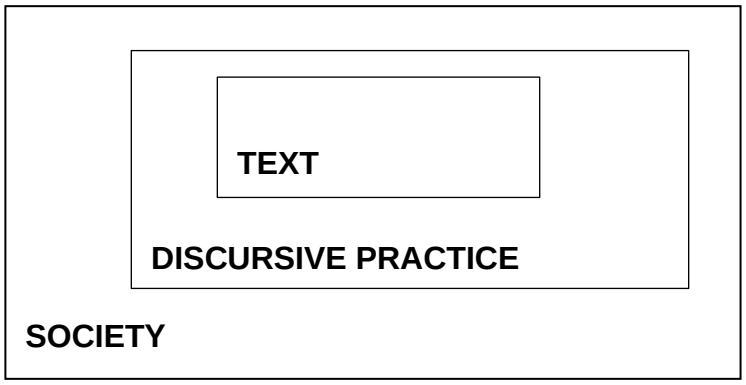

Figure 6.1 *– Fairclough's three-tiered CDA framework (Fairclough, 1989)*

Analysis at textual level involves examining language structures present, at discursive level considering the production, consumption and interpretation of the text and at societal level, exploring what occurs in a particular sociocultural framework (Rogers, et al., 2005). Sceptics of CDA warn that the analyst working with CDA needs to be cautious not to exert their own ideological beliefs whilst undertaking such work - 'interpretive positivism' (Fish, 1981), and therefore making my position clear in section 3.2 was important.

6.4.1 Societal level

The construction of chapter 7 policy-framing, focuses on the historical, social and economic context of the policy text i.e. the societal level aspects of CDA. It considers the context and social practices in which the external relations of the policy text is embedded (Taylor, 2004). Chapter 7 uses literature as data to establish the wider forces that support and give official order to the position calls a policy text (i.e. the NIF) provides (Adams, 2016). As Adams (2016) notes, this process is closely linked to policy-explaining, as it explores the wider forces that position both the reader and writer of the policy text. The identification and rationale of each position call espoused by Discourse is provided in the relevant section of chapter 7.

6.4.2 Textual level analysis

Textual and interdiscursive level analysis is the basis of chapter 8 policy-explaining. At the textual level, consideration is given to the internal relations of the text, and the linguistic and semiotic features that dominate (Taylor, 2004). To explore how a policy is explained, it was necessary to deconstruct the policy text itself. I was interested in the draft version of the text published in 2015 (Scottish Government, 2015a), the 2016 framework (Scottish Government, 2016b), and 2017 framework (Scottish Government, 2016c). Adams (2016) suggests examining differences between draft and final versions of the policy text, and exploring the style used to communicate and reinforce the messages being conveyed by the text itself. In other words, considering how policy texts offer positions through the position calls they provide, that can subsequently be taken-up, resisted or modified by the reader (Adams, 2016).

I examined the presentation of three versions (draft, 2016 and 2017) of the NIF text. I considered changes that had been made to different versions of the framework in respect of layout, font, pagination, visual aids and the use of photographs, colour and headings. I did this to provide examples of the position calls that were offered, how these may have changed between versions, and the significance of any changes. Visual aids and headings, for example, are ways the reader's attention can be obtained (McGregor, 2010) and attempt to offer a position. Therefore, consideration was not only given to the language used in policy texts, but also semiotic approaches including visual aids, diagrams and photographs (Fairclough, 2001).

I considered the use of specific words in different versions of the NIF to explore how language may have changed over time, and to show how different position calls may have changed between versions. As well as considering the choice of vocabulary used in these texts, I imported the three versions of the NIF text into NVivo to count the number of times a word appeared in each version. I excluded from the search words under three characters in length and common linking words for example, 'and' and 'the'. Similar words for example, 'school' and 'schools' were also counted together. As well as providing a list of the ten most frequently occurring words, I used word clouds to show visually, by the size of each word, how frequently a specific word appeared in relation to others.

6.4.3 Interdiscursive level analysis

This level links textual and societal and considers the organisation and structure of the whole text (Fairclough, 2001). Each section of the draft, 2016 and 2017 framework was compared and differences and similarities between each section noted. I was looking for what position calls were offered in the text, and in some cases changed between versions, to show how meaning and intent of the policy text may have changed over time. Consideration was given to how language is configured in text and the significance of different choices that have been made - *paradigmatic analysis* - as well as how different words and sentences are organised and structured together - *syntagmatic analysis* (Fairclough, 2001). By changing how sections of the text are organised in different versions of the text, a perspective of how the reader should perceive a topic is thus positioned; McGregor (2010) refers to this as 'topicalisation'.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the rationale behind the choice of data collection and analysis methods to under policy-framing and policy-explaining. The link between data collection and analysis, the research questions and thesis chapters are provided in table 6.1:

Source of Data	**Method of data analysis**	**Levels of analysis**	**Research Question**	**Thesis chapter**
Literature review	Critical Discourse Analysis	Societal level	1	7 Policy-framing
NIF policy texts – draft, 2016 and 2017		Textual and interdiscursive levels	2	8 Policy-explaining

***Table 6.1** – link between source of data, data analysis, level of analysis, research questions and thesis chapter*

Chapter 7 presents policy-framing and chapter 8 policy-explaining.

Chapter 7 Policy-framing

> A narrative. A story. It is this, historians, political theorists and leader-writers agree that, more than anything, a government must have if it is going to succeed.
>
> (Burn, 2008, p.169)

7.1 Introduction

After examining the methods used to undertake policy-framing and policy-explaining in chapter 6, this chapter uncovers the ways that policy writers and readers are positioned, and can be positioned by, forces of Discourse - 'Big-D'. Discourse examines how language is encapsulated in social institutions and society (Gee, 1990). As explored in section 4.3, policy-framing considers how these wider frames provide opportunities and can constrain potential for action by the position calls they espouse (Adams, 2016).

In chapter 8 policy-explaining, consideration is given to the purpose of policy being implied through the position calls epoused that are subsequenlty accepted, rejected or amended, subject to the rights and duties the reader feels they have and have been given (Adams, 2016). However, readers and writers of policy need to acknowledge and realise that the language used in policy texts actually construct the space in which they based (Adams, 2016). Discourse produces and reproduces such space by removing possibilities and highlighting others (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a). Discourse employed in policy texts attempt to offer potential for action by concentrating on some compared to others (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a). Therefore, consideration of how Discourse positions the 'reader' and 'writer' of the policy text, and the economic, social and political ways upon which it is based, is required (Adams, 2016).

7.2 Social construction of problems

Position calls offered by wider forces of Discourse are based on discontent with the current perception of how a situation is viewed (Adams, 2014; 2016). As examined in section 3.2.3, the problematisation process leads to argumentation through potential solutions to a problem being identified (Adams, 2014; 2016). Problematisation and argumentation are at the root of social constructionism, and allow for an examination of what basis decisions about policy and policy making are made. Social constructionism allows policy researchers to examine the aims, intent and activities that take place in the

social world (Adams, 2014), and crucially, how policy is framed because of its history, culture, social identity and economic background (Adams, 2011a). Social constructionism espouses the view that problems are socially constructed; a problem is only a problem because it is rooted and perceived as one in our culture, society and history (Adams, 2014) and subsequently, defined as a problem. The definition of a problem is given shape or formed by the policy pronouncement itself that also offers the solution to the problem (Bacchi, 2000). Policy as discourse analysts do not see Governments as simply 'responding' to problems that already exist, but rather problems are defined in the pronouncement itself (Bacchi, 2000). The policy text attempts to communicate the definition of the problem and offers evidence and argument to guide a policy in a specific direction (Byrne & Ozga, 2008).

7.2.1 The Scottish position

Succeeding a Labour/Liberal Democratic coalition administration in 2007, the Scottish National Party (SNP) is the governing political party in a devolved Scotland. Until May 2011, the SNP held a minority government, but after a successful election that year, formed a majority (Gillies, 2018). Following the defeat of the independence referendum in 2014, Alex Salmond stood down as First Minister of Scotland and subsequently, Nicola Sturgeon was appointed and remains in post today. She is assisted by the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, who also acts as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

The annual Programme for Government text sets out the policy delivery and legislative aims of the Scottish Government through purpose targets and strategic objectives. These are linked to the Scottish Government's purpose as defined by the Scottish National Performance Framework (SNPF). The education priorities identified by the Programme for Government, raising attainment and achieving equity amongst individuals regardless of their background, is linked to the Scottish Government's purpose of creating "opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish" (Scottish Government, 2016f, p.2). These priorities are also linked to its strategic objectives of a "wealthier and fairer" and "smarter" Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016f, p.2).

Education is seen by the Scottish Government as a vehicle for driving policy interventions forward to create a 'fairer society', and to isolate poverty-related problems

(Arnott, 2016). However, care needs to be taken so that social problems are not viewed independently of each other, and thus the emergence of a 'silo approach' that requires particular solutions (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

The SNPF was introduced in 2007 and refreshed in 2011 and 2016. Whilst there have been some amendments to aspects of the SNPF during this period, there have been no changes to the Government's purpose or original national outcomes[11] during this time. There has therefore been no change to the national outcome of "our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens" between 2007 and 2016 (Scottish Government, 2016f, p.2).

Two national indicators[12] were added to the 2011 SNPF and remained unchanged in 2016 (Scottish Government, 2011; 2016f): to improve levels of educational attainment and reduce children's deprivation. These indicators are highlighted as they are relevant to this study and in conjunction with wider Discourse offered by the SNPF and Programme for Government, framed through other (historical) political, social and economic factors, are the provider of position calls that support the emergence of the NIF. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore these position calls. The SNPF is structured and linked to the Programme for Government and subsequently the NIF, as illustrated in figure 7.1.

[11] Fifteen national outcomes aim to describe what the Scottish Government wants to achieve.
[12] National indicators aim to allow the Scottish Government to monitor progress towards each national outcome.

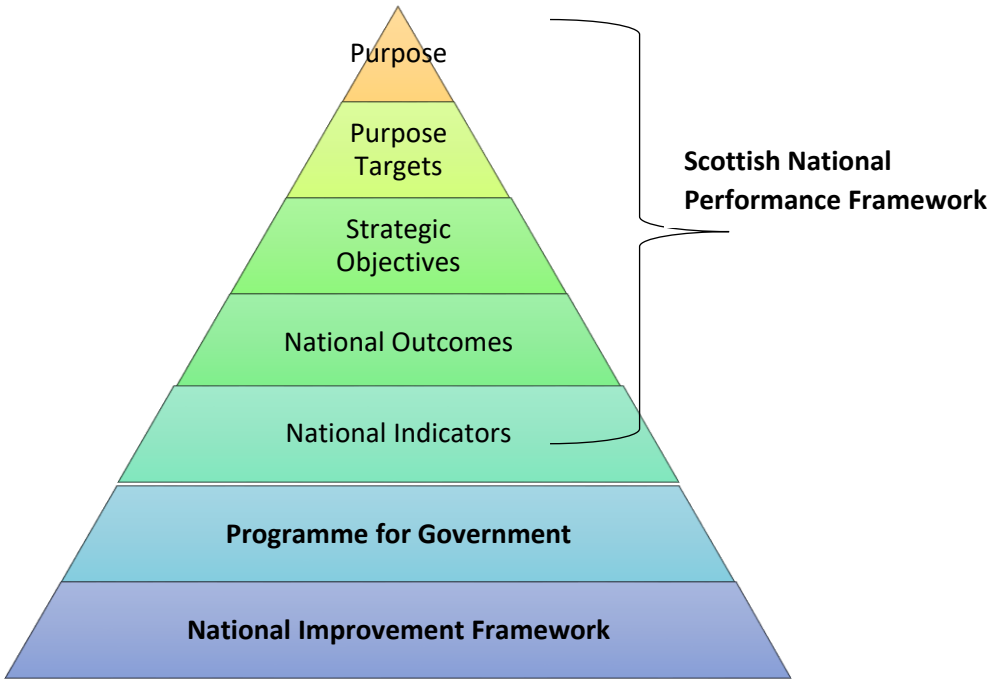

Figure 7.1 *– relationship between SNPF, Programme for Government and the NIF*

There is a clear link between wider Discourse used by the Scottish Government for example, the national indicators and the 'problems' the NIF aims to address. The NIF aims "to continually improve Scottish education and close the attainment gap" (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.1) and "to deliver improvement for children and young people" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1). The NIF offers a potential solution to the problem by providing "robust, consistent and transparent data" (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.1) and "clear actions on delivering improvement in all parts of the education system" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1).

Before discussing the position calls offered by wider Discourse, a summary of this section is shown visually in figure 7.2:

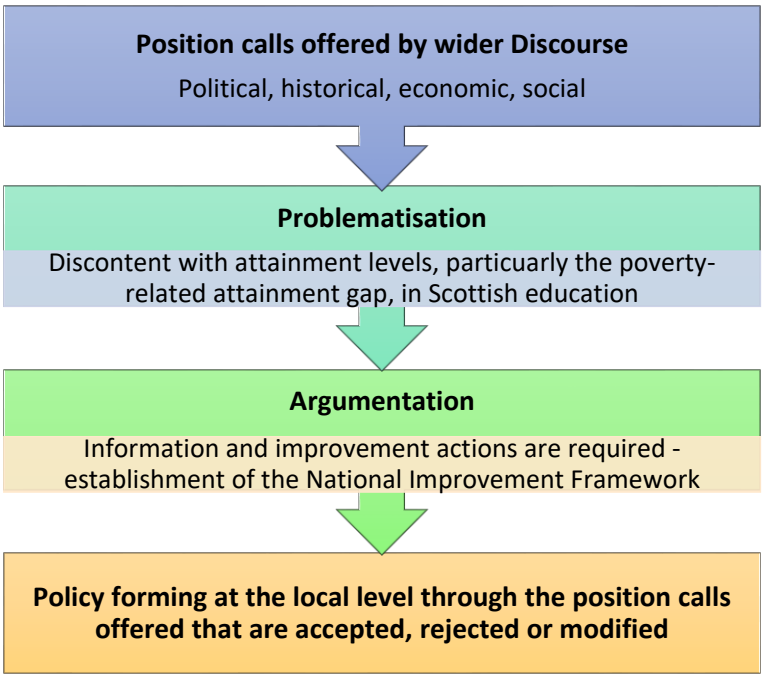

Figure 7.2 *– link between wider Discourse, problematisation, argumentation and policy forming*

As figure 7.2 illustrates, there is discontent with the current position of Scottish education. This discontent is formed through the problematisation process and is framed within position calls offered by wider Discourse. Discontent with attainment, specifically the poverty-related attainment gap, leads to argumentation; providing information and action to improve the system. These actions are the forming of potential position calls, together with the messages conveyed through the NIF (explored in chapter 8) that can be accepted, rejected or modified at the local level (explored in chapter 10) and thus form policy.

7.3 Position calls emerging from Discourse

The way the SNP administration has developed education policy can be interpreted as having used Discourse as a tool (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). Discourse is more than 'just words'; it has direct effects and results in action (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a). Discourse is thus not the same as language, as it *permits* writing, speaking and thinking, but also *constrains* it (Mills, as cited by Ball, 2015). Such use of Discourse is significant as it

portrays meaning and intent through the construction and use of carefully chosen narratives.

A review of the literature identifies prominent areas of wider Discourse that require attention. These are the position calls offered by the forces of wider Discourse and are discussed in this chapter. There is not scope in a Professional Doctorate thesis to consider all wider forces of Discourse that position both the reader and writer of policy. Therefore, a choice had to be made about what to include. A justification for each of the position calls identified is provided in each section of this chapter. The position calls examined are:

- National identity and the Scottish 'mythology'
- Social justice, equity and 'the gap'
- Globalisation and international policy

7.4 Position call - National identity and the Scottish 'mythology'

> Education is, by definition, the space for construction of a national identity
>
> (Novoa, 2000, p.46)

A country's education system is based on its history and social roots. Scotland's education system is moulded upon specific political, historical and social characteristics within a wider set of traditions (Humes & Bryce, 2018). Governments have historically used education as a mechanism for demonstrating their capacity to govern and is associated with a national identity (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). The landscape in Scotland is no different, with education since the Acts of Union in 1707, being a vehicle for establishing a Scottish national identity (Paterson, 2009; Anderson, 2018).

The identity of Scottish education is founded upon the relatively invariable comprehensive school system, public support for education and teachers, and a broad curriculum that links the arts, humanities and sciences (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). Arnott and Ozga (2016) suggest these form a Scottish education 'mythology' that allows for the construction of a national narrative. National identities are not solely based on myths, but also the understanding of national history and shared values and characteristics (Mills,

1995). The identity of the Scottish education system is discussed in the literature (Arnott & Ozga, 2016; Cairney, 2013; Humes & Bryce, 2018) and forms the basis upon which the myth surrounding Scottish education is known; democratic, fair and based upon meritocratic principles. The story of the 'lad o'pairts' in which a young boy from a poor background was able to achieve success (Gatherer, 2013), is an example of the egalitarian approach in Scottish education. This approach, more recently termed 'equity' is discussed in section 7.5.

Whether the idea of a Scottish mythology, and the concept of the democratic intellect which sets Scotland apart from neighbouring England, is more of a romantic one is unclear (Anderson, 1995). Historians would argue, for example, that it represents meritocracy in individualistic form, rather than society (Anderson, 2018). However, the Scottish mythology has had a significant impact on the shaping of education policy in Scotland (Menter & Hulme, 2008), and was used alongside social democratic Discourse since 1945 (McCrone & Keating, 2007). More recently, such narrative is based on the idea of education as a public good and has featured heavily in SNP policy imperatives, for example, with the abolishment of tuition fees in Scotland (Arnott, 2016). Arnott and Ozga (2016) suggest the concept of a national identity is inherited by people in Scotland, along with the achievement of academic excellence, and more recently since the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, "a judicious dose of personal and practical development" (Arnott & Ozga, 2016, p.4). As Novoa (2000, p.46) highlights, "education is, by definition, the space for construction of a national identity". However, increased global forces, as explored in section 7.6, has relaxed this idea (Ozga & Lingard, 2007).

Education, specifically in Scotland, has been used by its various Governments to distinguish and separate it from England (Arnott, 2017; Arnott & Ozga, 2016) and its "supposed superiority [from England] has been a point of national pride" (Anderson, 2018, p.99). The education system, legal system and the church have been separate and distinctive ever since 1707 (Humes & Bryce, 2018). Since devolution in 1999, Scotland's various Governments have attempted to separate themselves both ideologically and politically from those in England (Watson, 2010). For example, in the immediate years following devolution, Scotland was positioned through the language used in its social welfare policies, for example, as a "happening place" (Mooney & Poole, 2004, p. 459). However, the degree of precision to which Scotland is distinct from

England is subject to scrutiny (Mooney & Williams, 2006); for example, what does a Scottish approach, or 'Scottishness' actually consist of? The myth surrounding Scotland as democratic, fair and based upon meritocratic principles comes to mind.
The term a 'Scottish approach' refers only to the fairly recent way of describing a model of policy making by the Scottish Government (Cairney, Russell, & St Denny, 2016), with academics conversely tending to refer to the term 'Scottish policy style' to capture the apparent distinctive approach in Scotland to policy making (Cairney, 2008). The latter captures how policy is 'made' following [apparent] consultation with key actors for example, interest groups, local governments and unions (Cairney et al., 2016). However, to what degree this happens in practice is unclear; it maybe rather 'tokenistic'. The 'Scottish approach' specifically since 2013, is further promoted by the Scottish Government to encourage use of the term, and now includes more focus on performance and improvement, building on strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses, and the co-production of services between service providers and users (Cairney et al., 2016).

Despite the apparent distinct 'Scottishness' of policy for example, compared to England, its effect should not be exaggerated or overestimated (Cairney et al., 2016). Mooney and Poole (2004) challenge the idea of a distinct Scottish approach, and Cairney et al. (2016) note that since devolution, there is limited evidence that suggests the Scottish approach has produced policy outcomes with major differences. For example, inequality in health and crime, remain high (Mooney & Scott, 2012). Instead, Cairney et al. (2016) argue the Scottish approach may instead relate to the size of the Scottish Government. In comparison to England, for example, there are more opportunities for Government policy officials to make personal networks with public bodies and interest groups, which may help prevent Government departmental silos and ambiguity, as well as produce shared policy outcomes. Thus, a collaborative approach is easier to foster.

The SNP has positioned themselves as effective, competent and collaborative (Arnott & Ozga, 2012); they want to be seen as capable of governing and able to work in partnership (Arnott, 2016). Constructing new relationships with partners is an important tool in the SNP's approach to governance (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a). For example, a move towards the co-production of policy with local government (Sanderson, 2009). Indeed, the delivery of many policy imperatives falls to local government, third sector organisations and other agencies (McGarvey & Cairney, 2008), that the SNP can then

promote as a strength of their Government (Arnott & Ozga, 2012). Such partnerships mark a notable [apparent] shift away from 'top-down' approaches, coupled with retribution for failing to meet short-term goals, towards long-term shared objectives and cooperation (Cairney et al., 2016).

Since coming to power in 2007, the SNP have used education policy in its approach to governance (Arnott, 2016) and as a mechanism for combining both political and civic blends of nationalism (Arnott, 2017). The way the SNP has discursively framed policy, allows for a subtler understanding of the influence of nationalism and movement towards independence (Arnott & Ozga, 2010b). The SNP attempts to achieve this through the interplay of two types of referencing: 'inward' and 'outward' (Arnott, 2017; Arnott & Ozga 2016; 2010a; 2010b).

Inwards referencing deploys Discourse to link the idea of a 'flourishing' Scotland to the economic drivers of a specific policy, with a particular emphasis on fairness, inclusiveness and being socially appropriate (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). Inward referencing draws upon the Scottish tradition of education as being a public good (Arnott, 2016; 2017). Outwards referencing attempts to position Scotland in a competitive global arena, focusing upon economic growth and often through reference to other countries, for example, favoured Nordic and European countries (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). Through comparison with selected strong Nordic states for example, Finland, there is an attempt to position Scotland as being socially democratic and economically strong (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a). This positioning attempts to remove historical comparisons with England, and creates a more 'imaginary' future (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a). Of note, however, is there are no comparisons with any Nordic or European countries in either the draft, 2016 or 2017 NIF policy texts.

The relationship between inward and outward referencing since 2011, when a majority government was formed, has become more complex (Arnott, 2016). For example, there is greater attention on economic recovery and the development of a 'fairer Scotland' through education, as discussed in section 7.5. By also highlighting that the Scottish system should be one of the best in the world, uses the concept of outwards referencing. By blending a mixture of inward referencing in this way, as well as situating Scotland in a wider frame against the rest of the world, is an example of how the SNP administration

is trying to position Scottish education within a new policy framework (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). Maintaining national and territorial traditions in education policy, however, alongside the growth of global trends, for example, competitiveness, economic performance and modernisation, is not without tension (Arnott, 2017). Whilst Scotland may try to keep its values and democratic principles, it is not resistant to these global forces (Mowat, 2018a). These are therefore discussed in section 7.6. How these translate into practice given they espouse competing agendas through the highlighting of national traditions, yet simultaneously addressing economic growth, global competitiveness and 'neo liberal' approaches to delivering policy (Arnott, 2016). Such tension is described by Ozga, Baxter, Clarke, Grek and Lawn (2013) as 'speaking social democratic and acting neo-liberal'. Opposition parties to the SNP have criticised their approach of employing social democratic Discourse, but also engaging with more neo-liberal policies, in developing economic competitiveness (Cuthbert & Cuthbert, 2009). The economic goals of education policy have sat alongside goals to reduce social inequality and recently, to reduce the attainment gap (Arnott, 2016).

7.5 Position call - social justice, equity and 'the gap'

> Education cannot compensate for society (Bernstein, 1970)…or *can* it - a bit?
>
> (Gorard, 2010)

Education is an element of social policy that has frequently been connected to social justice (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2009), sometimes with the unreasonable assumption that it can limit effects of for example, poverty and prejudice (Arnott & Ozga, 2012). Studies over the past half-century (Gorard, 2010) have confirmed Bernstein's position that education cannot compensate for society. Since 2007, this is set within the backdrop of Scotland's move towards achieving greater autonomy and essentially, independence (Arnott & Ozga, 2012). Scotland's approach to housing, criminal justice and education policy since devolution has been particularly distinctive, through the intertwining of social policy and social justice, compared to the scaling back of welfare by UK governments (Scott & Wright, 2012).

Education policy since the end of 2014, when Nicola Sturgeon was appointed as First Minister, has seen an explicit connection between social justice and economic growth;

education is viewed as having a fundamental place in addressing issues for example, poverty, (Arnott, 2017) and the NIF alongside initiatives for example, the Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding, are two examples which reinforce this idea. The aim of this section therefore, is to examine the position call of social justice, equity and 'the gap' and how wider Discourse espoused by such a call frames Scottish educational policy.

7.5.1 Defining social justice

Social justice is an "ambiguous, contested and changeable idea, the focus of many different theorisations" (Mooney & Scott, 2012, p.11). Fraser (2009) argues that social justice requires *participatory parity,* thus everyone should be able to participate in life on an equal basis and if necessary, social practices have to be adapted to achieve this. Fraser (2009) initially espoused a two-dimensional view of social justice, requiring *recognition* and *redistribution;* the former requiring an acknowledgement from others that provides equal standing (a cultural element) and the latter, the removal of economic barriers that prevent people from participating as equals. Fraser (2009) now incorporates *representation* as a dimension of social justice, and argues all three are required to achieve participatory parity. The move from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional view reflects the changing nature of who should be included in recognition and redistribution; it is no longer sufficient, in a globalised world, to view social justice from simply the perspective of different national states because of growth in international organisations, the internet and mass media. Riddell and Weedon (2017) note how the original concepts of recognition and redistribution, which focused on social class and saw all forms of inequality stemming from an economic base (Young, 1990), were over-simplistic in aiding understanding of social justice, and thus called for *intersectionality* to be considered. For example, how poverty is affected by disability and the subsequent recognition and representation this affords.

7.5.2 Re-articulating social justice as 'equity'

The increase of testing and other data-driven measures (for example, data gathered through PISA) have changed what is measured and how it is measured in social justice (Lingard, Sellar, & Savage, 2014). Subsequently, the term 'social justice' is re-articulated as 'equity' in an educational area that concentrates on numbers, measurement and comparison (Lingard et al., 2014). This is linked to the growth of multi-level

approaches to measuring equity in schools and other organisations through graphs and league tables and other abstract representations that further re-articulate social justice as equity (Lingard et al., 2014). This view of equity is detached from more intricate, philosophical Discourses of social justice, for example, offered by Fraser (2009). The emergence of the 'neo-social' also further emphasises the re-articulation of social justice (Savage, 2013), through the integration of both social and economic spheres of governance to promote an individual's capacity to achieve in a market-driven society (Lingard et al., 2014).

The OECD views equity as a fundamental part of economic development and has been at the heart of promoting a neo-social policy agenda, rather than using language associated with equality (Lingard et al., 2014), as discussed in the next paragraph. Lingard et al. (2014, p.717) suggest there is a "*economisation* of education policy and *educationalisation* of economic policy" because of the OECD's cross-directorate Skills Strategy published in 2012, and thus, education has become more prominent in the work of the OECD. For example, a chapter in an OECD publication is named 'Investing in Equity in Education Pays Off' and how such 'paying off' is framed in respect to increased productivity and human capital. More recently, there has been an increase in focus on equity by the OECD (Mowat, 2018a). However, as Bøyum (2014) highlights, their restricted understanding of equity focuses upon the economic benefits it may bring, rather than the wider benefits that it may bring in its own right.

The OECD have promoted the concepts of *fairness* and *inclusion* in their definition of social justice, compared to that of *equality*, stemming from a paper that was published on behalf of the OECD by Levin in 2003 (Lingard et al., 2014). This paper argued that policy should not focus on everyone 'being the same' or achieving the same outcomes (i.e. equality), but rather, any difference in outcomes should not connected to variations in wealth, income or power (Levin, 2003). This view is further promoted in recent publications by the OECD in 2007 and 2012. However, there are different understandings of the term equality (Riddell, 2009). As Riddell (2009) notes, such understandings tend to focus on equality of outcome for example, promoted by the OECD, or equality of opportunity, through removing barriers to participation.

