

**Funds of knowledge in primary education: understanding ‘distance’ in the classroom and curriculum as a complex and changing space**

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# **Abstract**

From September 2019 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England has used the concept of cultural capital to measure a school’s performance. This thesis analyses how Ofsted uses its power to construct a problem to fit the intended solution – what Wood (2019) describes as a ’circular discourse’ (p. 790). Ofsted's (2021d) understanding of cultural capital as the solution to the problem of children’s deficit of ‘essential knowledge’ (p. 37, p. 38) is contrasted with the work of Bourdieu.

Ofsted’s use of cultural capital provided the impetus for this research in a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) the thesis explores how Ofsted has adapted the concept of cultural capital, and examines the impact on equality in education of introducing cultural capital into the Education Inspection Framework (EIF). Alternative theories are explored through semi-structured focus group interviews with teachers to evidence explanations for teachers' understanding of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment.

The key findings from this study evidence that teachers use the knowledge valued by diverse social groups to enrich the basic curriculum entitlement of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the National Curriculum. The concept of funds of knowledge offers a set of conceptual tools which can be used to reduce ‘distance’ in the primary classroom and create curriculum as lived experience accessible to all children. This study makes recommendations for policy and practice including the explicit use of children’s interests to inform teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Further, this study makes an original contribution to knowledge by conceptualising curriculum as a complex and changing space.

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

In September 2019 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) updated the education inspection framework[[1]](#footnote-1) (EIF) (2021a) for England, with a further update in 2021. This led to the publication of an updated school inspection handbook[[2]](#footnote-2) (handbook) (2021d). The handbook makes a reference to the concept of cultural capital within a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides:

‘As part of making the judgement about the quality of education, inspectors will consider the extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Our understanding of ‘knowledge and cultural capital’ is derived from the following wording in the National Curriculum:

It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38).

Cultural capital is a component of Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theory of social and cultural reproduction. Bourdieu (1986) later developed the concept in subsequent work which explored the different forms of capital. The definition of cultural capital used by Ofsted differs markedly from Bourdieu’s definition. I will provide a brief overview of the two definitions before sharing my initial reflections on the reference to cultural capital in the handbook and explaining how these reflections became the catalyst for my research.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) divided the concept of capital into three forms: economic, cultural and social (p. 3). Bourdieu (1986) contended that capital is the cumulative effect of labour in all its forms and that it is a force which predetermines and maintains the unequal structure of society (p. 280). Economic capital is assets and resources which can be directly monetarised, cultural capital is knowledge and skills which have the potential to be monetarised and social capital is social connections which have the potential to be monetarised, but less so than cultural capital (Ibid, p. 281). Primarily society is focused on economic capital, or economic exchange, because it can be directly monetarised and less so on cultural and social capital (Ibid). However, Bourdieu states that cultural and social capital derive from economic capital and represent a transubstantiated form of economic exchange (Ibid). Therefore, for Bourdieu this makes cultural and social capital of equal interest to economic capital.

Bourdieu (1986) divided the concept of cultural capital into three states: embodied, objectified and institutionalised (p. 282). The embodied state of cultural capital is the impact of substantial economic capital on a person’s inherent qualities and their subsequent behaviours (Ibid, p. 283). The objectified state of cultural capital is the ability to consume cultural objects (Ibid, p. 285). The institutionalised state of cultural capital is cultural knowledge institutionalised within an academic qualification (Ibid). Bourdieu stated that the fundamental representation of cultural capital is the embodied state which is approximated to economic capital and is, in effect, ‘embodied capital’ (Ibid, p. 283).

In the EIF, including the handbook, Ofsted make no reference to the concept of capital to contextualise the definition of cultural capital they have used. Ofsted contends that cultural capital is ‘the best that has been thought and said’ and ‘an appreciation of human creativity and achievement’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). This conceptualisation of cultural capital is expanded on in a special edition school inspection update[[3]](#footnote-3) (SIU) (2019) which sets out the rationale for the changes to the EIF (Ofsted, 2019, p. 1). The SIU equates cultural capital with ‘an appreciation of great works of art, music and literature’ (Ibid, p. 8). This conceptualisation is aligned with Bourdieu’s (1986) objectified state of cultural capital. To summarise, Bourdieu’s definition of cultural capital is embodied economic capital, in contrast to Ofsted’s definition of cultural capital which is the ability to value cultural objects.

I am a headteacher of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school in England. The age range of the children that attend the school is 3 to 11-years-old. The majority of children are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. The percentage of children at the school supported by pupil premium funding[[4]](#footnote-4) and with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. I found the reference to the concept of cultural capital in the Ofsted handbook thought-provoking. For Ofsted (2021d) the acquisition of cultural capital, the ability to value cultural objects, is a prerequisite to becoming an educated citizen (p. 37, p. 38). I am an educated citizen. I am a White man with working class parents who were born in South-East London. I grew up in South-East London, I attended a single-sex grammar school until the age of 18 and then moved on to higher education. My husband is an educated citizen. He is a Black man with working class parents who were born in Jamaica and emigrated to England. He grew up in South-West Coventry, he attended a mixed-sex Church of England grammar school until the age of 18 and then moved on to higher education. The cultural capital that my husband and I have acquired is different, yet we would both be considered educated citizens. In fact, all educated citizens will have differing cultural capital. From my perspective as a headteacher, the juxtaposition between the Ofsted definition, and everyday life experiences, I have started to question whose cultural capital should I be equipping the children at my school with to enable them to ‘succeed in life’ (Ibid)? Which cultural objects do they need to be able to value? Further, is it possible for a primary school to equip children with cultural capital? Possible answers to these questions depend on the definition of cultural capital being used; it would seem to be more straight forward to equip children with the ability to value cultural objects than it would be to equip children with embodied economic capital.

These questions became a catalyst for more questions and led to a determination to understand different perspectives on what cultural capital is because my experience of working in different primary schools found it to be more than ‘the best that has been thought and said’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Furthermore, I aim to explore why Ofsted think cultural capital should be a measure of the quality of education and what the impact may be on primary-aged children of introducing this measure. Moreover, by reflecting on my experience of cultural capital I started to question my epistemology and subsequently the epistemology of the statutory curricula: the Early Years Foundation Stage[[5]](#footnote-5) (EYFS) and the National Curriculum[[6]](#footnote-6). Given this, I resolved to investigate the impact on curriculum development and subsequently on children’s learning if we thought about knowledge from a different perspective. In the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for the EYFS and the National Curriculum by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities which maximise children’s engagement in learning in the classroom. The questions provoked by the reference to cultural capital in the Ofsted handbook, coupled with this mandate, created the impetus for my research.

Therefore, my thesis is focused on teachers’ perspectives of the impact on primary-aged children of the definition of cultural capital in the Ofsted handbook, and the impact on curriculum development and learning of thinking about knowledge from a different perspective. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of my thesis. To start I expand on the context for my research and then I set out the research focus, questions and design. Next, I explain the impact of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on my research. In the following section, I explore my positionality before considering the significance of my research and how it could contribute to the field. I then provide an outline of the thesis structure before concluding the chapter.

## **1.2 Context**

Given the purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of my thesis the context provided for my research in this section will necessarily be brief. However, the context for my research will be examined in more depth in chapter 2 when I conduct a literature review. In this section, I start by identifying how the Great Education Debate of 1976 changed the context for education and how this became a factor in the emergence and dominance of neoliberalism, exploring a definition for this term. Next, I make a link between neoliberalism, performativity and the marketisation of education, and in doing so explore definitions for these terms. To conclude this section I summarise the context for education now.

The Ofsted handbook is a policy text because it is a legal document which sets out decisions made by government with the intent to effect change (Winter and Mills, 2018, p. 2). It is a policy text which sits within and is the product of a specific context for education which started with the Great Education Debate of 1976. Before the Great Education Debate of 1976 there existed a markedly different context for education. A national commitment to the principle of universal and free education for all children from 5 to 16-years-old had been formalised in the Education Act 1944; a commitment which would be delivered locally (Ball, 2017, p. 75). A system of Local Education Authorities was created which would deliver education for 5 to 11-year-old children using primary schools and for 11 to 16-year-old children using different types of secondary schools: primarily grammar[[7]](#footnote-7) and secondary modern[[8]](#footnote-8) (Ibid). However, from the 1950s onwards criticism of the system for the local delivery of secondary education led to the emergence of comprehensive[[9]](#footnote-9) schools which were intended to meet the demand for new types of skilled workers and counter the ‘illogicality’ of the existing system of grammar and secondary modern schools (Ibid, p. 77). By 1976 it seemed that the increasing number of locally governed comprehensive schools at the expense of grammar schools, and the progressive ideas which led to the conception of comprehensive schools would continue to dominate the context for education (Ibid, p. 79).

However, during the Great Education Debate of 1976 the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, made public a causal relationship between education and the economy which created a mandate for more direct intervention into education at the national level (Ball, 2017, p. 1, p. 65). Following an extended period of procrastination and tentative first steps at reform with the Education Act 1980, the Education Reform Act 1988, an archetypal public sector policy of the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, formalised the relationship between education and the economy (Ball, 2017, p. 83, p. 85; Sahlberg, 2011, p. 174), underpinned by a ‘core curriculum’ for maintained primary and secondary schools. Today those ideas continue to influence the national and international context for education policy, which prioritises the principles of competition between schools, autonomy for schools, parental choice and a comparable measure of children’s performance (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 174).

The commonalities of the public sector policies of Margaret Thatcher, including the Education Reform Act 1988, can be ascribed to neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a complex term which denotes the extension of market relationships into the public sector. This complexity is evidenced by Larner (2000) who identifies three different interpretations of neoliberalism: a policy framework, an ideology and a discourse (p. 6). For policy framework, neoliberalism is interpreted to mark the shift from welfarism. In response to globalisation governments have introduced market relationships into public sector policy making to try to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the economy (Larner, 2000, p. 7). Neoliberalism represents a revision of a policy framework which provided the impetus for the dismantling of the public sector policies of welfarism (Ibid, p. 6). For ideology, neoliberalism is understood to be more than the top-down implementation of policy. Neoliberalism is interpreted to have changed the world view of people from differing social positions; it constitutes a change in political thought and argument which makes it an ideology (Ibid, p. 9). For discourse, neoliberalism is understood to be more than the rhetoric advocated by a hegemonic political group (Ibid, p. 12). Neoliberalism is interpreted to have permeated identities, practices and institutions; it is a discourse because it shapes meaning (Ibid). This interpretation of neoliberalism fits with my understanding of discourse: it is more than language. According to Gee (2005) discourse is the interaction of differing components including ‘language, actions, interactions’ which shape social identity (p. 21). A position supported by Fairclough (1995) and Foucault’s (1972) understanding of discourse; both make a connection between the structure of discourse, with language a component, and how it shapes meaning within society.

I ascribe to the interpretation of neoliberalism as a discourse because my experience of working in different primary schools is that both individuals (teachers) and institutions (schools) have been, and continue to be, encouraged to conform to the norms of the market in their practices (Larner, 2000, p. 12). An experience which supports my understanding of discourse as more than language. Further, I consider that this interpretation provides an explanation for why the idea of a causal relationship between education and the economy would be a factor in the emergence and dominance of neoliberalism. The idea of a causal relationship between education and the economy redefines the role of education within the state; it re-shapes the meaning of education. Instead of a service to improve human development and social well-being, education becomes a mechanism for improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the economy. It is an idea which fits with the neoliberal tenet of more market (Ibid, p. 5). A tenet which led to the extension of market relationships into the public sector and evidences the shift from welfarism. While the evidence of the neoliberal tenet of more market in the public sector is profuse, to further contextualise my research I intend to briefly explore two examples of this: performativity and the marketisation of education.

Performativity is defined by Ball (2003) to be a technology[[10]](#footnote-10) which simplifies complex social interactions for the purpose of public judgement and comparison (p. 217). The performances of individuals and institutions within the public sector become a measure of productivity representative of their value within a field of judgement (Ball, 2003, p. 216). For example, the complex social interactions within a primary school will be simplified to standard attainment tests[[11]](#footnote-11) (SATs). SATs then become the measure of productivity for a primary school representing its value within the field of education and facilitating a judgement of its performance which is compared in published performance tables[[12]](#footnote-12). The performances of individuals and institutions are invariably a quantitative measure of productivity and subsequently understood to represent an objective measure of value. This is premised on the false assumption that performativity can be depoliticised. Every individual and institution will have a value system comprised of moral, competency, personal and social values which will influence their attitudes and behaviour (Greenbank, 2003, p. 791). It is possible to neutralise the impact of moral, personal and social values on attitudes and behaviour. However, it is not possible to neutralise the impact of competency values, which influence how a decision is made, on attitudes and behaviour (Ibid). The decisions made in constructing the technology of performativity, for example how the performance of a primary school will be measured, will therefore be politicised and represent a subjective measure of value. This is further evidenced by Ball (2003) who contends that the purpose of public judgement and comparison, of performativity, is to incentivise and control towards an expected outcome (p. 216). For education the expected outcome is that the application of the neoliberal tenet of more market to teachers and schools will improve their efficiency and competitiveness and a priori the efficiency and competitiveness of the economy. This is an expected outcome which is shaped by a dominant political discourse: neoliberalism.

The impact of neoliberalism on the identities, practices and institutions of the public sector is evident in the technology of performativity. For education, the neoliberal tenet of more market is further evidenced in the emergence and dominance of a commitment to market mechanisms to facilitate educational practice in response to performativity. Apple (2001) contends that performativity demands the constant production of evidence of the performance of teachers and schools (p. 413). Given this, teachers and schools have to introduce more market into their practices to be able to demonstrate the entrepreneurial activity necessary to satisfy the government’s understanding of the function of education: to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the economy (Apple, 2001, p. 413). In effect, the conditions of performativity have created a context in which education is a marketable commodity and educational outcomes have to be reducible to standardised performance indicators (Ibid, p. 416). Examples of standardised performance indicators for education include SATs, performance related pay[[13]](#footnote-13) and performance tables. These market mechanisms enable teachers and schools to demonstrate their effectiveness, and provide the government with the evidence to judge and compare their performance leading to rewards or sanctions (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

To contextualise my research I have identified how the Great Education Debate of 1976 changed the context for education and became a factor in the emergence and dominance of neoliberalism. Further, I have linked neoliberalism with performativity and the marketisation of education, providing definitions for all three of these terms. Given this, and in summary, what is the context for education now? I would contend that the key principles of competition between schools, autonomy for schools, parental choice and a comparable measure of children’s performance set out in the Education Reform Act 1988 have become entrenched (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 174). This is evidenced in the majority of children in England now attending an academy[[14]](#footnote-14) (Sodha, 2019). Moreover, the discourse of neoliberalism continues to shape the meaning of the identities, practices and institutions of the public sector, including for education, evidenced in the continued commitment to using market mechanisms to facilitate educational practice. In the next section of this chapter I set out the research focus before moving on to the research questions and design.

## **1.3 Research focus**

At the start of this chapter I identified questions provoked by the reference to cultural capital in the Ofsted handbook and set out my understanding of the role of a headteacher. In conjunction with the context for my research these indicate that the area of the proposed study is an investigation of how Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) have adapted the concept of cultural capital; the potential impact on equality in education of introducing cultural capital into the EIF; and given my resolution to think about knowledge from a different perspective, to consider which alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice. O’Leary (2005) contends that if research is understood to be a process of decision making then every decision should be a step towards addressing a research question (p. 33). Given this, if I have an indication of the area of the proposed study then a few more decisions about the research focus can be made which will be steps towards formulating the research questions.

The proposed study will be a qualitative inquiry. This is because the focus on the classroom determines that I am interested in human interactions (Agee, 2009, p. 432). Addressing the research questions should promote an improved understanding of the social interactions in the classroom; of the relationship between the child and the teacher.If the intention is to improve classroom practice by examining social interactions in the classroom, then this will incorporate improving the quality of action within the classroom (Ginsburg et al., 1996, p. 246). If the intention is to improve the quality of action within the classroom, then this will lead to collaboration with the actors in the classroom (Ibid). It would seem inevitable that given my role in the school and the role of the teacher in the classroom that participants in the proposed study will become involved in the process of qualitative inquiry (Agee, 2009, p. 432). Tentatively this would indicate that the proposed study is interpretivist given the primary focus on social interactions in the classroom. Addressing the research questions will impact on classroom practice in my school. Therefore, the primary function of the proposed study is instrumental, to influence practice, instead of conceptual, to influence policy (Ginsburg et al., 1996, p. 245). However, I understand that in making a decision about classroom practice in my school there is a possibility of influencing classroom practice outside of my school, which would be indicative of a more conceptual function for the proposed study.

In summary, the area of the proposed study is to investigate the potential impact on equality in education of Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) introducing an adaptation of the concept of cultural capital into the EIF. This will be coupled with an investigation of the potential impact of using a different perspective on knowledge for curriculum development and learning in the primary classroom. The proposed study will be interpretivist, with a primary function of influencing practice. Having set out the research focus I will now move on to the research questions.

## **1.4 Research questions**

Given the area of the proposed study the objectives of my research include:

1. To conduct a critical analysis of the concept of cultural capital originally defined by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1986).
2. To conduct a critical analysis of how Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) have adapted the concept of cultural capital.
3. To conduct a critical analysis of the concept of funds of knowledge originally defined by Moll et al. (1992).
4. To explore the relationship between the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge using Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theory of cultural arbitrary.
5. To explore and compare alternative concepts, including funds of knowledge, which might inform teachers’ practice.
6. To investigate how a school can use its curriculum to give children the ‘knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38).
7. To investigate the potential impact on equality in education of introducing the concept of cultural capital into the EIF.
8. To explore teachers’ understanding of the concept of funds of knowledge.
9. To investigate if teachers can identify children’s funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures and communities.
10. To consider the potential of the concept of funds of knowledge for securing equality in education.

By identifying that the proposed study will be interpretivist I understand that, in collaboration with teachers, I will be attempting to find out what is going on in the classroom for the purpose of developing practice which will effect change and improve outcomes for children (Brownhill et al., 2017, p. 2). Therefore, having set out the scope of the proposed study with the objectives of my research the next step in the decision making process is to construct research questions which focus on this change by addressing these objectives (Ibid).

I have constructed the following research questions for the proposed study:

1. How have Ofsted adapted the concept of cultural capital to improve equality in education?

The first research question is a prerequisite for the following research questions. To understand the potential impact on equality in education of introducing the concept of cultural capital into the EIF (Ofsted, 2021a) and to explore and compare alternative concepts, including funds of knowledge, which might inform teachers’ practice I need to have a critical understanding of how Ofsted have adapted cultural capital to improve equality in education.

1. What alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice?

The inclusion of cultural capital in the EIF is significant because the concept is a component of Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theory of symbolic violence, and of Bourdieu’s (1986) subsequent work on the different forms of capital. Bourdieu and Passeron argue that the production and reproduction of an unequal structure in a society is caused, in part, by the action of the school (p. 5, p. 11, p. 47). Bourdieu argues that the fundamental representation of cultural capital is ‘embodied capital’ (p. 283). Therefore, within a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides, the introduction of cultural capital into the EIF makes it a responsibility of the school to tackle social inequality by using its curriculum to embody cultural capital in children (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Given this, I need to investigate how a school can use its curriculum to give children the ‘knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life’ (Ibid), and explore and compare alternative concepts, including funds of knowledge, which might inform teachers’ practice.

1. How do teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment?

For schools in England there currently exist two statutory curricula: the EYFS and the National Curriculum. I have previously stated that in the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for statutory curricula by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom. The pedagogical framework designed by school leaders and teachers will shape pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. The EYFS and the National Curriculum set out what children will learn. Primarily, the purpose of a school curriculum is to contextualise the EYFS and the National Curriculum; how children will complete the ‘areas of learning’ set out in the EYFS (DfE, 2020b, para. 5) and the ‘programmes of study’ set out in the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013b, p. 4). If teachers can understand and demonstrate the potential to utilise children’s funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures and communities, then there is the potential for school leaders and teachers to design the pedagogical framework, and in the process contextualise the EYFS and the National Curriculum, differently. Next, I outline the research design.

## **1.5 Research design**

The proposed study will be interpretivist because it is a collaborative qualitative inquiry focused on teachers’ knowledge and practice, specifically pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. The longer-term purpose of the proposed study is to develop practice which will effect change and improve outcomes for children. This research design, or methodology, will use two methods for data collection: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and semi-structured interviews with teachers. The method of CDA will be used in chapter 2, when I conduct a literature review, to support my understanding of how Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) have defined the concept of cultural capital.

The method of interview will be used to collect data which will evidence my explanation for teachers’ understanding of the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. The use of the method of interview will necessitate a small sample size due to limited resources. The participants in the research will be teachers at the school where I am a headteacher, therefore the maximum sample size will be 29 teachers. I understand this to be an exploratory sample given the small-scale of the proposed study (Denscombe, 2017, p. 34). The reason for selecting the method of interview is twofold. Firstly, interview is a method used in funds of knowledge research design to survey household and community resources. Secondly, to investigate teachers’ understanding of the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment the method selected will need to be able to collect data which will facilitate an in-depth understanding of teachers’ knowledge and practice (Ibid, p. 203). Given the reasons for selecting the method of interview, one-to-one and/or small group interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured format so interviewees can expand on ideas (Ibid, p. 204). I intend to conduct a pilot study of a semi-structured one-to-one or small group interview so that I can reflect on this methodological decision and make necessary adjustments. Next, I explain the impact of COVID-19 on my research.

## **1.6 The impact of COVID-19**

For my research it had been my intention to adapt Moll et al.’s (1992) methodology and for teachers to conduct face-to-face household interviews. However, post COVID-19 this would have been unethical. In section 3.7.3 I explain why this would have been unethical and subsequently how the focus of my research changed. Next, I explore my positionality before considering the significance of my research and how it could contribute to the field. I then provide an outline of the thesis structure before concluding the chapter.

## **1.7 Positionality**

If research is understood to be a process of decision making, with every decision a step towards addressing a research question, then all research is subjective because the assumptions of a researcher will be embedded in all decisions made (Jackson, 2013, p. 50; O’Leary, 2005, p. 33). Further, this would make all research interpretative because a researcher will choose how to utilise their assumptions when making a decision (Jackson, 2013, p. 50). A researcher’s assumptions comprise their beliefs and values, and their ontology and epistemology, which I contend is a product of a researcher’s lived experience (Ibid). It is a researcher’s assumptions which inform their positionality; their lived experience will determine the decisions which they will make and this will determine the outcome of their research (Ibid). This is why a prerequisite for all research should be an understanding of a researcher’s positionality. This is what I will now set out and revisit during the proposed study.

My career in education started with a career change; previously I worked in the finance and tourism industries. I found working in these industries to be financially rewarding. However, they were not philanthropically rewarding because they provided a limited sense of achievement and fulfilment which I realised over time would be necessary for my career. Having previously completed a bachelor’s degree the transition to education started with the completion of a postgraduate certificate in education in early years. For my first teaching position I taught a mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class in Key Stage 1 (KS1), 5 to 7-year-old children, at an inner-city two-form entry primary school in England. For the duration of my teaching career I have taught and led in inner-city primary schools in England. In my first year of teaching the school had an Ofsted inspection and moved from an overall effectiveness grade[[15]](#footnote-15) of ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’. Following completion of my newly qualified teacher induction year I continued to teach a mixed Year 1 and 2 class and led on information and communication technology[[16]](#footnote-16) (ICT) across the school. During this period in my teaching career teachers were still using the National Strategies[[17]](#footnote-17) and in particular the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy (DfE, 2011, p. 2). On reflection these strategies, which emphasised a primarily teacher-centred method and structured sequences of learning, had a significant impact on my understanding of pedagogy and continued to shape my teaching practice until I became a headteacher and stopped regular class teaching.

In my third year of teaching I became KS1 leader and instead of leading ICT I led English. I continued with those roles for a further year and I qualified to be an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST)[[18]](#footnote-18) specialising in the teaching of English. The following year I moved into Key Stage 2 (KS2) to teach a mixed Year 5 and Year 6 class, 10 to 11-year-old children, and take on the role of assistant headteacher leading on teaching and learning across the school. I decided that to further develop my teaching and leadership skills I needed to experience working at a different school so I agreed to a secondment at a local one-form entry primary school teaching a Year 5 class, 10-year-old children, and taking on the role of acting deputy headteacher leading on teaching and learning across the school. In my first term the school had an Ofsted inspection and moved from an overall effectiveness grade of ‘requires improvement’ to ‘good’. During the Ofsted inspection the lead inspector graded three of my lessons ‘outstanding’ (English, mathematics and science). In conjunction with the improved overall effectiveness grade for the school this led to an offer to take on the role of deputy headteacher, continuing to lead on teaching and learning, at a local three-form entry primary school with an overall effectiveness grade of ‘requires improvement’. In my first year I taught a Year 6 class, 11-year-old children, and the school had an Ofsted inspection and moved from an overall effectiveness grade of ‘requires improvement’ to ‘good’. The following year I taught a Year 1 class, 6-year-old children, and I started a master’s degree in leadership and innovation funded by the school.

For the master’s degree I completed a research project which developed a leadership model for securing ‘outstanding’ teaching quality over time. The master’s degree transformed my thinking because engaging in a process of inquiry led to an initial reflection and subsequently an emerging understanding of my ontology and epistemology. In the second year of my master’s degree I took on the role of headteacher at a local two-form entry primary school which due to three consecutive Ofsted inspections giving the school an overall effectiveness grade of ‘requires improvement’ had led to the school being significantly under subscribed. During the first year of being a headteacher I completed my master’s degree and in the second year the school had an Ofsted inspection and moved from an overall effectiveness grade of ‘requires improvement’ to ‘good’, including a leadership and management grade of ‘outstanding’. In the third year of being a headteacher I made the decision to apply for a doctorate of education, starting this programme of study in the fourth year. In the fifth year of being a headteacher I took on the role of Teaching School Director[[19]](#footnote-19) with a responsibility for coordinating the delivery of continuing professional development (CPD), school-to-school support and initial teacher training (ITT) for more than seventy local primary and secondary schools. I am now in my eighth year of being a headteacher at this school. The school is fully subscribed at two-forms of entry and from September 2019 we expanded to three-forms of entry in the Reception Year[[20]](#footnote-20), 5-year-old children, with the expectation that this additional class will eventually lead to the school becoming a three-form entry school in 2025. In January 2020, the school had an Ofsted inspection with the outcome that the school continues to be ‘good’ with ‘enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding’ if it were subject to a further inspection now (Ofsted, 2020b, p. 1). Given this outcome the school should have been re-inspected by Ofsted within twelve months. However, in March 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic Ofsted indefinitely suspended all routine inspections of schools (Ofsted, 2020a). The school converted to an academy in April 2021 and joined a local multi-academy trust (MAT) (more than one academy). In November 2021 Ofsted announced that all schools would be inspected by 2025 to determine ‘how well education is recovering from the pandemic’ (Ofsted, 2021b).

The school where I am headteacher is located in the inner-city in an area which is the focus of a long-term regeneration project. Due to its location, the school recently moved into a new school building constructed by the Priority School Building Programme[[21]](#footnote-21) (PSBP). The majority of children are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. The percentage of children at the school supported by pupil premium funding and with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The majority of staff are female and White British, however the percentage of staff that are male and from a minority ethnic group is above the national average. Given this, I would describe the school as a ‘super-diverse’ community (Tatham-Fashanu, 2021, p. 1).

My lived experience is why the area of the proposed study is of interest. I contend that for education a model of professional action is needed which is not focused on technical practice, but on moral practice (Biesta, 2007, p. 10). I understand teaching to be the application of informative professional judgement, not the application of technical causal interventions. This is why I intend to investigate the potential impact on equality in education of Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) introducing an adaptation of the concept of cultural capital into the EIF. Further, I contend that learning, the acquisition of knowledge, is the product of experience (Biesta, 2007, p. 14). Given this, what worked before will not necessarily work in the future and so evidence should guide my professional action not determine it. This is why I intend to investigate the impact of using a different perspective on knowledge for curriculum development and learning in the primary classroom. Before I consider the significance of the proposed study I will address my insider/outside status.

Merriam et al. (2001) argue that the boundaries between insider/outsider status are indistinct and that complexities exist within either status (p. 405). A researcher is not either an insider or an outsider with specific advantages and disadvantages tied to their status, for example that an insider will have a more ‘authentic understanding’ of the community they study or that an outsider will be more curious (Ibid, p. 405, p. 411). Merriam et al. use the concepts of positionality, power and representation to understand insider/outsider status which is a useful lens for further understanding my own positionality (p. 405). Given I am a member of the community that I am researching my position is ‘relatively inside’ (Ibid, p. 411). However, this position will be mediated by multiple factors, for example ethnicity, gender and religious affiliation, and therefore will be subject to change (Ibid). I understand that during the research process of the study I could become more or less relatively inside, or relatively outside. I am aware that all research will exist within a context in which power can be exercised over people (Pring, 2010, p. 187). Power relationships will need to be negotiated during the research process of the study (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 413). From this I understand that I will have to take steps to mitigate the power relationships which exist between myself and the community that I am researching.

## **1.8 Research significance**

The Ofsted handbook, a policy text, is already effecting change, albeit change mediated in practice, which is why this research needs to be done now. The role of Teaching School Director facilitates an understanding of school development plans for more than seventy local primary and secondary schools. Following the publication of the draft version of the handbook in January 2019, eight months before the publication of the final version, local primary and secondary schools immediately started to review curriculum content to work out if the ‘cultural capital’ children need to ‘succeed in life’ and to be ‘educated citizens’ is included or not (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). However, it should be made explicit that a tension exists within the area of the proposed study between the handbook as policy text, the mandate Ofsted have to inspect a school, and the mandate I have in the role of headteacher.

An investigation of the potential impact on equality in education of Ofsted introducing an adaptation of the concept of cultural capital into the EIF sits in opposition to an investigation of the potential impact of using a different perspective on knowledge for curriculum development and learning in the primary classroom. Ofsted introducing an adaptation of the concept of cultural capital into the EIF is a top-down, policy-driven approach to curriculum which will need to be mediated by teachers. Given the majority of children at the school where I am headteacher are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language mediation by teachers, including myself, will need to be extensive (the context of the school is set out in section 4.2). Moreover, different primary schools will mediate Ofsted’s approach to curriculum differently, dependent on their context. In contrast, using a different perspective on knowledge for curriculum development and learning in the primary classroom is a horizontal and situated approach to curriculum. A perspective which in 2004 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) advised schools to use to promote the inclusion of ethnic minority children: funds of knowledge ‘enriches a school in a range of valuable ways’ (DfES, 2004, p. 10). This is how I have interpreted the mandate I have in the role of headteacher; different headteachers will interpret this mandate differently, on a spectrum from policy compliance to policy resistance. I will now outline the structure of the thesis before concluding the introduction.

## **1.9 Thesis structure**

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following the introduction is a literature review. In chapter 2, I set out the theoretical framework for the study by engaging in a critical analysis of the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge. I will describe how Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) define cultural capital; I will use CDA to support my understanding of Ofsted’s definition. I will describe how Moll et al. (1992) use the work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992) to define funds of knowledge within the context of education. Further, in chapter 2 I position the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within key perspectives on the concept of curriculum, I will critically analyse and compare Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and I will critically analyse Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge.

Chapter 3 will be focused on methodology and methods including an in-depth exploration of my ontology and epistemology. I set out the methodology constructed, interpretivist, and justify the methods selected including consideration of the strengths and limitations of these methods. This chapter will include a discussion of ethical issues including ethical reflections post COVID-19. At the end of chapter 3 I address the first and second research questions. The next chapter is focused on an analysis of the data and the identification of key findings. To analyse the data I will primarily use Braun and Clarke’s (2006) method of thematic analysis. I will summarise how I conducted the thematic analysis of the data and the key themes identified from it. In chapter 5, I discuss the key findings to address the third research question in the context of the key literature and the theoretical framework. In the concluding chapter, I make recommendations for policy and practice, set out my original contribution to knowledge and evaluate the strengths and limitations of the study. I will conclude the chapter, and the thesis, with recommendations for future research and a reflection on my research journey.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

The discourse of neoliberalism continues to shape the meaning of the identities, practices and institutions of education. This is evidenced in the entrenchment of competition between schools, autonomy for schools, parental choice and a comparable measure of children’s performance, and a continued commitment to using market mechanisms to facilitate educational practice. This is not expected to change in the immediate future. In 2019, following the election of a Conservative majority government, Ofsted were given increased authority and funding to ‘raise school standards’ (Merrick, 2019). I contend that using the Ofsted definition of cultural capital to measure the quality of education is a significant revision of government policy on curriculum which is already effecting change in schools. The proposed study presents an opportunity to explore teachers’ perspectives of the potential impact on primary-aged children of this revision of government policy on curriculum, and investigate teachers’ perspectives of the potential impact on curriculum development and learning of thinking about knowledge from a different perspective. If this opportunity can support the school’s commitment to educational equality for primary-aged children by impacting on children’s engagement in learning in the classroom, then given my role of headteacher I have a responsibility to exploit it.

# **Chapter 2: Literature review**

## **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I start to address my research objectives and questions by conducting a critical review of the key literature. A literature review can have multiple purposes, but its main purpose is to locate and fit a study in a field (Wellington, 2015, p. 55). To locate and fit a study in a field a literature review will need to: provide an overview of the historical background and current context; identify relevant concepts and theories including the definition of key terms; and evaluate related research to underline the significance of the study and how it will contribute to the field in question (Ridley, 2012, p. 24). Within the overview of the current context a key focus will need to be the identification of ‘issues, debates and questions’ in a field (Ibid). Significantly, my engagement in the process of critically reviewing the key literature will lead to an understanding of where my ideas originate from and the potential to contribute to the field (Wellington et al., 2005, p. 73).

My research objectives and questions will be used to structure this chapter. Firstly, I set out the theoretical framework for the study. This section is framed by two objectives: a critical analysis of the concept of cultural capital and a critical analysis of the concept of funds of knowledge to try to understand how these concepts have been defined. To understand different definitions of cultural capital I will describe how Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (2019, 2021a, 2021d) define cultural capital and knowledge, and the relationship between these two concepts. I will use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to support my understanding of Ofsted’s definitions. To understand funds of knowledge I will describe how Moll et al. (1992) use the work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992) to define this concept within the context of education. At the end of this section I will use the idea of a cultural arbitrary to explore the relationship between cultural capital and funds of knowledge.

Secondly, I position the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within key perspectives on the concept of curriculum and a specific example of a curriculum: the National Curriculum[[22]](#footnote-22) in England. Thirdly, I critically analyse and compare Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and knowledge, and critically analyse Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. I then conclude this chapter.

I have adopted a systematic approach to the literature review. I started by reading the following articles and books: Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986), Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) and Moll et al. (1992). This then led to search terms focused on these specific articles and books. When I had read Bourdieu and Passeron I used search terms related to this book, for example ‘pedagogic action’. Similarly, when I had read Bourdieu I used search terms related to this article, for example ‘habitus’, ‘field’ and ‘practice. The broader context for this study, the policy/practice interface in primary education, provided the parameters for the search. When I had read Moll et al. I focused my search on funds of knowledge studies conducted in England. Given a literature review is an iterative process the initial search terms would have been adapted.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

I intend to use the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986), Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) and Moll et al. (1992) to explore the relationship between the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge, and why these are significant in the current education context in England. This will provide a theoretical framework for the study.

### 2.2.1 Understanding Bourdieu

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) initially defined the concept of cultural capital within a theory of symbolic violence. Bourdieu (1986) later developed the concept in subsequent work which explored the different forms of capital.

#### 2.2.1.1 Cultural capital

For Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) power is arbitrary which makes it symbolic violence (p. 4). They use the concept of pedagogic action to explain this argument (Ibid, p. 5). Pedagogic action is when the dominant group in a society exerts power by imposing a cultural arbitrary, or arbitrary meanings and values, on what Bourdieu and Passeron label the ‘subordinate’[[23]](#footnote-23) groups in a society (Ibid). These meanings and values are arbitrary because they have no absolute justification (Ibid). The dominant social group works to conceal the arbitrariness of these meanings and values; it is their belief in the intrinsic merit of these meanings and values which makes it difficult for ‘subordinate’ social groups to challenge them (Ibid). I understand that for Bourdieu and Passeron this is what makes power arbitrary and therefore symbolic violence: it is the forceful imposition of a cultural arbitrary. It is this idea of a cultural arbitrary which leads to the concept of cultural capital.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) expand on the idea of a cultural arbitrary by describing how it is reproduced in a society. They attribute this to three different modes of pedagogic action and these modes can be either explicit or implicit (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5, p. 47). The explicit modes of pedagogic action are the family and the school, both of which have significant impact, or pedagogic authority, when imposing a cultural arbitrary (Ibid, p. 5, p. 11, p. 47). The implicit mode of pedagogic action is social interaction which has less impact when imposing a cultural arbitrary (Ibid, p.5, p. 47). Bourdieu and Passeron argue that pedagogic authority is determined by the effectiveness of pedagogic work; how effective a mode of pedagogic action is at internalising a cultural arbitrary in a society (Ibid, p. 31). Pedagogic work will be more intensive and sustained over a longer period of time in the family and the school, which is why these modes of pedagogic action will be more effective at internalising a cultural arbitrary (Ibid). It is from the internalisation of a cultural arbitrary in members of a society that the concept of cultural capital emerges.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that the effective internalisation of a cultural arbitrary in a society leads to the production of a habitus in members of that society (p. 31). The concept of habitus is defined as the compound of ‘pedagogic ethos’ and ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 45). Pedagogic ethos is defined as the internalisation of the principles of a cultural arbitrary which will govern the practice of a member of a society even when the pedagogic action has stopped, for example when they have left school, therefore securing the generational reproduction of the cultural arbitrary in a society (Ibid, p. 31). Cultural capital is defined as the accumulated ‘cultural goods’ transmitted by the pedagogic action of the family, for example language competencies which will contribute to academic success, with the value of the cultural capital determined by the difference between the cultural arbitrary of the family and the cultural arbitrary of the dominant social group (Ibid, p. 30, p. 73). Therefore, the extent to which the cultural arbitrary in a society will be generationally reproduced is the outcome of the disposition of a member of a society towards pedagogic action and the institution exerting it, for example the school, and the value of a member of society’s cultural capital relative to the cultural arbitrary of a dominant group (Ibid, p. 30).

In summary, Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) position is that social and cultural reproduction in a society is the outcome of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is defined as a dominant social group imposing a cultural arbitrary, that is arbitrary meanings and values, on ‘subordinate’ social groups by instilling a belief in its intrinsic merit; the arbitrariness of the meanings and values imposed by a dominant group is not challenged by the ‘subordinate’ groups because they do not recognise it or they misrecognise it. The internalisation of a cultural arbitrary imposed by a dominant group leads to the production and reproduction of an unequal structure in a society. This is because those members of a society more closely aligned to a cultural arbitrary will have a greater understanding of its principles which will inform their practice and subsequently lead to a greater value attributed to their accumulated cultural capital. This is an outcome primarily determined by the pedagogic action of the family and reinforced by the pedagogic action of the school, and to a lesser extent the pedagogic action of social interaction. The concept of cultural capital is therefore understood to be both a determiner and a product of the class structure of a society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). Next, I describe how Bourdieu (1986) refines his definition of cultural capital in subsequent work.

In subsequent work Bourdieu (1986) positions the concept of cultural capital within the concept of capital (p. 280). He defines capital as the cumulative effect of labour in all its forms and therefore a force which predetermines and maintains the unequal structure in society (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 280). Bourdieu divides capital into three forms: economic, cultural and social (p. 281). Economic capital is defined as assets and resources which can be directly monetarised, cultural capital is defined as knowledge and skills which have the potential to be monetarised, and social capital is defined as social connections which also have the potential to be monetarised, but less so than cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 281). Bourdieu argues that society is focused on economic capital, or economic exchange, because it can be directly monetarised, and as a consequence less focused on cultural and social capital (Ibid). However, Bourdieu states that cultural and social capital derive from economic capital and, in and of themselves, represent a form of economic exchange (Ibid). Therefore, for Bourdieu, this makes cultural and social capital of equal interest to society as economic capital.

Compared to his previous work with Passeron, Bourdieu (1986) is more precise in subsequent work with how he defines the concept of cultural capital. He moves on from the idea of cultural capital as accumulated ‘cultural goods’ by explicitly dividing cultural capital into three states: embodied, objectified and institutionalised (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 30; Bourdieu, 1986, p. 282). The embodied state of cultural capital is the impact of substantial economic capital, or wealth, on a member of society’s principles and how this governs their practice and subsequent behaviours (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283). The objectified state of cultural capital is the ability to consume cultural objects, for example works of art (Ibid, p. 285). The institutionalised state of cultural capital is cultural knowledge institutionalised in the form of an academic qualification (Ibid). Bourdieu argues that the fundamental representation of cultural capital is the embodied state which he approximates to economic capital by describing it as ‘embodied capital’ (Ibid, p. 283). What also becomes clearer in his later work is the interdependency of the concepts used to construct Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theory of symbolic violence: capital, habitus, field and practice. Capital and habitus will interact to fix position within a field (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 280). A field is defined as a field of power and so would incorporate all types of institutions governed by norms (Ibid). The outcome of the interaction of capital and habitus within a field is practice, or action (Ibid). In summary, it is the interaction of these concepts which determines the trajectory for a member of society and subsequently their expected position within society.

To conclude this exploration of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of cultural capital I think it is necessary to expand on the idea of misrecognition because it will be useful when critically analysing and comparing Bourdieu and Ofsted’s conceptualisations of cultural capital. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that ‘subordinate’ social groups misrecognise as intrinsic merit the cultural arbitrary of a dominant social group. Bourdieu (1986) further develops this argument by asserting that because the fundamental representation of cultural capital is the embodied state, in effect embodied capital, the force it exerts within a field is misrecognised (p. 283). Instead of being recognised as a form of economic exchange it is recognised as ‘legitimate competence’ and so its contribution to the reproduction of a class structure in a society is significant, yet its impact is less likely to be mitigated against because the force it exerts is not recognised (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283, p. 284). I will now move on to think about Bourdieu’s understanding of what knowledge is and its relationship to cultural capital.

#### 2.2.1.2 Knowledge

By developing a theory of symbolic violence it would seem that Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) understand knowledge to be a social construct (p. 42). This is evidenced by Bourdieu and Passeron’s argument that the purpose of all pedagogic action, whichever mode is used, is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary using education (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). By imposing a cultural arbitrary, the family, the school and society are applying arbitrary meanings and values to what constitutes knowledge (Ibid). The family, the school and society work to conceal the arbitrariness of the meanings and values about the social construction and arbitrariness of dominant knowledge by instilling a belief in the intrinsic merit of the cultural arbitrary (Ibid). Therefore, when a dominant social group imposes a cultural arbitrary on ‘subordinate’ social groups, the pedagogic action works primarily to legitimise the knowledge valued by the dominant group and de-legitimise the knowledge valued by the ‘subordinate’ groups (Ibid, p. 42). However, for the members of ‘subordinate’ social groups the pedagogic action within the family will work to legitimise the knowledge they value and de-legitimise the knowledge valued by the dominant social group, countering the pedagogic action of the school and wider society (Ibid, p. 5). What can be inferred from this argument is that a change in the knowledge valued by a dominant social group will lead to a change in what is understood to be legitimate knowledge. Therefore, for Bourdieu the relationship between cultural capital and knowledge is complex: the acquisition of legitimate knowledge will not necessarily lead to the acquisition of cultural capital because cultural capital is understood to be more than the acquisition of legitimate knowledge and knowledge is understood to be culturally defined.

Next I describe how Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) defines cultural capital and knowledge and the relationship between these two concepts. This will evidence how Ofsted have adapted the concept of cultural capital, informed by the outcome of Ofsted’s ‘curriculum research’ (Ofsted and Spielman, 2017, para. 11) leading to the problematisation of school’s curricula and the introduction of an updated education inspection framework[[24]](#footnote-24) (EIF) (2021a) for the purpose of addressing this problem of practice (Wood, 2019, p. 787). This is a problem of practice Ofsted have constructed, a definition of cultural capital intended to shape school policy. Defining, or constructing, ‘problems of practice’ fits within Ofsted’s expanded remit, from inspecting schools to using their own research to determine effective practice in schools and subsequently desirable outcomes for children (Ibid).

### 2.2.2 Understanding Ofsted

In September 2019 Ofsted updated the EIF (2021a) for England which led to the publication of an updated school inspection handbook[[25]](#footnote-25) (handbook) (2021d) and a special edition school inspection update[[26]](#footnote-26) (SIU) (2019). I understand all of these texts to be policy because they are legal documents which set out decisions made by government with the intent to effect change; together they constitute a policy ensemble because they are a group of related policy texts (Ball, 1993, p. 14; Winter and Mills, 2018, p. 2). The context for the policy ensemble is summarised in chapter 1 (section 1.2). To support my understanding of how Ofsted defines cultural capital and knowledge and the relationship between these two concepts I will use CDA, Hyatt’s (2013) Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame (frame), which I will briefly describe in the next section.