Striving to reduce inequality in educational outcomes connected to an individual's socio-economic status is not a new phenomenon (Mowat, 2018a) and is an issue that attracts global attention (Ainscow, 2012). Over the last 30 years, income inequality has increased in most OECD nations and is now at its highest level. As Mowat (2018a, p.301) notes, "whilst the country where pupils attend outweighs social class in impacting upon pupil achievement…social class is closely related to student and school characteristics and exerts a powerful influence on learning outcomes (Schleicher**,** 2014)". Drawing on PISA data, the OECD highlights those education systems that are high performing as having a clear focus on equity as well as having high expectations of its pupils (Mowat, 2018a).

7.5.3 Equity - the Scottish position

It is not the purpose of this thesis to explore the causes and potential solutions to 'the attainment gap' in Scotland. However, some factual information on the current 'gap' is provided in this section to frame the extent of the gap in Scotland. Reference to 'the gap' is highlighted in the literature (Gillborn, 2008), however caution needs to be applied when using numerical data to illustrate 'the gap' as it can hide some of the deep-rooted inequality that exists (Lingard, 2011).

The attainment gap associated with socio-economic status (thus, the poverty-related attainment gap) begins before a child starts school, and whilst it becomes narrower over time, actually increases during their school years (Mowat, 2018a). At the time when the NIF was launched in January 2016, the most recent evidence (OECD, 2015) noted that:

- 14% of children were living in poverty;
- At 5 years old, children from the most deprived areas in Scotland are around 13 months behind their peers in vocabulary and 10 months behind in problem solving;
- The attainment gap between those from the least and most deprived areas in numeracy (between 2011 and 2013) and reading (2012 and 2014) had increased[13];

[13] Based upon the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) undertaken by pupils in Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 2.

- 20% of Secondary 4 pupils from the most deprived areas in Scotland achieved five or more qualifications at SCQF level 5[14], compared to a national average of 39%.

Although education, explicitly schooling, may be seen as vehicle for driving out of poverty (McKinney, 2014), the chances of children being able to detach from poverty are slim (Chapman, Chestnutt, Friel, Hall, & Lowden, 2016). Studies of social mobility across generations depict that education alone cannot bridge the gap between social inequalities (Brown, 2013). Although closing the poverty-related gap is high on the international agenda (Schleicher, 2014), it branches into social policy beyond education alone (Mowat, 2018a). The 'closing the gap' agenda of the Scottish Government is criticised by critics for offering a blunt tool that does not consider the issues of marginalisation, prejudice and discrimination that children may face during their lives (Mowat, 2018b), nor the plethora of ways these may be presented (Torrance & Forde, 2017). In a different paper, Forde and Torrance (2017) warn the approach that appears to be taken by the Government, through reducing the attainment gap measured by standardised testing and then providing targeted intervention to raise performance, "risks losing the opportunity to transform schools, pedagogy, curricula and wider culture" (p.112).

7.6 Position call - globalisation and international policy

Policy making is complex and becoming more globalised (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Since the late 1990s, increased attention has been paid to the impact of globalisation on education. Before this, attention was on the impact of globalisation on social, cultural, political and economic change (Maguire, 2002). In particular, the globalisation of policy formation, dissemination and enactment has received greater interest from critical policy scholars (Singh, 2015). Given the volume of attention being paid by the research community to it, it is certain that education and its modes of governance is becoming globalised (Maroy, Pons, & Dupuy, 2017).

[14] An SCQF level denotes the level of difficultly attached to a qualification. There are 12 SCQF levels from level 1 to level 12 (Doctoral). SCQF level 5 represents qualifications at National 5 typically undertaken at the end of Secondary 4.

Devolved Governments for example, Scotland have to manage a plethora of policy initiatives at local, national and state levels as well as globally (Arnott, 2017). Furthermore, the impact and implication of Brexit remains to be seen, including Scotland's position in both the United Kingdom and Europe, and may add further to the increasingly complex and challenging policy environment (Arnott, 2017). As the "layers of policy making between local, regional, national and state should be viewed through the prism of comparative policy making where the nature and variations of increasingly globalized trends maybe apparent" (Arnott, 2017, p.9), the impact of Brexit makes "the impact of re-spatialization of public policy…even more significant" (Arnott, 2017, p.9).

Whilst "education is, by definition, the space for the construction of a national identity" (Novoa, 2000, p.46), globalisation has weakened this (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a) as education is needed to create a knowledgeable society that goes beyond traditional National boundaries (Ozga & Lingard, 2007). The result is increased similarity in policies (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a) who refer to Ball's (1998) idea of 'big' policies for a 'small' world. The global education policy arena, overlooked by agencies like the OECD, are not alert to national contexts and traditions (Arnott & Ozga, 2010a). Whilst Scotland may try to keep its values and democratic principles, it is not resistant to these global forces (Mowat, 2018b).

7.6.1 Defining globalisation

The meaning of 'globalisation' is challenged and subject of debate (Dale, 1999; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). At a general level, it espouses a greater form of time/space flattening through technology (Maguire, 2002), thus creating a 'world system' distinct from local systems (Marginson, 2007). In this light, globalisation is a social process through which geography is no barrier to social and cultural arrangements (Waters, 1995). This is distinct from internationalisation where individual nations are the essential component that subsequently form multi-lateral and bi-lateral relationships with others (Marginson, 2007). A 'stronger' version of globalisation is espoused (Maguire, 2002), which emphases the role globalisation has had on the justification of privatisation and marketisation (Gewirtz, 2001). Edwards and Usher (2000) highlight globalisation as a discursive and material practice. This results in a way of thinking and speaking that provides succour to, and constrains, specific ways of acting and behaving whilst simultaneously, the 'product' of living in a global world is made to be natural (Maguire,

2002). Ultimately, education policy in an epoch of globalisation is thus multi-dimensional, multi-layered and exists across a range of sites (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Despite the battle over the meaning of the term globalisation, different nations have however, changed their welfare policies to align with what is viewed as crucial because of global market forces (Maguire, 2002). Rather than using markets to benefit the National population, Governments now have a duty to market forces since they define the boundaries of both national and local politics (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor, 1999). Even what would appear to be the most powerful of governments have experienced a variable reduction in how they can control and 'manage' the activities of multinational organisations, and the strength of National economic borders (Ball, 1998). Public policies were originally developed in response to National contexts, but are now located in a wider global arena (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). National policies are influenced by the forces of the global economy, political relationships and changes in global communications (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). However, how these factors are interpreted and subsequently played out, is also part of globalisation (Nagahara, 2011). What it is not being suggested is the need for National policies or politics to be similar; rather, there is a need to understand global forces and attempt to use them to advantage and minimise potential disadvantages (Henry et al., 1999). Local priorities of policy making and embedment, as well as well as convergence across localities, is subject to tension in policy analysis (Ball, 1998).

Policy scholars have focused on how new Discourses of learning, from education to lifelong learning policy shifts, has linked learning to the development of human capital in a globalised knowledge economy (Singh, 2015). To meet the needs of a competitive global economy, the role and purpose of education is redefined in National policy, to focus on the challenges of human capital development (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), and maintaining democratic aims in a framework of supra-national politics (Henry et al., 1999). For example, the purpose of education has narrowed from a broad focus to one that is instrumental (Henry et al., 1999), moving from social and cultural dimensions to focusing on the individual and how they can contribute to the economy (Taylor, as cited by Henry et al., 1999). International organisations for example, the OECD, European Union and the World Bank, have influenced and strengthened market forces and human capital development in global education policy (Nagahara, 2011).

7.6.2 Global panopticism

Quantitative indicators for example, those published by the OECD[15], have become a powerful driving tool in policy development (Gorur, 2015). These indicators are used to compare and predict education systems, as well as describe them. The OECD has become an influential actor in the educational policy arena since the 1990s (Sellar & Lingard, 2013) and the influence of the OECD on education is part of a wider, growing international convergence of education policy making (Thompson & Cook, 2014). Originally, there was no interest by the OECD in education; it was primarily concerned with economics (Gorur, 2015) and the reconstruction of the European economy after the second World War (Taylor & Henry, 2000). However, with the acknowledgment that education could promote economic growth has led to its involvement since the 1960s (Gorur, 2015). Lingard et al. (2014) argue the OECD has found a niche globally as a provider of comparative performance information of education systems.

The growth of the 'audit society' (Power, 1997) or 'evaluative state' (Neave, 1998) across nations has stemmed from the shift from government to governance, and the new geographies of governance across local, national and global spaces (Lingard, 2011). Such shift from government to governance is hinged on the influence of neo-liberal politics since the end of the Cold War and the dominance of numbers and statistics as a technology of governance (Lingard, 2011). However, the emergence of numbers in policy is not new; in the early twentieth century 'political arithmetic' was of significance in the approach to progressive public administration (Lingard, 2011).

Correlated with market reform agendas, there is a growing focus on developing educational policy using quantitative indicators to measure and then subsequently label school quality (Falabella, 2014). Subsequently, an audit culture has appeared in Western and UK school contexts (Keddie, 2013). Policy makers are increasingly being encouraged to look at such indicators to consider where the best 'performance' is prevalent, at lower costs (Tucker, as cited by Harris, Jones, & Adams, 2016). However, how such best 'performance' or system is judged, and what variables are taken into

[15] Examples include: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Programme for Assessment of Adult Competences (PIACC), Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) as well as the annual statistical report Education at a Glance.

account, is open to interpretation. The indicators used to measure educational performance, and the evidence on which such indicators are based, needs to be interpreted in context (Burdett & O'Donnell, 2016).

Whilst attainment in an education system can correlate with quality, depending on how quality is defined, there is a higher level of interest amongst politicians regarding the economic position and prosperity of a country and its educational quality (Howie, 2012). Politicians can use data at a National level to seek popularity and data for example, PISA, has been used in Scotland to support the argument for independence (Hardy, 2015a). However, test results and PISA data can work against politicians when their country does not do as well as expected and who are then subsequently required to defend such position (Stobart & Eggen, 2012). Politicians could point the blame of undesirable test results and PISA data onto others (Falabella, 2014). Providing this data could also lead to a 'PISA phenomenon' because of international comparisons (Stobart & Eggen, 2012). Lingard, Martino and Goli (2013, p.540) refer to this as 'global panopticism', whereby test data that form PISA comparisons, for example, is used as part of policy-by-numbers in national and international contexts through an 'national eye' and a 'global eye'. Thus, numbers are being used as a unit of measurement for comparative purposes and policy creation by policy makers nationally and internationally.

7.7 Chapter summary

Three position calls have been examined to illustrate how policy is framed because of wider Discourse; the historical, social, political and economic factors that shape policy through what Discourse it permits and constrains. The notion of a National identity and Scottish mythology is espoused with education being seen as a public good and available to all regardless of their circumstances. Social justice is rearticulated as 'equity' because of a globalised arena with a focus on numbers. The influence of globalisation, the influence of the OECD, and how the growth of international comparisons has led to a phenomenon of 'global panopticism' has been considered.

Chapter 8 presents policy-explaining by examining the internal relations, organisation and structure of the NIF policy text.

Chapter 8 Policy-explaining

> Policy texts are not closed, their meanings are neither fixed or clear, and the carry-over of meanings from one policy arena and one educational site to another is subject to interpretational slippage and contestation.
>
> (Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 2017, p.83)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter undertakes policy-explaining. It explores some of the significant, but also often implicit, differences between different versions of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) policy text to explore how the NIF is explained and positioned to readers. As explored in section 6.4, the 'textual' and 'interdiscursive' levels of Fairclough's (1989) three-tiered CDA framework are employed. The former is concerned with internal relations of the text, and the linguistic and semiotic features that dominate (Taylor, 2004) and the latter, the organisation and structure of the whole text (Fairclough, 2001).

8.2 Positioning of policy texts

As the quote by Bowe et al. (2017) above signifies, the interpretation of the purpose and meaning of policy texts from one space to another is not straight forward. However, by interrogating policy texts, the purpose and significance of the policy can be examined to begin engaging with the policy-making process (Adams, 2016). At one level, however, purpose can be seen as meant; i.e. the policy text signifies something. However, this is subject to interpretation (Ball et al., 2012), so we need to consider the purpose of the policy being implied through the position call epoused that is subsequenlty accepted, rejected or amended subject to the rights and duties the reader feels they have and have been given (Adams, 2016). It is therefore a process of *interaction,* rather than simply *interpretation.* This chapter considers how the NIF is presented, the use of words and images, as well as the impact of changes to the way the NIF is presented between publications. By doing so, the ways the policy text offers opportunities, and constraints opportunities for action, through the position-calls they espouse, as well as how key messages are reinforced (Adams, 2016) can be examined.

8.3 Position call - education as top priority

The Scottish Government has made no secret in its policy pronouncements that education is its top priority. Over the past three years, since the NIF has existed, the Programme for Government has stated that (emphasis added):

> At its centre is a commitment to introduce an Improvement Framework…to help us drive up attainment…and to close the attainment gap. We aim to ensure that children…whether in our least or our most affluent areas…have a fair chance to flourish.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015b, p.3)

> Our top priority is to raise standards in schools and close the attainment gap, delivering opportunities to our young people no matter their family background.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016f, p.3)

> Vital to all of what we aspire to as a nation is our commitment…to raise the bar and close the gap in education. All children and young people, whatever their background or circumstances, deserve the same chance to reach their full potential.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2017a, p.4)

These extracts reinforce the idea that education is being used as a mechanism for demonstrating the SNP's capacity to govern and association with a national identity (Arnott & Ozga, 2016) by positioning education as a top priority. Arnott and Ozga (2016) suggest Scottish Government policy is geared towards reinforcing the 'fairer' agenda, by making reference to a successful education system, but highlighting that some individuals and groups will require additional intervention to overcome disadvantage. The extracts above reinforce this through reference to "no matter what their family background" (Scottish Government, 2016f, p.3) and "whatever their background and circumstances" (Scottish Government, 2017a, p.4). Scotland's custom of meritocratic egalitarianism, is therefore reinforced (Grek et al., 2009) through the deployment of 'inward' referencing (Arnott & Ozga, 2016), for example, reference to "a fair chance to flourish" (Scottish Government, 2015b, p.3) and "to reach their full potential" (Scottish Government, 2017a, p.4), as discussed in section 7.4.

8.4 Birth of the National Improvement Framework (NIF)

The NIF was announced by the Scottish Government in September 2015. A draft text was published on the Scottish Government's website at that time and interested individuals, groups and organisations were invited to submit comments on the contents of the draft document between September and November of that year. Consultation events were also held and gave young people, parents, teachers and other interested parties the opportunity to feedback and ask on its proposed content.

The first NIF was published in January 2016, with an updated NIF to be published each January thereafter. The timing of this thesis allows consideration of the draft NIF published in 2015, the first NIF published in 2016 and the second published at the end of 2016 for the year 2017. Since the draft NIF was published in 2015, there have been accompanying documents published including the Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education: A Delivery Plan for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016a) and the Curriculum for Excellence Implementation Plan 2016/17 (Education Scotland, 2016) both in June 2016. However, since 2017, these two documents have been subsumed into the NIF to provide information on improving Scottish Education into one document (Scottish Government, 2016c). The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills foreword in the 2017 document also highlights this by writing:

> Currently we have a number of plans setting out key activity across the [education] system…in publishing this 2017 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan, I am bringing together information together in a single, definitive document…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1)

There is an attempt to position the reader to be clear that this document is the single, definitive source rather than a multiple ones. There is an attempt to locate in one source the main priorities for Scottish education and to focus the reader towards this document rather than others; the position of this document, compared to others published, as the important one is therefore highlighted.

8.5 Position calls - presentation of the NIF

There is a considerable difference in the presentation of the draft NIF and the 2016 and 2017 publication. There is a striking difference, for example, between the front cover of the draft version and the subsequent versions as shown in appendix 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The 2016 and 2017 publications have the same design, use of font and display as other education documents published by the Scottish Government, as well as in other directorates, during this period. A 'corporate' design is applied and offers the text a formal position as a government and national publication compared to a local or school-based text, thus reinforcing power. The draft NIF document has a less professional appearance compared to the 2016 and 2017 versions, where more consideration is given to display and style. For example, by using bold and capital letters in different levels of headings and pagination for different sections allows the reader to navigate from one section to the next easier. The draft NIF does not include any colour in the main body of the text and there are no photographs included. Visual aids, except one diagram, are also non-existent. The 2016 and 2017 texts use colour for headings and includes a visual aid at the start of each driver of improvement to signify which driver is being positioned.

The 2016 and 2017 publications make it clear on the front cover of the text what the aim of the document is – 'Achieving Excellence and Equity' – whereas the draft version does not. By including the aims of the text on the front cover, the reader is positioned into considering, although they may be unconscious of this, its purpose before they read the remainder of the text; there is an attempt to position the reader into a narrower focus of the text compared to the draft text. It is useful to remember that policy texts do not simply aim to describe a particular agenda, but to influence and change it (Scott, 2000). The aim of the policy, therefore, being highlighted on the front cover immediately offers the reader into a position of thinking about achieving excellence and equity.

The inclusion of photographs of children in the 2016 and 2017 versions also highlight to the reader that the policy is concerned with children whereas the draft version does not; the photographs are positioning these policy actors as being at the forefront. The photographs being used in the 2016 and 2017 texts all show children being engaged in different activities, for example reading and writing. This therefore focuses the reader's attention towards children engaging in learning and in associated activities. Visual aids

are one of the fundamental tools used in policy texts to obtain the reader's attention (McGregor, 2010) and to communicate the idea or message being presented to readers (Scott, 2000). By using children in the NIF texts, therefore, highlights to readers the main policy actor the text is concerned with.

The word 'National' in the title of the document also signifies the document is not a local policy text, but a National one. Therefore, there is an attempt to position the policy against a backdrop of the potential power and influence that a National government document may have.

The 2016 and 2017 texts contain an image to highlight each driver of the NIF as it is being discussed, as well as a diagram showing the link between different actors and levels of the education system from a local to National level. As figures 8.1 and 8.2 show, this diagram changes between the draft text and subsequent texts.

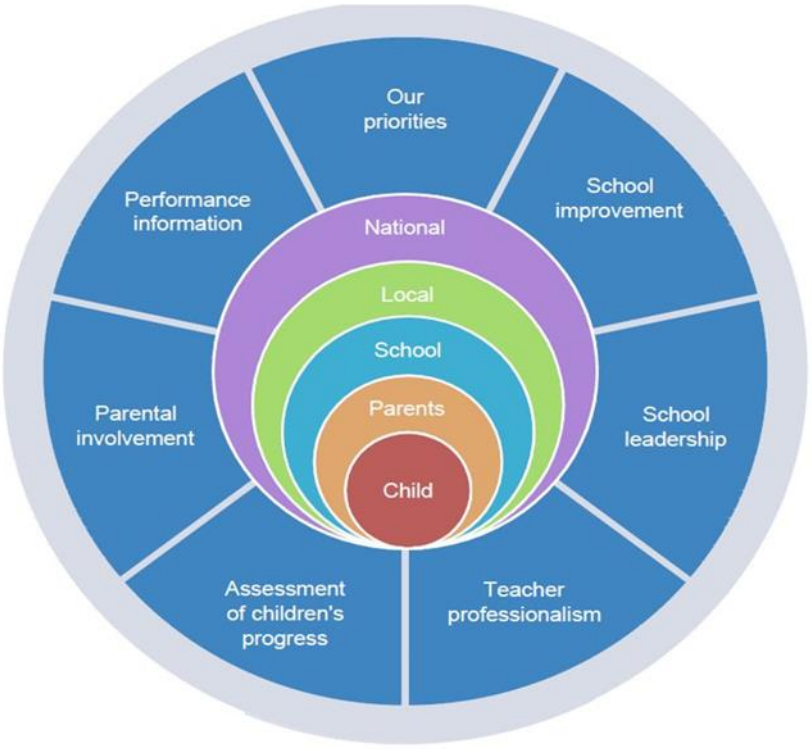

Figure 8.1 *– draft NIF diagram (Scottish Government, 2015a)*

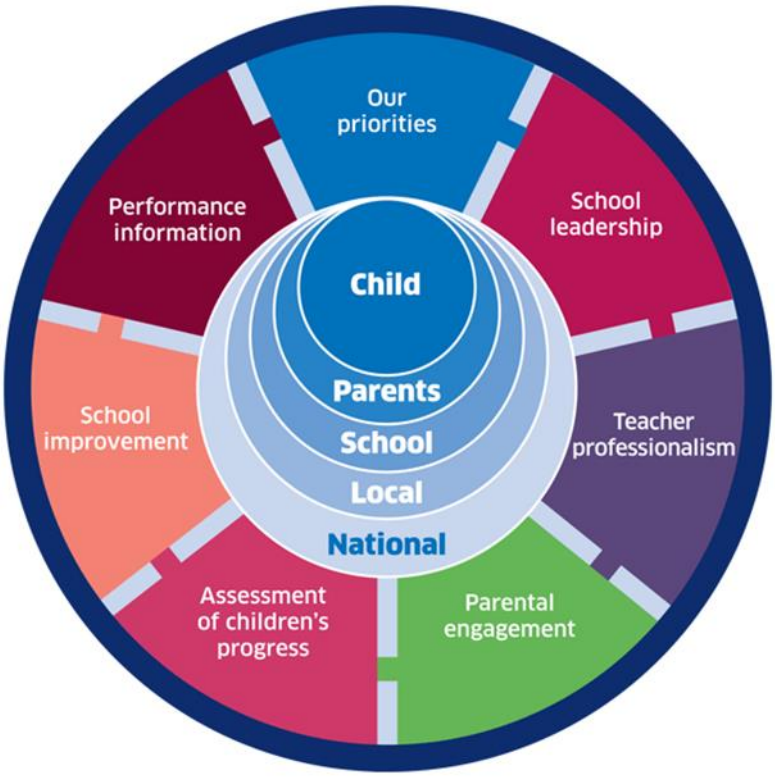

Figure 8.2 *– 2016 and 2017 NIF diagram (Scottish Government, 2016b; 2016c)*

Compared to the draft text, each driver in the 2016 and 2017 diagram is given a different colour from the 'our priorities' heading to emphasise what the priorities are and have each been presented in a different order. In the draft diagram, each driver is the same colour as 'our priorities' whereas the elements showing the words national, local, school, parents and child are highlighted using a different colour. This approach draws more attention to these words rather than the priorities.

There has also been a reorganisation of these words to show the nano level words (child) first to the macro (national), whereas these were originally organised in the opposite way. This may have occurred to show the word 'child' nearer to 'our priorities' compared to the word 'national'. Thus, a position call is offered by the diagram to position the reader towards considering the child first. Teachers and other professionals in education would probably find it difficult to resist such position call from a moral perspective and the subsequent rights and obligations attributed to them as teachers.

There is also a diagram in the 2016 text illustrating the main principles of another National policy (GIRFEC) and a diagram illustrating the annual cycle of improvement. However, in the 2017 version these three diagrams have been removed. This could be to simplify the contents of the document and to focus readers more specifically towards its main focus rather than multiple ones, as the single definitive source of educational improvement.

The main vision of the Scottish Government in the 2016 and 2017 versions of a 'Smarter Scotland' is also highlighted through an image in the bottom right hand corner of the front cover. However, in the draft version, the text 'Creating a Smarter Scotland' appeared before the title of the document – 'A draft National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education', and therefore had more prominence compared to the subsequent versions. The ideological belief, along with the notion of a National identity, of the government as a 'Smarter Scotland' is highlighted to the reader.

8.6 Position calls – words used

Before considering different components of the draft, 2016 and 2017 documents, the use of specific words is explored. NVivo was used to count the number of times words have appeared in each version of the NIF. Excluded from the count was the number of words

under three characters in length[16] and linking words for example, 'and' and 'the'. Similar words have been counted together so that it is easier to identify how often these words have been used. For example, the word 'school' and 'schools' are counted together as are 'learn' and 'learning'.

It is acknowledged that by simply counting the number of words used in a document does not consider the context they were used or in the manner they were used. For example, some of the words that appear frequently are simply part of the title of the text. However, it does help to uncover some of the changes in word use between draft and final documents, and to explore how the policy is positioned to the reader and the language that is adopted. The top ten words in each version of the NIF are:

Draft NIF		**2016 NIF**		**2017 NIF**	
Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
improvements	94	improving	168	improvement	181
framework	74	school	117	school	120
school	71	children	106	educational	103
children	65	education	97	2017	92
nationally	52	nationally	89	national	79
assessments	51	framework	86	children	76
education	48	learning	64	plan	74
teachers	46	development	61	learning	61
support	42	teacher	56	framework	61
information	40	scottish	55	support	60

Table 8.1 *– top ten words in the draft, 2016 and 2017 NIF text*

Word clouds are used to show visually, by the size of each word, how frequently it appears with other words in each version of the NIF, as figures 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5 illustrate.

[16] Except the word 'gap' as it was relevant to this study

Figure 8.3 *– word cloud showing top 100 words in the draft NIF*

Figure 8.4 *– word cloud showing top 100 words in the 2016 NIF*

Figure 8.5 *– word cloud showing top 100 words in the 2017 NIF*

8.6.1 Improvement, learning or education and children

Each version of the NIF clearly has as its heart 'improvement' and the words 'learning' or 'education' followed closely with 'children'. There is therefore a strong position call offered here to the reader. For example, these three words offer a sense of what the NIF is concerned with, without the reader having to examine the text any further. As explored in section 7.4, the growth of the word 'improvement' by the Scottish Government is used to strengthen a 'Scottish approach' to policy making (Cairney et al., 2016). The word 'child' in particular in the text, along with the NIF diagram (figures 8.1 and 8.2), show a semiotic approach (Fairclough, 2001) to illustrate how a position call is offered. As mentioned earlier, teachers and other educational professionals may find it difficult to morally resist such a position call as it involves children.

8.6.2 Assessment or evaluation?

The word 'assessment' was frequently used in the draft text (appearing 51 times), but did not appear as frequently in the 2016 and 2017 versions; 37 times and 34 times respectively. A check was made using the word count feature on NVivo to see whether another word had been used in its place. The word 'evaluate' was used more in the 2016 version (33 times) and 2017 version (22 times), whereas this word only appeared 9 times in the draft version. The word 'assessment' appears to be replaced with 'evaluate' in

subsequent versions of the NIF compared to the draft. This is an example of paradigmatic analysis (Fairclough, 2001) and the significance of this change in word use is explored along with the empirical work conducted for this study in section 11.5.

8.6.3 The OECD

Reference to the 'OECD' was far greater in the 2016 text compared to the draft text; 23 times compared to 3. However, this is perhaps not surprising considering the timing of the publication of the OECD report on Improving Schools in Scotland (OECD, 2015). The OECD's report in the 2016 text was therefore used to support the introduction of the NIF:

> This Framework is designed to address one of the key issues identified by the OECD…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.5)

However, considering the NIF was launched before the publication of the OECD report, the Government would appear to have used this report to warrant some of the principles of the NIF in subsequent policy texts. Thus, the Scottish Government have 'reached out' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017) to the OECD in attempt to legitimise policy calls being espoused. In the 2017 NIF, however, the term OECD had only been used 13 times. The significance of the OECD was discussed in section 7.6.2.

8.6.4 Schools, teachers and parents

'Schools' was the most frequently named stakeholder in any version of the NIF (71 times in the draft, 117 in 2016 and 120 in 2017). The word 'teacher' appeared frequently in all versions of the NIF (46 times in the draft, 56 in 2016 and in 2017). The word 'parents', however increased in frequency from 22 in the draft text to 50 and 57 in the 2016 and 2017 versions respectively. There appears to be an increase in these terms to promote partnership working and collaboration; an aim of the SNP (Arnott, 2016). This represent a 'bottoms up' approach towards long-term shared objectives and cooperation (Cairney et al., 2016).

8.6.5 The 'gap'

The word 'gap', referring to the attainment gap, has increased in use between the draft (8 times), 2016 (13 times) and 2017 (28 times) texts along with the word 'closing' or 'close'. This signifies the Scottish Government's intention to raise and strengthen awareness of closing the poverty-related attainment gap as the policy has developed, and to strengthen the reader's position towards a specific focus of what the policy text sets out to do. The term 'the gap' is discussed in relation to the empirical work conducted in section 11.3.3. The policy text is not only concerned with raising attainment, but also, closing the attainment gap between the least and most disadvantaged children. In the speech given by the First Minister of Scotland at the launch of Programme for Government 2015/16, reference to 'closing the attainment gap' was highlighted as a core principal of the Government's vision for Scotland:

> Improving school attainment is arguably the single most important objective in this Programme for Government.
>
> (Sturgeon, 2015)

Although 'closing the gap' was highlighted as a core aim in the First Minister's speech, this aim is not given as much emphasis in the draft NIF text published on the same day as her speech. It is not until the 2016 and 2017 NIF texts that this aim is referred to more often.