#### 2.2.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is the critical analysis of language or discourse, with discourse understood to be more than language (section 1.2). Hyatt’s frame (2013) uses a discourse theory perspective to analyse the discourse in a policy text (p. 836). The construction and implementation of a policy text is understood to be the process of policy and this process is informed by the relations which exist within a system of power (Ibid). Therefore, the ideology of the dominant social or governing group in a society informs the process of policy leading to an ideological position becoming textualised in the construction of a policy and detextualised in the implementation of a policy (Ibid). Hyatt’s frame uses CDA to interrogate the relationship between language and the relations which exist within a system of power; language is understood to be a site of conflict (p. 837). In choosing the language for a policy text, decisions will have been made which are indicative of the ontological and epistemological position of the dominant social or governing group in a society (Hyatt, 2013, p. 837). In comparison to a policy text, an interrogation of the language used within a policy ensemble will lead to a more precise understanding of this ontological and epistemological position.

Hyatt’s frame (2013) uses a contextualising element to identify the aims and instruments of a policy text, or its drivers and levers, and to understand the authority of a policy text, or its warrant (p. 838). A deconstructing element uses CDA to engage with a policy text and includes criteria which can be used to analyse a policy text at both a macro and a micro level, for example modes of legitimation (macro) and lexico-grammatical construction (micro) (Ibid, p. 839-840). In section 3.7.1. I describe how I applied the method of Hyatt’s frame to the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d).

#### 2.2.2.2 Cultural capital

Ofsted (2021d) defines the concept of cultural capital in the Ofsted handbook within a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides, and this definition is expanded on in the EIF (2021a) and the special edition SIU (2019) (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Therefore, all three policy texts in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) will be used in this section to evidence how Ofsted have adapted the concept of cultural capital. In the handbook five references to how Ofsted define cultural capital have been made, in the EIF one reference is made and in the special edition SIU two references have been made. The references are shown in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: *References to how Ofsted define cultural capital in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EIF | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 | A list of factors which will be used by inspectors to evaluate the quality of education provided by a school. |
| Handbook | |
| Page | Reference |
| 37 - 38 | A brief description of how Ofsted intends to conceptualise cultural capital. |
| 41 | A list of factors which will be used by inspectors to evaluate the ‘impact’[[27]](#footnote-27) of the education provided by a school. |
| 43 | The grade descriptors for the quality of education judgement. |
| 71 | The grade descriptors for the quality of early years education[[28]](#footnote-28) judgement. |
| 79 | Guidance on how to apply the EIF to a maintained nursery school[[29]](#footnote-29). |
| Special edition SIU | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 | An explanation of why ‘disadvantaged pupils’[[30]](#footnote-30) may not be able to access cultural capital. |
| 10 | A brief description of how Ofsted intends to conceptualise cultural capital. |

However, the majority of the references in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) to how Ofsted define the concept of cultural capital have been duplicated, for example the references on pages 43 and 71 in the Ofsted handbook. Given this, only three references across the Ofsted policy ensemble will be used to support my understanding of how Ofsted define cultural capital. The references are shown in table 2.2.

Table 2.2: *Understanding cultural capital in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EIF | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 | ‘Leaders take on or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.’ |
| Handbook | |
| Page | Reference |
| 37 - 38 | ‘Our understanding of ‘knowledge and cultural capital’ is derived from the following wording in the National Curriculum:  ‘It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.’’ |
| Special edition SIU | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 | ‘A double unfairness is created when schools in disadvantaged areas feel pressure to narrow their curriculums in order to focus on headline results. So many disadvantaged pupils may not have access to cultural capital, both in the home and then in their school.’ |

In the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) no reference is made to broader concepts, for example the concept of capital, or theories, for example theories of reproduction, to contextualise the concept of cultural capital. Further, the impact of cultural capital is not dependent on its interaction with other concepts, for example habitus, field and practice. Given this, I contend that Ofsted understand cultural capital to be a stand-alone concept.

#### 2.2.2.3 Contextualising and deconstructing how Ofsted define cultural capital

Ofsted (2021d) defines the concept of cultural capital in the Ofsted handbook; it is aligned with the aims of the National Curriculum (p. 37, p. 38). In the special edition SIU Ofsted expand on the phrase ‘an appreciation of human creativity and achievement’ used in the definition of cultural capital by explaining that this equates to ‘an appreciation of great works of art, music and literature’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). Given this, I understand Ofsted’s definition of cultural capital to be aligned with Bourdieu’s (1986) objectified state of cultural capital: the ability to consume cultural objects, for example works of art (p. 285).

In the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the driver, or aim, for the introduction of the concept of cultural capital as a measure of a school’s performance is communicated explicitly. The acquisition of cultural capital will enable all children to become ‘educated citizens’ and ‘succeed in life’; without cultural capital children will be ‘disadvantaged’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). The principle lever, or instrument of policy, for the acquisition of cultural capital by children is that cultural capital forms part of a new judgment in the Ofsted handbook focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 33). If a school cannot secure this judgment during an Ofsted inspection then there is a risk that it will get an overall effectiveness grade[[31]](#footnote-31) of ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 35, p. 36).

Further to the drivers and levers the contextualising element of Hyatt’s frame (2013) is used to determine the authority of a policy, or its warrant (p. 839). Warrant is subdivided into different categories: evidentiary, accountability and political (Ibid). Evidentiary warrant determines authority by using evidence, frequently presented to be objective to further underline its authority (Ibid). Accountability warrant determines authority by using measurable outcomes (Ibid). Political warrant determines authority by using public interest; frequently linked to arguments focused on how to improve society (Ibid). It is my view that in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the warrant for the introduction of the concept of cultural capital as a measure of a school’s performance is political. By claiming that the acquisition of cultural capital will enable all children to become ‘educated citizens’ it is aligned with public interest: cultural capital will improve society (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38).

For the deconstructing element of Hyatt’s frame (2013) I have selected the criteria of modes of legitimation (p. 840). This is because by examining the legitimation employed in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the societal norms and values used to justify the introduction of the concept of cultural capital as a measure of a school’s performance will be exposed. Legitimation is a discursive process and it can be achieved either by authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation or mythopoesis (Hyatt, 2013, p. 840). Within the Ofsted policy ensemble examples can be found of the use of all modes of legitimation to justify the introduction of cultural capital. Authorisation is legitimation by unchallengeable authority and is evidenced in the reference to the creation of ‘a double unfairness’ when children in disadvantaged areas do not have access to cultural capital in their school (Hyatt, 2013, p. 840; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). Rationalisation is legitimation by how useful a social action is (Hyatt, 2013, p. 840). Rationalisation is evidenced in the frequent use of the phrase ‘succeed in life’ to determine that an action, the acquisition of cultural capital by children at school, will lead to an improvement in society, the creation of ‘educated citizens’ (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8; Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38).

Moral evaluation is legitimation by what is considered to be a desirable outcome and therefore is informed by the dominant ideological position (Hyatt, 2013, p. 840). Within the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) moral evaluation is used to promote three desirable outcomes from the introduction of the concept of cultural capital as a measure of a school’s performance: all children will become ‘educated citizens’; all children will ‘succeed in life’; and no child will be ‘disadvantaged’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). Mythopoesis is legitimation by use of a narrative; how following a course of action will lead to a specific outcome which can be either positive or negative (Hyatt, 2013, p. 840). This mode of legitimation is evidenced, in particular, in the special edition SIU when Ofsted uses a specific example to justify a course of action. Ofsted argues that when schools narrow their curriculum to secure ‘headline results’ this will negatively impact on children in disadvantaged areas (Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). What is implied is that the acquisition of cultural capital by children at school is a counter to social disadvantage.

In summary, by applying Hyatt’s frame (2013) to the references to the concept of cultural capital in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) I would argue that Ofsted’s definition of cultural capital is the ability to consume cultural objects and that this is understood to be an unchallengeable social action for a school because of the desirable outcome: educated, successful citizens. Moreover, the ability to consume cultural objects is understood to be a counter to social disadvantage which is why the effectiveness of a school unable to evidence this social action, this improvement in society, will be questioned. For Ofsted’s definition of cultural capital to work, a school’s curriculum needs to include a legitimised body of knowledge.

#### 2.2.2.4 Knowledge

Within the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) numerous references to knowledge have been made. Primarily these references are focused on what should be done with knowledge, for example it should be sequenced, built on or applied, or these references are focused on the acquisition of subject specific knowledge, for example for mathematics or phonics (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 13, p. 25, p. 37, p. 44). Within the Ofsted policy ensemble the concept of knowledge is not explicitly defined. However, numerous references have been made which are indicative of how Ofsted would define knowledge. Therefore, it is all three policy texts in the Ofsted policy ensemble which will be used in this section. In the EIF three references to how Ofsted would define knowledge have been made, in the Ofsted handbook fourteen references have been made and in the special edition SIU two references have been made. The references are shown in table 2.3.

Table 2.3: *References to how Ofsted would define knowledge in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EIF | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 - 9 | A list of factors which will be used by inspectors to evaluate the quality of education provided by a school. |
| Handbook | |
| Page | Reference |
| 36 | A list of factors which will be used by inspectors to evaluate a school’s educational ‘intent’[[32]](#footnote-32). |
| 37 - 38 | A brief description of how Ofsted intends to conceptualise cultural capital. |
| 38 | An explanation of how a school’s curriculum can be used to address social disadvantage. |
| 41 | A list of factors which will be used by inspectors to evaluate the ‘impact’ of the education provided by a school. |
| 43 - 45 | The grade descriptors for the quality of education judgement. |
| 71 | The grade descriptors for the quality of early years education judgement. |
| 74 - 76 | The grade descriptors for the quality of sixth-form provision[[33]](#footnote-33) judgement. |
| Special edition SIU | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 | An explanation of how a school’s curriculum can be used to reduce economic and social inequality. |
| 10 | A brief description of how Ofsted intends to conceptualise cultural capital. |

However, similarly to the concept of cultural capital the majority of the references in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) which suggest how Ofsted would define the concept of knowledge have been duplicated, for example the references on pages 8 and 9 in the EIF. Given this, only five references across the Ofsted policy ensemble will be used to support my understanding of how Ofsted would define knowledge. The references are shown in table 2.4.

Table 2.4: *Understanding knowledge in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EIF | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 | ‘Leaders take on or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.’ |
| 8 | ‘The provider’s curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.’ |
| Handbook | |
| Page | Reference |
| 36 | ‘The school’s curriculum is rooted in the solid consensus of the school’s leaders about the knowledge and skills that pupils need in order to take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. In this way, it can powerfully address social disadvantage.’ |
| 37 - 38 | ‘Our understanding of ‘knowledge and cultural capital’ is derived from the following wording in the National Curriculum:  ‘It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.’’ |
| Special edition SIU | |
| Page | Reference |
| 8 | ‘This means they may not have access to the corpus of knowledge that should be the entitlement of every child – the key historical events that have shaped our nation, how our natural environment has been formed, the key scientific concepts that underpin everyday life, the principles of design, along with an appreciation of great works of art, music and literature, and the principles of design and development. For that reason, if we want to reduce economic and social inequality, a good place to start is the curriculum delivered in the classroom.’ |

#### 2.2.2.5 Contextualising and deconstructing how Ofsted define knowledge

I will now apply Hyatt’s frame (2013) to the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) to support my understanding of how Ofsted would seem to define the concept of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and the concept of cultural capital. Similarly to cultural capital, in the Ofsted policy ensemble the driver for the acquisition of knowledge as a measure of a school’s performance is communicated explicitly. The acquisition of knowledge will enable all children to become ‘educated citizens’ and ‘succeed in life’; without knowledge children will be ‘disadvantaged’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). Moreover, the acquisition of knowledge will enable all children to secure future employment and, therefore, reduce economic inequality (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). The principle lever for the acquisition of knowledge by children is the risk that a school will get an overall effectiveness grade of ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ following an Ofsted inspection (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 35, p. 36). A political warrant is used for the acquisition of knowledge; the claim that it will enable all children to become ‘educated citizens’ and secure future employment is aligned with public interest (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8).

For the deconstructing element of Hyatt’s frame (2013) I have selected the criteria of interdiscursivity and intertextuality (p. 840). Interdiscursivity, the reference to other discourses, and intertextuality, the reference to other texts, can be used to legitimise the assumptions, claims and views in a policy text which will further evidence the societal norms and values used to justify the acquisition of knowledge as a measure of a school’s performance (Ibid). To start with interdiscursivity, in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the references to the acquisition of knowledge by children and future employment, responsibilities of later life and economic inequality refer to the discourse about the causal relationship between education and the economy (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8; Ofsted, 2021d, p. 36; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). In chapter 1, I set out the debate about the causal relationship between education and the economy (section 1.2). In summary, this debate continues to set the national and international context for education policy by prioritising the principles of competition between schools, autonomy for schools, parental choice and a comparable measure of children’s performance (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 174). Across the Ofsted policy ensemble interdiscursivity is used to further legitimise the discourse about the causal relationship between education and the economy.

For intertextuality, in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the references to how Ofsted would define the concept of knowledge appear to have been aligned with E. D. Hirsch’s (1996) definition of knowledge and further, with how Hirsch understands that knowledge should be used. This is because of the focus by Ofsted on ‘essential knowledge’ which is comparable to Hirsch’s idea of ‘core knowledge’, a response to a perceived conflict in curricular design in the USA (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Winter, 2014, p. 285). Hirsch argues that a fixed selection of concrete knowledge needs to be taught to children in a specific sequence to enable them to succeed at school, with success evidenced by improved summative test scores (Buras, 1999, p. 70). This idea pre-supposes that there exists a body of absolute or objective knowledge which is unrelated to the arbitrary of a specific society and therefore not socially constructed (Kelly, 2009, p. 34). Further, Hirsch argues that it is the introduction of ‘core knowledge’ which will lead to greater coherence and equality within a school’s curriculum (Buras, 1999, p. 70). It is the drive for greater coherence and equality within a school’s curriculum which exposes the implicit deficit narrative of Hirsch’s curricula ideas. For Hirsch children start school with a deficit of intellectual capital (Buras, 1999, p. 70). If incoherence and inequality exist in a curriculum, as exemplified by content deficient of ‘solid’ knowledge, then a school will not be able to compensate for the deficit in children’s intellectual capital (Ibid, p. 70, p. 78). Curriculum coherence and equality are provided by provision for the transmission of concrete knowledge, what is variously termed ‘core’, ‘essential’ or ‘solid’ knowledge, to children (Ibid, p. 77). Similarly, this is how Ofsted think that knowledge should be used, evidenced in the references in the Ofsted policy ensemble to an overall body of knowledge which is the ‘entitlement of every child’ and Hirsch’s work as the ‘educational research’ which provides the rationale for the changes to the EIF (Ofsted, 2019, p. 7, p. 8). In the Ofsted policy ensemble intertextuality is used to legitimise Hirsch’s idea of ‘core knowledge’.

In summary, by applying Hyatt’s frame (2013) to the references to the concept of knowledge in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the indication is that Ofsted understand knowledge to be objective, and the acquisition of knowledge is understood to be an unchallengeable social action for a school because of the desirable outcomes: educated, successful citizens and low unemployment leading to a growing economy. Further, the acquisition of knowledge is understood to be a counter to social disadvantage and economic inequality which is why the effectiveness of a school unable to evidence this social action, this improvement in society and to the economy, will be questioned. Therefore, for Ofsted the relationship between cultural capital and knowledge is linear and deterministic: the acquisition by children of ‘essential’ knowledge will lead to the acquisition of cultural capital.

To understand what cultural capital is I have described how Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) define cultural capital, I have suggested how they would define knowledge and I have described the relationship between these two concepts. I advance that both Bourdieu and Passeron, Bourdieu and Ofsted’s definitions of cultural capital and knowledge have limitations. These limitations include Bourdieu and Passeron’s creation of a dichotomy between legitimate and non-legitimate knowledge, Bourdieu’s validation of the reproduction of a class structure in a society with the idea of misrecognition and Ofsted’s promotion of a body of objective knowledge. Given this, in the next section I start to explore alternative conceptualisations of knowledge. To understand what the concept of funds of knowledge is I will describe how Moll et al. (1992) use the work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992) to define funds of knowledge within the context of education.

### 2.2.3 Understanding funds of knowledge

To set the context for this section I will give a brief overview of a sample of funds of knowledge studies conducted in primary schools in England. I will use the works of Andrews and Yee (2006), Hughes and Greenhough (2006), Hughes and Pollard (2006), Martin-Jones and Saxena (2003) and Thomson and Hall (2008). Andrews and Yee completed case studies on the learning outside of school of two children from different minority ethnic groups (p. 435). Hughes and Greenhough and Hughes and Pollard shared the work of the Home-School Knowledge Exchange (HSKE) project focused on how knowledge exchange between parents and teachers can improve children’s attainment (Hughes and Pollard, 2006, p. 385). Martin-Jones and Saxena explored how bilingual classroom assistants utilise children’s funds of knowledge in the classroom (p. 267). Thomson and Hall explored three different examples of the introduction of funds of knowledge into the ‘English curriculum space’ including autobiographical writing and self-portraits (p. 91, p. 94). A key theme across all of the studies is the limited impact of funds of knowledge approaches in primary schools in England, with three of the studies attributing this to the constraints of the National Curriculum. Thomson and Hall argue that within the context of the National Curriculum acknowledging and utilising children’s funds of knowledge presents a ‘significant challenge’ (p. 89). I will make reference to these studies when I critically analyse Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge, an extension of the anthropological work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992).

Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992) proposed an anthropological approach to education reform in the United States (p. 313). They argued that if schools understood the culture of U.S.-Mexican children it would lead to an improvement in the engagement of these children in learning in the classroom (Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg, 1992, p. 313). Further, this acknowledgement by schools of the ‘strategic and cultural resources’ which existed in U.S.-Mexican households would lead to an improvement in educational equality (Ibid). Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg used the term ‘funds of knowledge’ to describe these resources (p. 313). Moll et al. (1992) further extended the work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg into the field of education by working with teachers to research funds of knowledge in U.S.-Mexican households (p. 135). The research of Moll et al. had three objectives: improving relations between teachers and families which would lead to the development of curriculum and pedagogy which they argued would be a significant improvement on the ‘rote-like instruction’ U.S.-Mexican children were used to at school; and subsequently improving the academic performance of U.S.-Mexican children (p. 132). Moll et al. defined the concept of funds of knowledge as ‘historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being’ (p. 133). The research led to the categorisation of a broad spectrum of funds of knowledge associated with U.S.-Mexican households’ occupations and origins, for example accounting, carpentry and farming, which were used by teachers to develop curriculum and pedagogy (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). It is Moll et al.’s definition of funds of knowledge which provided the impetus for subsequent research focused on this concept which is why this definition will be used to set out the theoretical framework for the study, and to contrast Ofsted’s position (Oughton, 2010, p. 64).

In their work Moll et al. (1992) do not conceptualise cultural capital or knowledge, or even reference cultural capital. However, their conceptualisation of funds of knowledge points to how they would define knowledge and is indicative of their position on cultural capital. By describing the knowledge and skills associated with U.S.-Mexican households’ occupations and origins as ‘historically accumulated’ and ‘culturally developed’ Moll et al. understand knowledge to be a social and cultural construct (p. 133). This is evidenced in the categorisation of the funds of knowledge found in U.S.-Mexican households which imply the existence of distinct, culturally defined bodies of knowledge and therefore that knowledge is subjective. Further, from this it can be inferred that Moll et al. understand that there exists a polarity between legitimate and non-legitimate knowledge, or the knowledge valued at school and the knowledge valued at home. The knowledge valued at school is understood as legitimate because it forms part of the school’s curriculum: a selection of knowledge valued by a dominant social group and subsequently legitimised (Apple, 1996, p. 22). Given this, the knowledge valued at home is rendered non-legitimate because it is excluded from the school’s curriculum: a selection of knowledge valued by a ‘subordinate’ social group and subsequently de-legitimised.

Moll et al.’s (1992) position on the concept of cultural capital is evidenced in their argument that the concept of funds of knowledge is a counter to thinking which assumes that ‘subordinate’ social groups have a deficit in their knowledge (p. 134). Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualise cultural capital as a resource. For Bourdieu, cultural capital is predominantly embodied capital, but it includes knowledge of cultural objects which have been legitimised by a dominant social group and cultural knowledge legitimised by an academic qualification (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283, p. 285). For Ofsted, cultural capital is knowledge of cultural objects which have been legitimised by their inclusion in the National Curriculum: a selection of knowledge valued by a dominant social group (Ofsted, 2019, p. 8; Apple, 1996, p. 22). For Bourdieu and Ofsted a deficiency in this resource leads to a ‘subordinate’ position in a society and partial citizenship respectively (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283; Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Therefore, Bourdieu and Ofsted engage in deficit, and arguably elitist thinking by creating a deficit narrative for ‘subordinate’ social groups. For Moll et al. ‘subordinate’ social groups, for example U.S.-Mexicans, are not in deficit. In contrast, ‘subordinate’ social groups have ‘ample cultural and cognitive resources’, but these resources are not valued outside of their households (Moll et al., 1992, p. 134). From this perspective cultural capital is an arbitrary concept and may exacerbate disadvantage and inequality within and between groups.

To conclude this section on the theoretical framework for the study I will use the idea of a cultural arbitrary to explore the relationship between the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge.

### 2.2.4 A cultural arbitrary

For Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) power is an arbitrary concept because it is the imposition by a dominant social group of arbitrary meanings and values, for example knowledge which is labelled legitimate, on ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 4, p. 5). These meanings and values constitute a cultural arbitrary because they have no absolute justification, yet belief in their intrinsic merit, for example the curriculum in a school, works to counter challenge from ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 5). A cultural arbitrary is reproduced in a society primarily by the authority of the family and the school (p. 5, p. 11, p. 47). These social institutions work to internalise the cultural arbitrary of a dominant social group which leads to the reproduction on an unequal structure in a society because those members of a society more closely aligned to the cultural arbitrary will have a greater value attributed to their cultural capital. However, the authority of a dominant social group is dependent on ‘subordinate’ social groups misrecognising a cultural arbitrary or not recognising its arbitrary nature. From this Bourdieusian perspective two arguments can be made which connect the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge

Firstly, the function of Ofsted is to use the EIF to promote the intrinsic merit of the cultural arbitrary of a dominant social group: the arbitrary knowledge selected to create the National Curriculum. In promoting the intrinsic merit of the National Curriculum Ofsted misrecognise a cultural arbitrary because this selection of knowledge is understood and promoted as ‘essential’, or objective, which makes it legitimate instead of culturally defined, or subjective, and therefore arbitrary (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Furthermore, the introduction of cultural capital into the EIF for the purpose of evaluating the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides evidences the extent of Ofsted’s misrecognition (Ibid). The unequal structure in society is attributed by Ofsted to the inability of a school to equip children with cultural capital, not the imposition of arbitrary meanings and values by a dominant social group which works to devalue the meanings and values of ‘subordinate’ social groups (Ibid).