8.6.6 Equity

There is an increase in the word 'equity' which the Government have defined as "ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed" (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.3). In the draft text 'equity' not appear in the list of 100 top words, yet it appeared 19 times in 2016 and in 2017. Achieving excellence and equity has already been highlighted as the core purpose of the NIF, as prominently positioned on the front cover of the 2016 and 2017 texts, as well as throughout the texts themselves. For example, in the 2017 text, a question is presented for each driver of the NIF that asks how the particular driver will achieve excellence and equity. Of note, however, is that the term 'equity' was only used once in the draft text, compared to 19 times in 2016 and 2017. As the NIF has developed, therefore, the 2016 and 2017 texts have attempted to position the reader towards a greater focus on 'closing the gap' and 'equity'. 'Equity' as an example of wider Discourse was discussed in section 7.5.

Arnott and Ozga's (2016) analysis of policy texts along with interviews they carried out with policy makers between 2007 and 2014, suggest there has been a gradual movement from texts dominated by education and economic growth, to an emphasis on education as a tool for addressing poverty. The NIF's vision of 'achieving excellence and equity' (Scottish Government, 2015a; 2016b; 2016c), with a focus on narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap, reinforces this. This is strengthened in the most recent NIF at the time of this study (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.2), by stating that "there is, for all of us, a moral imperative [to achieve the NIF's priorities]". There is an attempt to employ moral positioning, by implicating one's role and duties that are associated with it.

Having considered the presentation of the NIF and the specific words used, this chapter will now examine the following specific sections of the NIF to reveal the position calls offered:

- First Minister (or Deputy First Minister's) Foreword
- Vision of the NIF
- Drivers of improvement

8.7 Position calls - foreword of the NIF

The foreword of the draft and 2016 NIF uses the highest member of the Scottish Government, the First Minister for Scotland, to introduce the policy text, along with an official picture of her, thus positioning the importance and power the policy may have.

8.7.1 Purpose and improvement of Scottish education

The first sentence in the foreword of the draft NIF and also in the 2016 publication offers the reader a position towards what the Government feels the purpose of education is and what children should be achieving:

> Scotland's children and young people are our greatest asset and investing in their education is essential to achieving their aspirations and our ambitions as a country…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1; 2016b, p.1)

The purpose of education is positioned as achieving children's aspirations and the ambitions of the country. She position's the NIF as a way to continually improve Scottish education in the draft NIF:

> …we have committed to developing and implementing [the NIF]…this will ensure that our education system is continually improving, that all children are equipped with the skills they need to get on in the world.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

This extract positions children as needing the necessary skills *"to get on in the world",* thus reinforcing the idea of education in a globalised world (discussed in section 7.6). In the 2016 NIF, a similar statement is made, although positioning children as requiring skills *"to get on in life and in work"* through positioning herself as being committed to having one of the best education systems in the world*:*

> I am committed to ensuring that our education system is amongst the best in the world and equips all of our children with the skills they need to get on in life and in work…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.1)

In the 2017 NIF, the Deputy First Minister for Education, who also holds the position of Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, positions children as rightly deserving the improvements required:

> We must come together to drive forward the improvements that our children and young people so richly deserve
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1)

The statement *"that our children and young people so richly deserve"* is of note. There is an attempt at moral positioning by espousing a position call that suggests *"we must come together",* to achieve the improvements that *"children and young people so richly deserve".* Readers are offered a position in an earlier paragraph in the foreword that "there is, for all of us, a moral imperative…" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1).

All three versions of the NIF position the education system as requiring improvement and the NIF as a vehicle for doing so. However, it is only in the 2017 publication the way the

NIF is being positioned to drive forward the improvement required is made explicit in the foreword:

> …we need a clear flow of information and clear actions on delivering improvement in all parts of the education system.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1)

In the draft and 2016 NIF, the reader has to read a considerable proportion of the foreword to be able to identify how the NIF is being positioned, through the provision of information, to improve Scottish education. However, in 2017 it is made explicit.

As indicated in the extract above, the problem with the current education system is framed clearly (i.e. improvement is required) and the solution (clear flow of information) immediately follows in the subsequent sentence. This example illustrates the concepts of problematisation and argumentation (Adams, 2014). There is a limited position call offered to the reader here; there is little room for the reader of the text to reach their own conclusion on what the solution to the problem is in this statement and what action is required. Essentially, readers are being positioned by the text to establish a particular truth (Scott, 2000), which could still be resisted.

The position of the National inspection body, Education Scotland, is also immediately reinforced after this statement (emphasis added):

> Education Scotland is writing to all schools today to share with them clear and succinct guidance on what they need to consider to make [the NIF] a reality in their school.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1)

This statement positions Education Scotland as powerful as they are the body that provides guidance to schools to help them realise the priorities of the NIF. There is no positioning of Education Scotland in the draft or 2016 NIF.

8.7.2 Positioning of CfE

The draft NIF positions improvement in Scottish education, because of CfE, in a positive way through a careful choice of words (emphasis added):

> We are taking the right steps to improve Scottish education and we are seeing positive results
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

> The successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence has been a major step forward and one which has attracted international attention
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

> …it [CfE] has transformed the quality of children's learning, and their confidence and motivation
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

CfE is positioned being the vehicle for taking the "right steps to improve Scottish education", as "successful", as a "major step forward" and has "transformed the quality of children's learning".

CfE is also positioned as way of realising the aspirations and ambitions of the NIF in the draft and 2016 foreword. These therefore construct a twin purpose of the NIF; to praise CfE and what has already been accomplished in Scottish education, as well as what has yet to be achieved (emphasis added):

> As we move to a new phase of Curriculum for Excellence, we have committed to developing and implementing [the NIF]
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

> The combination of strong foundations laid out by Curriculum for excellence…will put us in a good position to deliver on the huge ambition…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.2; 2016b, p.1)

The 2017 foreword does not position CfE by what it has achieved or as a way of achieving the NIF's aspirations or ambitions. There is also no use of positive language in the 2017 foreword. However, as noted, there is an increase in moral positioning in this version of the NIF.

8.7.3 Restricted positions to raise attainment

Readers of the draft, 2016 and 2017 forewords are given restricted freedom to interpret from their own experience or perspective what they position as being key to raising attainment. Readers are offered two positions to what the Government believes is the key to raising attainment and closing the attainment gap; excellent learning and teaching and an increase in information, including that through standardised assessments (emphasis added):

> Excellent learning and teaching is key to raising attainment and closing the gap
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

> …we need to know much more, on a consistent and systematic basis, about the performance of our education system.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

> …the framework will provide a level of robust, consistent and transparent data across Scotland… including the development of standardised assessments
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.1)

> …we need a clear flow of information…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1)

> At its [NIF] heart will be a new national standardised assessment…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.1)

The statement *"at its heart"* in the draft publication is significant as it positions the central role these standardised assessments would have as part of the NIF. It is also referred to later in the document. However, these words are not used in subsequent versions. This might be to dilute the emphasis given to them, because of consultation feedback opposing to as much focus on assessment.

In the 2016 and 2017 framework each time standardised assessment is positioned it is always part of a sentence that also positions teacher professional judgement. This was not always the case in the draft publication. This change in the structure of how the position call is presented is significant, as the position of the teacher and the value of

their judgement is being highlighted and not only the position of standardised assessment. In 2016:

> ...this includes the development of national standardised assessments in primary and early years of secondary school to inform teacher judgement
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.1)

In 2017:

> The annual collection of teacher professional judgement data on the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels and, from August 2017, the use of national standardised assessment…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.11)

There is also an attempt to limit how readers interact with the position call of the vision and requirements of the NIF, for example, the reporting of performance information, by being reminded the framework will become legally binding. Thus, the framework is prescriptive and in common with other pieces of legislation, presumably there would be consequences if it was not adhered to:

> To give the framework the appropriate status…we will look to amend the current Education (Scotland) Bill to place the framework on a statutory footing
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.2)

The same statement is made in the 2016 foreword, but is also accompanied by a statement that states:

> ...this will mean that there is a legal requirement on local and national government…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.1)

The significance of this additional statement in 2016 is that readers are reminded there will be a *legal* requirement to comply with the framework. Therefore, the position call being offered cannot be as easily resisted through the certainty and authority being conveyed by the words used in the text. Such tone is referred to as modality.

Although there is no mention of the legal requirement of the NIF in the 2017 foreword, readers are positioned as having a "moral imperative" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1) to acknowledge and drive forward the actions required of the NIF. These words were not used in previous forewords and attempts to 'force' readers into accepting, by appealing to their moral dimension, what the NIF sets out to do:

> There is, for us all, a moral imperative to realise the key priorities of this framework…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1)

Including the words *"for us all"* before *"moral imperative"* provides a position call to all readers of the text, through the choice of specific words used, to reinforce the call being offered. The position call espoused is not only for example, the Government.

8.8 Position calls - vision for the NIF

The vision for the NIF consists of two aims: achieving excellence and equity. However, there are minor variations between the wording of each aim the draft NIF and the subsequent versions set out. For example, in relation to achieving excellence, reference to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels was not made in the draft framework but is positioned as the basis on which standards should be based in 2016 and 2017.

In relation to achieving equity, there is also specific reference made to "closing the poverty-related attainment gap" in the 2016 and 2017 framework. This therefore, specifically encourages the reader to think about not only children succeeding, but specifically those children who may have experienced disadvantage, thus reinforcing Scotland's custom of meritocratic egalitarianism (Grek et al., 2009):

> …ensuring every child as the same opportunity to succeed…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.4)

Compared to (<u>emphasis</u> added):

> …ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed, <u>with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap</u>
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.3; 2016c, p.2)

There are minor variations in two of the four priorities set out between the draft NIF and subsequent versions. For example, reading and writing is replaced with the term literacy (emphasis added):

> Improvement in attainment, specifically in reading, writing and numeracy
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p. 8)

Compared to:

> Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.3; 2016c, p.2)

Using the adverb 'specifically' compared to 'particularly' also highlights a subtle shift, thus paradigmatic, from explicitly focusing on reading, writing and numeracy, but also acknowledging there may be other areas requiring attention.

There is a change in positioning in one of the priorities to include a wider focus on employability and positive destinations after school (emphasis added). Originally:

> Improvement in sustained school leaver destinations for all young people
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.8)

In 2016 and 2017:

> Improvements in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.3; 2016c, p.2)

The NIF is attempting to shift positioning from purely on young people having a destination after leaving school, to also having relevant employment skills and having a *positive* destination after leaving school compared to simply, a destination.

8.9 Position calls - drivers of improvement

There are six drivers of improvement in all versions of the NIF. For each driver of improvement, there is a significant change between what information is provided, and what action is required, between the draft, 2016 and 2017 NIF. This is worthy of exploration because by changing how sections of the text are organised in different versions of the text, a perspective of how the reader should perceive a topic is thus positioned; McGregor (2010) refers to this as 'topicalisation'. Therefore, by changing how sections of the text are organised, represents a different positioning of the topic by the writer.

The draft NIF simply bullet points actions that each driver will have and for each driver, there are no more than four actions. In five of the drivers in the draft NIF, with the performance information driver being excluded as it is explicitly concerned with data, there is no mention of what evidence or data will be collected by the framework. The words 'evidence' or 'data' are never mentioned for these five drivers. The draft NIF for each driver simply indicates the actions that will be taken.

By comparing some of the actions required from the draft NIF to the 2016 and 2017 texts, as explored in the sections that follow, there is a shift in language used and a specific focus on the action required for each driver.

8.9.1 Presentation of the drivers of improvement

In the 2017 framework, the table that indicates what data would be collected for each driver and what it would be used for in 2016 is removed and is replaced with a section on improvement activity, showing what activity is new over the coming period and what activity is on-going. There are more links to other policies in the 2017 framework compared to the 2016 framework. This is a likely consequence of the framework from 2017 encompassing the action plan for Scottish education as well as the CfE implementation plans; these two plans were previously separate documents. The increase in reference to other policies under each driver of improvement may also be because there is not a separate section in the 2017 text that links the NIF to other policies; there is an attempt rather to embed other policies in the framework rather than being separate. As highlighted, from 2017 the NIF is the single, definitive source of improvement for Scottish education, and by including other policies under the appropriate driver of

improvement, positions the reader into a call that the framework is the overarching focus for each of these policies, rather than the framework being additional to them. As there is an expectation on schools and teachers to consider a range of policies (Braun, et al., 2010), if other policies are referred to and embedded in the framework, it does make it easier for schools and teachers to simply refer to one document rather than multiple.

In addition to a change in how each driver is presented in 2017, there are also specific timescales, which are emboldened, given. The inclusion of timescales had not happened in the draft or 2016 publications. The inclusion of timescales provides an induction of when actions need to be taken by those concerned for example, teachers, schools and the Government and by when. As the NIF is a legal requirement, it positions actors into a position of having to take certain actions by a certain time. By emboldening the specific date's actions are required by emphasises the position call being offered.

There is a significant increase in the term 'we will', use of the first person, compared to the second or third person, in the 2017 version compared to the draft and 2016 texts. However, this term is used in different contexts and it is not always clear who 'we' is; the reader is having to read between the lines to uncover this. For example, in the introduction it states:

> We need Scottish education to deliver…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.2)

However, who is we? Is it the Government or does it imply everyone involved in the education of children? The reader is left to interpret who 'we' is. Under each driver of improvement, nearly every single action in the entire document beings with 'we will', but it would appear to illustrate what action the Government will take and not necessarily other actors. For example:

> We will work with partners across Scottish education…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.5)

> We will make holding the Standard for Headship mandatory for all new head teachers…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.5)

This is an interesting comparison to the draft version that explicitly positioned children, parents and teachers by having a section on what the framework will mean for each of these actors. Under each actor, there was a list of bullet points that explicitly stated what the framework will mean for them. For example, for children:

> I will take part in national assessments at P1, P4, P7 and S3
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.6)

For parents:

> I will have the information I need to help my child progress
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.6)

For teachers:

> I will make clear judgements about children's progress, drawing on a range of evidence including the results of national assessment
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.6)

Each of these actors are being offered a position call on what the NIF will mean for them. The 2016 framework did not contain the same explicit bulleted list for each actor as the draft version, but did contain a table that showed the purpose and use of data at different levels, and ultimately, those actors at each level. For example, teachers are being positioned to use data to support judgement:

> [data will be used]…to support teacher professional judgement
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p. 21)

Schools are being positioned to use data to develop future school improvement plans:

> [data will be used in the]…development of school improvement planning
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.21)

The 2017 text does not contain a list or table of what the NIF specifically means for each policy actor. The position call being offered is therefore open to a larger degree of interpretation.

8.9.2 Growth of governance by numbers

The 2016 and 2017 NIF contains a statement to explain what the driver is, why it is important and how it links to achieving excellence and equity. This did not happen in the draft text. In the 2016 version, this is followed by a 2-column table that indicates clearly what evidence will be gathered by the Government and what specifically that piece of evidence will show. There is also a table that documents the purpose and use of performance information at each level (for example, child, school, authority). This shift focuses more on the performativity aspects of education, and what can be measured (<u>emphasis</u> added):

For school leadership:

> All new head teachers to hold the standard for Headship by 2018/2019
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p. 9)

Compared to:

> <u>Number</u> of new head teachers who meet the Standard for Headship, and <u>number</u> of experienced head teachers who continue to meet the Standard…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.11)

For school improvement:

> All schools to self-evaluate and report annually on their work to raise attainment…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.8)

Compared to:

> The number of schools who report positive findings in school evaluation…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.19)

For teacher professionalism:

> Support for teacher professional learning and evaluation of its impact to be strengthened…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.9)

Compared to:

> Percentage of teachers…within the annual cohort, having their professional learning successfully signed off by the GTCS
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.13)

For assessment of children's progress:

> Standardised assessment…to be used in all schools from 2017
>
> (Scottish Government, 2015a, p.9)

Compared to:

> The percentage of children achieving curriculum levels in literacy and numeracy…
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016b, p.17)

A focus in each of these statements of 'the percentage of...' or 'the number of...' reinforces Hardy's logic of enumeration and a focus on numbers (Hardy, 2015a). There is a shift in

emphasis from Government to governance, catalysed by the norm of policy as numbers in contemporary policy (Lingard, 2011). Furthermore, the growth of data could result in a position of data being viewed as valued capital (Hardy, 2015b). This has implications for school practices (Lingard, 2011) as discussed in chapter 11.

The 2017 text does not contain the table that indicates what data will be gathered and what it will tell the Government. There is also no reference to how performance information will be used at each level. In the 2017 text, each driver contains a list of on-going and existing improvement activity, with no reference to 'the number of' or 'the percentage of'. Instead, the 2017 text contains a section called "measuring the attainment gap" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.20). This section calls the reader to bear in mind that:

> We [the Government] have committed to engaging with stakeholders to discuss plans to close the poverty-related attainment gap, including milestones towards delivery.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.20)

Note the word 'milestones' is used rather than 'a number of' or 'a percentage of' that featured in the 2016 text. Readers are also reminded that:

> A key focus of these discussions will be to avoid the creation of perverse incentives through whatever targets, milestones or aims that may be set nationally or locally…with the primary focus on driving improvement rather than simply for accountability.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.20)

There is an attempt at inviting readers to focus on improvement, rather than accountability, and to avoid *"perverse incentives"* in achieving such improvement. The 2017 text contained the most reference to the word 'improvement'.

8.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has revealed some explicit, but also some subtle, differences between the draft NIF policy text and subsequent versions published in 2016 and 2017. In doing so, the position calls offered through policy-explaining have been highlighted.

As the NIF has evolved, the position calls offered to readers, through policy-explaining, have changed and were highlighted by employing 'textual' and 'interdiscursive' levels of Fairclough's (1989) three-tiered CDA framework. It does this by considering how word use changes over time for example, 'evaluation' compared to 'assessment', and greater reference to the 'OECD', 'parents', 'the gap' and 'equity'. There is also a greater focus on moral positioning in the 2017 text. How images are used for example, of children, to offer a particular position of the policy as well as the impact of changes in the way documents have been presented has also been explored for example, inclusion and then removal of tables highlighting the data to be collected. Finally, this chapter has revealed the 2016 NIF, the first NIF publication, focused explicitly on the collection of data that included 'a percentage of' or 'a number of', but this has been removed in the second version published for 2017.

Chapter 9 examines the methods used to undertake policy-forming. Policy-forming examines how policy been formed through discourse at the micro level and is the final element of Adams' (2016) tripartite approach.

Chapter 9 Methods for Policy-forming

9.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the methods used to address research question 3. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seventeen primary school teachers; fourteen by telephone and three face-to-face. Consideration is given to how the interview schedule was constructed and how interviews were conducted. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis is also examined. Finally, ethical considerations, particularly the presence of power in interviews, are examined.

Interviews provide 'little-d' discourse, the linguistic elements of language (Rogers et al., 2005) used in moment-by-moment interactions, and enabled policy-forming (RQ 3) in chapter 10.

9.2 Interviews

An interview is a common method of data collection (Cohen et al., 2018), and their use in research indicates a shift from viewing data as external from individuals, to a view that knowledge is actually constructed through discussion with others (Kvale, 1996). This view is connected with the social constructionist epistemology of this study. Bryman (2016) lists several types of interviews: structured, standardised, semi-structured, unstructured, intensive, qualitative, focused, group and in-depth. However, despite this, a general distinction is made between structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Silverman, 2017).

9.2.1 Structured interviews

Structured interviews are associated with a quantitative approach to interviewing (Silverman, 2017), a realist ontology and objective epistemology and were not used in this study. A standardised approach is adopted, and the questions during this type of interview need to be given to each participant, using the same words and in the same order, as given on the interview schedule (Bryman, 2016). The wording of questions is often very specific and provides for fixed answers to be given (Bryman, 2016). A structured interview tends to have pre-determined categories and coding, and is thus 'front-loaded' (Cohen et al., 2018).

9.2.2 Unstructured interviews

In contrast to the structured interview is the unstructured interview, whereby the interviewer aims to engage in interactive dialogue around a particular issue or topic (Bryman, 2016). The content of each unstructured interview may vary, as might the order of questions asked, if more than one question is asked. In case of the latter, the interview participant can respond without constraint; the challenge is for the interviewer to know when to follow up points worth exploring (Bryman, 2016) and requires considerable skill from the interviewer (Cohen et al., 2018). An unstructured interview is suitable for narrative research that explores in-depth individualistic experiences, or for ethnographic studies when a specific culture is being investigated (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, unstructured interviews were not adopted for this study.

9.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews consist of a list of questions or topics to be discussed and permit a degree of flexibility in how the participant can respond (Bryman, 2016). They allow a participant to inject into the discussion their own ways of viewing a particular issue and thus permit flexibility rather than a rigid, structured sequence of discussion (Cohen et al., 2018). This allows participants to reveal issues more prominent to them rather than provide a restricted response often obtained in a structured interview (Bryman, 2016). However, participants may choose to only discuss the views they deem as important and thus bias on their part, may weaken dependability of results (Robson, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews provide freedom to the interviewer by allowing them to change the wording of questions, the time devoted to different questions, as well as the order questions are asked (Robson, 2011). However, this flexibility may be seen as a disadvantage as it can weaken dependability of results. Semi-structured interviews allow for an active role between the participant and interviewer (Scott & Usher, 2011), with the interviewer able to respond to comments made by the participant that may not be on the interview schedule (Bryman, 2016). This is useful as it allows participants to construct their view the world, and is achieved through open-ended questions and a dialogue of open communication and discussion (Silverman, 2017). However, there is potential for subconscious bias on behalf of the interviewer as they may only respond and follow up comments made by participants that fit with their own values and views (Robson, 2011).

Because of the flexibility and structure offered by semi-structured interviews, they were used in this study. Ethics and power relations in interviews are considered in section 9.4.

9.2.4 Telephone interviews

I decided to use a telephone semi-structured interview if a participant preferred, rather than face-to-face, to make it more convenient for them to participate. Social science research often supports face-to-face interviewing as the most productive method for producing narrative data, with other methods being seen as inferior (Holt, 2010). However, Carr and Worth (2001) suggest the literature supports using telephone interview for research purposes. They comment on the few studies which compare use of a telephone interview versus a face-to-face interview, yield data of at least a comparable quality.

Telephone interviews offer many advantages including reduced travel costs, access to a wider geographical area and allow for a higher degree of anonymity (O'Leary, 2017). Individuals are more likely to participate in a telephone interview, compared to a face-to-face interview, because it is more convenient and less time consuming (Robson, 2011). This convenience was important as I was aware the time I was conducting interviews[17] was a busy time of the school year. Several participants commented they appreciated I was willing to interview them over the telephone, as they would have found it difficult to find a suitable time and location to meet face-to-face. As a part-time student who works full-time, it reduced the time I had to spend travelling to and from interview participants considerably. Although telephone interviews do not allow for the same face-to-face rapport to be established, Irvine (2010) suggests researchers who have conducted telephone research believe generally concerns over this are unsubstantiated.

[17] May and June 2017

9.2.5 The interview schedule

The interview schedule (appendix 4) consists of several questions and probes. Bryman's (2016) approach to preparing an interview schedule was followed:

Identify general research area

The aim of the study was established: to examine the National Improvement Framework (NIF), through the lens of positioning theory and how it is formed at the local level by teachers.

Identify specific research questions

Three research questions were constructed:

1. What wider Discourse has *framed* the National Improvement Framework?
2. How is the National Improvement Framework *explained* in official policy texts?
3. How is the National Improvement Framework *formed* at the local level by teachers?

Semi-structured interviews were used to address research question three. Research questions one and two were addressed through the literature (chapter 7) and analysis of the NIF policy text (chapter 8).

Identify interview topics

As the NIF covers a range of issues through the six drivers of improvement, I focused my attention on the assessment of children's progress driver. I chose this for a number of reasons. Firstly, excellent learning and teaching is at the heart of the NIF (Scottish Government, 2015a) and as assessment should always improve learning (Gardner, Harlen, Hayward, Stobart, & Montgomery, 2010), this was of interest to me. In light of these reasons, and since assessment was the issue that caused greatest tension amongst teachers about CfE (Priestley & Minty, 2013), I was interested in researching how this driver was being formed at the local level.

Formulate interview questions

The interview questions posed are based on trying to answer research question three. As Cohen et al. (2018) note, interview questions are often based on a 'translation' of the research questions into more specific questions that participants can be asked. I also included questions in the interview schedule that allowed for contextual information to be obtained. The information obtained from context-based questions may help to frame and provide a rationale for the answers that were provided (Bryman, 2016). This was particularly important in this study with the theoretical framework being used, to establish and confirm what position calls (identified during analysis) the participant had accepted, rejected or modified, and subsequently, I was able to refer to this contextual information later. The questions asked at the beginning of the interview, for example by asking a little bit about their professional background and school, allowed the participant to relax, and for a relationship between them and myself to be established (Cohen et al., 2018). I felt this was also important as most interviews were conducted by telephone and thus gaining trust face-to-face was not possible.

In keeping with the semi-structured interview, all but two questions asked were open questions. The two questions that were closed were included to confirm the participant was aware of the Government's drive to improve attainment and close the poverty-related attainment gap, and to establish if they had heard of the NIF. If their answer was 'no', further explanation was probed to determine whether the participant was aware of the NIF, but had simply not recognised its title or the words I used. The remaining questions were all of an open-nature that allowed for their experiences to be obtained (Cohen et al., 2018).

All questions asked used language that would, hopefully, be familiar to participants to enhance dependability (Cohen et al., 2018). However, there is always the potential that something might be unfamiliar or misunderstood. For example, I did not use the terms 'position', 'position call' or 'storyline' from positioning theory. When I was not sure if I had misunderstood something, I repeated back what they had said and asked them to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation. As the focus of this study was on exploring how policy is formed at the local level by teachers, when a participant highlighted how the NIF was impacting upon their practice, this was probed further; I asked for examples and often asked "why do you think that is?" to enable them to warrant their position. I

frequently found myself having to ask when a particular practice, initiative or for example, tracking system, had been introduced so that I could attribute this to the NIF. Active listening, therefore, was important; checks were made on what was said and comments that required expansion sought (Radnor, 2002).

Pilot interview schedule

Before conducting any interviews, the interview schedule was piloted with two EdD colleagues. Whilst these individuals were not primary teachers, they did provide some feedback on the wording of questions and how some of them, they felt, may have been misleading. For example, the first question I had asked was to ascertain the participant's background. I added in the word 'professional' to the question so that I only obtained information that was relevant to their journey as a teacher. However, some teachers did discuss their background that was not necessarily linked to education and I did not ignore this as this part of their biography is what may position them. The second change I made was to ask if they had heard of the NIF, rather than assuming they had. This proved a useful change as some teachers were unfamiliar with the term 'the NIF', but were able to describe what was happening in their school because of recent Government initiatives.

Identify novel issues, revise interview questions and finalise schedule

Taking into account the feedback from piloting the interview schedule, the finalised schedule was created.

9.2.6 Sampling

Sampling involves choosing the selection of units: people, organisations or documents, relevant to the research questions being asked (Bryman, 2016). If employing quantitative methods, sampling tends to be probability sampling, whereas for qualitative methods, purposive, or non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2016). As it was impossible to speak to every primary school teacher in Scotland, a suitable sampling strategy had to be employed to select those that were relevant to the research questions being addressed (Bryman, 2016).

Due to problems gaining access, as explored in section 5.3, and after discussion with my supervisors, I employed 'opportunistic sampling' (Bryman, 2016) or 'convenience sampling' (Cohen et al., 2018). I had friends who are teachers who were invited to take

part in an interview, who then recommended other teachers i.e. 'snowball sampling' occurred (Bryman, 2016). I also sought volunteers by asking for participants through my connections on Twitter. Whilst I recognise opportunistic and snowball sampling is not likely to be representative (O'Leary, 2017), it was not the aim of this study to provide generalisations, in keeping with the purpose of constructionist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I do have to bear in mind, however, that those who volunteer to take part will have different motives for doing so (Cohen et al., 2018), for example, not wanting to say 'no' to a friend, or because they have particular views. Consequentially, bias could be present from a volunteer-only sample (Cohen et al., 2018). Trustworthiness was considered in section 5.6.

To take part in this study, participants had to be a current un-promoted primary school teacher. Although the collection of data on the assessment of children's progress in the NIF is of particular concern to P1, P4 and P7 teachers, I was keen to examine the impact of the NIF on all teachers, and not only those who teach a P1, P4 or P7 class. Promoted teachers may have had a different perspective of the NIF from un-promoted teachers and as I wanted to ascertain what was happening at classroom level (RQ 3), promoted staff were not interviewed. Student teachers were not included as they do not have sole responsibility for a class, nor have they been involved in the life of a school for longer than several weeks at a time. The seventeen participants, the class they teach and the method (face-to-face or telephone) used for conducting their interview is provided in appendix 5.

9.2.7 Conducting the interviews

Fourteen of the seventeen interviews conducted for this study were conducted by telephone, with the remaining three conducted face-to-face. All interviews were audio-recorded. This allowed me to concentrate on what was being said, provided an account of what was being said by whom and enabled me to include specific quotations in the thesis (Dawson, 2009). However, I did have to rely on equipment working (which it did), and this could have caused complacency as I knew the interview was being recorded and thus, I may not have listened as much (Dawson, 2009).

As most interviews were conducted by telephone, visual recording equipment was not suitable, however, it could have been used for those interviews conducted face-to-face.

For consistency, I chose not to record visually record any interview. However, had I chosen to visually record the face-to-face interviews, I would have been able to review the recording for non-verbal communication cues for example, eye contact and body language (Dawson, 2009). I could have decided not to record any interviews and simply relied on notes taken. However, this would have meant no recording of the interview was available, no quotations could have been used, and there would have been no opportunity to double-check what and how something said (Dawson, 2009).

At the start of each interview, participants were asked to confirm they had read the participant information sheet, had given consent and asked if they had any questions. Further information about the participant information sheet and consent, along with other ethical considerations, is provided in section 9.4. I had a copy of the interview schedule in front of me as the interview was taking place and I made brief notes next to each question to aid my interpretation and analysis. I recognise that using different approaches to interviewing within the sample may receive criticism, but Carr and Worth (2001) note, data from both approaches are of a comparable quality, and although there is no contact face-to-face with those interviewed by telephone, Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury (2010) believes that concerns over this are generally without warrant.

A convent time was negotiated for each of the fourteen interviews conducted by telephone. I ensured for reasons of confidentiality, that I undertook each telephone interview at home and not in my place of work, and without the presence of anyone else. These interviews mainly took place in the evening or at weekends. For the three interviews conducted face-to-face, these were conducted in a private meeting room at the University, with the ‘engaged’ signed placed on the door to avoid unnecessary disruption. Regardless of how the interview was conducted, each interview lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes, commensurate with the optimal time for an interview to last (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2000).

9.3 Analysis of interview data

Bryman (2016) suggests that interview data can be analysed through for example, content analysis, narrative analysis and thematic analysis.

Content analysis allows quantifiable statements about the coverage of a particular topic or issue to be obtained (Bryman, 2016). It follows a systematic approach and places emphasis on replicability (Bryman, 2016); thus, it subscribes more to the conventional approach rather than the constructionist (Silverman, 2017) approach of this study. In this study it was necessary to explore stretches of discussion to identify positions being accepted, rejected or amended, rather than quantify elements of them. Therefore, content analysis was not used.

Narrative analysis represents participant experiences through the stories they portray, and is common in life history and biographical research (Bryman, 2016). As this was not a life history or biographical piece of research, this approach was not adopted.

Thematic analysis is a widely used approach to qualitative data analysis, but is rarely acknowledged as one (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a way of seeing; the researcher identifies important 'moments', encodes and then interprets those (Boyatzis, 1998). From a constructionist perspective, thematic analysis is a way of examining experiences, realities and experiences that are the effects of discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and therefore connects well with the theoretical basis of this study. There is no one method of discourse analysis (Bryman, 2016), and therefore, thematic analysis can be used to analyse discourse. The meanings, however, attached to different elements of data are contextual and can be interpreted differently by different individuals (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Thus, the position of the researcher needs to be made explicit. Themes or patterns identified in data can be generated inductively based on the data collected, or deductively from the literature and theory (Boyatzis, 1998), what Braun and Clarke (2006, p.84) refer to as a "theoretical thematic analysis".

Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-phase approach to thematic analysis was employed in this study. I could have chosen to use another approach to thematic analysis, for example, 'The Framework' (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), where data is organised into matrixes after coding (Bryman, 2016). However, this approach organises themes on a case-by-case

basis, and would have been more appropriate for case study research (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). As the framework approach is a time consuming and labour intensive activity, there is also a danger of the researcher becoming focused on the process rather than outcome (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The 6-phase approach offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used as it is a flexible approach that, in comparison to the framework, concentrates on the outcome, rather than the process. However, such flexibility could be seen as a disadvantage of the method if it is not conducted consistently (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Braun and Clarke's (2006), 6-phase approach is seen by Howitt and Cramer (2011, p.355), as a "sophisticated version of thematic analysis", that offers a systematic away of identifying themes in data. However, Howitt and Cramer (2011), acknowledge thematic analysis has been questioned by critics, and Bryman (2016) suggests that it does not, generally, contain specific principles for identifying pertinent themes. However, Nowell et al. (2017) suggest the disadvantages of thematic analysis are only evident when considered against other methods that have a higher volume of literature associated with them. Therefore, the process in which themes have been identified needs to be explicitly documented and open to scrutiny.

9.3.1 Six-phase approach to thematic analysis

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data

Familiarisation with the data can occur during transcription (Cohen et al., 2018). However, I chose not to transcribe interviews myself as it would have taken considerable time, and as I study part-time and work full-time, decided this was not the most effective use of my time. It could have led to an increase in the number of errors contained in each transcript because of fatigue (Poland, 1995) and as transcription is a skill (Bryman, 2016), and I am not a trained transcriber, interviews were therefore transcribed verbatim by a professional. The ethical issues resulting from this decision are examined in section 9.4. I also had the opportunity to undertake a research internship with the University at the time I would have been transcribing. I felt that my time was better spent on this internship and developing myself as a researcher, and I therefore used the income earned to pay for transcription.

To familiarise myself with the data I checked a printed copy of each transcript against the relevant audio recording. I checked for accuracy in the transcription as well as making some brief comments on my initial interpretation. There were some inaccuracies and typos identified in some of the transcripts which I corrected on the transcribed file. I then imported each transcript into NVivo in preparation for phase 2. Immersion in the data is necessary to appreciate the breadth and depth of what has been collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was also necessary to remove any errors in transcription, for example, when the transcriber had misunderstood what was said (Bryman, 2016). Several acronyms were used in each interview for example, NIF, CfE, PEF and the transcriber simply wrote 'inaudible' in many occasions when these were used. I was able to correct this during familiarisation.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes (identifying positions)

After the initial check of each transcript described in phase one, each transcript was read at least another twice, which also strengthened my familiarity with the data. This was a recursive process that often involved going back and forth between transcripts. On the first reading, each line of each interview transcript was read and where appropriate, data coded into positions. A position is "a cluster of disputable rights, obligations and duties" (Harré, 2012, p.193). These positions are from the positioning modes discussed in section 3.3.4 and have been translated into coding categories (Dennen, 2007). Each code (position) represents the lowest level of aggregation[18] in the data, and each code captures something relevant to the research questions being answered (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding and subsequent analysis from a constructionist perspective involves an element of interpretative work; this *latent* approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), considers what has given each code (position) meaning, rather than semantic, surface meaning. Coding (positioning) was carried out using NVivo and lots were generated at this stage. Upon second reading of the transcript, several tasks were carried out: initial codes (positions) were checked and confirmed, similar codes (positions) combined, and obsolete codes (positions) not relevant to the research questions were removed. The task of going back and forth is known as constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). 'Coding stripes' in

[18] First level aggregation – identifying codes (positions)
Second level aggregation – grouping similar codes (positions) into themes
Third level aggregation – grouping similar themes into storylines

NVivo made confirming, combining and removing codes (positions) more straightforward, as different codes (positions) were highlighted in different colours.

In this study, an inductive and deductive approach was employed to coding. This is because the segments of data that were coded were driven by a theoretical interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006) i.e. how individuals form policy at the micro level and the subsequent research questions being addressed. However, there was also an element of deduction, as there were no preconceived ideas to how policy was being formed at the micro level as this emerged from the data. Although this may sound as if I am trying to have my cake and eat it, as Morgan (2007) highlights, moving between theory and data is not one directional. In reality, therefore, a theoretical (inductive) approach was employed, with a deductive approach emerging from the theoretical lens used. This concurs with Seale (2004) that coding occurs both deductively and inductively, and is referred to by Boyatzis (1998) as theory-driven code development.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

This phase involved grouping similar codes (positions) together to form themes; the second level of aggregation. Themes facilitates the linking of similar positions into storylines (see phase 5). Themes allow for fragmented elements of ideas or experiences to be brought together to provide meaning (Nowell et al., 2017). By extracting similar codes (positions) in NVivo, I was able to see quickly whether these should be grouped together as themes. As this task of sorting and collating occurred, a sense of the overall story the data was telling began to emerge. Phase 3 of thematic analysis is described by Howitt and Cramer (2011, p.339) as "coding of codings", where patterns in the data form themes, thus "the joining together (or collapsing together) of similar codes", and the relationship between similar codes emerge. Some codes (positions) for example, how teachers positioned the purpose of the NIF, were easy to group into themes as groups of codes (positions) offered clearly fell into one of three themes. However, grouping codes (positions) on the impact of the NIF, was more difficult because of the large variety of codes (positions) identified, and involved going back and forth between codes (positions) and themes to see where they were more suitable. This involved trial and error as my thinking developed.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

This phase involved cross-checking codes (positions) against themes identified, by revisiting and double checking themes emerging and codes (positions) associated with them, after a period of 3-4 weeks had passed since phase 3. The codes (positions) linked to each theme had to be relevant to the theme being established. Some re-coding occurred at this stage if they fitted better with another theme. Identifying inadequacies and making changes to initial coding and themes during phase 4 is normal (King, 2004).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes (and grouping themes into storylines)

This phase involves identifying what aspect of codes (positions) grouped together as themes, captures and illustrates what the theme represents (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once I had established my themes, these were named and similar themes grouped together to form a storyline; the third and highest level of data aggregation. A storyline represents the individual and social narrative which fuels the positions offered to and by others. This was an iterative process, with some themes re-named, taking care to ensure I did not change the meaning of what was being presented. Storylines are somewhat pre-determined by the interview questions that were asked as these questions ultimately drove the direction of the interview. A copy of the positions, themes and storylines is provided in appendix 6.

Phase 6: Producing the report

The final phase of thematic analysis is to produce the report i.e. this thesis. This phase also involves communicating the process by which findings were generated so the reader can assess the claims made (Nowell et al., 2017). The process employed is documented in this section and selected extracts from each interview to exemplify the points being made and positions, themes and storylines identified are included in chapter 10. I was particularly keen to ensure the philosophical assumptions I had made, as well as the specific approach to thematic analysis I had employed, were well documented and consistent with the epistemological stance of the analysis (Cohen et al., 2018).

9.4 Interviews and ethics

9.4.1 Power relations

Researchers might be seen in a position of power by participants in respect of status, knowledge, role or position (Cohen et al., 2018). Although I am not employer in the primary education sector myself, I am in a promoted post in further education (FE), as well as a Doctoral student. The latter of these is of concern with professional ethics; the sign of status may impact upon those taking part (Bryman, 2016). However, this is minimised as discussed below.

As I have familiarity with the group being researched (primary teachers) through my own biography, I would be classed as an 'insider' according to Griffith (1998), with an 'outsider' having no detailed or intimate knowledge of those being researched. I see myself as both an insider and outsider as I do have familiarity with the education sector as a whole, but I do not have detailed knowledge of the day-to-day functions of a primary classroom. Having a degree of insider knowledge has its benefits; familiarity with the research setting and the language used, as well as knowledge regarding the potential sensitive issues that can occur (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). To gain participants trust, I did briefly explain to them that I was a secondary school teacher, but was now employed in FE. Of note, no participant asked me why I was specifically interested in talking to primary teachers.

As power relations are constructed by how interviews are conducted and set (Scott & Usher, 2011), the participant information sheet sent out made it clear what my role in the research was (i.e. Doctoral student) and that all discussions were confidential and would anonymous. Power relations were minimised in this study through snowball sampling. This is because asymmetrical power relations have been weakened or removed, because of the social knowledge of those involved and interpersonal relations present (Cohen et al., 2018). Participants can act as gatekeepers to other participants, reducing power relations (Cohen et al., 2018).

9.4.2 Informed consent

A copy of the participant information sheet and consent form was e-mailed to each participant before their interview. This information sheet contained details about the researcher, the format and purpose of the interview, and details surrounding risk and

confidentiality; this is necessary in obtaining informed consent (Bulmer, 2001). The information sheet was essentially a code of ethics that provided participants the information they require regarding the study, anonymity, right to comment and details about the output of the study (Dawson, 2009). At the start of each interview, whether by telephone or face-to-face, the participant information sheet was discussed, any questions answered and informed consent given. Each participant was reassured that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. Thus, the right to freedom was available at any time (Cohen et al., 2018).

9.4.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in a private meeting room at the University, and telephone interviews conducted at home when no other individual was present, to ensure confidentiality. Confidentiality of participants must always be respected (Silverman, 2017). The raw data collected for this study is only available to myself, my supervisors, and if requested, the Examination Committee. Raw data is stored electronically on the University's password protected system Strathcloud. I used Strathcloud, compared to a portable device that could be mislaid or stolen, and thus compromise data confidentiality and security.

Personal details about the participant including their name, school or local authority, provided at the start of each interview was not audio-recorded. Permission to audio-record each interview was obtained, and once each interview had been recorded, the recording was uploaded to Strathcloud and then immediately deleted from the audio-recorder. The file name of each recording only contained the interview number and not identifying information for example, the teacher's name or school name, to keep participant identities confidential (Seale, 2004), and comply with the Data Protection Act. The interview number was kept on a piece of paper along with the teacher's name, school and local authority in a locked cabinet, along with any other notes. The audio-recording of each interview will be deleted immediately after the degree has been examined.

The interview file was transmitted by a secure service to the professional transcriber, who assured me it would be deleted upon transcription. Transcripts were sent to me by e-mail and upon receipt, downloaded to Strathcloud, and the e-mail deleted. Transcripts are stored on Strathcloud as well as on a password protected laptop for the purposes of

working with them in NVivo. However, they will be deleted from the laptop after the degree is completed and deleted from Strathcloud after a period of 5 years, in line with University protocols. Results of interviews are presented by teacher number. No other identifying information is provided, thus achieving anonymity.

9.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined why semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data to undertake policy-forming. It has discussed the approach taken to construct the interview schedule, to choose participants (opportunistic and snowball sampling) and for conducting interviews. Consideration is given to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis as well as the ethical issues relevant to the conduct of interviews.

Chapter 10 presents the results of policy-forming; how the NIF is being formed through discourse at the local level.

Chapter 10 Results of Policy-forming

10.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 examined the methods employed to conduct policy-forming. This chapter presents the results of policy-forming. Semi-structured interviews with seventeen primary school teachers were conducted between May and July 2017, transcribed professionally and analysed thematically. Appendix 4 contains the interview schedule used, appendix 5 contains a list of participants, and appendix 6 presents the positions (codes), themes (groups of positions) and storylines (aggregation of themes) emerging from interview data.

Policy texts and other policy pronouncements 'offer' position calls (Adams, 2016); a tacit allurement to take up different subject positions. The term 'subject position' stems from that fact these position calls can be taken up, resisted or amended in conversation (Drewery, 2005), subject to the rights and duties individuals believe they have. Depending on the storyline in play, these positions may change.

The position calls offered through wider Discourse have been explored in chapter 7 and through the NIF policy documents, chapter 8 policy-explaining. However, as examined in section 4.5, it is through moment-by-moment conversational acts and activities that Adams (2011a) argues policy is formed. By examining 'little-d' discourse, the linguistic elements of language (Rogers et al., 2005) used in moment-by-moment interactions, the policy researcher can try to make sense of how policy is subject to formation and reformation through the positions that are offered, resisted and taken up by individuals at the micro level (Adams, 2016).

The positions offered by teachers during interviews for this study are grouped into six storylines and results presented in this chapter.

The storylines are:

1) awareness and knowledge of the NIF
2) purpose of the NIF
3) perception of the NIF
4) source of knowledge of the NIF
5) the impact of the NIF
6) the link between CfE and the NIF

Whilst storylines 1-4 offer positions on how teachers have positioned the NIF, these reveal many implicit ways the policy is being formed locally. Storylines 5 and 6 however, provide explicit examples through the positions calls offered, of how policy is being formed locally. Following a presentation of the results in this chapter, a discussion drawing on the relevant position calls espoused through policy-framing (chapter 7) and policy-explaining (chapter 8) is provided in chapter 11.

10.2 Storyline 1 – awareness and knowledge of the NIF

Teachers positioned their knowledge and awareness of the NIF in three ways through:

- Performative positioning of self;
- Accountive positioning of self;
- Performative positioning of others.

Accountive positioning of others did not occur as they were not asked (i.e. 'forced') to position the knowledge and awareness of others.

10.2.1 Positions offered: performative positioning of self

At the beginning of the interview four teachers performatively positioned themselves, before being asked any questions, as potentially not being able to 'help' with this study:

> *The only thing is I'm not sure how much I can help you…(teacher 2)*

> *I don't know how much I can help you…(teacher 6)*

I don't know how much help I'm going to be…(teacher 10)

I'm not sure how much help I'll be…(teacher 17)

As well as positioning themselves, these teachers simultaneously offered a position to myself as the interviewer that I can accept or reject. To make them feel more comfortable to take part in the interview, thus the perlocutionary force of the position they adopted, I rejected their first level position to acknowledge that whatever they said was helpful and if they were unable to provide answers to the questions being asked, that was still a finding for the study.

…whatever you have to say is of value and your contribution is much appreciated…(interviewer)

It was important that I challenged their first level position, so the teacher would not feel they were unhelpful to the study, or not as useful as someone else. There may have been a power relation at play; they positioned me as having knowledge about the NIF and were not sure how much 'help' they could be. I have, therefore, attempted to ensure the illocutionary force of the initial position they adopted was subsequently unrestricted (Moghaddam, 1999). Three of these teachers (numbers 6, 10 and 17) actually went on to give detailed accounts of what they understood the NIF to be as the interview got underway.

10.2.2 Positions offered: accountive positioning of self

Six teachers when asked "*have you heard of or come across the National Improvement Framework (NIF)?",* positioned themselves as not knowing much about it:

I kind of vaguely know what it is…(teacher 1)

I feel as if I don't know enough about this …(teacher 2)

Incredibly little…(teacher 3)

I must admit, I don't know that much about it…(teacher 9)

I don't really know much about it to be honest…(teacher 11)

I don't know what it is…(teacher 16)

Three of these teachers (numbers 2, 9 and 10), through the words they use in their positioning, are almost offering an apology for not knowing enough about the NIF for example, (emphasis added): *"I don't know enough", "I must admit, I don't know that much…", "I don't really know much about it to be honest*". They perhaps feel they have a moral obligation to know 'enough'. Of note, only one of these six teachers (number 2), had performatively positioned themselves earlier as 'not being of much help' in this study.

Teacher's number 2 and 3 attempted to validate their position by referring to their own biography:

I'm currently applying for leadership courses and I've done an SQH…[yet] I don't know enough about this…(teacher 2)

I read my Times Ed, I'm part of Twitter and Facebook networks for teachers…and it terrifies me that I don't feel I know very much (teacher 3)

These two teachers position themselves as feeling they should know more about the NIF. The comments they make, the perlocutionary force, position themselves as being surprised they do not know much about the NIF, despite taking part in a variety of professional activities, and in one case, the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH)[19].

Teacher 1 and 16 attempted to validate their position with reference to their school context:

They [the school] haven't been given any time to look at it…(teacher 1)

We [the school] looked at it for maths I think when we were part of the working time group for that, but apart from that, I don't think we did an awful lot to do with it (teacher 16)

[19] The SQH sets out the standards and professional actions expected of head teachers. Possessing the SQH is mandatory for new head teachers from 2019.

The lack of time given by their school is being used, a form of externalising, to validate their position. The perlocutionary force is to 'blame' the school.

Other teachers when asked "*have you heard of or come across the National Improvement Framework (NIF)?"* offered positions of what they believed the purpose of the NIF to be, as explored in section 10.3.

10.2.3 Positions offered: performative positioning of others

Two teachers (number 3 and 11) who positioned themselves as not knowing much about the NIF, also positioned the knowledge of others i.e. performative positioning:

> *I don't think they [other teachers in school] know much about it…(teacher 3)*
>
> *I think if you asked most people [teachers] what the NIF is, they wouldn't be able to tell you…(teacher 11)*

Number 11 explained they had "*never been that sort of school where management have talked about documents like that".* The school management are being 'blamed' (the perlocutionary force) for what they and colleagues know about "*documents like that"*. It appeared that this first-level position was unchallenged, certainly by her:

> ***Why do you think that is? (interviewer)***
>
> *I just assumed that was the way that it worked, and now through other things, I can see that it's not…but we've never really done that and I don't know why (teacher 11)*
>
> ***Do you think that's a good thing? (interviewer)***
>
> *I don't know, it could be. I wouldn't be overly confident though that the head teacher is very up on documentation or policy (teacher 11)*

The phrases *"I just assumed that was the way that it worked"* and *"we've never really done that"* implies (perlocutionary force) that it was common practice at this school not to discuss documents for example, the NIF.

10.3 Storyline 2 - purpose of the NIF

Teachers were asked to position their understanding of the NIF and two main storylines evolved: firstly, as to what they believe its purpose to be and secondly, the perception they had. As figure 10.1 illustrates, from each of these two storylines, three positions were evident:

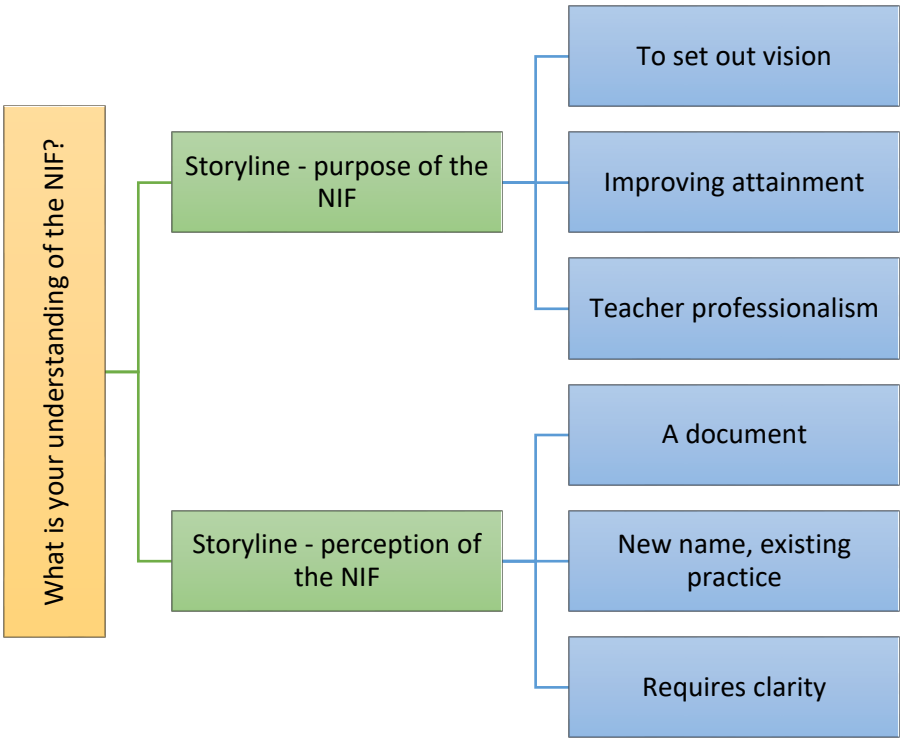

Figure 10.1 – *Understanding of the NIF – storylines and positions*

The first storyline is founded upon what teachers positioned the purpose of the NIF to be and what it sets out to achieve. Whilst a policy text i.e. the NIF, communicates positions offered by writers of the policy, these can be accepted, rejected or resisted by its readers.

Through analysis of interview transcripts, the purpose of the NIF was positioned by teachers in three ways:

- Generally, in relation to its vision;
- Specifically, through reference to improving attainment;
- By linking it to teacher professionalism.

10.3.1 Positions offered: to set out vision

Several teachers positioned the NIF as what it sets out to do at a macro-level. For example, reference was made to "*implement the Curriculum for Excellence" (teacher 1)* and a *"government initiative for the whole of Scotland" (teacher 5*).

Three teachers positioned the NIF as being something led by the Government (emphasis added):

> *My understanding is that it [the NIF] is basically a government initiative for the whole of Scotland, where we are focusing on key aspects of closing the attainment gap…(teacher 5)*
>
> *Well I guess my interpretation of it, it's an overarching vision, all the things that the government want us to be focusing on…(teacher 10)*
>
> *A framework outlaid by the government as a way of creating an education which is better for all children across all schools (teacher 12)*

This is in contrast to other teachers who made reference to schools and/or local authorities in their positioning:

> *…just how we lift ourselves in schools…(teacher 6)*
>
> *It is to get a standardised framework…for schools…(teacher 7)*
>
> *It's [the NIF] making it more coherent...I think every local authority is doing something slightly different and I think it's trying to get people aware that everyone is working towards the same goals (teacher 9)*
>
> *…all the things that every school or local authority should be working towards…(teacher 10)*

One teacher positioned themself as being able to articulate the policy calls offered through policy-explaining (emphasis added):

> *The two big parts of it [the NIF] seem to be the excellence aspect, which is about raising attainment…and the equity part, where you're trying to make a more equal playing field for children…(teacher 8)*

Although this teacher was able to articulate the position calls espoused by the NIF i.e. excellence and equity, they did position themselves later as being unsure as to what the

NIF meant. Thus, in a different storyline, their position changed. They also positioned themselves, and others through 'we', as being unclear about what was required to happen to achieve the aspirations of the NIF:

> *I'm not sure if it all makes sense…this is what we're meant to be doing, but I'm not quite sure what we're meant to be doing…(teacher 8)*

Although the teacher demonstrates an awareness of what the NIF sets out to do, they position themselves and others, as being unable to relate this to the micro level. Other teachers also made similar statements, specifically, not being able to *"get to the nitty gritty part"*; as presented in section 10.4.3.

Four teachers (numbers 5, 8, 9, 10) make specific reference to the NIF being concerned with *"closing the gap".* These four teachers did not discuss causes of 'the gap' or mention the 'poverty-related [attainment gap]'. Of note, a different teacher (number 11) later positioned the gap partially to CfE.

10.3.2 Positions offered: improving attainment

> *…the thing about assessment and looking at the impact on the pupils' progress…[its] something I've always done…(teacher 1)*

This particular teacher who positions the NIF as *"looking at the impact on pupils' progress",* validates the position offered by suggesting that it is something they have always done. The teacher is therefore proposing that, for them, the idea of looking at the impact on the pupils' progress is not a new phenomenon. They position the NIF as something that already occurs, something already formed. The NIF is therefore, in effect a validation exercise

Teacher 4 positions the NIF as a vehicle for raising attainment in Scotland and teachers 10 and 15 about raising attainment generally:

> *It [the NIF] has good intentions and I can see how things, if they were implemented correctly, could improve attainment in Scotland (teacher 4)*

> *…there's such a focused drive on attainment…(teacher 10)*

It's about improving attainment…(teacher 15)

The extract from teacher 4 raises some notable questions. This teacher positions the NIF as having good intentions; they therefore must agree with at least some of the ideas and subsequent position calls offered by the NIF. However, they offer a caveat to their position by suggesting the intentions laid out by the NIF need to be 'implemented' correctly. By offering this position, they must believe that what is implemented has not been done 'correctly', or, the NIF offers new positions that are not yet implemented, but should be done 'correctly'. What the teacher means by the word 'correctly' is unclear. Their interpretation of the 'correctness' or suitability of a particular intention would depend on their own professional background, experience and local context. This teacher validates their position by offering the caveat that it all comes down to money:

…there just isn't the money to get all of these wonderful things and raise attainment...(teacher 4)

Teachers 5, 8 and 14 position the NIF with raising attainment for pupils or young people, thus accepting the position call espoused by the NIF, whereas number 4 and 15 discussed raising attainment without any specific reference to who. One teacher positioned the NIF as being about tracking *"how they [schools] are doing in relation to different curriculum levels"* (teacher 7). The word 'schools' is notable; the teacher did not mention tracking pupils to see how they *"are doing in relation to different curriculum levels".* Therefore, this teacher positioned the NIF as a method to track schools, but not necessarily pupils; tracking of pupils is discussed further in section 10.6.5.