Secondly, the concept of funds of knowledge represents the less valuable cultural capital of a ‘subordinate’ social group, which in Moll et al.’s (1992) research is U.S.-Mexicans. The ‘rote-like instruction’ U.S.-Mexican children experience at school is a cultural arbitrary; arbitrary meanings and values imposed by a dominant social group (p. 132). Within the context of the classroom this cultural arbitrary is imposed to counter the perceived deficit in the ‘cultural and cognitive resources’ of U.S.-Mexican children (p. 134). This perceived deficit in U.S.-Mexican children accounts for the inequality U.S.-Mexican households’ experience within society. It is the cultural arbitrary of U.S-Mexican households evidenced in their occupations and origins, for example carpentry and farming, which leads to a lesser value being attributed to their cultural capital (p. 133). Therefore, for Moll et al. the introduction of funds of knowledge into the classroom is an attempt to counter the cultural arbitrary of the dominant social group by arguing that learning ‘does not consist of discrete chunks of knowledge’ (p. 138). If knowledge is understood to be culturally defined and learning is understood to be ongoing then the cultural arbitrary of ‘subordinate’ social groups, for example U.S.-Mexicans, will be re-evaluated and a greater value attributed to it. This leads to the potential for the inequality experienced by ‘subordinate’ social groups to be reduced.

In conclusion, I would argue that the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge should both be understood as a cultural arbitrary. Further, as evidenced in the two arguments made, from this Bourdieusian perspective if legitimate knowledge is defined by a curriculum then it is the process of selection which is the cultural arbitrary (Bernstein, 1975, p. 85). Therefore, the difference between cultural capital and funds of knowledge is the value attributed to them by society during the process of curriculum selection, with the extent of their misrecognition as a cultural arbitrary determined by their inclusion or exclusion from a curriculum.

## **2.3 Issues, debates and questions**

In this section I will position the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within key perspectives on the concept of curriculum, including deficit narratives, and a specific example of a curriculum, the National Curriculum in England. I will then critically analyse and compare Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and knowledge, and critically analyse Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. Investigating critiques of these concepts, perspectives and works will lead to the identification of ‘issues, debates and questions’ in the field which will support the design of the study (Ridley, 2012, p. 24).

### 2.3.1 Curriculum

In this section I will outline key perspectives on the concept of curriculum and position the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within these perspectives identifying issues, debates and questions. I will then conclude by identifying a definition of curriculum which will be used in the study. Curriculum is relevant to the study because cultural capital and funds of knowledge fit within different perspectives on curriculum content, coherence and control. Content is the knowledge selected for a curriculum, coherence is how knowledge is organised to ensure progression in learning and control is the external framework of accountability measures which the curriculum operates within for example standard attainment tests[[34]](#footnote-34) (SATs) and performance tables[[35]](#footnote-35) (Wood and Hedges, 2016, p. 389).

Curriculum is a contested concept for the most part because of the ongoing debate about content. What is in a curriculum reflects different ideas about what a curriculum is and more generally ideas about what education is and the role of the teacher and the school (Carr, 1996, p. 1). Inevitably, coherence and control will be shaped by content. Ideas about what a curriculum is can be divided into three key perspectives or paradigms: technical, practical and critical (Ibid, p. 7, 11, 16). The technical paradigm is influenced by Tyler’s (1949) ideas about curriculum. For Tyler curriculum is about instruction, content and coherence is specified by an expert and the role of the teacher is to deliver content in the form of learning objectives (Carr, 1996, p. 11). The school is a mechanism of the state which exerts control by the use of testing to evaluate the impact of a curriculum (Ibid, p. 9). In the technical paradigm curriculum is a technology.

Schwab (1969) argued that curriculum should be a practice because reducing it to a technology limited thinking about education (Carr, 1996, p. 12). Stenhouse (1975) used Schwab’s criticisms of the technical paradigm to develop the idea of curriculum as a process (Ibid, p. 15). In the practical paradigm content and coherence emerge when the teacher engages in the process of translating their educational values into classroom practice because the teacher is understood to be the expert (Ibid). However, Schwab and Stenhouse did not address control so in the practical paradigm the school continues to function as a mechanism of the state (Ibid, p. 16). In the critical paradigm control is directly addressed because the role of the state in determining content and coherence is questioned (Ibid). It is not the role of an expert or the teacher to specify content and coherence; they are shaped by economic, political, social and historical factors manifested in the interests of the state (Ibid). In the critical paradigm a curriculum is an ideological tool used by a dominant social group to legitimise specific knowledge and a valued educational outcome (ibid, p. 17).

It is my view that Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital can be positioned within the same perspective on the concept of curriculum: the technical paradigm. For Bourdieu the fundamental representation of cultural capital is the embodied state, or embodied capital, which is misrecognised as an innate ability (p. 283, p. 284). The role of the school is to impose this cultural arbitrary by applying arbitrary meanings and values to what constitutes knowledge (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). Therefore, this is a conceptualisation of cultural capital which infers that specifying content and coherence is not the role of the teacher by positioning the school as a mechanism of the state. For Ofsted cultural capital is the ability to consume cultural objects (Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). The role of the school is to impose a cultural arbitrary by applying arbitrary meanings and values to what constitutes a cultural object; the ‘works of art, music and literature’ which have been labelled ‘great’ and should be valued (Ibid). Similarly, this is a conceptualisation of cultural capital which infers that specifying content and coherence is not the role of the teacher, but of an expert, with the school continuing to function as a mechanism of the state. The role of the expert specifying content and coherence is evidenced in the latest revision of the National Curriculum in 2014.

Conversely, I contend that Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge can be positioned within differing perspectives on the concept of curriculum: the practical and critical paradigms. For Moll et al. knowledge is ‘historically accumulated’ and ‘culturally developed’ and the role of the teacher is to develop curriculum and pedagogy (p. 133). This is a position which fits with the practical paradigm because the teacher is the expert. It is a position which fits with the critical paradigm because of the recognition that content and coherence is shaped by economic, political, social and historical factors, and that invariably curriculum is used as an ideological tool by a dominant social group to legitimise specific knowledge and a valued educational outcome (Carr, 1996, p. 17). However, while funds of knowledge addresses control within the classroom by recognising and legitimising the ‘ample cultural and cognitive resources’ of ‘subordinate’ social groups, control is not addressed within the school; at the level of the institution (Moll et al., 1992, p. 134). Subsequently, control is not directly addressed which is why I would reason that funds of knowledge sits within, or between, these different curriculum paradigms. Now that I have positioned the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within the key perspectives on the concept of curriculum I will identify the issues, debates and questions within this field.

Previously I identified that curriculum is a contested concept because of the ongoing debate about content: what should be in a curriculum. I advance that the issue which acts as a catalyst for this debate is our understanding of human knowledge and the questions that this leads to (Kelly, 2009, p. 33). This is because our understanding of what human knowledge is will shape our ideas about what education is, and subsequently our ideas about what a curriculum is and the role of the teacher and the school. Kelly (2009) identifies two differing views on education, rationalist and empiricist, and argues that what underpins these views is differing ideas about what human knowledge is (p. 33). For the rationalist knowledge is objective which makes content and coherence universal and control the remit of the state (Ibid, p. 34). For the empiricist knowledge is subjective which makes content and coherence subject to change and control transitory because it is determined by experience (Ibid, p. 35). Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital, which is premised on a body of objective knowledge (rationalist), and Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge, which is premised on the contextual nature of knowledge (empiricist) evidence these two differing views on what human knowledge is.

It is my view that the study should use a definition of curriculum built on an empiricist understanding of what human knowledge is for three reasons. Firstly, the rationalist view of knowledge as objective is problematic. This is exemplified in the current promotion of the British values curriculum policy in schools (DfE, 2014a). The Education Act 2002 set out the responsibility of maintained schools (a school controlled by a local authority) to actively promote fundamental British values which include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance and respect for those with different beliefs (DfE, 2014a, p. 4, p. 5). How these values have been defined will differ according to context and the selection of these values is in itself a value-laden judgement. This is problematic because it represents the imposition of a universal curriculum, a one-size-fits-all understanding of content and coherence, which reifies knowledge and focuses on the collective not the individual (Kelly, 2009, p. 39).

Secondly, the rationalist view of knowledge as objective is countered by Apple’s (1996) argument about the selective tradition of curriculum (p. 22). Apple argues that a curriculum cannot be neutral because it is a selection of knowledge which inevitably realises a dominant social group’s vision of legitimate knowledge (Ibid). For Apple a curriculum is the sum of the conflict between economic, political, social and historical factors and therefore subjective because fluctuating power relations make it subject to change (Ibid). Thirdly, the empiricist view of knowledge as subjective is more democratic. If we accept that human knowledge is a social construct then we acknowledge the political implications of this (Kelly, 2009, p. 43). The reification of knowledge works to exclude and subsequently marginalise ‘subordinate’ social groups from education. In contrast, if education is understood to be a process of ‘knowledge-making not knowledge-getting’ then the knowledge valued by ‘subordinate’ social groups is acknowledged; if our understanding of knowledge is open and democratic then education itself becomes more open and democratic (Ibid, p. 53). For the study curriculum will be premised on an open and democratic understanding of knowledge. In the next section, I position the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within a specific example of a curriculum: the National Curriculum in England.

### 2.3.2 The National Curriculum

For schools in England there currently exist two statutory curricula. Introduced by the Childcare Act 2006, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory curriculum which sets out the ‘areas of learning’ that should be taught to all children from birth to 5-years-old (DfE, 2020b, para. 5). Introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, the National Curriculum is a statutory curriculum which sets out the subjects that should be taught, including the content of those subjects, to all children from 5 to 16-years-old (DfE, 2013b, p. 5). The EYFS and the National Curriculum are relevant to the study because in the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for statutory curricula by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom. Positioning the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within the National Curriculum will be used to critically analyse the National Curriculum as an example of a statutory curriculum and expand on the issues, debates and questions about curriculum identified in the previous section.

The Education Reform Act 1988 introduced the National Curriculum with the following aims:

‘Aim 1: The school curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve.

Aim 2: The school curriculum should aim to promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and

experiences of life.’ (DfEE, 1988, p. 11).

When Carr (1991) concluded that the National Curriculum failed to prepare children for ‘the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life’ he ascribed this failure not to the aims of the National Curriculum, but to society for not creating the conditions within which these aims could be realised (Carr, 1991, p. 190; DfEE, 1988, p. 11). Carr argued that a society focused on making education conform to the norms of the market is a society which excludes and marginalises (Ibid). In 2014, a revision of the National Curriculum led to a change in the aims:

‘3.1 The National Curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential

knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best

that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human

creativity and achievement.

3.2 The National Curriculum is just one element in the education of every child.

There is time and space in the school day and in each week, term and year to range

beyond the National Curriculum specifications. The National Curriculum provides an

outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and

stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils’ knowledge, understanding

and skills as part of the wider school curriculum.’ (DfE, 2013b, p. 6).

I would argue that the shift from providing ‘opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve’ to providing ‘pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens’ evidences that the exclusion and marginalisation of ‘subordinate’ social groups identified by Carr is now more entrenched (DfEE, 1988, p. 11; DfE, 2013b, p. 6). Positioning the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge within the National Curriculum using the work of Apple (1996) will further evidence this argument.

Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital fit with the National Curriculum because it realises the technical perspective on curriculum: content and coherence is specified by an expert and control is exerted by the use of testing to evaluate impact (Carr, 1996, p. 9, p. 11). When Apple (1996) argued for the selective tradition of curriculum by identifying the fluctuating power relations which sit underneath it he labelled this process of conflict the ‘politics of official knowledge’ (p. 22, p. 23). According to Apple it is the politics of official knowledge which provides the rationale for the National Curriculum: the idea that the acquisition of ‘essential knowledge’ will raise standards and provide a mechanism for holding schools to account (Apple, 1996, p. 25; DfE, 2013b, p. 6). In effect, the National Curriculum provides a framework for national testing and comparison which is dependent on the standardisation of knowledge (Apple, 1996, p. 32). The standardisation of knowledge leads to a monocultural curriculum which fits with Bourdieu and Ofsted’s conceptualisations of cultural capital (Ibid, p. 34). For Bourdieu and Ofsted, the role of the school is to impose a cultural arbitrary, or a monoculture, by applying arbitrary meanings and values to what constitutes knowledge or a cultural object (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8).

Conversely, I contend that Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge cannot fit within the National Curriculum. For the most part this is because the central tenet of funds of knowledge, valuing the knowledge and skills of ‘subordinate’ social groups, is a counter to a curriculum which reifies knowledge and focuses on the collective not the individual (Kelly, 2009, p. 39). For Apple (1996) a monocultural National Curriculum provides a framework for the control of knowledge which leads to the creation of a dichotomy between essential and non-essential knowledge, or legitimate and non-legitimate knowledge (p. 35). This works to further exclude and marginalise ‘subordinate’ social groups because it de-values their knowledge and skills and subsequently exacerbates their differences (Ibid, p. 36). In summary, I would maintain that using the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge to critically analyse the National Curriculum demonstrates that the revision of its aims in 2014 entrenched the societal conditions previously identified by Carr (1991) as the cause of the National Curriculum’s ‘failure’ following its introduction in 1988 (p. 190). The National Curriculum, an example of a statutory curriculum, is a one-size-fits-all curriculum focused on the collective not the individual. Next, I critically analyse and compare Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and knowledge.

### 2.3.3 Bourdieu on cultural capital and knowledge: a critical analysis

Inevitably there is a breadth of criticism of Bourdieu’s work (including with Passeron) because many of the concepts he engages with are contested. It is my view that there are broadly three key themes in the criticisms of Bourdieu’s work which can be applied to his conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge. Firstly, that Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of power is deterministic (Mills, 2008, p. 79). Secondly, that Bourdieu’s understanding of human agency is limited (Ibid). Thirdly, that Bourdieu oversimplifies class cultures and structures (Ibid). I will use the works of Edgerton and Roberts (2014), Hattam and Smyth (2015), Pelletier (2009) and Yosso (2005) to explore these themes.

For Edgerton and Roberts (2014) criticism of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of power is evidenced in their analysis of Bourdieu’s definition of knowledge and his understanding of the role of the school (p. 205). They argue that Bourdieu’s definition of knowledge overemphasises its political nature and arbitrariness, an outcome of the conceptualisation of power as symbolic violence, because not all knowledge is arbitrary, for example mathematical and scientific knowledge (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 4; Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 205). For Bourdieu, the school is an explicit mode of pedagogic action imposing the cultural arbitrary of a dominant social group which leads to the reproduction of an unequal structure in a society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). However, Edgerton and Roberts argue that Bourdieu overemphasises the role of the school in reproducing an unequal structure in a society because significant educational disadvantage emerges before children start attending school (p. 205). Hattam and Smyth (2015) primarily use the work of Ranciere (1991) to argue that Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of power is too focused on domination (Hattam and Smyth, 2015, p. 281). They argue that a focus on domination inevitably leads to a ‘circular logic’ of inequality and reproduction which positions ‘subordinate’ social groups in deficit (Ibid). They argue that the counter to this is to focus on equality which positions every member of a society as having value (Ibid, p. 282).

Similar to Hattam and Smyth (2015), Pelletier (2009) uses the work of Ranciere (1991) to critique Bourdieu. Pelletier demonstrates how Ranciere uses the idea of misrecognition, the reproduction of a system of power because it is not recognised for what it is, to dismantle Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theory of symbolic violence (Pelletier, 2009, p. 139, p. 140). Pelletier argues that the epistemological starting point of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of power is inequality and that by pedagogising society Bourdieu explains and justifies inequality and makes equality an end point (Ibid, p. 142, p. 144). The dominant social group give themselves the authority to reduce the perceived inequality of the ‘subordinate’ social groups (Ibid, p. 144). However, Pelletier counters this by arguing that to realise equality in a society the epistemological starting point for conceptualising power needs to be equality not inequality (Ibid, p. 142). For Yosso (2005) criticism of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of power focuses on the unrecognised potential of the school to challenge the reproduction of race inequality in a society (p. 74). Yosso argues that this can be achieved by replacing the concept of cultural capital with the concept of community cultural wealth: the knowledge and skills used by communities of colour to ‘survive and resist’ (p. 70, p. 77). Next, I will address the second key theme in criticisms of Bourdieu’s work: a limited understanding of human agency (Mills, 2008, p. 79).

Edgerton and Roberts (2014) use a critical analysis of the concept of habitus, understood to be the compound of the arbitrary dispositions which govern practice and the accumulated cultural capital of a member of society, to argue that human agency is shaped but not determined by habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 45; Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 202). In effect, they counter Bourdieu by arguing that the reproduction of the unequal structure in a society is not inevitable (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 202). For Hattam and Smyth (2015) Bourdieu’s limited understanding of human agency manifests itself in an under developed role for ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 275). This is similar to the criticism levelled by Edgerton and Roberts (p. 202), however Hattam and Smyth are focused more on the attributes of the young working class, as a ‘subordinate’ social group, which work to counter the reproduction of the unequal structure in a society (p. 275). An example of these attributes of the young working class would be the ability to recognise a cultural arbitrary and therefore not be subordinated by it because they have misrecognised its intrinsic merit (Hattam and Smyth, 2015, p. 275).

For Pelletier (2009) Bourdieu’s limited understanding of human agency is again evidenced in the idea of misrecognition (p. 139). An epistemological starting point of inequality which gives the dominant social group the authority to reduce the perceived inequality of the ‘subordinate’ social groups works on the assumption that ‘subordinate’ social groups have a deficit of knowledge (Pelletier, 2009, p. 142, p. 144, p. 145). However, Pelletier uses Ranciere (1991) to counter that the perceived inequality of ‘subordinate’ social groups is not the outcome of the deficit in their knowledge, but the outcome of their knowledge not being valued (Pelletier, 2009, p. 145). Similarly, but from a critical race theory perspective, Yosso (2005) explicitly criticises Bourdieu’s limited understanding of human agency by positioning Bourdieu as an example of a deficit scholar (p. 82). For Yosso a deficit scholar engages in thinking which assumes that children of colour start school with a deficit of intellectual capital with these racialised assumptions leading to a school adopting the banking method of education for these children[[36]](#footnote-36) (p. 75). I will now move on to address the third key theme in criticisms of Bourdieu’s work: an oversimplification of class cultures and structures (Mills, 2008, p. 79).

Edgerton and Roberts (2014) focus on what they understand to be Bourdieu’s oversimplification of the concept of cultural capital and how this reflects on his understanding of class cultures and structures (p. 196). Using the works of Lareau and Weininger (2003) and Swidler (1986) they argue that Bourdieu’s definition of cultural capital reduces culture to a ‘marker of class position’ and that a more expansive definition of cultural capital which understands it to be a set of adaptable cognitive and behavioural skills leads to a richer conceptualisation of culture (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 197). Hattam and Smyth (2015) address Bourdieu’s oversimplification of class cultures and structures by questioning his understanding of the role of the school. They argue that the school can function to reproduce inequality in a society, but that the school can also function as a catalyst for change in a society (Hattam and Smyth, 2015, p. 275). For Pelletier (2009) this oversimplification is evidenced in what is ‘othered’ by Bourdieu’s theories and concepts: the value of ‘subordinate’ social groups, for example communities of colour (p. 141). This criticism is evidenced in Yosso’s (2005) argument that Bourdieu makes ‘overgeneralisations’ about ‘subordinate’ social groups and uses White middle class culture as the benchmark for measuring the value of other cultures (p. 75, p. 76). Next, I will conclude this section by reflecting on these three key themes in the criticisms of Bourdieu’s work.

Using the works of Edgerton and Roberts (2014), Hattam and Smyth (2015), Pelletier (2009) and Yosso (2005) to explore the three key themes in the criticisms of Bourdieu’s work has supported the clarification of my thinking about how Bourdieu conceptualises cultural capital knowledge, and led to an emerging understanding of the ‘issues, debates and questions’ in the field (Ridley, 2012, p. 24). Exploring criticism of Bourdieu’s deterministic conceptualisation of power leads to the identification of two issues and a series of related questions. Firstly, I contend that Bourdieu overemphasises the political nature and arbitrariness of knowledge, but that the political nature and arbitrariness of the selection of knowledge used to create a curriculum persists. While I would agree that there exist objective areas of knowledge within the fields of mathematics and science this argument cannot overcome the arbitrariness of a curriculum. A curriculum is a selection of knowledge which inevitably realises a dominant social group’s vision of legitimate knowledge (Apple, 1996, p. 22). Previously I used the current promotion of the British values curriculum policy in schools to exemplify this point (DfE, 2014a).

Secondly, I would argue for both the reduced role of the school in reproducing the unequal structure in a society and the unrecognised potential for the school to challenge the reproduction of this structure. If I apply the concept of pedagogic action to both my personal and professional experience then I would reason that the pedagogic action of the family is a more significant determiner of the disposition of children towards a school than the pedagogic action of the school itself, and so I am inclined to agree with the argument for the reduced role of the school in reproducing the unequal structure in a society. In the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for statutory curricula by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom[[37]](#footnote-37). There is broad agreement that if the premise for this mandate is a position of equality, instead of inequality, then this will lead to greater engagement for children in learning in the classroom. If education were to start from a premise of equality, constituting a ‘reformulation of the problematic of education’, then there is the potential for the school to challenge the unequal structure in a society by functioning as a catalyst for change (Pelletier, 2009, p. 147). This would have implications for the usefulness of the concept of cultural capital, how knowledge is conceptualised and how knowledge is selected. The identification of this issue leads to the following related questions: how can education start from a premise of equality? What would be the impact on curriculum development? What would be the impact on the engagement of children in learning in the classroom?

Exploring criticism of Bourdieu’s limited understanding of human agency leads to the identification of an ongoing curriculum debate. I would maintain that the reproduction of the unequal structure in a society is not inevitable because it is premised on a limited understanding of the role of ‘subordinate’ social groups which assumes that they have a deficit of intellectual capital or legitimate knowledge. My personal experience supports this argument. I am a White man with working class parents and I attended a single-sex non-denominational grammar school until the age of 18 before I moved on to higher education. My husband is a Black man with working class parents who were born in Jamaica and emigrated to England. He attended a mixed-sex Church of England grammar school until the age of 18 and then moved on to higher education. While it would seem self-aggrandising to label my husband and I as middle class[[38]](#footnote-38), we certainly cannot be labelled as working class which is how our parents were labelled and, according to Bourdieu, how my husband and I should be labelled too.