During coding of interview transcripts, it was interesting to see that only one teacher offered the position call of 'tracking' initially in their positioning of the purpose of the NIF, as several went on at length later in the interview about this. Thus, in a different storyline, 'tracking' was of significance.

10.3.3 Positions offered: teacher professionalism

Three teachers positioned the 'teacher' and professionalism in their description of the NIF:

> *You've got your teacher professionalism and what we're expecting to do...it's very clear and [has] precise steps that we're going to take…that's what I really like about it…(teacher 9)*
>
> *I know that in some schools, previous teachers were allowed to use professionalism. I think that's been reduced…we're being dictated to more…(teacher 12)*
>
> *It [the NIF] is a focus on…in terms of training for teachers…(teacher 14)*

There is a contrasting position between teachers 9 and 12 in these examples; the former is clear the NIF is setting out how teacher professionalism will be enhanced, yet the latter is suggesting that teacher professionalism is being reduced. This teacher qualifies his position by referring to his experience by commenting the curriculum is being *"dictated*" rather than him being able to determine what is taught. Teacher 14 positioned the NIF as being a provider of training for teachers, but what he means by this is unclear.

10.4 Storyline 3 - perception of the NIF

Teachers positioned the purpose of the NIF to be, in respect to how they perceived it. Some teachers position it as a document, a new name for something that already exists and finally, something that requires clarity.

10.4.1 Positions offered: it's a document

Four teachers positioned the NIF as a document:

> *It's a document that the government published…(teacher 2)*
>
> *It's a document…(teacher 4)*
>
> *It's pages and pages of stuff…(teacher 14)*
>
> *It's a piece of paper…(teacher 15)*

Of note, these teachers recognise a textual document exists and it is not some mythical artefact. This corresponds with the view of Trowler (2003) that policy is sometimes viewed, albeit limitedly, as a 'thing' written on paper.

Two teachers positioned the NIF about the diagram (see figures 8.1 and 8.2 in section 8.5) that features as part of the policy document:

> *[It has] children at the centre but then you've got your staff and you've got your parents and you've got your wider community at all the centre…(teacher 9)*

> *I'm obsessed with the diagram but there's the part at the top that says, 'our priorities', and there's a blue bit in the middle that's not one of the drivers…it's more a visual, look at that, this is what we are meant to be doing…(teacher 8)*

As these extracts show, both teachers were able to describe in some detail the diagram the document contains. These positions reinforce Fairclough's (2001) argument that diagrams, tables and other visual aids (i.e. semiotic approaches) can be used to communicate policy and not just language (Fairclough, 2001).

10.4.2 Positions offered: new name, existing practice

Some teachers position the NIF as simply a new name or label for existing practice and it already exists:

> *There's quite a few of these things over the last few years that are introduced in and things become quite muddled…for me it's something that I've always done…sometimes it's just been called by another name…(teacher 1)*

> *…it's been jumping about for a while…it's a new label for things…(teacher 15)*

Teachers 10 and 12 position the NIF as bringing 'things' together:

> *For me, it's an amalgamation of all the things that every school or local authority should be working towards and focusing on…(teacher 10)*

> *It all blends into one big thing…(teacher 12)*

The NIF for these teachers is therefore a new name for things that teachers are already doing.

10.4.3 Positions offered: requiring clarity

Some teachers position the NIF as vague or abstract:

> *I think it's quite vague...(teacher 1)*
>
> *It's very vague especially as an NQT…(teacher 14)*
>
> *It's a very abstract thing…(teacher 17)*

These positions are reinforced by other teachers who highlighted not being able to get to the bottom of what the NIF is:

> *It always seems to be jargon…I can't get to the nitty gritty of what this is or what it means…I can't dial it down to the classroom level (teacher 3)*
>
> *I'm not quite sure what we are meant to be doing…(teacher 8)*
>
> *It tends to be difficult for folks to access to get into the nitty gritty of (teacher 17)*

There is a sense from these positions of teachers being unable to apply what the NIF is about to the micro (classroom) level.

The language being used in the NIF is described as, for example, *"vague"* (number 1 and 14), *"abstract"* (number 17) and contains *"jargon"* (number 13). The newly qualified teacher (NQT), number 14, made specific reference to NIF being vague *"especially as an NQT";* he attempts to validate the position he offers through reference to his own biography. He perhaps feels that he cannot get to the bottom of what the NIF means as he does not have the same volume of professional experience as others; he refers to it as *"not user friendly"* in a later part of the interview.

10.5 Storyline 4 - source of knowledge of the NIF

Teachers were asked *"what do you think has influenced your views or thinking about the NIF?"* This question was asked to get teachers to position where their knowledge and perception had come from and to gauge how much attention the NIF was being given in schools.

Two positions emerged that illustrate where teachers' knowledge of the NIF has come from. Firstly, some teachers have been 'forced' to engage in some activities, through no choice of their own, which have raised their awareness of the NIF (i.e. others have positioned them to become aware of the NIF). Secondly, some teachers have become aware of the NIF because of activities they have voluntary chosen to engage in. In some cases of voluntary awareness, teachers (numbers 4, 11 and 17) commented the NIF had not been discussed in school.

10.5.1 Positions offered: 'forced' awareness of the NIF

This position is labelled 'forced' awareness, as teachers have not actively or voluntarily sought to learn about the NIF. For example, it is discussed as part of in-service day activities, collegiate sessions or as part of day-to-day conversation.

> *It comes up [at school] it's one of the buzzwords that flies past…(teacher 3)*
>
> *…I think it has been mentioned a few times, maybe in passing…(teacher 10)*
>
> *It may have been mentioned in passing…(teacher 15)*

These extracts show these teachers are aware the NIF has been part of dialogue. They are engaging in third level positioning i.e. talk about talk. However, whether these teachers were actively part of the discussion or listening to a conversation is unknown. Reference to the NIF being a *"buzzword"* or something that *"flies past"* is interesting, and a similar remark was made by another teacher:

> *It would strike me that it's in fashion at the moment…the current most influential thing in a CPD when you come into the room is the NIF, whereas before, it might have been something else…(teacher 8)*

For these particular teachers, position calls about the NIF are being made in some form in their school and it is clear that, specifically for number 3 and 8, both think the NIF is current and topical.

10.5.2 Positions offered: 'voluntary' awareness of the NIF

This position is labelled 'voluntary' awareness, as teachers have in these specific positions have been exposed to the NIF through activities they have chosen to do. For example, through postgraduate studies or by taking time to learn about the NIF.

> *I've heard about it only because I'm doing a Master's degree. It's not been spoken about in school (teacher 4)*
>
> *The only way I have heard about it is through Uni. We haven't really spoken about it as such in school…(teacher 11)*
>
> *I was looking at it last year in terms of postgrad…(teacher 14)*

One teacher (number 10) said she had been given a copy of the NIF, in draft form, in her pigeon hole at school and had been encouraged to read it. Another commented they had to look at the document to find out about it and:

> *Anything you want to find out, you have to go and look for yourself (teacher 17)*

What became apparent was that many teachers had positioned themselves as not having much knowledge of the NIF or impact on their practice to offer. However, many were subsequently able to talk in detail about how their current practice had been shaped by the NIF. Thus, in one storyline they positioned themselves as knowing little, but in another, were able to talk at length about it. One teacher comment that:

> *It may well be that I'm just not aware of the fact that we are talking about the NIF if it doesn't have that label. So I suppose, it's discussed but without really knowing…(teacher 15)*

Another teacher commented:

> *Quite often when you're getting lots of things that they're bringing in thrown at you, or what we're having to do, it's not that you don't listen and you don't pay attention, but yes, you have other things on your mind as well (teacher 2)*

10.6 Storyline 5 - impact of the NIF

Teachers were asked to position themselves on whether the NIF had any impact on them as a teacher, their professional or classroom practice. Five themes emerged:

- No impact
- Greater awareness of issues
- Pupil equity funding
- Impact on assessment practices
- Tracking of pupil progress

10.6.1 Positions offered: no impact

Three teachers positioned the NIF as having no impact:

> *No…no I don't (teacher 1)*
>
> *Not one (teacher 3)*
>
> *No (teacher 17)*

I did not challenge their first level position to see whether during the remainder of the interview they unconsciously revealed an impact of the NIF. Had their position been challenged, for example, through probing, an example of locutionary force of language, this may have 'forced' them into providing examples of an impact they had not considered. Interestingly, two teachers (numbers 1 and 3), later in the interview (i.e. in another storyline) unconsciously revealed the NIF had an impact on them, albeit unconsciously to them.

10.6.2 Positions offered: greater awareness of issues

Some teachers positioned the NIF as a vehicle for raising awareness of issues. For example:

> *I think it just comes back to me for…I suppose if I think about it, a lot of it is just good practice. It's raised awareness of all these issues that we need to be focusing on… the attainment gap, numeracy, health and wellbeing and things…(teacher 10)*

In addition to number 10, teacher (number 9) felt the NIF was a method of reinforcing good practice, thus a validation exercise of practice already formed. The word 'good' in such description, takes acknowledgement of something which has been identified as 'not good' practice (Adams, 2016).

There is an increased awareness of standardised testing as a result of the NIF:

> *I've got somewhere in my head about some new national testing…which keeps coming past in discussion, particularly at union level…(teacher 3)*
>
> *I think we're going to have testing; it's going to happen…(teacher 6)*
>
> *I think next year there is standardised testing being brought back out…(teacher 11)*

The interesting thing in each of these positions is the words *"I think"*. These teachers were not able to say for sure that standardised testing was being introduced, but they simply thought it was. There appears to be a degree of uncertainty over this:

> *…[discussions on standardised assessment] through the grapevine…(teacher 1)*
>
> *They are just this mythical thing that is coming! (teacher 17)*

The first teacher refers to the 'grapevine' – third level positioning – and the second teacher believes they are still fictitious.

10.6.3 Positions offered: pupil equity funding

Some teachers explicitly positioned the pupil equity fund (PEF) when asked about the impact of the NIF. Other teachers knew their school had received some money, but were not entirely clear what it was for or how it had to be spent. In the former, therefore, the PEF was positioned as a vehicle for forming, at least in part, the NIF. Some teachers also recognised their school received very little PEF funding in comparison to other schools. These teachers saw the link between the PEF and the perceived aims of the NIF and attributed the PEF to helping towards achieving these aims:

> *In my head I'm tying it [the NIF] very closely to PEF because this additional funding, we're constantly being told it's about improvement, improvement, improvement (teacher 3)*

There was a wide range of examples of what the PEF money was being spent on:

> *It is proposed that the money would be spent on teachers being given time to do research…(teacher 1)*
>
> *We are taking on an early year's officer to work with P1 next year…some of the money is being spent at the moment on nurture clubs...we are taking a group of identified children swimming…because they don't get that kind of out of school experience…(teacher 4)*

However, this teacher also felt the school was constrained with what they could spend it on:

> *The thing is, the money is needing to be spent on what we're not allowed to spend the money on. We're needing more staff in classrooms (teacher 4)*

One teacher positioned the PEF as a means to get things that you want – "*a shopping list"*, rather than a way to improve for example, maths or literacy:

> *…it seems to be a shopping list of things that you want, rather than thinking what's the best way to improve…for example, maths or literacy…it's concrete stuff my school seems to be spending it on… we'll get a jungle gym outside in the playground…(teacher 8)*

The forming of policy through this teacher's position is based on the school being able to buy *"concrete stuff"* rather than to "*think what's the best way to improve"*. This teacher does not position themselves as seeing a link between the *"concrete stuff"* the school is buying, for example, the *"jungle gym"* and how this can improve for example, maths or literacy.

Two teachers (number 11 and 12) positioned the PEF as way of resourcing support in the infant department at their school. Number 11 noted *"closing the gap down in the infants"*. This forming of policy is based on the position that if support is *"put into P2 and P3"*, this would "*close the gap"*. This teacher positioned the head teacher as *"not being quite as interested in the P7s in particular"* and commented "*the head teacher has used the phrase that 'it's too late for them now'...*". They commented:

> *…they [the infant teachers] get quite a hard time getting quizzed about why are they [the children] are not achieving a level…we don't seem to get that in P7…(teacher 11)*

In this school, therefore, the achievement of levels in the infant department was positioned as being more important than that in P7, and the infant teachers "*get quite a hard time getting quizzed about why [the children] are they not achieving a level*" positions the data from this year group of children as being a valued form of capital, compared to that from the upper school.

This position also evident in another example:

> *I think the biggest push has been downstairs in the infant department. Lots of money, lots of time, lots of working hours…(teacher 12)*

Local forming of policy in these examples favour the lower school compared to the upper.

10.6.4 Positions offered: impact on assessment practices

Teachers positioned ways their practice had been influenced by the NIF. Of particular significance was the tracking of assessment and attainment data and therefore, is considered as a separate set of positions in the subsequent section.

One teacher (number 5) felt there had been an increase in the volume of assessment this year (2016/17) that she had to execute. She positions herself as feeling overwhelmed by this and she could not do anymore assessment. I asked her why she was feeling overwhelmed:

> *Well we're getting it drummed into us…I think they [the management team], want formative assessment to be back, using it all the time again (teacher 5)*

I asked her what she thought was driving the increase in assessment:

> *…the fact that the NIF has come out and the fact that my head teacher thinks we're so accountable…(teacher 5)*

She positions the increase in assessment to the NIF "coming out" as well as positioning her head teacher as feeling "so accountable". I asked her if she thought it was going to get worse:

> *Oh god, I hope not. I don't know if it's going to get worse. I think if teachers use it the way that they want us to use it, with formative assessment being a part of your day… I don't think I could do more assessments than I've done this year. (teacher 5)*

She clearly feels that she could not have done any more assessment this year and suggests if formative assessment is used as part of daily practice, as *"they"* want, then it may not make things worse. There is a resistance of the position call espoused by those she terms *"they",* and in her forming of the NIF, she feels she could not do anymore assessment. This is in comparison to another teacher (number 9) who positioned assessment as becoming more formal this year:

> *We are going a lot more down the formal assessment route...because we've got to be able to prove it [attainment data]...to our head teacher…(teacher 9)*

I asked her to clarify what she meant by 'more formal' and she said in comparison to *"assessment for learning strategies"***.**

One teacher in her discussion of assessment highlighted the impact of current arrangements for testing in her school:

> *…we knew that P1, P4 and P7 were targeted…if you were a P4 or P7 teacher, we really did make sure that the class sizes those years were as small as possible, to give the classes the best possible chance with their testing…(teacher 2)*

This teacher knew that *"P1, P4 and P7 were targeted"* and this had been happening for the last 2 years. However, they did not think it have been going on for much longer than that, but could not confirm. I was therefore unable to ascertain whether this testing was because of the NIF. However, what was interesting was that practice in this particular school was to limit the size of P4 or P7 classes so they *"had the best possible chance with their testing"*. The forming of policy in this school, therefore, involved limiting class sizes to ensure that P1, P4 and P7 were able to have the *"best possible chances with*

their testing"; the class groups the NIF requires data to be reported upon, thus an acceptance of the position call espoused by the policy itself.

The introduction of benchmarks to enable teachers to make a judgement on pupil progress, is having an impact on how teachers form practice. Teachers (numbers 1, 10 and 15) for example, positioned benchmarking as a current feature of discussions in school and how these would be used in the forthcoming session (2017/18) to make judgements about pupil progress. One teacher commented:

> *We are talking about this for next year…thinking about what we should and shouldn't do...and making sure we are not overegging the pudding (teacher 15)*

This particular teacher through her comment *"thinking about what we should and shouldn't do"*, is implying there is a choice to be made. The action of *"thinking about what we should and shouldn't do"* is forming policy at the local level; they are having to consider and decide, for example, on what evidence should be gathered and to make a choice not to *"overegg the pudding"*.

One teacher positioned the assessment aspect of the NIF as influencing school improvement planning.

> *We've actually put it [assessment] in as a big part of our school improvement plan…(teacher 13)*

In another example, having to reconsider school policy:

> *It [% of children achieving first level maths] wasn't at the level it should be which is why we've had to look at our teaching, our school policy towards maths and just see, what is it that's not clicking? (teacher 14)*

Another example of locally formed policy is provided by teacher 13. They comment an assessment calendar is being introduced in their school in the forthcoming session (2017/18):

> *We will actually have a calendar from August and it will [tell us] what we should be assessing, evidence we will bring to the assessment meetings to discuss with other people (teacher 13)*

The calendar is positioned to provide a standardised approach to when assessment evidence should be gathered and what evidence should be gathered. This will then be the basis for planned *"assessment meetings"* that will take place with colleagues. Since this calendar is only being introduced, it represents a move towards monitoring data over the year, compared to what occurred previously.

10.6.5 Positions offered: tracking of pupil progress

Every teacher interviewed spoke at length about the tracking of pupil progress and achievement, and how this influenced, or did not influence, practices in their school. However, during data analysis, I had to be careful to only extract evidence of where the NIF was forming locally mediated practice. If it was not clear whether a practice had been used in 2016/17 or 2015/16, it has not been included in this discussion as I could not be certain, and in several cases neither could the teacher being interviewed, if it was because of the NIF. For example, nearly every teacher discussed a spreadsheet being used to track children's progress and went into detail about how this works and how in some cases, how children were colour coded. Whilst this was of note, unless it was an example of a new or recent initiative, it was not relevant to this study and has not been included.

Whilst all teachers discussed tracking during interviews, some specific comments were made that were attributed to the NIF. For example, one teacher (number 9), mentioned that she felt:

> *We are having to make sure that we know where the children are and supposed to be and what targets and what levels they are (teacher 9)*

In her particular school, a new tracking system had been developed in 2015/16 and was rolled out across the authority in 2016/17. This tracking system represents another example of locally formed policy. As well as containing a wealth of attainment data, SIMD[20] information and attendance data about each pupil, the system also predicts when each child should achieve the next level of for example, numeracy.

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[20] The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a tool used by the Scottish Government to identify areas of deprivation. There are 6,976 'data zones' (groups of people by post code) in Scotland that are each given a decile from 1-10 that illustrates its level of deprivation (1 = most deprived, 10 = least deprived).

In one local authority (interview 10), a chart was given to each teacher that contained the names of pupils in the class, their SIMD and a variety of data from numerous tests children in the local authority had to sit. This chart colour coded children depending on whether they had achieved better than expected:

> *We get given a chart with all the pupils names in it, which SIMD they're in…and from [a variety of tests]…[the chart would be] green, orange or red things as to whether they're doing better than, doing really well, or whether they're not doing as well as they should be doing…(teacher 10)*

I asked her what she meant by "*whether they're not doing as well as they should be doing"* and answered she was under the impression the colour coding children receive on this chart predicts whether, based on a range of test information, each child has achieved what they have the potential to achieve. She said:

> *You're meant to really focus on the [children] who are SIMD one and two…they are the ones that could be more at risk from falling back from the poverty gap…(teacher 10)*

As she noted, *"you're meant to really focus on…"* particular children, thus locally formed policy, depending on the SIMD level attributed to them; there is acknowledgement of a position call espoused in her local context. These particular children then have *"an improvement plan created for them",* thus another example of locally formed practice.

One teacher positioned the change in tracking in her school to become 'more traditional' as a direct result of the NIF:

> *…the need to track more "traditionally", even like 5-14 (teacher 2)*

She positioned the NIF as moving back to tracking that she felt was similar to 5-14 she had used in her career, and used her professional biography to justify this. This teacher said that she believed because of CfE, she was positioned to make decisions on *"flimsy evidence".* She used the word 'forced' in her explanation and later revealed she was not particularly comfortable with making assessment decisions because of differences between teachers' professional judgement:

> *I'm not very comfortable with our tracking and monitoring system…an awful lot of it is left down to our professional judgement…we were being asked to almost have a guess…it was almost like pick a number (teacher 2)*

It is clear this teacher is not *"comfortable"* with making an assessment decision and felt it was *"almost to have a guess";* the NIF positions teachers as the ones who can make such an assessment decision, and empowers them through professional judgement to do so, but she is resistant to this. This teacher discussed that this year and last year, her school used a commercial testing package as part of the children's assessment. She liked them because:

> *It was quite a good one, because it did actually assess the children (teacher 2)*

This particular teacher has positioned herself as preferring a more 'traditional' approach to assessment and tracking, and as described it, and has not been particularly comfortable with being able to exercise as much professional judgement that CfE has given. She described a new spreadsheet for tracking purposes:

> *…we're very clear that we needed to have quite robust records of where we saw the children being at each one of these points and it was colour-coded……if they weren't where they should be, they would be a certain colour and if they didn't have the progress they expected then the thing would change colour again. So, we could see which children we needed to focus on to try and raise their attainment, their levels (teacher 2)*

The requirement to have *"quite robust…colour coded records"* is an example of locally formed policy. The comment *"we could see which children we needed to focus on"* illustrates the position that this system has on practice in this school.

Some teachers discussed the format and detail a tracking system contains. For example, one teacher (number 16) highlighted a new tracking system that was implemented during this academic year (2016/17) in their authority. Last year (2015/16), she simply gave a list of names and levels to her head teacher, with achieved or not achieved, marked against each pupil per curriculum area on a piece of paper, but this year, *"the process has become more formalised"* through the recording of data on an excel spreadsheet. I asked her to explain way the process had become more formalised:

> *This year, there was an attainment key so you had one, two and three and each of these were described…one was consistently meeting the benchmarks, a two was sometimes meeting the benchmarks and three was they are not meeting the benchmarks at all [for that level]. You also had a star…it was that they were working beyond their level of attainment (teacher 16)*

This teacher therefore positioned the inclusion of the *"attainment key…[with] one, two and three"*, an example of locally formed policy, as making the process more formal compared to what previously happened. This teacher revealed this year *"monitoring and tracking meetings"* were held with management:

> *We had the monitoring and tracking meetings with our management, so we had to provide the information and justify why we thought certain children would get a one, or a star (teacher 16)*

The locally formed practice in this school is to focus on children who *"would get a one, or a star*", thus those pupils who achieved the benchmarks for that level or who had exceeded them needed to be justified. The data that records the *"attainment key*" is then sent to the local authority. The teacher entered into third level positioning and commented that:

> *After the meeting, it's came back [the data from the local authority] and my colleague in P1 had a discussion of her levels with the head teacher, but nothing has come back for my class (teacher 16)*

I asked her to explain this and she thought as her colleague recorded a two for some children, indicating they had not achieved a particular level, she was *"spoken to"*. In contrast, this teacher stated that *"nothing has come back for my class"*, suggesting that she positioned the data she submitted as being 'accepted' and therefore, she had not been *"spoken to"*.

Three other teachers (numbers 11, 12 and 15) commented that simply recording a level, or achieved/not achieved for a level, next to a pupil's name was not always representative of their true level of achievement. For example, one teacher (number 11) felt that she was doing her pupils an *"injustice"* in some cases, because of the constrained nature of the tracking system in place. A new authority tracker introduced in the current school

year (2016/17), only allowed for the level a pupil had achieved to be recorded, and not the level the pupil was working at. She commented:

> *My core group of children who are working at first level were on the sheet as early level…and they're doing well in first, not just at the start, [however], they are not quite achieving it and I just felt that I was doing them an injustice. (teacher 11)*

Another two teachers shared similar views:

> *If you have a child who hasn't met the level, then they're still on first level, [yet] they might be two or three weeks away from the level…it's not a true reflection of some children in my class (teacher 12)*

> *It [attainment data] shows if a pupil achieves a level, but it doesn't show that there are some children who have made huge progress...but it doesn't show up in the stats as having made a difference (teacher 15)*

The fact reference was made to progress *"not showing up in stats"* indicates that what matters to the teacher is the progress a pupil has made, but that she feels what matters to the 'the system' are the statistics.

One teacher (number 6) described a new local authority tracking system, whereby every school is plotted on a chart and an average for the local authority is shown. When performance in a school is lower than *"as we should b*e", a visit from a Quality Improvement Officer (QIO)[21] took place:

> *Well we've had a visit [from a QIO] because we're not performing as well in maths as we should be…they want to know why…we've been told that we're going to need to lift our game in maths especially (teacher 6)*

The choice of words *"as a staff, we've been told we're going to need to lift our game"*, for example, in maths, was interesting. Teachers are therefore being forced into a position of *"having to lift [their] game".* However, this teacher liked that schools are grouped by SIMD; schools are able to see where they are with others in a similar area of

[21] Quality Improvement Officers are employed in some local authority Education Departments to monitor school performance. In some authorities they line manage head teachers.

deprivation in the local authority, as well as the authority average in relation to literacy and numeracy.

This teacher explained a new training programme staff in the school had been on this year (2016/17) for maths. I asked if the training was compulsory for teachers and she said no. However:

> *There's no pressure [to attend training], but they will have to rethink. It depends if that person's got results. If that person has kids every year that are on track, that's fine (teacher 6)*

The comment *"but they will have to rethink…depends if that person's got results…"* is notable. This teacher is positioning *"results"* as what matters, and if you do not, you have to *"rethink"*, but if you have *"kids every year that are on track, that's fine"*. She was positioning others as having to *"rethink"* if they did not have results.

I asked her if there was any pressure on teachers at her school to get children to the levels expected. She said:

> *Absolutely. You meant to make sure your class is at the right levels…it's almost a reflection of your teaching that you know that you're doing well and nobody wants to have a lot of underachieving children (teacher 6)*

This teacher is positioning a connection between *"your teaching"* and *"your class is at the right levels"*. She gave an example from last year (2015/16) when she had some children in her P7 class that were not on track. She commented:

> *…I really had to stick my heels in and say they weren't on track and the head [teacher] was really quite annoyed. But as a result, it pushed our maths level down. There's a wee bit of pressure to…are you sure? What's your evidence? (teacher 6)*

Another teacher holds the position that pressure is on them to make premature assessment judgements:

> *I think there's a lot of pressure on people to put them [pupils] onto the next level because we need to be seen to get the data up…our data is going to be uplifted on something like the 26th of June, something like that, and already the information*

> *is coming out that, if you think that by October next year, they will be on the third, put them onto third just the day before (teacher 3)*

This teacher positioned data as being important "*we need to be seen to get the data up*" and practice was to *"put them into third level just the day before"*" the day before the data was being collected (in June), although the judgement was where the pupil *might* be in October. I asked her where this pressure was coming from and she thought it was from the head teacher. She said this happened as the head teacher is going to have the same discussion with the local authority education officer and, "*unless you are 100% committed and stand firm, your children are going to be moved on".*

This teacher positioned a new authority tracking system as influencing school priorities:

> *As [the children] have been identified by the computer and are being heavily targeted…to get their writing up because our levels were something like 65%. However, if you take into account where those children started, 65% wasn't bad (teacher 3)*

This teacher commented the school were aware that this new tracking system had flaws. She explained the system has postcode and free school meal data attributed to each relevant child and this was used to generate a list of those children that need to be *"targeted"*. However, she specifically said in some cases, the school knew a particular child maybe stayed in the same street as another, but as they stayed in private rented accommodation, the system would not identify them. However, she explained that:

> *This is the most comprehensive pulling together and sharing of data that we've ever had…we were expected to go away and discuss the children who were on our lists with our support assistants, to work out how we were going to use them (teacher 3)*

The practice positioned in this school was to *"go away and discuss the children who were on our lists".* Interestingly, this teacher (number 3), initially positioned herself as believing the NIF had no impact on her. However, she was able to describe new practices that were going on in her school, because of the NIF, although she did not make the link between the NIF and them. This reinforces the argument that some teachers may, unconsciously, position the NIF as part of the web of their professional activity.

10.7 Storyline 6 – link between CfE and the NIF

Teachers were asked to describe what links they saw between the NIF and CfE. This was asked because the NIF is positioned by the Scottish Government as supporting high quality teaching and learning, the two fundamental aims of CfE (Scottish Government, 2016c).

Two themes emerged from analysis of interview transcripts: tension with the curriculum and tension with assessment

10.7.1 Positions offered: tension with the curriculum

Reference to the curriculum moving towards a more taught or planned curriculum was positioned by one teacher:

> *…we're just now slowly but surely moving back towards a taught or planned curriculum…with teacher professionalism being reduced (teacher 12)*

This teacher has drawn a comparison between a former curriculum, presumably 5-14, and that being delivered. He positioned himself as believing the NIF was reducing teacher professionalism, and thus the curriculum was moving back towards a *"taught or planned"* one. This teacher felt teacher professionalism was being reduced and *"they were being dictated to more and freedom had been taken away"*.