Exploring criticism of Bourdieu’s oversimplification of class cultures and structures leads to a more in depth understanding of the ongoing debate about what cultural capital is. I think it is an oversimplification to reduce Bourdieu’s definition of the concept of cultural capital and subsequently his understanding of culture to class identity (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 195). While this argument can be applied to the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), in subsequent work Bourdieu (1986) acknowledges the complexity of the ‘social world’ and the impact of this on the ‘types and subtypes’ of capital including cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 280). I contend that this demonstrates Bourdieu’s understanding of cultural capital to be more than ‘highbrow’ cultural preferences and of culture to be more than a marker of class identity. However, I do think that inherent in Bourdieu’s work is the assumption that legitimate knowledge will be White middle class knowledge. Bourdieu understands society to be ‘accumulated history’ and so implicitly acknowledges that White middle class culture is the benchmark for measuring the value of other cultures (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 280; Yosso, 2005, p. 76). This is an understanding which will impact on the accumulation of both the objectified and institutionalised states of cultural capital for communities of colour. Further, it implies that the accumulation of the embodied state of cultural capital will be limited to the White middle class. However, I would reiterate that the personal experience of my husband (a Black man with working class parents who were born in Jamaica and emigrated to England) indicates that the role of arbitrary knowledge and cultural capital in determining position in a society is perhaps not as powerful as it is perceived to be.

To conclude this section I suggest that Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of cultural capital presents a useful tool for critically thinking about inequality, but that its logic leads to assumptions about human agency, society and culture which when subjected to critical analysis become problematic. In contrast, either explicitly or implicitly Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of knowledge continues to present a useful commentary on the political nature and arbitrariness of the legitimisation of knowledge and how the acquisition of legitimate knowledge can determine position in a society. In the next section, I will critically analyse Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge evidenced in the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d).

### 2.3.4 Ofsted on cultural capital and knowledge: a critical analysis

Limited criticism of the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) exists, due to the recent publication of the policy texts included within it. Moreover, there is limited experience of the implementation of the Ofsted policy ensemble, including how the concept of cultural capital may be used to evaluate the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides, due to the onset of the Coronavirus disease[[39]](#footnote-39) (COVID-19) (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Given this, I will use the three key themes identified in the criticisms of Bourdieu’s work in the previous section to frame a critical analysis of Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge: a deterministic conceptualisation of power, a limited understanding of human agency and an oversimplification of class cultures and structures (Mills, 2008, p. 79). Similarly, I will use the works of Edgerton and Roberts (2014), Hattam and Smyth (2015), Pelletier (2009) and Yosso (2005) to explore these themes, starting with a deterministic conceptualisation of power.

Edgerton and Roberts (2014) argue that Bourdieu’s definition of knowledge overemphasises its political nature and arbitrariness which is an outcome of the conceptualisation of power as symbolic violence (p. 205). I advance that when this criticism is applied to Ofsted it exposes three problems with their conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge. Firstly, by defining knowledge as the ‘essential knowledge’ that children need to be ‘educated citizens’ Ofsted (2021d) negate the political nature and arbitrariness of knowledge by inferring objectivity and yet implicitly acknowledge it by creating a dichotomy between essential and non-essential knowledge (p. 37, p. 38). In effect, Ofsted have misrecognised a cultural arbitrary. Secondly, by defining cultural capital as the ability to consume cultural objects explicitly linked to the acquisition of ‘essential knowledge’ Ofsted (2021d) use White middle class culture as the benchmark for measuring the value of other cultures (p. 37, p. 38). Thirdly, this definition of cultural capital infers a deficit narrative: thinking which assumes that ‘subordinate’ social groups have a deficit in their knowledge. The exposure of these three problems is evidence that Ofsted have constructed a deterministic conceptualisation of power.

When the second theme, a limited understanding of human agency, is applied to Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge a further problem is exposed. For Ofsted (2021d) the acquisition of ‘essential knowledge’ and the subsequent acquisition of cultural capital is a prerequisite for becoming an ‘educated citizen’ (p. 37, p. 38). From this it can be understood that if concrete knowledge is not acquired then the status of full citizenship is not achieved. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) argue that human agency is shaped, but not determined by the concept of habitus (p. 202). Their critical analysis of this concept evidences that it is generative and capable of enabling a broad range of diverse and innovative action within and between different environments and groups (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 202). Subsequently not acquiring an arbitrary selection of knowledge at school will not preclude the achievement of the status of full citizenship because the generative nature of habitus will present multiple opportunities in our lived experiences to acquire the knowledge relevant to our career aspirations and social position desired. Certainly the lived experience of my husband and I attest to this: we have not acquired Ofsted’s (2021d) ‘essential knowledge’ and yet we are ‘educated citizens’ that have attained our career aspirations (p. 37, p. 38). It is my view that this thinking is evidence of Ofsted’s limited understanding of human agency.

When the third theme, an oversimplification of class cultures and structures, is applied to Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge the problem of deficit thinking is further exposed. For Hattam and Smyth (2015) the school can function to reproduce inequality in a society, but the school can also function as a catalyst for change in a society (p. 275). Pelletier (2009) uses the work of Ranciere (1991) to argue that the epistemological starting point for this societal change needs to be equality instead of inequality (Pelletier, 2009, p. 142, p. 145). By creating a linear and deterministic relationship between cultural capital and knowledge, the acquisition by children of concrete knowledge will lead to the acquisition of cultural capital, Ofsted have indicated that they think without intervention a school will reproduce inequality in society. Ofsted, as a mechanism of the state, have given themselves the authority to reduce the inequality to which ‘subordinate’ social groups are subject which is an outcome of the deficit in their knowledge (Ibid). In effect, Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge perpetuates the othering of ‘subordinate’ social groups which is evidence of an oversimplification of class cultures and structures, and other dimensions of diversity, for example ethnicity, gender and religious affiliation.

To conclude this section I would argue that using criticisms of Bourdieu’s work to frame a critical analysis of Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital and knowledge exposes many problems with Ofsted’s thinking, or discourse, which in summary evidence the creation of deficit models of children by the othering of those groups in society which are not White, middle class and British. Therefore, within the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the use of cultural capital to evaluate the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides is problematised (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). In the next section, I compare and contrast Bourdieu and Ofsted’s conceptualisations of cultural capital and knowledge.

### 2.3.5 Bourdieu and Ofsted on cultural capital and knowledge: a comparison

For Bourdieu (1986) the fundamental representation of the concept of cultural capital is the embodied state which he describes as ‘embodied capital’ and it is the interaction of cultural capital with the concepts of habitus, field and practice which determines position in a society (p. 280, p. 283). For Ofsted (2019) cultural capital is a stand-alone concept and is the ability to consume cultural objects, for example works of art, which leads to the status of full citizenship (p. 8). For Bourdieu the concept of knowledge is subjective because it is a social construct relative to the dominant social group which leads to the creation of legitimate knowledge (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 42). The acquisition of legitimate knowledge will not necessarily lead to the acquisition of cultural capital because cultural capital is understood to be more than the acquisition of legitimate knowledge and it would seem that knowledge is understood to be culturally defined. For Ofsted (2021d) knowledge is ‘essential’, or objective, because the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) indicates that Ofsted assumes there exists a body of absolute knowledge which is unrelated to the arbitrary of a dominant social group and therefore not socially constructed (p. 37, p. 38). The acquisition of this body of absolute knowledge will lead to the acquisition of cultural capital. However, whether Bourdieu or Ofsted, a deficit narrative is created which negates ‘cultural and cognitive resources’ (Moll et al., 1992, p. 134) and exacerbates disadvantage and inequality within and between groups. A critical analysis of Bourdieu and Ofsted’s conceptualisations of cultural capital and knowledge present both to be problematic. This analysis subsequently necessitates consideration of alternative ways of thinking about knowledge in the context of curriculum and pedagogy, which attend to equity and diversity. I will now move on to a critical analysis of Moll et al.’s conceptualisation of funds of knowledge.

### 2.3.6 Funds of knowledge: a critical analysis

Similar to Bourdieu’s work there is a breadth of criticism of the concept of funds of knowledge, not least because it is a counter to the prevalent view that learning consists of ‘discrete chunks of knowledge’ (Moll et al., 1992, p. 138). I would maintain that there are broadly three key themes in the criticisms of Moll et al.’s conceptualisation of funds of knowledge which are relevant to the study. Firstly, that it is a problematic idea which has led to it becoming too diluted to be useful in disrupting deficit narratives. Secondly, that it represents the replacement of one cultural arbitrary with another cultural arbitrary (Oughton, 2010, p. 72). Thirdly, that it ignores the impact of power structures and relations which determine educational outcomes for ‘subordinate’ social groups (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 106). I will use the works of Hogg (2010), Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018), Oughton (2010), Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) and Rodriguez (2013) to explore these themes. For every theme I will provide examples of funds of knowledge studies conducted in England which support the criticism.

Hogg (2010) completed a literature review for the concept of funds of knowledge from 1988 until 2010 and Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018) extended this literature review from 2011 until 2015. It is from these literature reviews that the first key theme in the criticisms of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge emerges. Hogg reviews 50 texts and Llopart and Esteban-Guitart review 92 texts, which evidence the impact of Moll et al.’s ideas including acknowledgement of the potential for funds of knowledge to disrupt deficit narratives (Hogg, 2010, p. 668; Llopart and Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p. 149). However, Hogg argues that funds of knowledge is a contested concept because there are differences in how it is defined and applied, identifying four areas of disagreement (p. 669). Firstly, there is disagreement about what constitutes funds of knowledge with some researchers expanding Moll et al.’s definition to include popular culture and peer groups leading to confusion about whether the focus should be on areas of knowledge, for example carpentry, or sources of knowledge, for example popular music (Ibid). Secondly, there is disagreement about what knowledge should be included: household funds of knowledge or children’s funds of knowledge (Ibid). Thirdly, related to the second area of disagreement, whose knowledge should be included, as Moll et al. exclude children’s funds of knowledge from their definition (Ibid). Finally, identification of these three areas of disagreement leads to the problematisation of the idea of funds of knowledge itself (Ibid).

In extending Hogg’s (2010) literature review Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018) further develop the areas of disagreement with Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. In particular, Llopart and Esteban-Guitart focus on whose knowledge should be included in a definition of funds of knowledge by exploring the idea of funds of identity (p. 155). Funds of identity is defined as all areas and sources of knowledge which inform our understanding of who we are, for example where we live, who we socialise with, our heritage and which school we attended (Ibid). Therefore, funds of identity is an attempt to understand more than just the culture of ‘subordinate’ social groups evidenced in their household practices. By further developing the areas of disagreement Llopart and Esteban-Guitart inadvertently contribute to the problematisation of the idea of funds of knowledge itself. Given this, what emerges from Hogg and Llopart and Esteban-Guitart’s literature reviews, whether intentional or not, is that Moll et al.’s conceptualisation of funds of knowledge is imprecise.

Oughton (2010) problematises the idea of funds of knowledge itself by identifying the metaphor of ‘funds’ as the problem (p. 71). By adopting the term ‘funds of knowledge’ Oughton points out that Moll et al. (1992) have aligned the concept with metaphors associated with the economy and the idea of ‘learning as acquisition’ (Oughton, 2010, p. 71). Oughton argues that for a concept which is designed to disrupt deficit narratives it is inexplicable why an economic metaphor is used when Freire (1970) critiqued the banking method of education, understood to be the ‘act of depositing’ knowledge into children when they start school, precisely because it is premised on deficit narratives (Freire, 1970, p. 53; Oughton, 2010, p. 72). Similarly, Oughton argues that the term ‘funds of knowledge’ conveys the idea that learning is a state of having because knowledge is acquired which is more applicable to formal learning or learning situated in the classroom (p. 71). In contrast, the idea that learning is a state of doing because knowledge is the outcome of a process of participation is more applicable to informal learning or learning situated within a specific context or culture (Ibid).

It is my view that it is the contradictions evident in the use of the term ‘funds of knowledge’ in conjunction with the impreciseness of its conceptualisation by Moll et al. (1992) which have led to the continuing evolution and hybridity of funds of knowledge. A state which leads to criticism because it is argued that it works to dilute the concept and subsequently reduce the potential for funds of knowledge to disrupt deficit narratives. An argument evidenced in the use of funds of knowledge by the Department for Education and Skills[[40]](#footnote-40) (DfES) in 2004 to promote the inclusion of ethnic minority children: funds of knowledge ‘enriches a school in a range of valuable ways’ (DfES, 2004, p. 10). This argument is further evidenced by the works of Andrews and Yee (2006), Hughes and Greenhough (2006), Hughes and Pollard (2006), Martin-Jones and Saxena (2003) and Thomson and Hall (2008): studies conducted in primary schools in England which adapted Moll et al.’s conceptualisation of funds of knowledge with varied, but generally limited success. For the majority of the studies the limited success is attributed to the constraints of the National Curriculum. However, from a practical perspective the studies would seem to have conceptualised funds of knowledge as an either/or choice of alternatives, positioning funds of knowledge in opposition to the National Curriculum. For example, Thomson and Hall argue that the ‘structures, habits and resistances’ of the National Curriculum work against funds of knowledge approaches (p. 89). Next, I will address the second key theme in the criticisms of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge: that funds of knowledge notionally represents the replacement of one cultural arbitrary with another cultural arbitrary (Oughton, 2010, p. 72).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) defined a cultural arbitrary as the imposition of arbitrary meanings and values which are misrecognised as having intrinsic merit (p.4, p. 5). A dominant social group exerts power by imposing a cultural arbitrary on ‘subordinate’ social groups (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). An objective of Moll et al.’s (1992) research was for teachers to develop curriculum and pedagogy using funds of knowledge sourced from U.S.-Mexican households (p. 132). For Oughton (2010) funds of knowledge is problematic because it represents the replacement of one cultural arbitrary, the knowledge valued at school which is legitimate because it forms part of the school’s curriculum, with another cultural arbitrary, the knowledge valued in the households of ‘subordinate’ social groups which is non-legitimate because it is excluded from the school’s curriculum (p. 72). If the process of curriculum selection is the cultural arbitrary then funds of knowledge represents an attempt to legitimise knowledge by recalibrating the extent of its misrecognition (Bernstein, 1975, p. 85).

Further, Oughton (2010) argues that the knowledge valued at school is not being replaced with the knowledge valued in the households of ‘subordinate’ social groups, but with the knowledge which teachers have decided counts as legitimate funds of knowledge (p. 72). In effect, it is not the cultural arbitrary of ‘subordinate’ social groups, but the cultural arbitrary, or ‘value-laden judgement’, of a teacher (p. 73). This is a criticism levelled by Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018) evidenced in their argument that a teacher’s funds of knowledge will impact on their decision-making processes in the classroom (p. 153). The study conducted by Martin-Jones and Saxena (2003) exemplifies this criticism in its explicit use of bilingual teaching assistants to access children’s funds of knowledge (p. 267). For this study, the indication is that in the classroom it is not the cultural arbitrary of ‘subordinate’ social groups, but the cultural arbitrary, or ‘value-laden judgement’, of a bilingual teaching assistant that is valued. Moreover, from a practical perspective this funds of knowledge approach would not work for heterogenous groups of children. The problematisation of a teacher’s cultural arbitrary will be explored further when addressing the third key theme in the criticisms of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge: that it ignores the impact of power structures and relations which determine educational outcomes for ‘subordinate’ social groups (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 106).

Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) identify a conceptual limitation with funds of knowledge: a focus on the interactions at the classroom level at the expense of the interactions at a school level which will arguably have a greater impact on the educational outcomes of ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 171). At a micro level, if funds of knowledge are effectively used to develop curriculum and pedagogy in the classroom there will be a shift in what is recognised as legitimate knowledge; the cultural arbitrary of ‘subordinate’ social groups will have increased in value (p. 172). However, at a macro level institutional processes outside of the classroom will work to maintain the status quo; the misrecognition of the cultural arbitrary of the dominant social group (Ibid). By defining funds of knowledge without including a macro lens to focus on power structures and relations Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation has no capacity to evaluate how the effective integration of funds of knowledge into classroom practice will impact on the educational outcomes of ‘subordinate’ social groups (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011, p. 175).

Rodriguez (2013) further develops the idea that without a focus on power relationships funds of knowledge is conceptually limited (p. 93). Rodriguez starts by recognising the potential for funds of knowledge to empower at the micro level: engaging teachers as researchers leads to empowerment for teachers and the subsequent inclusion of funds of knowledge into classroom practice leads to empowerment for the children and families from ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 92). However, Rodriguez problematises funds of knowledge by questioning the extent to which the potential for empowerment at the micro level, or the transformation of agency in the classroom, will extend to the macro level leading to a transformation in the perception of ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 93). Rodriguez argues that if funds of knowledge is unable to engage at a macro level, by countering deficit narratives, then education policy will not change which will limit the impact on the educational outcomes of ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 101). According to Rodriguez there are three reasons why not focusing on power relationships is conceptually limiting for funds of knowledge.

Firstly, Rodriguez (2013) argues that the rejection of the importance acceded to the idea of concrete knowledge and the acceptance of the idea of lived experiences as a source of knowledge at the classroom level is not sufficient to impact on the educational outcomes of ‘subordinate’ social groups; this change needs to be at the school, or institutional, and societal level too (p. 102). Secondly, expanding on a criticism identified by Oughton (2010) and Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018), Rodriguez questions the extent to which funds of knowledge will give a voice to ‘subordinate’ social groups (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 103). However, instead of focusing on how the cultural arbitrary of a teacher engaged as a researcher will inform what counts as legitimate funds of knowledge, Rodriguez argues that power structures and relations will have a significant impact on a teacher’s engagement in this role (Ibid). For Rodriguez this will lead to the reproduction of those power relationships, evidenced in existing privilege and deficit narratives, which funds of knowledge is itself attempting to disrupt because of the predominantly White, middle class background of teachers and their attempt to engage with ‘subordinate’ social groups who are predominantly of colour or working class (Ibid). Thirdly, Rodriguez argues that irrespective of the impact of funds of knowledge at a classroom level, on classroom practice, the same measure of a child’s performance will be used, for example SATs (p. 102). The existing measures of a child’s performance reduce the complex social interactions within a classroom to standardised performance indicators ‘shaped by the economic, political, social, and historical power structures’ which funds of knowledge is itself attempting to disrupt (p. 104). These standardised performance indicators will continue to exist even if the complex social interactions within a classroom are informed by funds of knowledge. The studies conducted by Hughes and Greenhough (2006), Hughes and Pollard (2006) and Thomson and Hall (2008) identify power structures and relations, in particular performative regimes and the constraints of the National Curriculum, as limiting factors which impacted on their use of funds of knowledge (Hughes and Greenhough, 2006, p. 484; Thomson and Hall, 2008, p. 98). I previously argued that this is because the studies would seem to have conceptualised funds of knowledge as an either/or choice of alternatives positioned in opposition to the National Curriculum. Next, I will conclude this section by reflecting on these three key themes in the criticisms of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge.

Using the works of Hogg (2010), Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018), Oughton (2010), Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) and Rodriguez (2013) to explore the three key themes in the criticisms of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge in conjunction with funds of knowledge studies conducted in England has led to an emerging understanding of the ‘issues, debates and questions’ in the field which will be relevant to the study (Ridley, 2012, p. 24). Exploring the criticism that funds of knowledge is a problematic idea which has led to it becoming too diluted to be useful in disrupting deficit narratives has led to the identification of an issue that the study will need to address, and to a more in depth understanding of the potential of counter-storytelling (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 113). I would agree with the criticism that funds of knowledge is a problematic idea; it is evidenced in the areas of disagreement about how it should be defined and applied identified by Hogg (2010) and Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018) in their comprehensive literature reviews. Therefore, the study will need to be underpinned by a precise definition of funds of knowledge which addresses the issue of what knowledge should be included (Hogg, 2010, p. 669). Tentatively I would reason that addressing this issue will work to resolve the related issues of what constitutes funds of knowledge and whose knowledge should be included (Ibid). This is because the context for the study is a primary school and so when articulating a definition of funds of knowledge the age of the children suggests that household knowledge, including virtual contexts to reflect contemporary lives, should be the focus which will subsequently identify areas of knowledge and adult’s funds of knowledge as relevant to the study. A different context for the study, for example a secondary school, would lead to a different definition of funds of knowledge which would possibly shift the focus to sources of knowledge, for example popular culture and peer groups, and children’s funds of knowledge instead (Ibid).

In contrast, I disagree with the criticism that the concept of funds of knowledge has become too diluted to be useful in disrupting deficit narratives. I advance that funds of knowledge is an example of counter-storytelling (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 113). This is because it presents an alternative to the deficit narratives which persist in education. Notwithstanding the contradictions evident in the use of the term ‘funds of knowledge’ and the impreciseness of its conceptualisation by Moll et al. (1992) which have led to the continuing evolution and hybridity of funds of knowledge, the 142 texts reviewed by Hogg (2010) and Llopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018) evidence that the concept is a powerful model for countering deficit narratives (Oughton, 2010, p. 75). I contend that this is because funds of knowledge made explicit the flawed logic of deficit narratives by underscoring the knowledge valued by ‘subordinate’ social groups and subsequently the existence of distinct, culturally defined bodies of knowledge.

Exploring the criticism that the concept of funds of knowledge represents the replacement of one cultural arbitrary with another cultural arbitrary has led to engagement with a debate: the role of values in education research (Oughton, 2010, p. 72). My position in relation to this debate will be addressed by the extent of my reflexivity in the role of researcher for the study. By acknowledging that curriculum selection is the cultural arbitrary I understand that funds of knowledge represents an attempt by a teacher in the role of researcher to legitimise a distinct, culturally defined body of knowledge by recalibrating the extent of its misrecognition, and that integral to this process of selection will be the value-laden judgement of a teacher (Bernstein, 1975, p. 85; Oughton, 2010, p. 73). Further, the decisions made by a teacher will operate within the framework of power structures and relations which exist outside of the classroom including the EIF and the National Curriculum (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 103). However, these limitations are outweighed by the potential of funds of knowledge to create more meaningful learning experiences for children which I believe will lead to a deeper engagement in learning for children. I would maintain that there are two reasons why more meaningful learning experiences for children will be created.

Firstly, funds of knowledge provides a framework for a teacher to understand their own cultural perspective and the cultural perspective of the children that they teach (Hogg, 2010, p. 667). From this position, identifying what is instead of what is not, more inclusive classroom practices can be developed which will work to scaffold children’s learning more effectively leading to the creation of more meaningful learning experiences; in effect a culturally responsive pedagogy is developed (Ibid, p. 667, p. 673). Secondly, when a teacher engages with children and their families in the role of a researcher with the objective of sourcing their funds of knowledge it strengthens the relationship between home and school. This is because teacher engagement in the home empowers children and their families leading to a shift in the balance of power, and when there is a more equal distribution of power, relationships will be strengthened (Llopart and Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p. 148). In my professional experience strengthening the relationship between home and school will lead to the creation of more meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, I would reason that if in the role of researcher I can be reflective and critically evaluate how I engage with the research process of the study then the limitations of funds of knowledge as a cultural arbitrary can be mitigated.

Exploring the criticism that the concept of funds of knowledge ignores the impact of power structures and relations which determine educational outcomes for ‘subordinate’ social groups, similarly to the second key theme, has led to engagement with a debate: the power of human agency (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 106). I engaged with this debate previously when exploring criticisms of Bourdieu’s work; to be specific that Bourdieu’s understanding of human agency is limited (Mills, 2008, p. 79). I would agree that Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge makes no provision for evaluating how the effective integration of funds of knowledge into classroom practice will impact on the educational outcomes of ‘subordinate’ social groups because there is no macro lens to focus on power structures and relations (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011, p. 175). However, similarly to Bourdieu’s work, I think this criticism underestimates the power of human agency. The logic of this criticism is that there is the potential for funds of knowledge to effect change at the classroom level, but that the potential for change is unable to extend to the school, or wider institutional, level. The inference is that human agency can only effect change at a micro level. It is my view that there are three reasons why human agency can effect change at a macro level.

Firstly, when reflecting on the key themes in the criticisms of Bourdieu’s work I previously set out the potential for school leaders and teachers to effect change. If education were to start from a premise of equality, for example by integrating the concept of funds of knowledge into classroom practice, then there is the potential for school leaders and teachers to challenge the unequal structure in a society by functioning as a catalyst for change. Secondly, there is evidence that funds of knowledge can effect change at a wider institutional level. In 2004, the DfES referenced funds of knowledge in a policy text promoting the inclusion of ethnic minority children (DfES, 2004, p. 10). While the impact of funds of knowledge in this context is contested it evidences that change at a micro level, classroom practice, can lead to change at a macro level, policy discourse. Thirdly, given how I exercise the mandate I have in the role of headteacher, the focus of my research and the moral, competency, personal and social values evident in this decision making, I am evidence of the power of human agency. If the study concludes that integrating funds of knowledge into classroom practice creates more meaningful learning experiences for children and subsequently leads to a deeper engagement in learning for children, then this will lead to change at a wider institutional level at my school. I will now conclude this chapter.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have positioned the study in a field: cultural arbitrary. Following an investigation of the literature in this field and given the focus of my research, to investigate the impact on curriculum development and subsequently on children’s learning if we thought about knowledge from a different perspective, I would tentatively suggest that the concept of funds of knowledge can be used to contextualise statutory curricula: the EYFS and the National Curriculum. A contextualisation which puts forward a different perspective on curriculum content, coherence and control. In the next chapter, I will set out the methodology and methods for the study; this will include a discussion of ethical issues.

# **Chapter 3: Methodology and methods**

## **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I set out the methodology and methods for the study including ethical considerations and ethical reflections post the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Firstly, given the study is a qualitative inquiry, I outline the key features of qualitative research, followed by the key ideas of the philosophical perspective the study aligns with: interpretivist. Secondly, I define and explain the difference between ontology and epistemology, and methodology and methods in support of my positionality. Thirdly, I summarise the research objectives and questions, and I introduce the methods and explain why the study is an exploratory study. Fourthly, I set out how the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and interview were used for data collection, and justify the type of interview I used. Fifthly, I explain how the study is ethical and trustworthy. Included in the ethical framing of the study will be contestation of the concept of cultural capital and how it is being used by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), and an exploration of the concept of funds of knowledge as a practical alternative. Further, I will summarise ethical reflections on the original design of the study, and subsequent adaptations post COVID-19. Sixthly I identify issues from data collection and set out the strengths and limitations of the methodology and methods used. Before I conclude the chapter I address the first research question: How have Ofsted adapted the concept of cultural capital to improve equality in education? I then address the second research question: What alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice?

## **3.2 Qualitative research**

Denscombe (2017) identifies five key features of quantitative and qualitative research and argues that the difference between these contrasting approaches to research is underscored by the ‘different kinds of data’ that they use (p. 6). In outlining the five key features of qualitative research I will make the comparison with quantitative research to further contextualise the philosophical perspective of the study. Firstly, the unit of analysis, or the data, for qualitative research is words or visual images; for quantitative research it is numbers (Ibid). Given this, the focus for qualitative research is an in-depth familiarity with the data to facilitate detailed description (Ibid). This makes qualitative research less generalisable, or transferable (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 246). Secondly, the time constraints of qualitative research tend to lead to small-scale studies involving relatively few people; the tendency for quantitative research is large-scale studies (Denscombe, 2017, p. 6).

The third key feature of qualitative research is the focus on context; the idea that people cannot be understood in isolation from their context (Denscombe, 2017, p. 6). For quantitative research the focus is on specific variables (Ibid). Fourthly, for qualitative research data collection and data analysis is an iterative process with the potential for the researcher to engage in multiple cycles of both (Wellington, 2015, p. 264). Therefore, data analysis is during data collection instead of following data collection (Denscombe, 2017, p. 7). Fifthly, the researcher is the ‘measurement device’ for qualitative research which makes the positionality of the researcher ‘relatively inside’ (Denscombe, 2017, p. 7; Merriam et al., 2001, p. 411). In contrast, the intent to produce objective data for quantitative research determines that the role of the researcher is more detached from the data (Denscombe, 2017, p. 7). However, while the study is a qualitative inquiry I add that I do not subscribe to the opposition of quantitative and qualitative research described by Pring (2010), what is termed the ‘false dualism’ (p. 67, 72). Next, I outline the key ideas of the philosophical perspective of the study, interpretivist, including the advantages and disadvantages of using this philosophical perspective for the study.

Thomas (2013) identifies four key ideas of interpretivism (p. 109). Firstly, knowledge is socially constructed and secondly, all information is valid and therefore is understood to be knowledge (Ibid). Therefore, interpretivism is focused on understanding people’s lived experiences (Denscombe, 2017, p. 8). Thirdly, the interconnection of people’s lived experiences determines that the social world is a complex phenomenon that needs to be interpreted (Thomas, 2013, p. 109; Denscombe, 2017, p. 8). Fourthly, that a researcher’s positionality will impact on their thinking and subsequently their interpretation of the social world (Thomas, 2013, p. 109). The advantages of using this philosophical perspective for the study include the breadth and depth of the data collected facilitating an in-depth understanding of a complex issue: social interactions in a primary classroom. This in-depth understanding is strengthened by my ‘relatively inside’ positionality (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 411). The disadvantages include the time-constraints of data collection and analysis, and that the study is less generalisable, or transferable. In the next sections, I define and explain the difference between ontology and epistemology, and methodology and methods in support of my positionality.

## **3.3 Ontology and epistemology**

I would agree with Jackson’s (2013) argument that research is subjective because it is informed by the positionality of a researcher (p. 50). Positionality is constructed from a researcher’s beliefs about reality, the nature of knowledge and human agency, and their values leading to the development of fundamental assumptions (Sikes, 2004, p. 31). It is these fundamental assumptions which shape methodological decision making (Jackson, 2013, p. 50). I intend to define and explain the difference between beliefs about reality, ontology, and beliefs about the nature of knowledge, epistemology, so that I can define and explain the difference between methodology and methods. This is a prerequisite to setting out my positionality.

Ontology is our understanding of reality and whether we see reality as independent, fixed and objective or socially constructed, experienced and subjective (Jackson, 2013, p. 52; Sikes, 2004, p. 32). The positionality of a researcher is determined by these ontological assumptions because if a researcher sees an independent and fixed reality methodological decision making will be quantitative and, in contrast, if a researcher sees a socially constructed and experienced reality methodological decision making will be qualitative, with these positions representing end points on a broad spectrum of ontological assumptions (Jackson, 2013, p. 52). The position on this spectrum will shape ontological assumptions and determine research design and the methods selected. If reality is understood to be independent and fixed then the methods selected will aim to measure and quantify (Ibid). However, if reality is understood to be socially constructed and experienced then the methods selected will aim to ask people questions (Ibid).

Epistemology is our understanding of knowledge and whether we see knowledge as real or experiential (Sikes, 2004, p. 34). Similarly to ontology, the positionality of a researcher is determined by these epistemological assumptions which will determine research design and the methods selected. If the researcher sees knowledge as real, or objective, then it can be measured and quantified and, in contrast, if the researcher sees knowledge as experiential, or subjective, then it will need to be interpreted and sense will need to be made of it (Jackson, 2013, p. 54). In conjunction with a researcher’s beliefs about human agency, whether people’s behaviour is reactive or proactive, ontological and epistemological assumptions create fundamental assumptions specific to a researcher which shape their view of how the world works and how we know this (Sikes, 2004, p. 35). This represents a specific view of the world which will impact on the methodology and methods selected by a researcher.

## **3.4 Methodology and methods**

According to Clough (2012) the purpose of a method is to explain the relationship between a researcher and what is being researched (p. 31). I would agree with Clough’s argument because it fits with my understanding that a methodology is constructed by a researcher for the purpose of validating the methods selected so that the claims made by the researcher can be justified (Ibid). From this perspective methodology is an operation because it is the practical application of the fundamental assumptions of a researcher, including ontological and epistemological assumptions, to the process of research design (Ibid, p. 37). My understanding of a method is that it is a tool or a procedure selected by a researcher which is used to collect information, or data, so that the researcher can present an answer to a research question (Jackson, 2013, p. 57). From this perspective methods are processes because they are techniques for collecting and analysing data with differing methods, for example observation and interview, representing differing assumptions about how the world works and how we know this (Clough, 2012, p. 34; Sikes, 2004, p. 29). Therefore, in summary, I would extend Clough’s argument and say that the purpose of a method is to realise a researcher’s unique perspective on how to answer a research question, or how to get knowledge (Sikes, 2004, p. 29). Further, it is my view that the context for Clough’s argument is a researcher’s values, inevitably leading to many perspectives and many answers.

## **3.5 Positionality**

The methodology and methods for the study have been determined by my positionality which is the product of my lived experiences and how these have shaped my beliefs about reality, the nature of knowledge and human agency, and my values. I became a teacher to make a difference to children’s lives following the realisation that I needed a career which provided a philanthropic sense of achievement and fulfilment. I became a headteacher to challenge the hegemony of education policy in England which limits the capacity of teachers to make a difference to children’s lives by continuing to present a one-size-fits-all understanding of education; a position which reifies knowledge and focuses on the collective not the individual (Kelly, 2009, p. 39). Given this, my ontological assumption is that for education a model of professional action is needed which is not focused on technical practice, but on moral practice (Biesta, 2007, p. 10). I understand teaching to be the application of informative professional judgement, not the application of technical causal interventions. Further, my epistemological assumption is that learning, the acquisition of knowledge, is the product of experience (Ibid, p. 14). Therefore, what worked before will not necessarily work in the future and so evidence should guide my professional action not determine it. The critical analysis set out in the previous chapter demonstrates my belief in the power of human agency, delineating the fundamental assumptions which inform my positionality.

From this position I understand reality to be socially constructed, experienced and subjective and, therefore, I understand knowledge to be experiential (Jackson, 2013, p. 52; Sikes, 2004, p. 32, p. 34). This determined a qualitative, instead of quantitative, approach to methodological decision making and a research design and methods selected which provided an opportunity to ask people questions (Jackson, 2013, p. 52). It is the fundamental assumptions that I have set out which informed the study and the subsequent explanations. In effect, a theory of human nature specific to my positionality (Ibid, p. 73). I maintained the integrity and trustworthiness of the study by being reflective and reflexive; I critically evaluated my methodological decision making and my engagement in the research process (Wellington, 2015, p. 101). In the next section, I summarise the research objectives and questions before moving on to introduce the methods selected.

## **3.6 Research objectives and questions**

The objectives of the study were to investigate: how Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) have adapted the concept of cultural capital; the potential impact on equality in education of introducing cultural capital into the Education Inspection Framework[[41]](#footnote-41) (EIF) (Ofsted, 2021a) for England; and alternative concepts which might inform teachers’ practice. The alternative concept of funds of knowledge, originally defined by Moll et al. (1992), is explored. To be specific, teachers were asked to think about what funds of knowledge are and if they can identify children’s funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures and communities. This exploratory work will provide a springboard for future professional development in the school.

### 3.6.1 How have Ofsted adapted the concept of cultural capital to improve equality in education?

The first research question is a prerequisite for the following research questions. To understand the potential impact on equality in education of introducing the concept of cultural capital into the EIF (Ofsted, 2021a) and to explore and compare alternative concepts, including funds of knowledge, which might inform teachers’ practice I needed to have a critical understanding of how Ofsted have adapted cultural capital to improve equality in education. I framed this question with four research objectives to support my understanding of key concepts and ideas: a critical analysis of cultural capital; a critical analysis of how Ofsted have adapted cultural capital; a critical analysis of funds of knowledge; and the use of cultural arbitrary to explore the relationship between cultural capital and funds of knowledge. I evidenced my explanation for this research question with a critical analysis of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and knowledge, and Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. I have attempted to address the first research question at the end of this chapter.

### 3.6.2 What alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice?

The inclusion of cultural capital in the EIF (Ofsted, 2021a) is significant because the concept is a component of Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) theory of symbolic violence and of Bourdieu’s (1986) subsequent work on the different forms of capital. Bourdieu and Passeron argue that the production and reproduction of an unequal structure in a society is caused, in part, by the action of the school, action which encompasses culture, ethos, policy, practice and structure (p. 5, p. 11, p. 47). Bourdieu argues that the fundamental representation of cultural capital is ‘embodied capital’ (p. 283). Therefore, within a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides, the introduction of cultural capital into the EIF (Ofsted, 2021a) makes it a responsibility of school leaders and teachers to tackle social inequality by using the curriculum to embody cultural capital in children (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Given this, the second research question is framed by two research objectives: to investigate if school leaders and teachers can use the curriculum to give children the ‘knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life’ (Ibid, p. 49); and to explore and compare alternative concepts, including funds of knowledge, which might inform teachers’ practice. I evidenced my explanation for this research question with a critical analysis of Moll et al.’s conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. Similarly to the first research question, I have attempted to address the second research question at the end of this chapter. In the next section I summarise the third research question and the three research objectives which frame it.

### 3.6.3 How do teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment?

For schools in England there currently exist two statutory curricula: the Early Years Foundation Stage[[42]](#footnote-42) (EYFS) and the National Curriculum[[43]](#footnote-43). In the previous chapter I argued that the National Curriculum, as an example of a statutory curriculum, is a selection of knowledge valued by a dominant social group; it is legitimate knowledge (Apple, 1996, p. 22). Therefore, the National Curriculum realises what is understood as the technical perspective on curriculum: content and coherence is specified by an expert and control is exerted by the use of testing to evaluate impact and the EIF (Carr, 1996, p. 9, p. 11). I would reason that this aligns the National Curriculum with Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital, albeit markedly different conceptualisations, because the role of the school is to impose a cultural arbitrary, or a monoculture, by applying arbitrary meanings and values to what constitutes legitimate knowledge (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). In the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for statutory curricula, or legitimate knowledge, by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom. The National Curriculum’s alignment with Bourdieu and Passeron, Bourdieu and Ofsted’s conceptualisations of cultural capital will determine the design of a pedagogical framework within a school. Moreover, the pedagogical framework will shape teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. In summary, before and, inevitably, following the inclusion of cultural capital in the EIF (Ofsted, 2021a), ideas about what cultural capital is will have an impact on classroom practice.

The third research question is framed by three research objectives: to explore teachers’ understanding of the alternative concept of funds of knowledge; to investigate if teachers can identify children’s funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures and communities; and to consider the potential of funds of knowledge for securing equality in education. The EYFS and the National Curriculum set out what children will learn. Primarily, the purpose of a school curriculum is to contextualise the EYFS and the National Curriculum; how children will complete the ‘areas of learning’ set out in the EYFS (DfE, 2020b, para. 5) and the ‘programmes of study’ set out in the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013b, p. 4). If teachers can understand and demonstrate the potential to utilise children’s funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures and communities, then there is the potential for school leaders and teachers to design the pedagogical framework, and in the process contextualise the EYFS and the National Curriculum, differently. In the previous chapter, I argued that the National Curriculum, as an example of a statutory curriculum, is a one-size-fits-all curriculum focused on the collective not the individual and that, in effect, it is a top-down, policy-driven approach to curriculum which will not work in a diverse community without mediation by teachers. Further, there is a broad consensus that given the majority of children at the school where I am headteacher are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language, a one-size-fits-all curriculum will not work for a diverse community (section 2.3.2). In contrast, funds of knowledge is a horizontal and situated approach to curriculum which could impact on children’s engagement in learning in the classroom and, tentatively, I advance it would then have an impact on equality in education. To clarify, this is not an either/or choice of alternatives: can funds of knowledge make the EYFS and the National Curriculum work for all children? I have evidenced my explanation for this research question with a thematic analysis of semi-structured focus group interviews with teachers.

## **3.7 Methods**

The methods selected for the study emerged from my positionality, the research objectives and questions and the theoretical framework constructed in the previous chapter. In this section, I describe the methods selected, CDA and interview, and explain how they were used. Following this, I specify the sample size and outline how I negotiated access to the participants.

### 3.7.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

In chapter 2, to support my understanding of how Ofsted defines cultural capital, would seem to define knowledge and the relationship between these two concepts I used CDA. I used the method of Hyatt’s (2013) Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame (frame) (section 2.2.2.1). I briefly described Hyatt’s frame (section 2.2.2.1) before I applied it to the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) (section 2.2.2.3 and section 2.2.2.5). Given I have previously described Hyatt’s frame, in this section I set out the advantages and disadvantages of using CDA, I describe how I applied the method of Hyatt’s frame to the Ofsted policy ensemble and then, to conclude, I summarise the impact of using the methodology/method of CDA/Hyatt’s frame.

Lewin-Jones (2017) identifies two advantages and three disadvantages of using CDA (p. 76, p.77). The first advantage is that CDA is a resource for understanding the explicit and implicit messages that policy texts convey (Ibid). Secondly, exposing the messages that policy texts convey and subsequently understanding how policy texts have been shaped by society and the political system opens up a space within which dominant policy frameworks, ideologies and discourses can be challenged (Ibid, p. 76, p. 80). The first disadvantage is that CDA allows the researcher to ‘cherry-pick’ the policy texts to be an analysed (Ibid). However, this is countered by the argument that if the researcher’s positionality is understood then subjectivities will be transparent (Ibid). Secondly, that findings from CDA may not be generalisable, but if the aim is to understand a policy text then this disadvantage can be discounted (Ibid). Thirdly, poor quality CDA contributes to the view that it is an outdated methodology and that ‘anything goes’ when it is used (Ibid). Next, I describe how I applied the method of Hyatt’s frame to the Ofsted policy ensemble and in the process will address the disadvantages identified.

To start, I read the three policy texts in the Ofsted policy ensemble to get a broad understanding of the texts: the EIF (2021a), the school inspection handbook[[44]](#footnote-44) (handbook) (2021d) and the special edition school inspection update[[45]](#footnote-45) (SIU) (2019). Following this, I searched the three texts for references to the concepts of ‘cultural capital’ and ‘knowledge’ and recorded the references in two separate tables. Next, I removed duplicate references which led to the creation of two tables of references to be analysed. For the contextualising element of Hyatt’s frame (2013) I applied all elements of the framework to the references to cultural capital and knowledge (p. 838, p. 839). For the deconstructing element of Hyatt’s frame I used ‘lenses’ from the selection provided to analyse the references to cultural capital and knowledge (p. 839). For cultural capital I selected the criteria of modes of legitimation (Ibid, p. 840). This is because by examining the legitimation employed in the Ofsted policy ensemble the societal norms and values used to justify the introduction of cultural capital as a measure of a school’s performance will be exposed. For knowledge I selected the criteria of interdiscursivity and intertextuality (Ibid). Interdiscursivity, the reference to other discourses, and intertextuality, the reference to other texts, can be used to legitimise the assumptions, claims and views in a policy text which will further evidence the societal norms and values used to justify the acquisition of knowledge as a measure of a school’s performance (Ibid).

In conjunction with my positionality (section 1.7), the application of Hyatt’s frame (2013) to the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) ensured transparent subjectivities and, due to ‘close engagement’ with the policy texts, an in-depth understanding of the messages the texts convey (Lewin-Jones, 2017, p. 77). Further, the criticality of this process led to an understanding of how society and the political system shaped the Ofsted policy ensemble. In summary, the methodology/method of CDA/Hyatt’s frame worked to expose the dominant discourses which underpin the texts that constitute the Ofsted policy ensemble. From this position a space opened up within this study from which dominant policy frameworks, ideologies and discourses could be challenged.

### 3.7.2 Interview

According to Wellington (2015) the method of interview is designed to draw out views and perspectives which other methods cannot (p. 137). The aim of an interview is not to determine the absolute truth, but to use multiple truths to understand reality by giving a person or a group of people the opportunity to have their voice heard (Ibid, p. 137, p. 139). Interview is, therefore, a method which fits with my ontological and epistemological position of a reality which is socially constructed, experienced and subjective, and knowledge which is experiential (Jackson, 2013, p. 52; Sikes, 2004, p. 32, p. 34). In effect, an interview is a method of data collection that uses people’s answers to questions, their views and perspectives, as a source of data (Denscombe, 2017, p. 202). How the questions in an interview are structured will impact on people’s answers and subsequently the views and perspectives elicited. An interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Wellington, 2015, p. 141).

A structured interview is effectively a ‘face-to-face’ questionnaire, with set questions and a rigid order to the questions (Wellington, 2015, p. 141). In contrast, an unstructured interview will have no set questions and, inevitably, no order to the questions (Ibid). The compromise is the semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview will have a focused set of questions, however there will be flexibility in the order of the questions and, significantly, the emphasis will be on open-ended questions which allow the person or group of people being interviewed to provide more in-depth answers and in doing so to develop their ideas further (Denscombe, 2017, p. 204). To prepare for a semi-structured interview it is standard practice to start by creating an interview guide; identifying the broad research ideas or questions which the researcher intends to explore (Wellington, 2015, p. 142). The research ideas or questions can then be categorised into different areas to be investigated (Ibid). This is the interview guide and the next step is to convert it into an interview schedule by using the areas to be investigated to construct clear and meaningful questions for the interviewees which can then be coherently sequenced (Ibid, p. 143).

Wellington (2015) sets out guidance on how to prepare for an interview and the advantages and disadvantages of a group interview which I will briefly explore before summarising the advantages and disadvantages of the method of interview (p. 144, p. 148). I will then move on to explain how I used the method of interview for the study. According to Wellington the preliminaries for an interview should include: to not record an interview without the interviewees’ prior knowledge and permission; to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees and the confidentiality of their responses; and to provide interviewees with sufficient information about the study beforehand (p. 144). Further, Wellington differentiates between ‘prompting’ and ‘probing’ (p. 147). Prompting during an interview, or indirectly leading an interviewee, should be avoided because it can lead to bias, whereas probing during an interview, or using additional questions to fully understand an answer given by an interviewee, is acknowledged to be an essential, and neutral, interview technique (Ibid).