Another teacher positioned the curriculum in a similar way:

> *…it's starting to go down the more formalised route…there's been a few comments that it is starting to a wee bit more towards 5-14 (teacher 9)*

This teacher believes the curriculum is becoming more formalised and positioned other teachers, commenting *"it is starting to be a wee bit more towards 5-14"*. Interestingly, this teacher had not taught the 5-14 curriculum and was only familiar with the CfE curriculum, therefore a position offered by others had been accepted by her. She believed the benchmarks were a cause, as she put it, of going *"down a more formalised route"*. Another teacher (number 4), believed the arrangements for assessing children's progress

was going to constrain the curriculum; she commented personalisation and choice would be removed and is significant given CfE aims to promote this (Scottish Executive, 2004).

Another teacher commented:

> *CfE was supposed to be so flexible and so pupil led and pupil centred…but hopefully as we get use to the assessment things [I will see the link] (teacher 5)*

The NIF does not espouse changes to the curriculum, but these teachers believe the freedom to make choices about what is taught is being reduced.

One teacher (number 11) believes that CfE is partially the cause of 'the gap'. They commented:

> *Teaching is a lot less structured…there are massive gaps of things that they [teachers] haven't covered and when the curriculum was a lot more structured, you tended not to have those gaps (teacher 11)*

One teacher positioned the NIF as a means to achieve standardisation and consistency amongst and across teachers and referred to it as having *"more joined-up-ness*" (interview 7). Their position was when children reached secondary school, there was gaps in their knowledge depending on the primary school they attended, and ultimately, what their teachers had chosen to teach. A similar position was offered by another teacher:

> *There's not been a coherent progression of structure, especially across all schools…they are working on CfE, but they're all doing different things – they interpret it in different ways (teacher 16)*

10.7.2 Positions offered: tension with assessment

Tension with assessment between the NIF and CfE was positioned by several teachers.

One teacher made a connection between the OECD report, published in December 2015, the aims of the NIF, and how it connected with CfE:

> *We've got the OECD report that says we're going OK…so that's where the NIF comes into CfE…but we don't have anything robust to say, that actually, children are making progress (teacher 15)*

This teacher positioned the NIF as being able to demonstrate what pupils have achieved, because of a recommendation from the OECD report.

Some teachers found it difficult to see the connection between the vision of CfE, however they position it, and the demands being placed on them and ultimately pupils, regarding assessment.

> *…there's more of a direction to getting standardised assessment…that's contradicting a lot of the assessment is for learning approach from CfE (teacher 10)*

> *With these standardised assessments coming in, we've felt it contradicted a bit with the CfE mantra of creativity, opening thinking etc, yet you are slapped with these tests…[it goes against] encouraging kids to think outside the box (teacher 14)*

These two teachers offer the position the introduction of standardised assessments is contrary to the 'mantra' of what, they believe, CfE is concerned with. However, at the time the interviews were conducted, standardised assessments had not been introduced. Therefore, these teachers were talking about their perception of them. However, I did not ask where this perception had come from. Number 10 could not see a link between the standardised assessments and the assessment is for learning approach of CfE. Another teacher (number 8) positioned standardised assessments as detracting from the autonomy they believed CfE brought to their job:

> *[standardised tests] don't fit entirely with how teachers are meant to do their jobs according to CfE...the autonomy you're meant to have in terms of how you're teaching (teacher 8)*

One teacher positioned standardised assessments as being alien to some pupils and another positioned CfE as being about every child being successful and not only on tests:

> *The way we are teaching because of CfE, a lot of testing will be quite foreign to anything they would normally experience (teacher 2)*
>
> *I've got kids in my class that will never be successful in a test, however, they're going to be successful at other things…CfE is about every children being successful, [not just] about test scores (teacher 4)*

The positions offered by these two teachers, therefore, is to ensure the way pupils are being taught subsequently matches how they will be assessed, and recognising that not all pupils will be 'successful' in a test. Number 6 commented:

> *CfE is all about the holistic approach…but according to the NIF, we've got to get the children up to a certain level…I think we are under a lot of pressure to get children through…(teacher 6)*

One teacher did not see the link between what the NIF measures and the purpose of CfE:

> *I don't see that the NIF is actually helping to measure what CfE actually features…we have to ensure that marries…it measures what's actually being taught in schools (teacher 17)*

One teacher commented:

> *CfE is about depth and breadth, rather than being able to perform in a test (teacher 10)*

In this example, the teacher compared some of the principles of CfE (breadth and depth) with *"performing in a test"* they position the NIF to entail. Another commented:

> *It's not just about sitting down and doing sums…but that is what basically they want us to do (teacher 6)*

In these two examples, therefore, performing in a test, or doing 'sums' are examples of locally formed policy.

10.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the results of seventeen semi-structured interviews that were undertaken with primary school teachers. The results have been presented by storyline:

1) awareness and knowledge of the NIF
2) purpose of the NIF
3) perception of the NIF
4) source of knowledge of the NIF
5) the impact of the NIF
6) the link between CfE and the NIF

Within each storyline, positions have been presented which illustrates how policy is being formed at the local level. Chapter 11 discusses the implications and significance of these results, drawing on chapter 7 policy-framing and chapter 8 policy-explaining.

Chapter 11 Discussion of Policy-forming

11.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data presented in chapter 10, drawing upon policy-framing (chapter 7) and policy-explaining (chapter 8) where appropriate. It considers many positions that require dissection as they position and thus form the NIF in some Scottish primary schools. This chapter firstly discusses how teachers have positioned the NIF and its purpose which includes to achieve standardisation, to implement CfE and to close the attainment gap. A discussion around accountability and data is presented along with the assessment and tracking practices that have formed because of the NIF. These include children being seen as 'data doubles', the Government and local authorities 'reaching into' local spaces, changes in pedagogy, use of data stories and emergence of education triage.

11.2 Teachers perception of the NIF

Four teachers positioned themselves as potentially not being of much help in this study before being asked any questions. These teachers have positioned themselves with others i.e. myself as interviewer, as being unsure how much they can help me. In different situations for example, during a discussion with a colleague in their own school, they may not have done this. However, this is difficult to verify, if at all possible.

Zelle (2009) remind us that as storylines evolve and change during conversations, positions can do the same. Thus, how an individual positions themselves during conversation will change and shift as they hear themselves speak; there is a constant movement of the reflexive position as new experiences emerge, and the present storyline evolves (Moghaddam, 1999). Positions held in a storyline can conflict with an earlier position and can be contradictory in a different storyline (Adams, 2011a). As each interview evolved and storylines changed, this was evident as some teachers gave detailed accounts of their understanding of the NIF as each interview unfolded.

The four teachers who positioned themselves as not being of much help in this study, may have positioned themselves in this way to preserve their self-image; they were 'warning' me their knowledge might not be helpful. They may have viewed me as the

interviewer as more powerful. As teachers, they may feel they have a moral obligation to be familiar with current education policy and offered the 'warning' as an apology for not being "of much help". The Government reminds readers of the NIF there is "for us all, a moral imperative to realise the key priorities of this framework" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1). There is also a global consensus that teachers are expected to improve their professional knowledge through continuing professional development (Valcke, 2013). Furthermore, the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) requires all registered teachers to "have knowledge and understanding of the principal features of the education system, educational policy and practice" (GTCS, 2012, p.10) also adds weight to this global position, and may contribute towards the positions held by these teachers.

Six teachers positioned themselves as not knowing much about the NIF and three which appeared to apologise for not knowing as much as they feel they should for example, (emphasis added): "I must admit, I don't know that much…" (teacher 9) and "I don't really know much about it to be honest" (teacher 11). One felt "terrified" (teacher 3) they did not know much about the NIF. Given the Scottish Government claim they make policy in partnership (Arnott, 2016), this is notable. These teachers may have positioned themselves in this way as they viewed the interview as a test of their knowledge. They may also have positioned me as powerful and the knowledge of the NIF they positioned me to have. This line of thought is consistent with what Cohen et al. (2018) suggest; an interviewer may be seen as powerful by participants in respect of status, knowledge, their role or position. To position themselves favourably, therefore, they indicated lack of knowledge so that what knowledge they did offer was seen as positive.

It appears that some teachers recognise they should know more about the NIF than they do, and some apportion blame for this to other factors. For example, because of time (teacher 1 and 16), as the school "doesn't talk about documents like that" (teacher 11), as there are so many other policies and initiatives that teachers have to get to grips with (teacher 1, 10, 12) and because the NIF is positioned as vague (teachers 1 and 14), abstract (teacher 17), and they cannot get to the "nitty gritty of it" (teachers 3 and 17).

The positions offered by these teachers illustrate several issues. For example, policies which lack clarity and are more generalised than specific, require a high degree of interpretative work on behalf of those attempting to understand it (Maguire, Ball, &

Braun, 2013). In doing so, teachers will use existing knowledge, as well as the social and structural settings of the school, as a lens to help make sense of policy when attempting to put it into practice (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). As these teachers believe the NIF is "vague" and they cannot get "to the nitty gritty of it", this may offer wider possibilities for action. Thus, if policies reduce the possibilities for action because of the position calls they espouse (Adams, 2016), for those who "can't get to the nitty gritty of it", the opposite could be argued.

In the case of teacher 11 who positioned their school as being one that "[doesn't] talk about documents like that", we have to remember that school management are the individuals who attend meetings, networking events, and receive Government directives (Coburn, 2005). Therefore, they have access to messages being conveyed by policy more easily than teachers; school leaders, therefore, can act as a filter in making decisions about which policy messages to convey, to emphasise and to ignore (Coburn, 2005). Such decisions are influenced and shaped by local norms and priorities (Lin, 2000). In this particular case, the teacher validated the position they held by saying that "I just assumed that was the way that it worked" and "we've never really done that". Thus, the local norms as Lin (2000) describes, was not to talk about "documents like that".

The first-level positioning of custom and practice, described in the previous paragraph, when unchallenged, can become ritualistic (Adams, 2011a). Such first-level position can curtail and imped future thought and action. The forming of the NIF in this particular case may therefore be restricted by those acting as gatekeepers, but at the same time, there is a formation of practice in this school because they have "never been that sort of school where management have talked about documents like that". This teacher described her head teacher as not being "very up on documentation or policy" and therefore, there is the potential for the positioned calls offered by policy-explaining and policy-framing to be constrained by the position that this teacher held of their head teacher. However, there is potential for action occurring out with such intentions (Adams, 2016). Some teachers could use the fact the NIF has not been discussed in school to avoid or limit doing certain tasks.

The NIF was positioned as a "buzzword" (teacher 3) and as something that "is in fashion at the moment" (teacher 8). Teacher 8 made a specific remark about it coming up as "the first line in the PowerPoint" at training courses in school. As it is "the first line in the PowerPoint" reveals the person, or people, who is/are delivering the PowerPoint position the NIF as important. Two other teachers (number 10 and 15) positioned the NIF as something mentioned "in passing". For these four teachers, these examples illustrate how policy, through discursive practices at the local level to get to grips with the policy pronouncement itself, is actually the way policy is formed in a palpable way (Adams, 2016) and it is clear from interview data the NIF is being discussed at the local level. Other teachers (numbers 1, 2, 5, 15) for example, mentioned the NIF had "come up" at in-service days and several (numbers 7, 8, 9) mentioned it had been discussed at school collegiate sessions. These examples illustrate an initial interpretation (decoding) of the policy by for example, the school management team, set within the school's position of the policy (Ball et al., 2011). Policy interpretation is "instantiated and elaborated in meetings, staff briefings [etc]…" (Ball et al., 2011, p.619) and provides policy with value and priority in the particular context it is being articulated (Ball et al., 2011). In doing so, interpretation is deemed as an "interpretational political process…a genre chain…involving selling policy to staff" (Ball et al., 2011, p.619). As Fairclough (2003) notes, this 'genre chain' involves filtering out certain discourses in favour of others as part of a 'regulating device' for example, during meetings. However, recipients of the position calls espoused through such filtering process, have the capacity to accept, reject or amend the call espoused subject to the rights and duties they have and have been given (Adams, 2016). It is therefore a process of *interaction,* rather than simply one of *interpretation.*

11.3 Purpose of the NIF

The NIF's twin purpose of achieving excellence and equity is prominent in the policy text itself. However, only one teacher made reference to these purposes during interviews, with one further teacher referring to the word 'equity' in their description. However, some other teachers in their positioning of the NIF implicitly showed they were aware of the position calls espoused by the NIF about its purpose, although did not use the language therein. For example, rather than the word 'equity' some referred to 'the gap', as discussed in section 11.3.3. Several teachers positioned the NIF as something the Scottish Government has set out that contains a focus for what for

example, schools and teachers should be doing. Thus, there is a recognition the Government determines what happens at the macro level, but there is also a positioning of schools and teachers as being the ones that influence the micro level, although as discussed in section 11.2, many were unable to "get to the nitty gritty" part. One teacher made reference to the NIF setting out what they (teachers) are "meant to be doing" (teacher 8). Teacher 5 said 'we' and teacher 10 said 'us' and through these pronouns, have positioned themselves and others, whether that be other teachers, schools or local authorities for example, in this storyline as being the ones that can drive the NIF forward i.e. form the policy at the micro level. Their formation of the NIF is thus positioned as a collective activity. These two teachers did not, for example, say 'they' which would have positioned the Government as responsible for forming the NIF at the local level.

Two teachers positioned the NIF as an "amalgamation of things" (teacher 10) and "[it] all blends into one big thing" (teacher 12). These positions are interesting as the Scottish Government in the 2017 publication of the NIF made several attempts, by highlighting this specifically throughout the text, that this publication to be the single, definitive source for driving forward educational improvement in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2016c). These two teachers therefore position the NIF as bringing together a range of 'things' that are taking place in Scottish education. We know that individual schools and local authorities are subject to a plethora of National policy initiatives (Fullan, 2003) and consequentially, schools and individual teachers need to become familiar with and 'implement', several, sometimes contradictory, policies designed by others (Braun et al., 2010). These teachers therefore position the NIF as bringing a range of plethora of policies together.

Two teachers positioned the NIF, however, as a validation exercise as "it's something that I've always done" (teacher 1) and "it's a new label for things" (teacher 15). Thus, it is a validation of what they already do (number 1) and what 'things' already exist (number 15) and thus, for them, is already formed. Two other teachers (numbers 3 and 17) in another storyline positioned the NIF has having no impact on them. These teachers are therefore highlighting the NIF as preserving existing strategies and thus maintain the quo (Adams, 2016). As Adams (2016) suggests, we could be benevolent and say this is to continue existing good practice, but it could also be a way of maintaining self-preservation.

A range of positions were expressed about what the NIF aims to do at the macro level: to achieve standardisation, to implement CfE and to close 'the [attainment] gap'.

11.3.1 To achieve standardisation

Three teachers positioned the NIF as being a way of achieving a standardisation approach across schools. They referred to the NIF as a way, for example, of achieving a "standardised" (teacher 7), "coherent" (teacher 9) and "joined-up" (teacher 7) framework, with the latter two teachers also making reference to local authorities each doing "something slightly different". Their positioning would imply that current practice is not 'standardised' or 'coherent' and these teachers position the NIF to combat this. However, as CfE aims to move away from a prescriptive curriculum (Scottish Executive, 2004), as discussed in the next section, this is notable.

With respect to standardisation and teacher professionalism, teacher 9 specifically made a link between achieving a standardised approach and teacher professionalism; they liked they were given "very clear and precise steps that we're going to take". However, this is in contrast to another teacher (number 12) who positioned the NIF as reducing professionalism through because "we're being dictated to more". As CfE and other policies (for example, Teaching Scotland's Future) emphasised the role of the teacher in curriculum development as 'agents of change' (Leat et al., 2013; Priestley, Minty, & Eager, 2014) and aimed to reduce the de-professionalisation of teachers (Keddie et al., 2011) and thus increase teacher professionalisation (Leat et al., 2013), this is notable. However, whether this teacher's positioning was because of the NIF or the school management team was unclear; he had previously positioned the school management team as suffering from a lack of vision, unorganised and lacking communication skills. Both of these teachers (numbers 9 and 12) however, have positioned the NIF as what Ball et al. (2011) refer to as an 'imperative policy'. This is a policy which constrains the agentic action they can take (which teacher 9 positions themselves as liking) as their practice is determined by the requirement to deliver, compared to an 'exhortative policy' which invites creativity and the active involvement of teachers (which teacher 12 positions themselves as preferring) (Ball et al., 2011). However, what both positions highlight is that policy is interpreted in context and this limits the interpretative and practical response of policy actors to policy (Braun et al., 2011). Contextual factors may not be 'school-caused' but rather are 'school-based' (for example, position of the school

management for teacher 12) and policy formation in one locale may not be replicable in others (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006).

11.3.2 To implement CfE

Despite the Government positioning the NIF to achieve the aspirations of CfE, only one teacher (number 1) positioned the NIF as a way of implementing CfE and this is notable for several reasons. Firstly, it offers the impression that this teacher does not position CfE as being 'implemented'. They do not imply from their positioning of the NIF think that it is a continuation of, or a vehicle for, driving forward what *is* 'implemented'. This teacher believes that CfE "hasn't help improve [attainment]", and positions the NIF as the solution to this problem. This teacher has, therefore, positioned the NIF as a 'traditional' approach to policy whereby policy solves a problem (Ball et al., 2012). However, this ignores the humanistic element of policy, as explored in section 2.3.

Several teachers positioned the NIF in tension with CfE. As CfE aims to reduce input regulation (Leat et al., 2013) by giving teachers more opportunities to develop assessment practices that promote learning, and to plan the curriculum around the needs of learners in their classrooms (Hayward & Hutchinson, 2013), this is notable. For example, one teacher positioned the NIF as constraining the curriculum as it moves towards a planned curriculum (number 12) and another positioned the NIF as requiring the curriculum to be more formalised (number 9). Another (number 4) commented the assessment requirements that she positions the NIF as having constrains the curriculum, and that it is not only about "doing a test". She commented personalisation and choice would be removed. This is significant as CfE aims to promote personalisation and choice (Scottish Executive, 2004) and the need to try and align curriculum and assessment (Hayward, 2015). These positions are these teachers' forming of the NIF at the local level as the NIF does not specify the curriculum or how children should be taught. This is similar to another teacher's position (number 6) who commented CfE is not "just about sitting down and doing sums", yet positions the NIF as requiring this to happen. Other teachers held similar positions that the NIF contradicts with the mantra of creativity (teacher 14), breadth and depth (teacher 10) espoused by CfE and that "it [the NIF] does not measure what CfE features" (teacher 17). Therefore, for these teachers, there is tension between what they position the NIF to be and their positioning of CfE. There is tension between the input regulation of CfE and how teachers position the output

regulation required of the NIF. The assessment and tracking practices discussed in sections 11.5 and 11.6 also contribute towards this. However, this local forming of the NIF; the NIF does not specify how the curriculum should be taught, delivered or assessed. Rather, the NIF simply requires information on children's progress to be reported.

11.3.3 To close 'the [attainment] gap'

Reference to 'the gap' is highlighted in the literature (Gillborn, 2008). Gillborn (2008) suggests that Discourse around 'the gap' may detract from the actual causes of 'the gap', and talk about 'closing or narrowing the gap' is a vehicle for numerical data to be used to highlight where differences in attainment may be improving. By simply referring to numerical data to illustrate 'the gap' between the least and most disadvantaged individuals in society, may actually hide some of the deep-rooted inequality that may exist (Lingard, 2011).

Four teachers (numbers 5, 8, 9, 10) make specific reference to "closing the gap" and one of the four (interview 8) also said "improving the gap'". The word 'gap', referring to the attainment gap between the least and most disadvantaged children, as noted in section 8.6.5, has increased between different versions of the NIF text along with the word 'closing' or 'close'. By concentrating on 'closing the gap', the Scottish Government are hoping to achieve equity; this term, through numerical comparisons, is a re-articulated term for achieving social justice (Lingard et al., 2014), as discussed in section 7.5. However, despite there being a significant increase in the word 'equity' in the NIF policy text, only two teachers (number 8 and 9) referred to the word 'equity' in their positioning of the NIF; it may well be that teachers accept the position of working towards achieving 'equity', but do not use this language to describe it. For example, one teacher referred to "creating a level playing field". These teachers, along with the teachers that positioned the NIF as "closing the gap", therefore acknowledge the Scottish position call of meritocratic egalitarianism (Grek et al., 2009). However, as Gillborn (2008) suggests, Discourse around 'the gap' may detract from the actual causes of 'the gap'. Teachers who discussed "closing the gap" did not discuss the actual causes of 'the gap', although of note, one other teacher positioned CfE as the cause of 'the gap' because of the lack of standardisation they believe CfE promotes.

11.4 Accountability and data

The SNPF operationalised the concept of an outcomes-based policy process, along with evidence and data, to inform policy and enhance accountability and transparency (Arnott, 2016). The outcomes-based approach of the SNP is in contrast to the former Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition who followed a target-setting approach. This move was seen as an important segment of the SNP's approach to governance (Sanderson, 2009). In the foreword of the draft NIF (Scottish Government, 2016b), the terms 'accountability' and 'transparency' are used explicitly. However, an explicit attempt to reposition readers towards 'improvement' rather than 'accountability' was made in 2017 by the Deputy First Minister in the foreword of the NIF. The word 'improvement' throughout the NIF doubled between the draft publication in 2015 and the 2017 text. Of note, only one teacher (number 5) explicitly mentioned the word 'accountability' in their positioning of the NIF, yet several teachers described locally formed practices that suggested either themselves, colleagues or schools, were being held accountable.

Performance information, including that provided through the NIF, can provide information to a range of stakeholders and is seen as a key component in strengthening accountability and transparency (Dempsey & Davies, 2013). Accountability is concerned with being answerable to relevant stakeholders (O'Neill, as cited by Hutchison & Young, 2011), for example, parents and the public. There is a growth in emphasis placed on performance and accountability in education over the last 20 years (Selwyn, 2016). This growth of performance outcomes and accountability is described by Keddie (as cited by Selwyn, 2016) as a 'climate of hyper-accountability', fuelled by an audit culture surrounding effectiveness and improvement. This is part of wider Discourse that surrounds policy and globalisation. As discussed in section 7.6, across global, national and local contexts, data in correlation with accountability regimes, is influencing policy and practice (Hardy & Lewis, 2017). However, there can be tension between assessment for the purposes of learning and assessment for the purposes of accountability, particularly when there is pressure on politicians to improve educational quality because of international comparisons (Fulmer, Lee, & Tan, 2015). Hardy and Lewis (2017) argue there is a potential for school practices to change because of 'positive' data being favourable. Subsequently, teachers may feel a sense of what Ball, Maguire, Braun, Perryman and Hoskins (2012) have termed 'deliverology', as they attempt to comply with and deliver publically available performance standards; accountability may drive a

focus on improving assessment results rather than pupil learning (Hutchison & Young, 2011). There is a potential for data to become a "valued form of symbolic capital" (Hardy & Lewis, 2017, p.672), which can result in 'gaming' by teachers and schools by adopting practices to ensure data looks favourable (Lewis & Hardy, 2015). In consequence of 'gaming', the concentration of generating positive-data might result in what Ball (2003) refers to as the 'terrors of performativity'; individuals conducting themselves in response to 'performance indicators' (for example, the % of children at a certain level), and evaluation of their practice. There is some evidence of this as discussed in section 11.6.

As policy-explaining revealed, between the draft and 2016 NIF, there was a significant increase in use of the terms 'the number of…' or 'the percentage of…'. However, these statements did not appear in 2017. A focus on each of these statements of 'the percentage of...' or 'the number of...' reinforces Hardy's logic of enumeration and a focus on numbers (Hardy, 2015a). For example, the focus of having certain proportions of children at particular CfE levels, demonstrates the link between the growth of data and governance (Ozga et al., as cited by Hardy, 2015b). The point being made here is if the NIF is so highly focused on data, as it appears to be by the changing of terminology being used as illustrated in the extracts above, there is potential for individuals and groups for example, teachers, schools and local authorities, to position themselves to be responsive to this.

The positioning described in this section is complex, challenging and consists of multiple dimensions (Hardy, 2015b). As the data generated by the NIF will also be published annually, coupled with strong emphasis on 'improvement' as already noted, also positions the policy against a back drop of neo-liberal principles and national and international competitiveness (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The growth of accountability and governance in contemporary education has positioned numbers as a signal of achievement (Selwyn, 2016). As the educational arena is focusing on numbers and measurement, the term social justice is re-articulated as 'equity' (Lingard et al., 2014) and as previously discussed, there is a significant increase in use of this term in different versions of the NIF. A focus upon the collection and recording of attainment data in relation to CfE levels, as required both locally and nationally, demonstrates the influence of the broader impact of political logics (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and thus the position calls

espoused by political Discourse. Reference to CfE levels by the NIF texts themselves and teachers interviewed implies a tacit acceptance of the position of particular CfE levels of achievement as a form of valued capital; there is evidence therefore of a link between made between governance and the collection of data (Ozga et al., 2011).

11.5 Assessment practices

Teachers were able to describe several ways their practice had been positioned by the NIF. Of particular significance was the tracking of assessment and attainment data and therefore, this is dealt with separately in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

One particular teacher (number 5) positions herself as feeling overwhelmed by the increase in assessment she had experienced this year (2016/2017). She commented "assessment is being drummed into us" and thus, the "drumming into us" is an example of locally formed policy. The teacher is reporting an increase in formative assessment, not summative, being employed at this school; she mentions that "they want formative assessment to be back", implying at some point this was a feature of her practice, but no longer now. She commented she did not think she could have done any more assessment with her pupils this year.

Another teacher (number 9), however, held a different position and commented there had been a shift towards more 'formal' compared to 'informal' assessment strategies. There is a positioning of assessment is for learning strategies[22] as being 'informal' compared to the 'formal' assessment route required to "prove it [attainment data]…to the head teacher" and this practice is what the head teacher is attempting to form. This position call could, however, be accepted, resisted or rejected by teachers. Although the NIF allows for judgements to be "informed by a range of evidence…including ongoing classwork" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p. 16), this position call appears to be resisted by the head teacher at this school, and is not part of the local practice being positioned by the head teacher. Another teacher (number 2) expressed a similar position that the NIF was forming a 'formal' assessment and tracking regime similar to what she believed the

[22] These strategies have been promoted in Scotland since 2003 to marry assessment for learning and assessment for accountability (Hutchison & Young, 2011) through formative assessment practices.

former 5-14 curricula espoused; she positions CfE as permitting her to "pick a number" based on "flimsy evidence". Should this first level positioning go unchallenged, this could result in this becoming custom and practice i.e. ritualistic (Adams, 2011a).

As noted in policy-explaining, there was a decrease in use of the word 'assessment' between different versions of the NIF, and an increase in the word 'evaluation'. The literature defines the terms 'evaluation' and 'assessment differently; evaluation relates to programme or course delivery and assessment is concerned with the inferences made about the quantity of learning by an individual (Taras, 2005). Based on this definition, the word 'assessment' is therefore the correct term to use to describe what the NIF is concerned with. However, there may have been a deliberate playing down by the Scottish Government of the term assessment to attempt to position the reader away from what people may view assessment as. The Scottish Government produced a 'You Said, We Did' document (Scottish Government, 2016e) after the publication of the draft version to show how they had actioned feedback from the consultation process. Consultation feedback suggested the draft NIF focused too much on assessment and the Government responded to this by suggesting the 2016 text focused more on the child and improvement. This is therefore perhaps why there is a reduction in the term assessment and an increase of the word 'child' between the draft and 2016 text.

11.6 Tracking the data

All teachers discussed the need and requirement to track pupils and their attainment during interviews:

> *We are having to make sure that we know where the children are and supposed to be and what targets and what levels they are (teacher 9)*

Teacher 9 described a new tracking system that had been developed and implemented across the local authority in 2016/17. In addition to containing a range of attainment data about each child, the system also contained their SIMD decile and attendance data and predicted when each child should achieve the next level of for example, numeracy. The inclusion of SIMD and attendance data represents acknowledgement of situated context; the elements of a school's context that considers its history and location (Braun et al., 2011), and in this example, levels of deprivation in its pupil intake. Inclusion of for

example, SIMD data, represents a way for the school to be able to "know where the children are and supposed to be*"* (teacher 9) commensurate with their SIMD If a pupil had not achieved the level predicted by the system by a specific date, the head teacher would "ask her questions". In this example, the teacher is positioning the head teacher as someone who she is accountable to if a child does not achieve what the tracking system predicts. There is a link here between this example of forming policy and the position call espoused by the NIF; to close the poverty-related attainment gap (Scottish Government, 2016c) and the tracking system is a way of attempting to capture this at the local level. This teacher highlighted the fact their head teacher would "ask her questions" if a pupil had not achieved the level predicted by the system by a specific date; thus the monitoring of pupils and the levels they had achieved in this locale was positioned as 'keeping the data on track' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017).

11.6.1 Children as 'data doubles'

Teacher (number 10) discussed being given a colour-coded chart detailing each pupil, their SIMD and data from a variety of tests. The chart colour coded each child as green, orange or red, depending on whether they are "not doing as well as they should be", "doing well", or "doing better than [expected]". She commented "you're meant to focus on [the children] who are SIMD one and two" and when they are "at risk" they have "an improvement plan created for them". There are a variety of locally formed practices being created here, but as certain pupils then have "an improvement plan created for them" illustrates the position (of power) that data in this context has; data as valued capital (Hardy, 2015b).

Colour-coding pupils, as discussed in the previous paragraph, was also positioned by another teacher (number 2). Teacher 2 discussed the need to have "quite robust…colour coded records...[to see] which children we needed to focus on". Similarly, teacher 16 mentioned an excel spreadsheet that had an "attainment key" which numbered each child depending on whether they were consistently meeting the standard expected at a particular level, sometimes meeting it or not meeting it. In cases where a child was exceeding their level of attainment, this was illustrated by a star. In this particular locale, acknowledgment of a child exceeding the expected level was acknowledged. In other cases, teachers felt that simply recording a level, compared to the extent to which a level was being achieved, was not representative of their true level of achievement. One

teacher (number 11) positioned herself as doing her pupils an "injustice" as she had to say achieved or not achieved a level. Teachers 12 and 15 also shared a similar view that achieved or not achieved did not always reflect the distance a pupil had travelled within a level. There is therefore tension between what these teachers are being asked to do and positions they hold. These examples illustrate "the doublethink of data" (Hardy & Lewis, 2017, p.672); teachers providing the data for compliance, but without seeing the real value of doing so.

Colour coded spreadsheets and charts to track learning as discussed in the previous paragraphs, only capture at a particular point in time, what has been chosen to be captured. Thus, a huge range of data and information is reduced into a single entity (Selwyn, 2016). This reduction does not capture complex, contextualised aspects of school life, for example, relationships between pupils and teachers, between pupils, and emotions. Additionally, it does not acknowledge assessment practices are inherently social (Hardy, 2015a). As pupil achievement is being converted into numbers and colours, it also represents evidence of tracking data towards a practice of 'keeping data on track' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017) and every time a data set, for example, a spreadsheet is opened, produces a "new concentration of power" (Crawford, Miltner, & Gray, 2014, p.1667). This is because such (simple) practices involve "decisions being enacted in terms of what was remembered, over-looked, ignored or summarised when feeding back and reporting" (Selwyn, 2016, p.64). Being able to 'reduce' pupils into colours reveal the power of this process in which pupils are known by simply looking at the colour they are; Raley (as cited by Lewis & Hardy, 2017, p.227) refers to the 'data double' as people are "inscribed and shadowed by their virtual data traces" and thus, children become 'known' by their data double. In such cases, 'erased' from the data is the realities of the [complex] social world and educational practices for the purposes of [abstract] comparability and legibility (Lewis & Hardy, 2017). As Hardy and Lewis (2017) note:

> …numbers are not inherently 'objective' but rather, as noted by Desrosières actually constitute the very phenomena they purport to represent; they are deeply complicit in how the phenomena to which they relate are known and understood
>
> (Hardy & Lewis, 2017, p.673)

11.6.2 'Reaching into' local spaces

The NIF is an example of 'reaching into' local spaces (Lewis & Hardy, 2017), to exert power over what is happening in a particular location (Allen & Cochrane, 2010) for example, local authorities at the meso level, and schools at the micro level. There is evidence of local authorities also 'reaching into' the local level. One teacher (number 6) described a new local authority tracking system that plotted each school in the authority on a chart along with the authority average. In their school, maths was not "performing as well [as it] should be", which led to a visit from their authority's QIO and the staff at the school had been told that "we're going to need to lift our game in maths especially". This represents policy being formed through a 'reaching into' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017) of local spaces (for example, schools). This teacher explained that in their school teachers who "has kids every year that are on track, that's fine", otherwise they would have to "rethink". She felt that it was "almost a reflection of your teaching". She gave an example of a pupil who had not achieved a particular level, thus were not on track, and "the head [teacher] was really quite annoyed…[as it] pushed our maths level down" and she had to "stick [her] heels in" to keep the pupil at the level they *had* achieved. As this teacher mentions "if you've got results", "I really had to stick my heels in" and "it's almost a reflection on your teaching", illustrates the position being formed at this school; results matter, and that this teacher believes it reflects upon their teaching. There is evidence therefore of school-practices around 'being tracked by data' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017). The fact the head teacher "was really quite annoyed" when they did not agree with the levels the teacher had given their pupils adds weight to this, and if they did not have results, they might have to "rethink" or "attend training" more so. Thus, teachers are being 'captured through data' (Thompson & Cook, 2014), as explored more fully in the next two sections.

The practice of 'reaching into' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017) as described in the previous paragraph, was also espoused another teacher. Teacher 3 felt there was pressure to "be seen to get the data up" and the practice of putting children up a level the day before the data was to be collected (in June), although they might not achieve it until October, was in play. She felt that this happened as the head teacher was going to have a discussion about the data with the local authority officer and "unless you are 100% committed and stand firm, your children are going to be moved on". The practice being formed is unless the teacher rejects the positioning being impressed from the head teacher, as they will be

questioned, is to change the child's level. This is an example of 'reaching into' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017) local spaces by the local authority, and forming a practice of 'gaming' (Lewis & Hardy, 2015) to "be seen to get the data up".

11.6.3 Influencing pedagogy

One teacher (number 14) commented "maths wasn't at level it should be". As "maths wasn't at the level it should be", implies a comparison (a positioning) has been made at some point, whether against another school in the authority, the authority as a whole or the national average, and the conclusion reached that their maths 'is not where it should be'. He then commented "we've had to look at our teaching, our school policy towards maths and just see, what is that's not clicking". In this example, the focus is on considering how maths is taught in the school, i.e. school policy towards maths, and to see what make needs to change to "make things click". The NIF does not require schools to consider how maths is taught in the school, it requires data on numeracy achievement levels to be reported.

Teacher number 14, along with the example described by in the previous section by teacher 6, reveals a practice being formed of teachers being captured by data (Thompson & Cook, 2014). Data is being used for the purposes of "assessment of teaching" (Lewis & Hardy, 2017, p.230) which subsequently, *could* result in data-centric evaluation of what constitutes a 'good teacher' (Thompson & Cook, 2014), and would be an unintended consequence of the NIF.

11.6.4 Data stories

Teacher 13 discussed a new assessment calendar being introduced that specifies when children should be assessed and what "evidence we will bring to the assessment meetings". The calendar is a locally formed practice and could be the first step in which individual teacher and whole-school practices could become focused upon 'how to keep data on-track' (Lewis & Hardy, 2017). As Lewis and Hardy (2017, p.229) note in their own study of assessment practices in Australia, "the 'giving' of data at different points throughout year was central to helping teachers 'keep the data on track', and especially to improve on school-level performances from previous years". The "assessment meetings" the teacher mentioned, is similar to *"monitoring and tracking meetings"* another teacher (number 16) discussed. These meetings involve the discussion of children's progress and

attainment with members of the school management team. These meetings I am going to call 'data stories', a term taken from the work of Hardy and Lewis (2017). Data stories are conversations between the teacher and school management regarding pupil performance (Hardy & Lewis, 2017). In the case of teacher 16, they commented that one of their colleague's had been "spoken to" after the meeting once the data had been submitted to the local authority. By contrast, in this example the teacher stated "nothing has come back for my class", suggests that she positioned the data she submitted as being accepted and therefore, was why she had not been "spoken to". As her colleague was subsequently spoken to, illustrates the potential these data stories can have as a basis of teacher evaluation (Hardy & Lewis, 2017); the teacher was in effect, being asked account for the data that had been submitted.

11.6.5 Emergence of education triage?

> *The head teacher has used the phrase that "it's too late for them now" (teacher 11)*

One teacher (number 3) commented that some children were being "heavily targeted" as they had been identified by the school's tracking system based upon their current attainment in writing along with their post code (i.e. SIMD data) and free school meal entitlement[23]. Although she acknowledged the system had flaws as it did not include children to be "heavily targeted" if they stayed in for example, private rented accommodation. The position this teacher was espousing therefore was if a child stayed in private rented accommodation, their parents/carers would not qualify for free school meal entitlement, and therefore would not appear on the tracking system to be "heavily targeted". The reason for targeting certain children based on their free school meal entitlement is because these are the pupils who attract funding through the PEF, although head teachers are allowed to direct the allocation of PEF they receive to any child in their school who may benefit (Scottish Government, 2017b).

Teacher's number 11 and 12 commented that PEF money was used to target children in the infant department (primaries 1-3). However, the PEF allocation is based upon the

[23] Children in Scotland beyond Primary 3 are only entitled to free school meals subject to their parents/carers qualifying for certain income-based benefits or depending on their asylum status.

total number of children in a school receiving free school meals regardless of which year of primary school they are in. In these examples therefore, the practice formed was to divert the PEF towards the infants although children in other year groups may have qualified for it. In the case of teacher 11, they commented their head teacher was "not being quite as interested in the P7s in particular" and that "the head teacher has used the phrase that 'it's too late for them now'". Whether all children in P1-3 had access to the resources provided by the PEF, or only specific children for example, based on SIMD or tracking information, is not clear.

The significance of the two paragraphs above is that it possibly illustrates 'education triage' (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000) at play. Education triage involves children being allocated to one of three groups: "non-urgent" (those that will achieve); "suitability for treatment" (those who would benefit from being targeted) and "hopeless cases" (those with no benefit of being targeted) (Booher-Jennings, 2005, p.241). Resources are then directed towards the group where the highest gain in 'performance' may be achieved (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000).

In relation to the examples in the previous two paragraphs, the practice being formed is that resources are directed towards those who, based on the position of the school, believes would benefit the most but only if they meet certain criteria for example, attainment in writing and free school meal entitlement in case of teacher 3 or, being a pupil in P1-P3 in the case of teachers 11 and 12. In the latter example, teacher 11 made specific reference to the fact their head teacher had suggested it was "too late for them [P7 pupils] now". However, what is not acknowledged in these examples are pupils who maybe 'suitable for treatment' but do not meet the criteria the school has stipulated i.e. do not receive free school meals or are not in P1-P3. As already noted, the Government calculates the PEF allocation based on the number of pupils entitled to free school meals, but stipulates any child can benefit from the funding allocation. Therefore, the question of how equity can be achieved, and thus the reinforcement of Scotland's custom of meritocratic egalitarianism when locally derived criteria is employed, is raised. If schools and teachers position themselves as being accountable, as some teachers did during interviews (for example, "[need to] be seen to get the data up"), this can drive an increase in triage-type practices (Lauen & Gaddis, 2016), through a focus on the so-

called ‘bubble kids’ (Booher-Jennings, 2005), which can negatively impact upon higher or lower achieving children (Lauen & Gaddis, 2016).

The term ‘bubble kids’ emerged from the work of Booher-Jennings (2005) in the United States who observed that children, who were short of achieving a particular grade, were heavily targeted for intervention in an attempt to raise a school’s overall performance level. Further research into how the PEF is being distributed at the local level (i.e. is it being directed specifically towards children who are narrowly short of achieving a curriculum level to increase a school’s overall result), would highlight whether this is a practice being formed. The examples discussed in this section are in contrast to other teachers who positioned the PEF more broadly as “a shopping list” (teacher 8), to give time to teachers “to do research” (teacher 1) or for “accessing [staff] training” (teacher 16).

11.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined how policy is being formed ‘on the ground’ through a discussion of the data gathered through *policy-forming,* drawing on *policy-framing* and *policy-explaining* where appropriate.

The discussion has demonstrated that teachers perceive the NIF in different ways and position the NIF as having different purposes. Assessment is positioned as becoming more ‘formal’. There is a range of locally formed practices being created because of the NIF including children being seen as ‘data doubles’ through colour-coded spreadsheets and charts, evidence of local authorities ‘reaching into’ local spaces, influence in pedagogy and the emergence of ‘data stories’ in some schools. There is some evidence of resources being prioritised for children based on locally formed criteria, that thus has the potential to form an ‘education triage’ scenario. Teachers in some cases are being ‘captured through data’, although teachers in many cases are resisting and challenging the position calls espoused to them.

Chapter 12 concludes this thesis by highlighting its main findings, limitations and providing recommendations. The contribution this study has made to knowledge is highlighted as is my development as a ‘scholarly professional’.

Chapter 12 Conclusions

12.1 Introduction

This thesis has presented a review of how policy is conceived in the literature, the philosophical and methodological basis on which this study was operationalised, and how Adams' (2016) tripartite approach to policy analysis has been used as a theoretical framework. It has presented the results of *policy-framing* through using the literature as data, *policy-explaining* through analysis of policy texts, and *policy-forming* through semi-structured interviews with primary school teachers. Finally, it has discussed the implications and significance of the results of policy-forming.

This chapter summarises the key findings and implications emerging from the three research questions. Recommendations for the Scottish Government, local authorities, schools and teachers are made, and areas for further investigation identified. The limitations this study has as well as the contribution to knowledge it makes are examined. Finally, a reflection on my learning and development as a 'scholarly professional' is provided.

12.2 Summary of this study

This study has utilised Adams' (2016) approach to policy analysis. This approach allows the researcher to examine how ideas are presented and explained, *policy-explaining;* through wider Discourse, *policy-framing;* to analyse how policy is positioned, thus formed and reformed at the micro level, *policy-forming.*

The aim of this study was to examine the National Improvement Framework (NIF), through the lens of positioning theory and how it is formed at the local level by teachers. Three research questions have been addressed:

1. What wider Discourse has *framed* the National Improvement Framework?
2. How is the National Improvement Framework *explained* in official policy texts?
3. How is the National Improvement Framework *formed* at the local level by teachers?

As the macro level context the NIF is embedded was explored, a relativist ontology was appropriate to this study. By constructing meaning through the realm of written and spoken language, a social constructionist epistemology was used that employed three sources of data: the literature, NIF policy texts and semi-structured interviews with teachers. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis was employed to examine wider Discourse at societal level (RQ 1) and NIF policy texts were analysed at the textual and interdiscursive level (RQ 2). Finally, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to identify codes (positions), themes and storylines that illustrated policy formation at the local level emerging from semi-structured interviews with seventeen primary school teachers (RQ 3).

12.3 Key findings

12.3.1 Research Question 1

A review of the literature in chapter 7 highlights that Scottish education policy is framed using Discourse that permits and constraints opportunities for action. The SNPF and Programme for Government provide succour to policy, with education being positioned as a top priority for the Scottish Government.

Since 2007, the way the SNP administration has developed education policy can be interpreted as having used Discourse as a tool (Arnott & Ozga, 2016), for the positioning and promotion of nationalism (Arnott & Ozga, 2010b) and simultaneously, the distinctiveness of Scotland compared to England (Arnott, 2017). The positioning of Scotland as a provider of education as a public good, democratic and based upon meritocratic principles are espoused. However, whether this positioning is more of a romantic one (Anderson, 1995) is unclear. The Scottish Government have promoted the idea of a 'Scottish approach' to policy making, alongside narratives of performance and improvement and the co-production of services (Cairney et al, 2016). However, in practice, these maybe tokenistic. The 'Scottish approach' has been challenged (Mooney & Poole, 2004) and there is little evidence that suggests this approach has produced policy outcomes with major differences (Cairney et al, 2016).

Education policy pronouncements have used a careful blend of 'inward' and 'outward' referencing to promote nationalism, economic growth and competitiveness, within a social democratic, fair and 'flourishing' nation (Arnott & Ozga, 2016). These references

aim to promote nationalism and a move towards independence (Arnott & Ozga, 2010b). However, the relationship between them has become complex (Arnott, 2016) and is not without tension (Arnott, 2017). There is now a greater focus upon economic recovery ('acting neo liberal') and the development of a 'fairer Scotland' through education ('speaking social democratic') and the acceptance of a position call surrounding social justice, with a clear drive to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap, evident in the Scottish Government's policies. Scotland is not sheltered from the increase in quantitative indicators, for example, those provided by the OECD, to describe and compare education systems globally, and fuelled by these, social justice has been rearticulated as 'equity' (Lingard et al., 2014). Despite closing the attainment 'gap' associated with socio-economic status being high on the Scottish Government and international agenda, the ability of education alone to achieve such aim is questioned (Chapman et al., 2016). In Scotland, 'the gap' narrows over time, but increases during a child's schooling (Mowat, 2018a). However, reference to 'the gap' can shadow deep-rooted inequality that exists (Lingard, 2011).

Although Scotland may try to hold onto its values and democratic principles, it is not separate from the globalised world (Mowat, 2018a) and greater attention is now paid to the impact of globalisation on education compared to *only* social, cultural, political and economic change (Maguire, 2002). Globalisation has removed traditional national boundaries resulting in countries operating in a world system, as well as a local one. Policies are developed in response to local and global contexts (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and Discourses of learning within a policy tend to focus on the development of human capital in a globalised world (Singh, 2015).

12.3.2 Research Question 2

The NIF policy texts espouse a range of position calls that attempt to position the reader towards certain key messages, and provide and constrain opportunities for policy formation. Education is positioned as a top priority by the Scottish Government, and the NIF is positioned by them to drive improvements in the education system by achieving excellence and equity, through providing comprehensive information, developing CfE, and excellent teaching and learning. Readers of the NIF are reminded that it is a National policy along with photographs of the First Minister or Deputy First Minister for Scotland in its foreword which offers a position call of the NIF being powerful. It is positioned as

the definitive source of improvement by the Scottish Government and contains explicit links to other education policies.

The 2016 and 2017 texts attempt to position the reader towards considering the child as centre staged (through image and word use) and improvement (through the number of times the word is used), compared to the earlier draft text. Teachers and schools may find it difficult morally to resist such positions and indeed, these two actors appear most frequently in all versions of the NIF; thus, they are being positioned as the most important in driving the NIF forward. However, an increase in the term "we will" in the 2017 text, also promotes the position of partnership and collaboration.

The positioning of 'assessment' has reduced from the draft text, but has been replaced with 'evaluate'. Alongside this, the role of standardised testing has changed from 'at the heart of the NIF', to that alongside teacher judgement, perhaps in an attempt to position the professionalism of teachers as being important. There is emphasis on calling to an individual's moral side in the 2017 text by reminding them they have a "moral imperative", although readers are also reminded the information gathered through the NIF is statutory. There is greater reference to the OECD that may be to legitimise the emergence of the NIF, given that it is influential in education (Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

A position call to 'close the gap' is far stronger in 2017 compared to earlier versions of the NIF, as is 'equity'. There is a strong focus on collecting data through calls to collect a range of numbers and percentages from different drivers of improvement. These calls are less prominent in the 2017 text compared to 2016, in an attempt to avoid 'perverse incentives' associated with accountability. However, specific timescales have been included in 2017 which positions actors into at least *considering* taking action by a particular date.

12.3.3 Research Question 3

The NIF is positioned as topical in some schools and although some teachers felt they knew very little about the NIF, or that it had no impact, findings reveal many locally formed practices emerging since the NIF was introduced. Therefore, for some teachers, the NIF is having an impact on them, albeit tacitly. The NIF is clearly an area of priority for schools, although teachers espoused mixed positions about its purpose. Some

teachers positioned the NIF as being ‘vague’ or ‘abstract’ and they could not get to the ‘nitty gritty of it’. Some teachers felt that the NIF aimed to achieve ‘standardisation’, although some positioned this as going against the ethos of CfE for example, through a reduction of teacher professionalism, or because they felt the NIF was constraining the curriculum and what was taught. An increase in the assessment of pupils becoming more ‘formal’ was positioned. Several teachers described practices that they felt were against the principles of CfE for example, reduction in personalisation and pupils having to “sit down and do tests”. In these cases, there is tension between the weak input regulation espoused by CfE and the stronger output regulation required by the NIF. Only one teacher positioned the NIF as implementing CfE, although the Scottish Government made no secret the NIF was designed to drive forward CfE.

A variety of practices surrounding ‘tracking’ have been formed. Teachers are required to track the progress of their pupils, although the format this can take varies. A significant number of teachers discussed tracking, but unless a practice had emerged since the NIF was introduced, this was not included in this study. However, since the NIF was introduced, some teachers have reported that pupils are being tracked by for example, colour coded spreadsheets or charts. In these cases, there is a danger that pupils can become known by their ‘data double’ (Raley, as cited by Lewis & Hardy, 2017) which reduces the complex social world and education arena into a single entity. There were some instances where local authorities were ‘reaching into’ (Lewis & Hardy, 2017) the data tracked by the school. However, the two teachers who positioned this resisted it; they often felt they were having to justify the decisions they had made about the progress of their pupils and felt they were being ‘captured by the data’ (Thompson & Cook, 2014).

Discussions between a teacher and a member of the school management team, ‘data stories’ (Hardy & Lewis, 2017) occurred in two instances, with one having to report data at frequent points in the year, and in the other, there was a position being formed that led to a teacher “being spoken to” about the data they had submitted. The inclusion of SIMD data into tracking systems demonstrates there is an acceptance of a wider position call to consider those pupils who are experiencing disadvantage, and several teachers discussed the need to ‘close the gap’. However, in some cases, resources obtained through the PEF were being directed to pupils deemed to be ‘suitable for treatment’, through making decisions based on locally formed practices, rather than all pupils who *may* benefit. In

these cases, a practice of 'education triage' (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000) appeared to be forming.

Overall, there is evidence of 'gaming' (Lewis & Hardy, 2015) by schools, but not teachers; teachers have in cases rejected the position call espoused for example, by "having to dig their heels in" or "stand firm". It is clear from the interviews conducted that data gathered in tracking systems is viewed as a valued form of symbolic capital (Hardy & Lewis, 2017) by schools.

12.4 Limitations of the study

The research design and subsequent methods chosen to address research question 3 have a number of limitations. Firstly, a single case study design (e.g. a single school) or multiple case study design (e.g. a number of schools) would have allowed me to construct an in-depth picture of how the NIF was being formed within a particular school or cluster of schools (for example, within the same local authority). However, as examined in section 5.3, I was unable to gain access to any school and therefore had to employ opportunistic sampling to collect data from teachers who worked in different schools across Scotland.

As noted in section 2.4, studies that explicitly consider 'contextualised policy responses' between schools are scarce in education policy literature and even scarcer are those which explore differences in policy responses in the same school (Braun, Ball, Maguire et al., 2011). The latter would have provided another layer of analysis of policy formation (Gowlett et al., 2015). A case-study design would have strengthened the study in its attempt to understand and illustrate policy formation because school-level context would have been acknowledged (Singh et al., 2014). Although macro-level context is examined in this thesis (chapters 7 and 8), school-level context is not. Whilst some teachers did provide contextualised information during their interviews, which aided analysis in chapter 10, explicit consideration of school context would have revealed ways policy is shaped and influenced by school-specific factors.

As Braun, Ball and Maguire et al. (2011) note, policy formation is not immune to school-specific context and this tends to be marginalised in policy research; contextual factors will not be 'school-caused' but are 'school-based' (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). As

highlighted in section 4.5, action (the act of human agency) can occur outside the aims of policy-framing and policy-explaining (Adams, 2016). Hence, a school-based study would have permitted an analysis of how teachers interact with their environment, the 'ecological' concept of agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). The 'ecological' view examines how agency is achieved through engagement in specific, contextual conditions rather than just 'something' that individuals have (Priestley et al., 2015). Accordingly, a study that examines how the NIF is being formed within a single school, with explicit examination of context, is recommended.

Adams (2011a) argues that it is through moment-by-moment conversational acts that policy is formed. However, in this thesis conversational acts occurred between myself as the interviewer and individual teachers who were responding to my questions. This creates a limitation, as the social force of language used and thus the positions adopted by teachers, may have been different from those which would have occurred in a conversation with their colleagues (e.g. at a departmental or whole school meeting). Positions define the limits individuals have to take action in a conversation (Zelle, 2009), as individuals do not have equal rights or obligations to carry out specific actions at that moment, with those particular people (Harré, 2012). Thus, how teachers positioned themselves to me as an interviewer in response to questions might be different from the positions they adopt in conversations with their colleagues. Consequentially, the account of how the NIF is being formed in this study might be different from a study that examined how teachers position themselves in conversations with their colleagues. Conversations between teachers within a school could be observed by the researcher and is something I would have carried out had I gained access. As noted in section 4.5, conversations could take place electronically in a variety of ways e.g. by e-mail and through collaboration on a shared network, and could capture ways policy is being formed that is not evident through face-to-face conversations. Given the use of technology in schools, I would also consider examining stretches of electronic discourse if I was to employ Adams' (2016) model in the future.

The number of primary teachers who took part in semi-structured interviews for this study was small and based on opportunistic sampling. However, I am not proposing the study's findings are generalisable, but rather they portray the positions of the seventeen teachers who agreed to be interviewed. The findings show examples of practice on

which some recommendations can be made. Some teachers may have taken part in an interview as they had strong views on the NIF, or because they felt they had an obligation to take part. Thus, potential bias needs to be considered. As a lone researcher, it was not possible to triangulate interview data with others and my interpretation of the data might legitimately be contested by other researchers. However, I did enhance the credibility of my findings by providing a number of quotations in the presentation of my data as well remaining in regular contact with my supervisors regarding the data analysis process. Section 5.6 gives a full account of how the quality of this study has been enhanced. Bias may also be present as I was conducting this study from the viewpoint of a social constructionist researcher with interaction occurring between the "subject and the object" (Crotty, 1998, p.9) i.e. what is being researched and the researcher. Coding and subsequent analysis of interview data from this viewpoint involves interpretative work - a latent approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, social constructionism acknowledges the historical and social background conferred on us as humans (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, my own position had to be made clear, as provided in sections 1.3 and 3.2, to allow the reader to assess my findings from an informed perspective. As positioning theory, the theoretical framework on which Adams' (2016) model is based, sits within a social constructionist epistemology (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999), I would have been unable to operationalise his approach if I had accepted there was an objective reality.

As a result of time constraints, there was a limit to the amount of data that could be collected empirically. Firstly, the amount of time I had available whilst working full-time was limited. Secondly, as I wished to explore the experiences and positions of teachers from that specific academic year (2016/17), interviews had to be conducted towards the end of the summer term. The interview data therefore provides a snapshot of teachers' experiences at a particular point in time. The NIF has been updated twice (2018 and 2019) since the interviews for this study were conducted, and thus these updates are not captured in the data presented.

As noted in section 9.3.1, I chose to have each interview transcribed professionally and I therefore lost the opportunity for early engagement with the data. However, I overcame this during phase 1 and 2 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. Firstly, I checked each transcript for accuracy after transcription (during phase

1) and secondly, I read each transcript on at least another two occasions (during phase 2). Although I used NVivo to organise and manage my data, I frequently printed what I had coded onto A3 paper so I could check data coding on a hard copy and, if necessary, make any changes; this is known as constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The time I saved from transcribing each interview myself was spent on an internship with another doctoral student at the University. I explore what I learned from this internship in section 12.7.

As noted in sections 1.4.2 and 8.9.2, this study is primarily concerned with the forming of the NIF in relation to one of the six key drivers of improvement: the assessment of children's progress driver. Therefore, my findings are restricted to how the NIF is being formed in respect to this key driver only. Further research into how the NIF is being formed with respect to the other key drivers is recommended. Furthermore, as noted in sections 1.4.2 and 10.7.2, standardised testing in Scottish schools was only about to be introduced when I conducted empirical work. Had I waited a further year, I would have been able to obtain examples of how policy was being formed as a consequence of these tests. However, the time-bound restriction of the degree and the fact that I was self-funded did not permit this. The impact of standardised testing on policy formation is therefore worthy of exploration.

Finally, the contribution this thesis makes to understanding how the NIF is being formed, acknowledging the limitations presented, is yet to be realised. Although Adams' (2016) heuristic does not include a feedback loop, given a Professional Doctorate aims to facilitate the development of professional practice (Pratt et al., 2015) and create knowledge which can impact on practice (Fulton et al., 2012), I feel that providing feedback to the 'field' is important. Furthermore, dissemination is part of ethical research (Cohen et al., 2018). I did present a poster at the launch of the Strathclyde Doctoral School in October 2018 and wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (see appendix 7). However, due to pressures of full-time work, writing the thesis and family commitments, I have not yet sought opportunities to publish or disseminate my work further. However, once the examination process is complete, this will be a priority.