Wellington (2015) argues that a group interview, when more than one person is interviewed at the same time, is more useful than a one-to-one interview (p. 148). According to Wellington the advantages of a group interview include: increasing the number and range of interviewees and therefore the breadth and depth of the views and perspectives, or data, collected; interviewees may feel more safe and secure with their peers; if interviewees feel safe and secure they are more likely to engage with the interview questions; and, further, if interviewees feel safe and secure then the impact of interviewer effect, or perceptions of the interviewer based on their sex, age, ethnicity, status or experience, is more likely to be mitigated (Ibid). For Wellington the disadvantages of a group interview include the reduction in time for each interviewee and the potential for interviewees to either dominate or not contribute during the interview (p. 149).

In summary, the advantages of the method of interview include the breadth and depth of the views and perspectives, or data, that can be collected and the flexibility in how the method can be used, for example an interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Further, Denscombe (2017) identifies that the response rate for an interview can be high and the focus on self-reports, people’s views and perspectives, can lead to the credibility of the data (p. 202, p. 220). The disadvantages include the time needed to conduct an interview, and the potential impact of interviewer effect and of interviewees not contributing. Moreover, Denscombe identifies that the credibility of the data collected from an interview can conversely be a disadvantage (p. 220). This is because the interviewer is reliant on an interviewee providing open and honest answers to the interview questions; if they do not then the credibility of the data can be questioned (Ibid).

### 3.7.3 How I used interview

I used semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers to evidence my explanation for teachers’ understanding of the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Given that I explored a complex issue, teachers’ understanding of an alternative concept in the context of their existing pedagogical knowledge, then I needed to select a method which allowed the complexities and subtleties of the issue to be understood; this is why I selected interview (Denscombe, 2017, p. 203). Further, in view of the complexities and subtleties of the data collected, using a semi-structured format accommodated the technique of probing and therefore allowed interviewees to provide more in-depth answers and in doing so to develop their ideas further. I used a group interview format by organising teachers into focus groups according to the phase that they teach in.

I used a group interview format to increase the breadth and depth of the data collected, but predominantly to make the teachers feel more safe and secure and to mitigate the impact of interviewer effect. I am the headteacher of the school and so my status and experience may have made teachers hesitant or reluctant to share their understanding of an alternative concept in the context of their existing pedagogical knowledge. The support of their peers during the interview alleviated this and led to their engagement with the interview questions (for interview schedule see appendix 1), providing open and honest answers. To further mitigate the impact of interviewer effect, I framed the interview as a professional/research conversation, provided pre-interview information for teachers (see appendix 2) and made it clear that teachers were able to ask questions during the interview. I acknowledge the disadvantages of a group interview format, however, I maintain that the preparation of an interview guide and schedule in conjunction with being a reflective and reflexive interviewer worked to overcome these disadvantages. Further, I conducted a pilot study of a semi-structured focus group interview so that I could reflect on this methodological decision and make necessary adjustments. Next, I explain how I analysed the interview data collected.

### 3.7.4 Interview analysis

The interview data collected is descriptive and extensive, therefore to analyse the interview data I used a thematic approach by extricating patterns or themes from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Given data analysis is an iterative process I engaged in cycles of data analysis (Wellington, 2015, p. 264). Before the data analysis started the interview data needed to be prepared. I protected the interview data by a process of duplication before I catalogued and indexed it (Denscombe, 2017, p. 306). I then transcribed and annotated the interview data (Ibid, p. 307). Following the preparation of the interview data, the thematic analysis started with a process of immersion, getting to know the data, and then a process of reflection, standing back from the data (Wellington, 2015, p. 261). During the processes of immersion and reflection I used memos to record my initial thoughts (Denscombe, 2017, p. 314).

The next step is to break down the interview data collected to identify patterns or themes which start to give sense to the data (Wellington, 2015, p. 262). For the process of breaking down the interview data I used analytic coding (Thomas, 2013, p. 245). To be specific, primarily I used Miles and Huberman’s (1994) method of creating codes. I adopted an inductive approach to identifying patterns or themes within the data. Given this, I coded the data without a ‘start list’ of codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 58). I started the analytic coding by unitising the interview data: deciding what to code and applying initial codes (Denscombe, 2017, p. 315). The next step in the analytic coding is to engage in a cycle of grouping codes into categories and then reducing the number of codes and categories to support the development of a hierarchy of codes and categories (Ibid, p. 316). This led to the identification of initial patterns or themes within the data. Following this, I defined and named the patterns or themes so that they could be related to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92; Wellington, 2015, p. 263). The success of the processes of defining and naming, and locating is determined by the strength of the literature review in the previous chapter and my ability to make sense of the interview data within this context (Wellington, 2015, p. 264). The analysis of the interview data concluded with a decision on how to present the data accurately and coherently including how I used data extracts to support the patterns or themes identified (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 93). I will now summarise the interview pilot study.

### 3.7.5 Interview pilot study

I conducted a pilot study of a semi-structured focus group interview with three teachers using an interview schedule (for interview pilot study schedule see appendix 3) and recording equipment. The teachers were not included in the main study. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the interview process and schedule in collaboration with my supervisor, and to make necessary adjustments. Following the pilot study I made no adjustments to the interview process. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of school due to a national lockdown I recruited participants for the pilot study using email and teachers responded promptly. To adhere to the current government guidance for schools, I conducted a virtual semi-structured focus group interview. During the interview teachers shared their views and perspectives. I audio recorded the interview using the Microsoft TEAMS app. An advantage of using the Microsoft TEAMS app is that at the start of a session all participants are informed that the session will be recorded and that by joining the session they have given consent. This further supported the informed consent of participants.

In contrast, I did make adjustments to the interview schedule following the pilot study. The creation of an interview guide had led to an interview schedule with coherently sequenced questions categorised into three themes: statutory curricula (the EYFS and the National Curriculum), cultural capital and funds of knowledge (Wellington, 2015, p. 143). During the interview these themes elicited rich data in the form of stories from the teachers. Subsequently the interview overran and I did not have time to ask all of the questions. Given this, three questions were removed from the interview schedule and two questions were amended. On reflection, the pilot study supported my methodological decision making, in particular the decision to use semi-structured focus group interviews. This is evidenced in the rich data collected and the minimal impact of interviewer effect. To conclude the methods section I will specify the sample size and outline how I negotiated access.

### 3.7.6 Sample size

The participants in the research were teachers at the school where I am a headteacher. From a potential sample size of 29 teachers, 15 teachers were interviewed as voluntary participants. I conducted the interviews of teachers in February 2021 over a two-week period and I used a group interview format. The teachers were organised into four focus groups according to the phase that they teach in and I interviewed teachers from every phase. The focus groups are shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: *Teacher focus groups organised by phase*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Phase | Year groups | Age of children | Number of teachers | Number of teachers interviewed |
| Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) | Nursery  Reception | 3 to 5-years-old | 7 | 3 |
| Key Stage 1 (KS1) | Year 1  Year 2 | 5 to 7-years-old | 7 | 4 |
| Lower Key Stage 2 (LKS2) | Year 3  Year 4 | 7 to 9-years-old | 7 | 3 |
| Upper Key Stage 2 (UKS2) | Year 5  Year 6 | 9 to 11-years-old | 8 | 5 |
| Total number of teachers | | | 29 | 15 |

I am a headteacher of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school in England, which is currently expanding from two form entry, 60 children in a year group, to three form entry, 90 children in a year group, over a 7-year period. The majority of children at the school are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. The percentage of children at the school supported by pupil premium funding[[46]](#footnote-46) and with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Over a 6-year period Ofsted have judged the school’s overall effectiveness[[47]](#footnote-47) to have moved from ‘requires improvement’ to ‘outstanding’ following a recent inspection (Ofsted, 2020b, p. 1). In 2019, 80% of children at the school achieved the KS2 expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, significantly above the national average and in the highest 20% of all schools in England (CSPS, 2019). The range of experience of the teachers at the school is from newly qualified teacher[[48]](#footnote-48) (NQT) to experienced teachers who have progressed to the upper pay range[[49]](#footnote-49) (UPR).

### 3.7.7 Negotiating access

All teachers at the school were invited to participate in the study by email. A participant consent form and an information sheet were given to all teachers. I requested permission to conduct the study from the governing body of the school. I wrote to the Chair of Governors including all relevant documentation and requested written permission to conduct the study; it started when I received written permission from the Chair of Governors. In the following section, I explain how the study is ethical and trustworthy.

## **3.8 Ethics**

For the study to be ethical and trustworthy I need to demonstrate how I have engaged with ethical considerations. I will start by explaining how ethical considerations have framed the study. Next, I will summarise the ethical review process and how I ethically engaged with participants, including securing anonymity of the data collected. Following this, I will reflect on the original design of the study post COVID-19. I will then consider the trustworthiness of the study.

### 3.8.1 Ethical considerations

Denscombe (2017) identifies four ethical principles which should be used to guide research: the interests of the participants should be protected; informed consent by participants is a prerequisite for voluntary participation; the researcher is open and honest; and the researcher abides by the laws of the land (p. 341). The study adheres to these ethical principles and, with particular reference to abiding by the laws of the land, it adheres to the current government guidance for schools during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (DfE, 2020c). For the study ethical considerations have primarily focused on the use of semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers. I will set out these ethical considerations with reference to Wellington’s (2015) understanding of how an educational research project could be unethical: the design, the methods, the analysis, the presentation or the findings (p. 113). Next, I will contest the concept of cultural capital and how it is being used by Ofsted. I will then explore the concept of funds of knowledge as a practical alternative.

In the design of the study I have used a group interview format with the well-being of the teachers being interviewed the determining factor. Similarly, I have used a semi-structured interview format to accommodate the complexities and subtleties of the teachers’ answers to the questions, the data, which led to the integrity of the data analysis. Previously I explained that I transcribed the interview data. Following the transcription of the interview data I shared the transcription with the teachers and obtained their agreement that it is an accurate record of their views and perspectives. It is my view that this step is supportive of an ethical analysis of the interview data collected. I have preserved the anonymity of the teachers being interviewed and the confidentiality of the data to secure an ethical presentation of the study and its findings.

I maintained the integrity and trustworthiness of the study by being reflective and reflexive, not least because, according to Pring (2001), there is ‘an inescapable dependence on the trustworthiness of the researcher’ (p. 411). To demonstrate my trustworthiness in the role of the researcher it is essential that I acknowledged the power relationships which exist between myself, headteacher, and the participants in the research, the teachers. I agree with Pring (2010) that research cannot be apolitical; all research will exist within a context in which power can be exercised over people (p. 187). For the study this presented the potential for participants in the research to be influenced by the power relationships which exist and, for example, to feel compelled to participate or to provide answers to questions that they think the researcher is expecting. Given this context I became mindful of Sikes’ (2004) comment that I should be responsible and ethical in the use of my power (p. 41).

I have taken steps to mitigate the power relationships which exist between myself and teachers. At the start of the 2018-19 academic year the school replaced performance appraisal for teachers linked to pay with professional development conversations (PDC) for all staff not linked to pay. With the expectation of completing the study during the 2020-21 academic year and in acknowledgement of the power differential between myself and the teachers, I did not lead PDC for teachers during the 2020-21 academic year. Removing myself from PDC provided additional reassurance to teachers when making a decision about whether or not to participate in the study and signalled that I expected open and honest participation in the research. Moving forward, I understood that continued transparency and critical evaluation of my methodological decision making and engagement in the research process would be essential (Wellington, 2015, p. 101).

In the previous chapter I argued that within the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) the use of the concept of cultural capital to evaluate the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides exposes many problems with Ofsted’s thinking (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). In effect, Ofsted have problematised, or constructed the problem of, cultural capital as a policy discourse. The solution presented by Ofsted is the acquisition by children of ‘essential’ knowledge which is comparable to E. D. Hirsch’s (1996) idea of ‘core’ knowledge (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Winter, 2014, p. 285). Similarly, within the context of early childhood education (ECE) Wood (2019) identified that Ofsted used the mechanism of the inspection regime to colonise the discourse of ECE and construct the problem of teaching and play; the solution presented is aligning child development theories with the hierarchical early learning goals[[50]](#footnote-50) (p. 793). Therefore, a pattern emerges of Ofsted using its power to promote ideologies, determine policy agendas, define effective practice and inevitably shape outcomes for children (Ibid). I contend that this is an unethical use of power by Ofsted because invariably the problem is constructed to fit the intended solution, informed by policy-led evidence - what Wood describes as a ‘circular discourse’ (p. 790). It is my ontological assumption that education is a moral practice and my epistemological assumption that learning is the product of experience. From this perspective Ofsted’s use of a circular discourse may sustain or exacerbate inequality (Wood, 2020, p. 11).

The indication is that a practical alternative to Ofsted’s use of the concept of cultural capital is the concept of funds of knowledge. In the previous chapter, I suggested that Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge is problematic, however the central tenet of the concept is to know the learner. This is a powerful tool for changing classroom practice and potentially effecting change at a wider institutional level which fits with my ontological and epistemological assumptions. Funds of knowledge is an opportunity to engage with children from diverse social groups and heritages and, therefore, different sources of knowledge which may lead to different perspectives on curriculum content, coherence and control. Further, this makes funds of knowledge an opportunity for education to start from a premise of equality which may counter rather than sustain or exacerbate existing inequalities. Therefore, funds of knowledge may offer a practical and ethical alternative to Ofsted’s use of cultural capital. In the next section, I will summarise the ethical review process.

### 3.8.2 Ethical review process

The ethical review guidance set out by the School of Education, the University of Sheffield, was followed at every stage of the study. In accordance with this, in October 2020 the study received ethical approval (see appendix 4). In this section, I outline the key components of the ethical review process including participants and the information provided for them to obtain informed consent, and securing anonymity of the data collected.

#### 3.8.2.1 Participants

The participants in the study were teachers at the school where I am a headteacher. From a potential sample size of 29 teachers, 15 teachers were interviewed. Teachers were invited to participate in the study by email. Before the start of the research the teachers that agreed to participate were given a consent form (see appendix 5) and a participant information sheet (see appendix 6). The teachers that agreed to participate had an opportunity to meet with myself to ask questions, make comments and raise ethical concerns, and, if they preferred, this would have been confidential. I did not collect data until all consent forms had been signed and returned to myself from the participants.

#### 3.8.2.2 Information for participants

In accordance with the ethical review guidance set out by the School of Education, I provided information about the study to the participants to obtain informed consent which is a prerequisite for voluntary participation. The information provided to the participants included the purpose of the study and that I would be the researcher. The possible disadvantages and risks of taking part were specified and I made it clear to the participants that if at any time they wished to withdraw from the study they would be able to do so and they would not have to give a reason. Further, the benefits of taking part were specified and I made it clear to the participants that whilst there would be no immediate benefits, including financial or in kind payments, I hoped that by being involved the participants, teachers, would reflect on and develop their thinking about teaching and learning.

#### 3.8.2.3 Anonymity of data

Given that interviews were audio recorded and that I conducted semi-structured focus group interviews, all participant consent forms were signed before the interviews started. All of the information collected about participants during the course of the study is kept strictly confidential and is only accessible by myself, the researcher. The participants and the school have not been identified; I applied anonymisation of names from the transcription phase onwards. Data analysis is on a password protected and encrypted computer in the researcher’s home and office; only the researcher can access the data collected. Physical documents have been stored in locked cabinets which only the researcher can access, and any physical documents scanned electronically have been stored with password protection and encryption on all files. All data collected will be destroyed at the end of the project which is expected to be July 2022. Next, I reflect on the original design of the study post COVID-19.

### 3.8.3 Ethical reflections post COVID-19

In the previous chapter I described how Moll et al. (1992) further extended the work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992) into the field of education by working with teachers to research funds of knowledge in U.S.-Mexican households (section 2.2.3) (Moll et al., 1992, p. 135). The objectives of Moll et al.’s research included improving relations between teachers and families and the development of curriculum and pedagogy (p. 132). For Moll et al. this led to a methodology which focused on teachers conducting household interviews with the expectation that teachers would use the knowledge and skills found in the households, funds of knowledge, to develop ‘innovations in teaching’ (Ibid). My intention had been to adapt this methodology for the study. However, post COVID-19 this would have been unethical for three reasons. Firstly, conducting face-to-face household interviews would have put the participants and myself at risk, and I would not have been abiding by the laws of the land (DfE, 2020c). Secondly, when the majority of children have missed more than six months of teaching due to the closure of schools during two periods of national lockdown the priority for a school needs to be supporting children to catch up[[51]](#footnote-51). The priority for a school should not be the development of curriculum and pedagogy, irrespective of whether this could have been attempted by conducting virtual, instead of face-to-face, household interviews. Thirdly, in response to COVID-19 the government made remote education statutory (DfE, 2020e). Remote education is the provision of teaching at home for children unable to attend school due to COVID-19. Therefore, from January 2021 onwards teachers’ day-to-day experience is frequently teaching children in school and at home in parallel. At the school where I am headteacher remote education significantly impacts on teacher workload and, inevitably, well-being; an additional focus on ‘innovations in teaching’ would have exacerbated this.

Following these ethical reflections post COVID-19 the research questions for the study are now more exploratory. The focus is on exploring teachers’ understanding of the alternative concept of funds of knowledge, investigating if teachers can identify children’s funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures and communities, and evaluating the potential of funds of knowledge for securing equality in education. If teachers can understand and demonstrate the potential to utilise children’s funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures and communities, then there is the potential for school leaders and teachers to re-design the pedagogical framework and impact on equality in education. Further, given the majority of children at the school where I am headteacher are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language, then there is the potential for the study to impact on equality in a diverse community.

### 3.8.4 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study is secured, in part, by my reflectivity and reflexivity, however broader consideration needed to be given to the standard of trustworthiness for the study to be trustworthy. When I described the method of interview (section 3.6.4) I evaluated the credibility, instead of the validity, of the data collected using this method because I understood that the standards used for qualitative research, and therefore applicable to the study, are different to the standards used for quantitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1982) identified four criteria which can be applied to qualitative research to secure trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (p. 248). I will briefly summarise the criteria and then apply the criteria to the study to demonstrate how it is trustworthy.

For Guba and Lincoln (1982) credibility is the substitute for the quantitative criteria of validity; it is an indicator of how fairly the views and perspectives of participants in qualitative research have been represented (p. 246). Similarly, transferability is the substitute for generalisability and it is used to indicate if transfer to a different context is possible (Ibid). Dependability is the substitute for reliability; it is an indicator of the stability of the findings (p. 247). Confirmability is the substitute for the quantitative criteria of objectivity and it is used to indicate the extent to which the findings have been determined by the data (Ibid). To demonstrate the credibility of the study I have shared the transcription of the interview data with the teachers and obtained their agreement that it is an accurate record of their views and perspectives. The data collected for the study is descriptive and extensive which should enable parts of the sample, under certain circumstances, to be relevant within a different context (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p. 246). I would expect this to support the transferability of the findings across a range of different schools. Dependability is evidenced in the clearly defined and articulated process of research design which makes the study repeatable. The confirmability of the study is demonstrated by my positionality in relation to the methodology and methods.

In applying the standard of trustworthiness to the study, I would agree with Guba and Lincoln’s (1982) caveat that “no one set of procedures may be taken as gospel or represent prescriptions for how inquiry must be done” (p. 249). In the next section, I identify issues from data collection.

## **3.9 Issues from data collection**

Before I started data collection I identified two probable issues. Firstly, I had been uncertain if the use of a group interview format would be sufficient to make the participants, teachers, feel safe and secure and mitigate the impact of interviewer effect. This would have impacted on how teachers engaged with the interview questions and, in particular, if they would have provided open and honest answers. Secondly, I questioned if the impact of remote education on teacher workload would discourage teachers from participating in the study. This would have decreased the expected sample size and impacted on the breadth and depth of the data collected. However, the issues from data collection were negligible which I have attributed to the impact of the interview pilot study and how this supported my methodological decision making, and the onset of COVID-19.

### 3.9.1 Sample size

There were no issues with sample size. I interviewed 15 teachers from a potential sample size of 29 teachers, or 52% of teachers at the school where I am headteacher were interviewed.

### 3.9.2 Negotiating access

There were no issues with negotiating access. Teachers were invited to participate in the study by email and I secured the sample size by sending an initial email and then a follow up email. The Chair of Governors provided written permission to conduct the study immediately following my request.

### 3.9.3 Conducting the interviews

Following the interview pilot study I made no further adjustments to the interview schedule. There were no issues with technology which is an advantage of using the Microsoft TEAMS app to audio record the interviews, an app used by the school following the onset of COVID-19.

## **3.10 Strengths and limitations of the methodology and methods used**

In this section I set out the strengths and limitations of the methodology and methods used. Next, I address the first research question: How have Ofsted adapted the concept of cultural capital to improve equality in education? I then address the second research question: What alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice?

### 3.10.1 Strengths

Before I started data collection I expected the strength of the methodology and methods used would be the depth of understanding that the interviews would provide about a complex issue: the potential for the alternative concept of funds of knowledge to be realised in a school. The methodology and methods used realised this strength with the rich data and teacher stories generated from the semi-structured focus group interviews of 15 teachers. The method of interview facilitated a critical insight into how teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews provided the necessary flexibility, in the form of open-ended questions and the technique of probing, to enable teachers to give in-depth answers and share their stories. This is evidenced in a data set comprising 28 codes across three key themes that supports an understanding of the complexities and subtleties of the issue.

In conjunction with the interviews being semi-structured, the group format contributed to the breadth and depth of the data collected. I would reason that this is because the group format worked to mitigate the impact of interviewer effect by making the teachers feel safe and secure to engage with the interview questions, provide open and honest answers and ask questions. In effect, the teachers engaged in a professional/research conversation. These conversations provided teachers with an opportunity to reflect on and develop their thinking about teaching and learning, explore the potential impact on primary-aged children of using the concept of cultural capital as a standardised performance indicator and consider future curriculum development. Moreover, these conversations provided an invaluable opportunity for the views and perspectives of the teachers at my school to be heard.

### 3.10.2 Limitations

Following the interview pilot study, I expected the limitation of the methodology and methods used would be the amount of data generated from the semi-structured focus group interviews of 15 teachers. The semi-structured focus group interviews did generate a large amount of data which led to the transcription of the interview data becoming a time-consuming process and, in particular with the KS1 and UKS2 interviews, which included the largest number of teachers, a complex process. I have previously acknowledged the power relationships which exist between myself, the headteacher, and the participants in the research, the teachers. However, I think the sample size, the ease of the negotiation of access and the rich data and teacher stories generated evidence that teachers were not influenced by the existing power relationships. Conversely, I think the existing relationships between myself and the teachers supported the trustworthiness of the study which is why the semi-structured focus group interviews were more like professional/research conversations. It is possible that the existing relationships impacted on my objectivity and therefore my ability to challenge the teachers. To counter this, I would argue that my dual role of researcher and headteacher worked to contextualise the data generated from the semi-structured focus group interviews and to mitigate against what is, in effect, a manufactured and time limited experience.