12.5 Recommendations

This section provides recommendations for relevant policy actors based on the data presented in chapters 7, 8 and 10 and discussion in chapter 11: the Scottish Government; local authorities; schools; and teachers. Signposts to the relevant sections of those chapters are provided next to each recommendation to allow the reader to assess the evidence presented.

12.5.1 Scottish Government

Reference to 'the [attainment] gap' is highlighted in the literature (Gillborn, 2008). However, caution needs to be exercised when using numerical data to illustrate 'the gap' as it can hide some of the deep-rooted inequality that exists (Lingard, 2011). A focus in both discourse and Discourse around 'closing the gap' may detract from its actual causes and consequences. Indeed, despite some teachers referring to 'the gap' during interviews, none referred to its causes or consequences. Therefore, **it is recommended that the causes and consequences of the attainment gap should be highlighted in future NIF publications and other relevant guidance documents for teachers.** *(Sections 7.5, 8.6.5, 8.6.6, 10.6.3, 11.3.3).*

Some teachers interviewed positioned the NIF as being in tension with the aims of CfE. As CfE aims to reduce input regulation (Leat et al., 2013) by giving teachers more opportunities to develop assessment practices that promote learning and to plan the curriculum around the needs of learners in their classrooms (Hayward & Hutchinson, 2013), this is notable and worthy of further research. Furthermore, the NIF is positioned by the Scottish Government as supporting high quality teaching and learning, which are the two fundamental aims of CfE (Scottish Government, 2016c). **It is therefore recommended that the relationship between the NIF and CfE is made clear to teachers**. *(Sections 8.7.1, 10.7, 11.3.2).*

There are some pockets of evidence from interviews which suggests that the NIF is driving an increase in assessment and some changes in pedagogy. Nearly all teachers interviewed reported an increase in tracking as a consequence of the NIF, and consequentially there were some examples of children being viewed by their 'data double'. This increase in tracking was positioned by two teachers as a vehicle for tracking *them* as professionals and they felt that *they* were 'being captured by the data'.

Given that the Scottish Government wants the NIF to focus on providing data for improvement rather than accountability (Scottish Government, 2016c), this is noteworthy and would benefit from further investigation. Therefore, **it is recommended that the position and value of attainment data as a tool for improvement, rather than for accountability, needs to be reinforced to local authorities, schools and teachers.** *(Sections 10.6.4, 10.6.5, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6).*

Three teachers described practices during interviews commensurate with the creation of 'education triage' (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000). In these cases, Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) was being prioritised for pupils who were deemed 'suitable for treatment', i.e. those who would benefit from being targeted for additional support or intervention because they were viewed by the head teacher as being the most likely to achieve a higher attainment level. From the three teachers who described this practice, those pupils 'suitable for treatment' were in primaries 1-3. However, PEF is based on the number of children entitled to free school meals and is not related to year groups. Therefore, the question of how equity can be achieved and how Scotland's custom of meritocratic egalitarianism (Grek et al., 2009) can be maintained when locally derived criteria employed is raised. **It is therefore recommended that the Scottish Government ensure that its PEF guidance is clear that funding is for all pupils who may benefit and not just for those potentially capable of achieving a higher attainment level.** Further research into 'education triage' practices as a consequence of the NIF is also recommended. *(Sections 10.6.3, 11.6.5).*

12.5.2 Local Authorities

Two teachers reported an increased sense of accountability due to their local authority 'reaching into' their school's data, e.g. in one case by comparing one school against another and in another instance because the local authority officer questioned attainment levels. These teachers described feeling they had to "stick their heels in" and "stand firm" to prevent pupils from having their assessment level recorded at a higher level than they had originally decided. Although these findings are very limited in scope and would benefit from further investigation, **local authorities need to consider how 'reaching into' schools' data may increase the feeling of intrusive accountability felt by teachers.** *(Sections 10.6.5, 11.6.2).*

12.5.3 Schools

Several teachers interviewed felt they knew very little or nothing at all about the NIF. The purpose of the NIF to some teachers was unclear. Words and phrases used by some teachers to describe the NIF included "it's a buzzword", "vague" and "I can't get to the nitty gritty of it". The Scottish Government reminds readers of the NIF that there is "for us all, a moral imperative to realise the key priorities of this framework" (Scottish Government, 2016c, p.1) and teachers need to have knowledge of the "principal features of the education system, educational policy and practice" (GTCS, 2012, p10). Therefore, **some teachers would benefit from having the purpose of the NIF explained and/or reinforced as part of their continuing professional development.** *(Sections 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 11.2, 11.3).*

All teachers interviewed described a range of practices around tracking of pupil learning (including colour-coded spreadsheets and charts) and how the use of data was influencing some practices in their school. Whilst tracking allows support to be provided when required by certain children, colour-coded spreadsheets and charts only capture an aspect of learning at a particular point in time. Thus, a significant range of data and information is reduced into a single entity (Selwyn, 2016). This reduction does not capture complex, contextualised aspects of school life, for example: relationships between pupils and teachers; between pupils themselves; and pupil emotions. In three cases, teachers felt they were doing their pupils an "injustice" because they felt the tracking system did not capture the full progress a pupil had made over a period of time, but instead only what could be tracked. Whilst tracking systems can be used for positive effect, **some schools need to acknowledge that tracking systems can fail to capture a pupil's full spectrum of learning and experiences.** *(Sections 10.6.5, 11.6).*

12.5.4 Teachers

Some teachers interviewed for this study gave examples of where they were acting in the best interests of their pupils, e.g. by challenging decisions that were being made about their pupils. Teachers therefore **should be commended for the work they are doing to promote the best interests of their pupils.** *(Sections 10.6.4, 10.6.5, 11.5, 11.6).*

12.6 Contribution to knowledge

This study makes two main contributions to knowledge: firstly, methodologically to policy analysis and secondly, an understanding of how the NIF is being formed at the micro level.

This study contributes methodologically to policy analysis by being the first empirical study to apply Adams' (2011a, 2016) approach. This approach based upon positioning theory, which tends to focus on relationships and alignment between people in conversations, rather than as a tool for policy analysis, is therefore unique. It moves beyond policy implementation or studies of policy enactment, to policy as position. I would recommend other policy researchers, acknowledging the limitations of Adams' (2016) model explored in chapter 4 and in section 12.4, consider using this as a basis for future studies. As Adams (2016) does not specify a particular way to operationalise his approach to policy analysis, the combination of methods used in this study are also novel and may not necessarily be used by other researchers who may wish to use his approach. Using CDA to examine wider Discourse that framed the NIF, and to examine how it was explained in policy texts, is also original.

Secondly, the NIF remains a prominent and influential part of the Scottish policy landscape since it was introduced in 2016. This study is one of the first (if not the first), to conduct research into how the NIF is being formed and therefore, its findings are original and have implications for policy and practice. Although, the limitations highlighted in section 12.4 need to be borne in mind when drawing conclusions from the work presented.

12.7 Reflection on my learning and becoming a 'scholarly professional'

The EdD has formed a significant part of my professional and personal life. To aid my reflection, I thought it was useful to revisit the aims of the EdD and to reflect on each one individually. The Strathclyde EdD has three aims, which together provide knowledge, understanding and scholarship in education (University of Strathclyde, 2014). The three aims are:

1. To provide instructional programmes which allow you to practise and demonstrate skills and abilities appropriate to the contexts, level and demands of your studies;
2. Through research, to allow you to demonstrate specialised understanding of an area of professional relevance and interest, by processes of systematic enquiry;
3. To provide a structured programme of continuing professional development which affords an increasing degree of self-direction and originality in the planning and implementation of tasks appropriate for your level of study.

(University of Strathclyde, 2014, p.6)

Reflection on aim one

The series of taught modules during the first two years of the programme allowed me to acquire and utilise skills in a 'safe' environment. Each module was taught face-to-face as part of a cohort of students and this allowed me to try out and obtain feedback from peers and tutors before committing to a thesis topic. For example, during the first module I extended the work I had completed during my MEd on examining conceptualisations of formative and summative assessment. However, I soon realised that this topic did not excite or motivate me as much as I had hoped. Therefore, during the next two modules I began to focus my efforts on reading around policy studies and took a keen interest in the work being conducted in Australia examining NAPLAN tests. During this time, the NIF was published in draft form and I began to see a very broad topic emerge from my reading and the NIF. However, it took around another six months to refine my topic further, during which I wrote a paper as part of one of the modules on standardised testing in Australia and what this might mean for Scotland.

Although the NIF was introduced in January 2016, standardised testing was still a further eighteen months from being introduced. Given the time-bound nature of the degree, I had to consider what I could examine between these two time periods. After discussions with the module tutor, I decided to design a study that examined the immediate impact of the NIF. At this point, I wrote my thesis proposal based on conducting a series of interviews with teachers based in a small number of schools and as I indicated in section 5.3, proposed to use Bourdieu and his thinking tools of 'field', 'habitus' and 'capital' to

explore my topic. Once the proposal had been assessed, I met with my primary supervisor for the first time and the research component of the degree got underway.

Reflection on aim two

After initial meetings with my primary supervisor, I began to explore different policy conceptions and my views of policy changed. I was encouraged to think critically, to avoid accepting things at face value and to think independently. Whilst I felt supported by my supervisor, I also felt 'I was in charge'. I had to be able to think for myself and go back to him with my thoughts and ideas, firmly grounded in relevant reading and reflection. I underestimated the amount of thinking time required to complete a doctorate, and found myself going back and forth between different articles and books as my thinking developed and the number of questions I had grew.

At the start of the research stage, I created a Gantt chart that neatly laid out the linear process I intended on taking to complete my thesis. I set clear timeframes, defined goals clearly and compiled a list of resources that I thought I would need. However, what I did not recognise at this stage was how 'messy' and unpredictable the process would become. For example, several tasks would be on-going at any one time (e.g. data collection, analysis and writing) and I underestimated the time it would take for others to respond to questions about my study. For example, seeking ethical approval took time and even when it was approved, it took a few months before I was able to actually start collecting data because of problems with gaining access. I had not built into my plan time away from the EdD that was needed to recharge and to remain connected with family and friends. Whilst I initially saw any deviation away from my plan as a sign of failure which caused distress, I soon recognised that this was the norm. I kept focused, dealing with problems and issues as they arose, and continued to remind myself of the overall goal. Indeed, taking some time away at various points provided a new source of energy and brought a sense of perspective to things. I found it reassuring to keep telling myself to "chip away at it" and now this "chipping away" has nearly paid off.

The study I have conducted has changed my view of how policy is conceptualised. As I noted in 1.3, I did perceive policy as something 'top down' and to be complied with. I assumed it was merely a prescriptive document to be filed away, detailing steps to be followed. My perception, therefore, was that policy was 'implemented'. What I have

described here is a traditional approach to policy that does not take account of the role of individuals and contexts. Thus, my own ontological and epistemological view of policy has changed from one that focuses on policy as "aims or goals, or statements of what ought to happen" (Blakemore, 2003, p.10), with policy being *done* to teachers (Priestley, 2013), who are "cardboard cut-out sense makers" (Ball et al., 2012, p.5) to something different. I now consider policy as something that exists in multiple realities (Carusi et al., 2018), encourages a 'bottom-up' approach through the agentic responses invited through policy interpretation (Ball, 2015) and formed locally through conversation-type activities (Adams, 2011a). I no longer view policy as something *done* to teachers, but rather something that teachers *do*. In my own professional practice, I now appreciate how both discourse and Discourse can shed light on the positions individuals adopt that subsequently form policy.

Reflection on aim three

Whilst reflecting on aim three, the words 'self-direction' have stood out. The doctoral experience is an individual one and the responsibility for it has been firmly within my own hands. Particularly in the early stages of the research component, I had to stop comparing myself with others, e.g. ignore the fact they were perhaps doing tasks in a different order to me and I thought somehow I was doing things incorrectly. On reflection, the structure of my thesis is not 'traditional'; it is individualistic and has been shaped based on my experience and academic journey throughout the degree. I also learned that just because someone might appear confident and knowledgeable on the outside, does not necessarily mean they are feeling this on the inside. I remember being told at a workshop not to "compare our insides with other peoples' outsides" and this is something that has stuck with me.

Towards the end of the study, I began to accept that whilst aiming for high standards of scholarship was important, there is no such thing as a 'perfect' thesis. I had to accept that I would never be able to include everything about the subject in my thesis, but neither was I expected to do so. Receiving feedback on my work during the study allowed me to make it better, and whilst criticism was sometimes blunt, it was not an 'attack' on me, but rather was intended to aid my development as a scholar. Obtaining feedback during the research and writing process, both informally and formally, was a new experience because this was not a feature of the taught modules. However, the opportunities

afforded by the EdD to obtain feedback aided my learning, strengthened my thesis and provided reassurance, that despite the onerous task of conducting and writing a doctoral thesis, I was making progress. Towards the end of the study, I also began to consider ways to present my work orally; I was aware that talking about my work rather than just doing it were two different skills. Fortunately, presenting a poster at the Doctoral School and participating in a 'mock viva' aided this process.

I had to learn a range of skills through self-initiation and direction to operationalise my study. I had to navigate and complete the ethics process, conduct risk-assessments, design an interview schedule, and organise and manage data in accordance with the Data Protection Act. I had to learn how to use NVivo to store and code data, organise a system for managing my reading and organising my notes, use bibliographical management software and learn the various tools on Microsoft Word to create, manage and edit a large document. Some of these skills were learned by seeking out relevant workshops at the University and some through trial and error. However, they are useful in both my professional and personal lives.

As part of my doctoral journey, I applied for and was successful in obtaining a summer internship along with a PhD student from another Faculty at the University. I used the income from the internship to pay for my interviews to be transcribed. I worked jointly with another student to carry out a survey of postgraduate research students' experiences of Strathclyde and whether they felt ready for employment upon graduation. The internship gave me the opportunity to work with another researcher on a project (and the challenges this presents) compared to working alone on the EdD, and to develop skills in creating surveys and using Qualtrics for administering them. Whilst the internship was short, it did expose me to experiences that I would not have obtained purely from my own study.

As a result of my doctoral study, I have been able to contribute to my primary supervisor's work and methodology for analysing policy, and thus my development as a researcher has grown and the power relations between us have changed. I no longer rely on the tutor telling me what to do but, rather, make these decisions for myself and be able to provide a rationale for them. I feel proud to have been able to apply the theoretical work of one of my supervisors and demonstrate how his approach to policy analysis can

be operationalised. I can remember reading the primary article on which this thesis is based, Adams (2016), for the first time and understanding very little of it. Now, three years later, having used it as a basis for a doctoral study, illustrates the academic progress I have made. This reminds me of the journey along the zone of proximal development I have followed, drawing upon the support of my supervisory team and how distribution of rights and duties amongst the 'junior' and 'senior' members of the duo changes.

Final reflections

I believe the factors that motivated me to undertake the EdD, explored in chapter 1, have been realised. As Scott et al. (2004) highlight, motivations to undertake a Doctorate are two-fold: extrinsic and intrinsic. My colleagues and peers have recognised that my knowledge has grown and they have turned to me as a source of support for their own professional development. Secondly, my supervisors have recognised that my knowledge and expertise have grown and have invited me to teach on the MEd at the University and to present at the launch of the Strathclyde Doctoral School.

I strongly believe the achievement of an EdD will be a positive addition to my CV and the experience and challenges it has provided me can be drawn on during my career progression. Although I noted in section 1.3 I did not undertake the EdD to achieve career acceleration, my view has changed. I am now considering using the EdD as a vehicle for either returning to the secondary education sector in a leadership role, or to seek a lectureship at a University. However, regardless of where my career might now take me, I fully intend on working hard to be part of the policy community and to continue to develop the field through publication and other outputs.

In respect of my intrinsic motivation, the EdD has challenged me in more ways than I could imagine, and my ability to be resilient has increased significantly. I have developed a critical understanding of the nature of education policy and I feel a real sense of personal achievement. I am proud to have been able to develop as a 'scholarly professional' (Gregory, 1995) and undertake a study that has implications for policy and practice.

I started the EdD having previously never conducted empirical research. Whilst I underestimated the amount of thinking time a doctorate requires, I believe that my knowledge of the research process, together with the challenges it presents, has grown considerably.

12.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has concluded this thesis by highlighting the main findings in relation to each of the three research questions. The NIF is clearly forming locally occurring practices in Scottish primary schools and consequentially, recommendations for different policy actors have been provided. Recommendations for future research and future applications of the methodology have been highlighted. The limitations of the study have been acknowledged. The contribution this study has made to knowledge, as well as my learning and development as a 'scholarly professional' have been highlighted.

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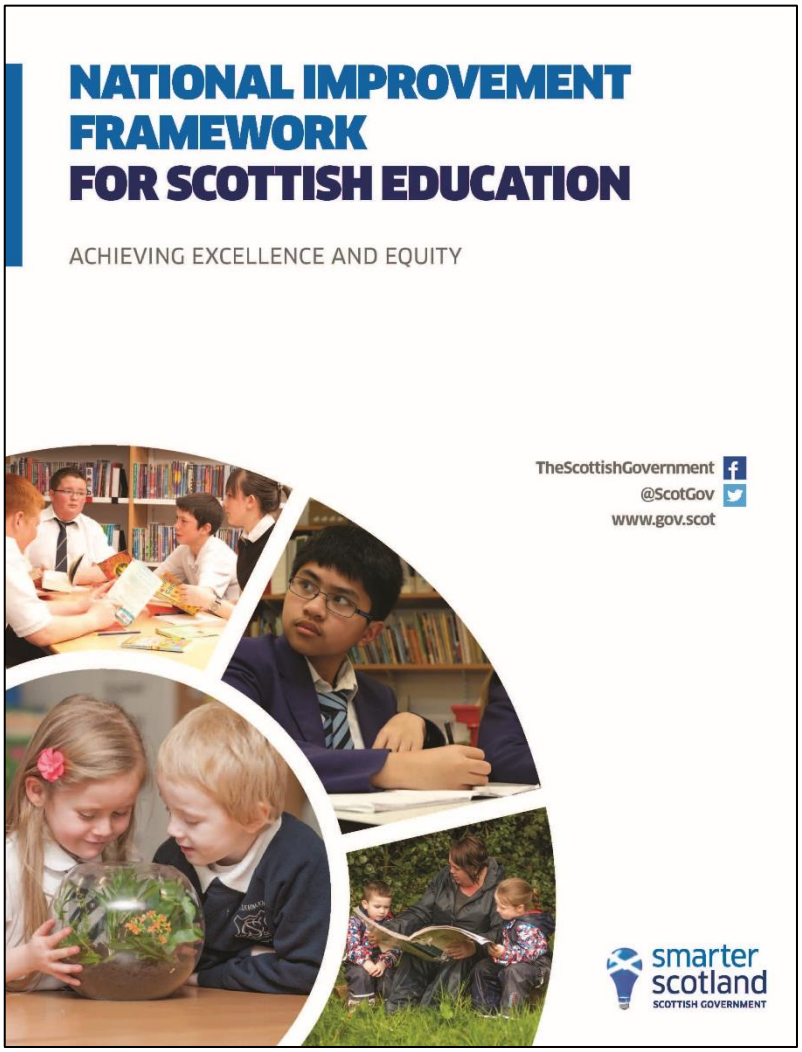
Appendix 1 Draft NIF front cover

(Scottish Government, 2015a)

Appendix 2 2016 NIF front cover



(Scottish Government, 2016b)

Appendix 3 2017 NIF front cover

(Scottish Government, 2016c)

Appendix 4 Interview schedule

NAME	
SCHOOL	
LOCAL AUTHORITY	
CLASS TAUGHT	
PARTICIPANT NUMBER	

My name is Lee Coutts, and I am undertaking a Doctoral degree in Education at the University of Strathclyde. First of all, thank you for agreeing to meet with me and for your time. I am interested in finding out from your perspective what teachers think of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and what impact, if any, this has had on them.

We shall now go through the participant information sheet and consent form so that you are clear about what is required of you during this interview and what will happen to the data that I collect.

I'm really interested in hearing what you have to say about this.

To begin with, I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about your professional background?
(probes: length of time in post/this school, career history)

Can you tell me a little about your school?
(probes: history, values, life in the school, local contextual factors)

Have you heard about the Government's agenda to improve Scottish education and to close the poverty-related attainment gap?
(probes: current priorities e.g. NIF, Scottish Attainment Challenge)

Have you heard of or come across the National Improvement Framework (NIF)? Can you tell me what you understand by the NIF?
(probes: purpose, aims, rationale, reasons for existence)

What do you think has influenced your views or thinking about the NIF?
(prompt: is it a particular priority for the authority or school, has it been given particular attention, displays)

What are the arrangements for the assessment of children's progress in your school?
(probes: when, how/methods, who decides)
[*NB direct experience as a P1, P4 or P7 teacher?]*

Do you think the NIF has had any impact on you as a teacher, your professional or classroom practice? Can you give me examples?
(probes: the curriculum, lesson planning, assessment of pupils, reporting, relationship with pupils, workload)

Do you see any link between the NIF and Curriculum for Excellence? Can you tell me about this?

(probes: links to the 4 capacities, developing literacy and numeracy, HWB, personalisation and choice)

Is there anything else you would like to discuss or tell me about the NIF?

If you want to leave me a note of your e-mail address, I can send you a copy of my final thesis, or if you would like to discuss the results with me in person, we can arrange this at a later date.

Thank you very much for your time.

Comments on any follow up requested:

Appendix 5 Interview participants

Interview Number	Class Taught	Method of interview
1	P4/5	Telephone
2	P4	Telephone
3	P6/7	Telephone
4	P4/5	Telephone
5	P1	Telephone
6	P5	Telephone
7	P2	Telephone
8	P4	Face-to-face
9	P6	Face-to-face
10	P4	Telephone
11	P7	Telephone
12	P6	Telephone
13	P4	Telephone
14	P4	Telephone
15	P1-P4[24]	Face-to-face
16	P1	Telephone
17	P6	Telephone

[24] School is small and has two teachers: one teaching P1-P4 and the other P5-P7

Appendix 6 Positions (codes), themes and storylines

Storyline – awareness and knowledge of the NIF

Positions (codes)	**Interview No(s)**	**Theme** (group of positions)
I don't know how much I can help you	2, 6, 10, 17	**Performative positioning of self**
I kind of know vaguely what it is	1	**Accountive positioning of self**
I don't know enough about this	2, 9, 11	
Incredibly little	3	
I don't know what it is	16	
I don't think other teachers in the school know much about it	3	**Performative positioning of others**
If you asked most people what they NIF is, they wouldn't be able to tell you	11	

Storyline – purpose of NIF

Positions (codes)	**Interview No(s)**	**Theme** (group of positions)
Implement Curriculum for Excellence	1	**To set out vision**
Government initiative or plan for Scotland	5, 10, 12	
To get a standardised framework for schools	7	
Lift ourselves in schools	6	
Achieving excellence	8	
Achieving equity	8, 9	
Contains or sets out drivers	8	
Closing the gap	5, 8, 9, 10	
Every school and local authority working towards the same goal	9, 10	
Contains steps or actions to be taken by Government	9	
Impact on pupil or child progress	1	**Improving attainment**
Improve or raising attainment in Scotland	4, 10, 15	
Improve or raising attainment for pupils or young people	5, 8, 14	
Track schools and children in relation to different levels of CfE	7	
Focus on improving pupils learning	14	
Training for teachers	14	**Teacher professionalism**
Teacher professionalism	9, 12	

Storyline – perception of NIF

Positions (codes)	**Interview No(s)**	**Theme** (group of positions)
Document or paper, pages of stuff	2, 4, 10, 14, 15	**A textual document**
It's a diagram or visual	8, 9	
It's a new name or label	1, 15	**New name: existing practices**
Something I've always done	1	
Been around for a while	1, 15	
Blends into one big thing	1, 10, 12	
Muddled	1, 8	**Requires clarity**
Vague	1, 14	
Abstract	17	
Unsure what it means	3	
Can't get to the 'nitty gritty' of it	3, 8, 17	
Jargon	3, 14	
Not user friendly	14	

Storyline – source of knowledge of the NIF

Positions (codes)	**Interview No(s)**	**Theme** (group of positions)
Mentioned in passing	15, 10, 17, 3	**Forced awareness**
In-service days	1, 2, 5, 15	
Collegiate sessions	7, 8, 9	
Through other teachers	7	
Document given to teacher/put in their pigeon hole	10	**Voluntary awareness**
Through postgraduate studies	3, 4, 10, 11, 14	
Talking time for yourself	17	
Not been spoken about in school	4, 11, 17	

Storyline – impact of the NIF

Positions (codes)	**Interview No(s)**	**Theme** (group of positions)
NIF has no impact	1, 3, 17	**No impact**
Awareness of need to track pupil progress	2	**Greater awareness of issues**
Involving parents and community more in life of school	9	
Raised awareness of issues to be focusing on	10, 12	
Raised awareness of standardised testing through HT or/and school collegiate	3, 6, 11	
Mythical awareness of standardised testing/grapevine	1, 17	
Raised awareness of standardised tests through union	3	
Reinforces existing good practice	10, 9	
Teachers time to do research	1	**Pupil equity funding**
PEF and improvement	3	
Taking on Early years officer	4	
Shopping list of things wanted	8	
Nurture clubs for identified pupils for example, swimming	4	
Infants get priority	12, 11	
Accessing training by another school	16	
Overwhelmed with assessment – couldn't do anymore	5	**Impact on assessment practices**
Increase in assessment this year	5	
Assessment is getting drummed into us…doing more with formative assessment	5	
More 'formal' assessment this year…to be able to prove it to HT	9	
Piloting of standardised testing	14	
Testing impacting on class sizes	2	
Informing school improvement planning	13, 14	
Introduction of an assessment calendar	13	
Having to measure benchmarks…we are talking about this for next year	15	
Change from using own benchmarks to government ones for next year	1	
Using benchmarks to help make a judgement	10	
Know where children are, supposed to be, targets and levels they have	9	**Tracking of pupil progress**
More 'formal' assessment	9	
Tracking progress using a chart, including SIMD	10	
Tracking becoming more 'traditional'	2	
Uncomfortable with tracking	2	
Having robust records	2	
New tracking system	6, 16	

Monitoring and tracking meetings	16	
Questioning data	16	
Level not always representative of achievement	11, 12, 15	
Doing pupils injustice, not a true reflection	11, 12, 15	
Pressure on results	6	
Evidence of premature judgements	3	

Storyline – links with Curriculum for Excellence

Positions (codes)	**Interview No(s)**	**Theme** (group of positions)
Moving towards a taught or planned curriculum	12	**Tension with curriculum**
Curriculum becoming more formalised…back towards 5-14	9	
Assessment arrangements constrain curriculum	4	
Contradiction with flexibility and pupil led/pupil centred curriculum	5	
Part of the 'gap' caused by CfE	11	
More 'joined-up-ness'	7	
Provision of a coherent progression structure	16	
Achieving recommendations of the OECD	15	**Tension with assessment**
Contradiction between AiFL approach of CfE and standardised assessment	10	
Contradiction with CfE mantra of creativity, opening thinking	14	
Reduction in autonomy of teachers through standardised assessments	8	
Testing is foreign to pupils because of CfE	2	
CfE is about every child being successful…not just on a test	4	
NIF does not help to measures what CfE actually features	17	
CfE is about depth and breadth...not about performing in a test	10	
It's not just about sitting down and doing sums	6	

Appendix 7 Letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

7 January 2019

Mr John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister/Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Mr Swinney

Doctoral study -
Forming of the National Improvement Framework

I have submitted a thesis for examination for the Degree of Doctor of Education at the University of Strathclyde. My study examined how teachers are forming the National Improvement Framework (NIF) at school level. I undertook interviews with seventeen primary school teachers during May and June 2017 and thought you might be interesting in my findings.

I found that:

- Teachers position their pupils as important and do what they can with available resources to meet their needs.
- The NIF is a priority for schools, but not all teachers recognised what it sets out to do.
- Schools and teachers were aware of the need to 'close the gap'.
- There is a sense of accountability felt by teachers and schools. Consequentially, a number of practices around tracking, discussing and reporting data have been formed by schools, although sometimes resisted by teachers.
- Some teachers feel recording 'achieved' or 'not achieved' a CfE level (e.g. for literacy and numeracy) does not reflect progress within a level. These teachers feel they are doing their pupils an "injustice".
- Pupil equity funding is sometimes being prioritised for certain children in P1-P3 based on locally-devised criteria.
- Some teachers felt their professionalism was being constrained and the practices noted above were not always in keeping with the ethos of CfE.

I have made recommendations based on my findings and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with you.

Yours sincerely

Lee Coutts
E-mail: lee.coutts@strath.ac.uk