## **3.11 How have Ofsted adapted the concept of cultural capital to improve equality in education?**

Given the preceding analysis in chapter 2 I would contend that the concept of cultural capital is a cultural arbitrary. It is the funds of knowledge of a dominant social group. The funds of knowledge of ‘subordinate’ social groups do not constitute cultural capital because they have not been legitimised and subsequently privileged by a dominant discourse (Oughton, 2010, p. 69). This makes cultural capital a construct for explaining and rationalising inequality in a society evidenced in my critical analysis of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and knowledge, and Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. In particular, Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of cultural capital is a useful lens for exploring inequality in a society. For example, Edgerton and Roberts (2014) further develop the concept of habitus so that in conjunction with cultural capital it presents a more useful framework for understanding and challenging educational inequality (p. 215). Hattam and Smyth (2015) acknowledge the role of the school in reproducing inequality in a society, but demonstrate that conversely the role of the school can be to effect change in a society (p. 275). Further, Yosso (2005) inverts and subsequently challenges cultural capital with the conceptualisation of community cultural wealth (p. 82). Without Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of cultural capital and the theoretical framework it is a component of, this theorising would not have emerged.

Similarly, Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital is a useful lens for exploring inequality within a school. However, the literature review in chapter 2 indicates that in contrast to Bourdieu (1986), Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital reduces the construct to a measure of a school’s performance, or a standardised performance indicator. The usefulness of Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital is not the theoretical framework it operates within, but in its confirmation of the persistence of a deficit narrative which others those groups in society that are not White, middle class and British. The counter-storytelling of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge emphasises the arbitrariness of cultural capital by contesting this explanation and rationalisation of inequality in a society which constitutes a deficit narrative. Given this, I would argue that Ofsted’s adaptation of the concept of cultural capital will not improve equality in education because cultural capital is a construct for explaining and rationalising inequality in a society. By reducing cultural capital to a standardised performance indicator Ofsted have simply limited the concept’s usefulness as a lens for exploring inequality in a society and, therefore, its potential for understanding and challenging inequality. Subsequently, instead of supporting school leaders and teachers to effect change it entrenches the role of the school in reproducing inequality in a society. It is an example of what Wood (2019) describes as a ‘circular discourse’ (p. 790). This is because the problem, cultural capital, is constructed to fit the intended solution, the acquisition by children of ‘essential’ knowledge (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38).

## **3.12 What alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice?**

Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge is problematic. However, this study will employ funds of knowledge for the following reasons. Firstly, when Moll et al. (1992) conceptualised funds of knowledge they positioned teachers as co-researchers actively engaged in household research, for example conducting interviews in the homes of the children in their class (p. 139). They argued that this led to teachers developing an understanding of ‘strategic knowledge’ specific to the children in their class in contrast to the ‘folkloric displays’ of knowledge associated with a more generalised understanding of culture (p. 139). For Moll et al. it is the incorporation of ‘strategic knowledge’ into classroom practice which leads to an improvement in the engagement of children in learning in the classroom. Further, I advance that positioning teachers as co-researchers reduces the potential for a teacher to impose their own cultural arbitrary instead of the cultural arbitrary of the children in their class. Secondly, in the school where I am headteacher we have more heterogenous groups of children; the specificity of funds of knowledge would seem more of a fit with the complexities of my school. Thirdly, the central tenet of the concept is to know the learner which is a powerful tool for changing classroom practice and potentially effecting change at a wider institutional level. I will now conclude this chapter.

## **3.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have set out the methodology and methods, determined by my positionality, which addressed the research questions for the study. In the next chapter, I present the analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers.

# **Chapter 4: Analysis and findings**

## **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I present the analysis of the data and identify the key findings. The objective of the analysis is to foreground themes from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers to address the following research question: how do teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment?

To analyse the data I primarily used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) method of thematic analysis because it can be applied to different theoretical frameworks ‘to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality’ (p. 81). The theoretical position of the thematic analysis is evidenced in the theoretical framework constructed in chapter 2 and my positionality set out in chapter 3.

To start I present an overview of the school where I am headteacher. The teachers that I interviewed work at this school and in the second section I present a similar overview of the teachers. In accordance with the ethical review process set out in Chapter 3, the school and the teachers have been anonymised. Thirdly, I summarise how I conducted the thematic analysis of the data and the key themes identified from it. To contextualise the themes I have constructed a concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom which will be included in this section. Fourthly, I present the three key themes foregrounded by the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers: curriculum content, cultural arbitrary and funds of knowledge. I then conclude this chapter.

## **4.2 School**

I am a headteacher of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school in England. The school recently converted to an academy[[52]](#footnote-52) and joined a medium-sized Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) made up of 7 schools working in partnership together. The school is located in the inner-city in an area which is the focus of a long-term regeneration project. Due to its location, the school recently moved into a new school building constructed by the Priority School Building Programme[[53]](#footnote-53) (PSBP) and is expanding from two form entry, 60 children in a year group, to three form entry, 90 children in a year group, over a 7-year period. Currently 29 teachers work at the school and approximately 500 children attend the school; it is expected that at the end of the period of expansion nearly 700 children will attend the school. The age range of the children that attend the school is 3 to 11-years-old. The majority of children are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. The percentage of children at the school supported by pupil premium funding[[54]](#footnote-54) and with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.

Over a 6-year period Ofsted have judged the school’s overall effectiveness[[55]](#footnote-55) to have moved from ‘requires improvement’ to ‘outstanding’ following a recent inspection (Ofsted, 2020b, p. 1). In 2019[[56]](#footnote-56), 80% of children at the school achieved the KS2 expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, significantly above the national average and in the highest 20% of all schools in England (CSPS, 2019). I believe that integral to the success of the school is the curriculum. The teachers have developed a curriculum for the school which uses the backward by design pedagogy to contextualise the statutory entitlement set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage[[57]](#footnote-57) (EYFS) and the National Curriculum[[58]](#footnote-58). This approach to the curriculum gives teachers the opportunity to create transdisciplinary end goals and outcomes every term that the children work towards. These creative contexts provide a wide and varied learning experience within which the children develop their knowledge and skills; invariably exceeding the prescribed statutory entitlement. Moreover, this transdisciplinary, inquiry-based approach to learning works to mediate the EYFS and the National Curriculum because to make learning engaging, relevant and meaningful for children the curriculum necessarily needs to acknowledge the diversity of the community. During the LKS2 interview Paula, an experienced leader, who developed the curriculum described the impetus for it, ‘We looked at the needs of our community, their aspirations in life, their experiences, and tried to bring that into the curriculum’ (T8, LKS2 interview, line 82). In the next section, I present an overview of the teachers that I interviewed, including the diversity of their views and perspectives shared during the interviews.

## **4.3 Teachers**

The range of experience of the teachers at the school is from newly qualified teacher[[59]](#footnote-59) (NQT), to experienced teachers who have progressed to the upper pay range[[60]](#footnote-60) (UPR) and senior leaders, for example assistant and deputy headteachers, who have progressed to the leadership pay range (LPR). This range of experience is represented in the sample size of the teachers that I interviewed. From a potential sample size of 29 teachers I interviewed 15 teachers across all phases of the school. An overview of the teachers that I interviewed is shown in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: *Overview of teachers interviewed*

| Phase | Teacher | Gender | Ethnicity[[61]](#footnote-61) | Age | Teaching experience | Leadership experience |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Range in years | | |
| Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) | Jane | F | White British | 25 – 34 | 5 – 10 | 0 – 5 |
| Sophia | F | White British | 35 – 44 | 10 – 15 | 5 – 10 |
| Martha | F | White British | 35 – 44 | 10 – 15 | n/a |
| Key Stage 1 (KS1) | Serena | F | White British | 25 – 34 | 0 – 5 | n/a |
| Tom | M | White British | 35 – 44 | 5 – 10 | 0 – 5 |
| Hyo-Rin | F | Asian/Any other Asian background | 25 – 34 | 5 – 10 | 0 – 5 |
| Amelia | F | White British | 35 – 44 | 10 – 15 | 0 – 5 |
| Lower Key Stage 2 (LKS2) | Paula | F | Mixed/White and Black Caribbean | 25 – 34 | 10 – 15 | 0 – 5 |
| Hanna | F | White British | 35 – 44 | 10 – 15 | n/a |
| John | M | White British | 25 – 34 | 0 – 5 | n/a |
| Upper Key Stage 2 (UKS2) | Lucy | F | White British | 25 – 34 | 0 – 5 | n/a |
| Yaara | F | White/Any other White background | 35 – 44 | 10 – 15 | 5 – 10 |
| Faith | F | White British | 45 – 54 | 20 – 25 | n/a |
| Sally | F | White British | 35 – 44 | 10 – 15 | 0 – 5 |
| Darius | M | White/Any other White background | 25 – 34 | 5 – 10 | n/a |

The range of experience of the teachers is further evidenced in the diversity of their views and perspectives shared during the interviews. For example, during the LKS2 interview while discussing curriculum content Hanna, a more experienced teacher, questioned the content of the National Curriculum, ‘If you think about Henry VIII for instance, he was a total misogynist, when you think about how he treated women, his view of marriage, is that the kind of person we want to be celebrating?’ (T9, LKS2 interview, line 117). This question then led to John, a recently qualified teacher, making the following observation:

‘White British children need to learn that British people haven’t always been

celebrated and haven’t always been particularly kind to other nations, and we are

spending a long time making up for things that have been done in the past.’ (T10,

LKS2 interview, line 139).

Conversely, while discussing curriculum content during the KS1 interview Hyo-Rin, an experienced teacher whose family emigrated to England when they were a child, presented a different view of the National Curriculum:

‘I think that some families purposefully move to different countries so that they can

experience a new curriculum…I know a lot of families move to England because they

really like the National Curriculum, they’ve heard a lot about it and they just like the

idea of it.’ (T6, KS1 interview, line 166).

Similarly, while discussing the concept of cultural capital, teachers’ views and perspectives were both congruent and discordant. For example, during the KS1 interview Serena, a recently qualified teacher, questioned Ofsted’s (2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital:

‘Who is saying what is ‘the best that has been thought and said’? What I think might

be the best, and what another teacher thinks might be the best could be completely

different. What a child in my class thinks might be the best could be completely

different too…‘the best that has been thought and said’…is such a subjective

statement.’ (T4, KS1 interview, line 84; Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38).

During the UKS2 interview Lucy, an NQT, shared this view:

‘I wonder if there is a perceived better type of experience? If we take our children to

a classical music concert versus taking them to a steel drums performance, or if we take our children to a West End musical versus taking them to a break dancing show. I get that is the politics, arguably, of what is a perceived better experience.’ (T11, UKS2 interview, line 230).

However, during the EYFS interview Jane, an experienced leader, accounted for the inclusion of cultural capital in the school inspection handbook[[62]](#footnote-62) (handbook) (2021d) by thinking about the disparity in children’s word acquisition when they start school at 4 or 5-years-old in the Reception year group and how a limited exposure to specific cultural experiences will have impacted on this:

‘Ofsted talk about cultural capital because children that come from a disadvantaged background enter Reception [year group] with not as wide a vocabulary, so to me it feels like that us providing children with certain experiences will bridge that word gap.’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 70).

Further, when discussing the concept of funds of knowledge teachers used stories from their childhood to explore the concept and convey their understanding of it. During the UKS2 interview, while discussing food as an example of children’s funds of knowledge Yaara, an experienced leader from any other White background, shared a story about being ‘othered’ at primary school (Pelletier, 2009, p. 141):

‘When I think about what I used to have in my lunch box – a sandwich, a packet of crisps and a piece of fruit – what I ate at home was very different, but that’s the traditional, that’s what you do in England.’ (T12, UKS2 interview, line 395).

The semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers across all phases of the school have created a rich data set with which to address the research question. I acknowledge that the data set represents what teachers say they do in the classroom and that this may differ to what they do in practice. I will now summarise how I conducted the thematic analysis of the data and the key themes identified from it.

## **4.4 Thematic analysis**

To analyse the data I used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) method of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke identify six phases of thematic analysis (p. 87). I will briefly summarise the six phases of thematic analysis and then provide an overview of how I applied the six phases to the data, transcripts from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers. For Braun and Clarke the first phase of thematic analysis is to familiarise yourself with the data, and for the second phase initial codes should be generated (Ibid). The third and fourth phases of thematic analysis are searching for and then reviewing themes (Ibid). The fifth phase of thematic analysis is defining and naming themes and is followed by the sixth phase, the production of the report (Ibid).

For the first phase of thematic analysis I transcribed and annotated the interview data; this led to an in-depth familiarity with the data. For the second phase I coded the data without a ‘start list’ of codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 58). However, I recognise that I did not code the data in an ‘epistemological vacuum’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). I primarily used Miles and Huberman’s (1994) method of creating codes (see appendix 7 for an example of an anonymised coded transcript from the KS1 focus group interview). I started the analytic coding by unitising the interview data: deciding what to code and applying initial codes (Denscombe, 2017, p. 315). Next, I engaged in a cycle of grouping codes into categories and then reducing the number of codes and categories to support the development of a hierarchy of codes and categories (Ibid, p. 316). This led to the third phase, the identification of initial patterns or themes within the data, and subsequently the fourth phase, reviewing the themes. The recursive process across the second, third and fourth phases of thematic analysis gradually reduced the number of codes, categories and themes.

For the fifth phase of thematic analysis I defined and named the patterns or themes so that they could be related to the third research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92; Wellington, 2015, p. 263). During this phase, to contextualise the themes, I used the codes generated from the interview data to construct a concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom. At this point, I understood that the success of the thematic analysis would be underpinned by the strength of the literature review in chapter 2 and my ability to make sense of the interview data within this context (Wellington, 2015, p. 264). During the fifth phase I identified 28 codes within three key themes across the data set (see appendix 8 for a table of codes organised by theme) (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 86). The themes were: curriculum content, cultural arbitrary and funds of knowledge. For the sixth phase I made the decision to present the data analysis and findings in this chapter, and to use data extracts to support the patterns or themes identified (Ibid, p. 93). I have attempted to foreground the themes by providing a rich thematic description of the whole data set instead of focusing on a specific data item: a focus group interview with teachers organised according to the phase that they teach in (Ibid, p. 83).

In the following sections I will describe the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom and explore the three key themes. I will identify key points of critical discussion from the analysis of the data for the concept map and for each theme. This will be interpreted within the context of the third research question and the key literature. I will use teacher quotes and stories to share their views and perspectives; this will bring the data to life and exemplify the findings.

### 4.4.1 The primary classroom

Before I describe the concept map I will briefly explain how it developed. The more I became immersed in the data, and moved backwards and forwards through the phases of thematic analysis, the more I started to develop a greater understanding of the factors which impact on practice in the primary classroom and shape the experience for children at school every day by determining pedagogy: the statutory curricula (the EYFS or the National Curriculum), cultural arbitrary and funds of knowledge. However, initially I did not know how to convey this thinking. Eventually I settled on the idea of constructing a diagram to convey this thinking; representing the three factors as intersecting areas of impact on practice in the primary classroom with pedagogy positioned at the centre. I started by using circles to represent the three areas of impact. However, my thinking progressed and I understood that I needed to separate funds of knowledge for a child and a teacher. I now had four areas of impact and I worked out that to make them intersect the shape representing an area of impact needed to change from a circle to an ellipse. This stage of my thinking is shown in diagram 4.1.

*Diagram 4.1: Thinking about the primary classroom 1*

Trial and error led to the four areas of impact intersecting. This stage of my thinking is shown in diagram 4.2.

*Diagram 4.2: Thinking about the primary classroom 2*

To further develop my understanding of the primary classroom and complete the diagram I positioned the codes generated from the data onto the areas of impact. The completed diagram, a concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom, is shown in diagram 4.3.

*Diagram 4.3: A model of practice in the primary classroom*

The completed diagram, or concept map, is a visual description of my thinking and therefore explains how the key themes were identified. To clarify, the factors that impact on practice in the primary classroom and shape the experience for children at school every day by determining pedagogy are the statutory curricula, either the EYFS or the National Curriculum, cultural arbitrary, a child’s funds of knowledge and a teacher’s funds of knowledge. For example, the EYFS and the National Curriculum specify what should be taught. Both curricula are a selection of arbitrary knowledge and realise the cultural arbitrary of the dominant social group. A child and a teacher will introduce their funds of knowledge into the classroom which may align with the cultural arbitrary of the dominant social group. For a teacher this will be both their everyday funds of knowledge, from everyday living, and their professional funds of knowledge, from teacher training and experience. My positionality sets out that to a greater or lesser extent all of these factors will impact on the classroom. Given this, how all of these factors interact will determine the pedagogy in the classroom and shape the experience for children at school every day. At the school where I am headteacher inevitably the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, and cultural arbitrary have a greater impact on pedagogy than a child’s funds of knowledge or a teacher’s funds of knowledge, both everyday and professional. I will now briefly explain the positioning of the codes generated from the data onto the areas of impact before critically analysing the concept map and subsequently justifying the three themes identified from the data.

#### 4.4.1.1 Factors in the primary classroom

The thematic analysis of the data generated codes for curriculum planning and assessment. For curriculum planning, across all phases of the school the teachers that I interviewed differentiated between formal planning and ad hoc planning. An example of formal planning is a medium term plan which would map out what will be taught in every subject for a term. During the KS1 interview, while discussing using children’s funds of knowledge for curriculum planning, an experienced leader, Tom, explained how and why ad hoc planning is used:

‘Or sometimes it is ad hoc [planning]. You have found out about it [a child’s fund of knowledge] one day and you have adapted your planning because of that the other days. I think those times where you are almost flying free, there is a piece of knowledge in there which needs to be explored further or you suddenly realise there is a piece of knowledge that isn’t there in the class collectively which is essential and you kind of go for it!’ (T5, KS1 interview, line 389).

Formal planning is based on the statutory entitlement set out in the EYFS and the National Curriculum which is why it is positioned in the intersection of the ellipses for the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary. Ad hoc planning, evidenced by the data, is the outcome of a child’s funds of knowledge or a teacher’s professional funds of knowledge interacting with the statutory curricula which is why it is positioned in the intersection of these three ellipses. For assessment, I differentiated between statutory assessment, or summative assessment, and assessment in the classroom, teacher or formative assessment. Similar to formal planning, statutory assessment is based on the statutory entitlement set out in the EYFS and the National Curriculum which is why it is positioned in the intersection of the ellipses for the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary. I maintain that assessment in the classroom, teacher or formative assessment, is the outcome of a teacher’s professional funds of knowledge interacting with the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary which is why it is positioned in the intersection of these three ellipses.

At the start of the focus group interviews I asked the teachers what they thought about how Ofsted were using the concept of cultural capital (for interview schedule see appendix 1). Subsequently, the thematic analysis of the data led to the generation of codes for both Ofsted’s (2021d) and Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptualisation of cultural capital. In chapter 2, I argued that the concept of cultural capital is a cultural arbitrary; it is the funds of knowledge of a dominant social group (section 2.4). This is why on the concept map Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of cultural capital is positioned in the ellipse for cultural arbitrary. I have positioned Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital in the intersection of the ellipses for the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary because Ofsted’s definition of cultural capital is explicitly aligned with the aims of the National Curriculum, ‘It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38).

In the focus group interviews I asked the teachers to explain their understanding of children’s funds of knowledge and if they were able to think of examples. Across all phases of the school the teachers identified 12 examples of children’s funds of knowledge, for example food, religion and video games, which during the process of thematic analysis led to the generation of 12 corresponding codes (see appendix 8). During the UKS2 interview, while discussing how children’s funds of knowledge can be used in the classroom Faith, an experienced teacher, explained the limited impact of children’s funds of knowledge on curriculum planning:

‘[To give] recognition and value to a wider range of funds of knowledge would impact on engagement in learning and self-esteem. However, it would be important firstly to have the time to get to know the children. These opportunities are few during a school day that contains little down time activities which may give rise to informal conversation. It becomes more difficult as the children get older and their education becomes more formalised.’ (T13, UKS2 interview, line 696).

This explains the position of children’s funds of knowledge on the concept map because invariably there is no explicit intersection with the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary. It is possible that in the classroom there is an intersection between specific funds of knowledge for a child and a teacher, for example religion. However, I did not collect data for teachers’ funds of knowledge, everyday or professional, during the focus group interviews. This will be addressed when I consider the strengths and limitations of the study (see chapter 6).

Similarly, the discussion about identifying children’s funds of knowledge in the focus group interviews led to codes for Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge and the concept of funds of identity. Across gender, ethnicity, age and experience (table 4.1), ethnic minority teachers’ focus on identity represents the significant difference in the views and perspectives of teachers more generally. In the interview schedule there is not a specific question about funds of identity. However, during the KS1, LKS2 and UKS2 interviews ethnic minority teachers explicitly discussed identity when questioned about their understanding of children’s funds of knowledge and if they were able to think of examples. During the KS1 interview Hyo-Rin, an experienced teacher from any other Asian background, shared a story about their sibling being confused about their identity because ‘at home she feels she is constantly criticised because she is too ‘English’’ (T6, KS1 interview, line 259). In the LKS2 interview Paula, an experienced White and Black Caribbean leader, observed that a child’s identity is shaped by their experiences at home and at school and that the statutory curricula works to create a ‘negative identity of being black’ by focusing on slavery when ‘there is so much more to Black history’ (T8, LKS2 interview, lines 295, 302, 303). Further, during the UKS2 interview Yaara, an experienced leader from any other White background, commented on the impact on children of a shared identity with a teacher because the children related to the ‘funds of knowledge of the teacher’ (T12, UKS2 interview, line 641). On the concept map Moll et al.’s conceptualisation of funds of knowledge and funds of identity have been positioned in the intersection of the ellipses for a child’s funds of knowledge and a teacher’s everyday funds of knowledge because findings from this study indicate that invariably there is no explicit intersection of these two concepts with the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary. I will now critically analyse the concept map.

#### 4.4.1.2 ‘Distance’ in the primary classroom

In effect the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom, constructed using the codes generated from the data, is a visual description of my thinking and a visual representation of a typical classroom in the school where I am headteacher. It is specific to my school, however I expect there would be similarities with local primary schools, including the schools that my school works in partnership with. The concept map makes explicit the interplay of factors which impact on the classroom and shape the experience for children at school every day by determining pedagogy. I contend that the position of the codes on the concept map evidences the ‘distance’ in the classroom between children and current pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. In diagram 4.4 I have amended the concept map to show this distance.

*Diagram 4.4: ‘Distance’ in the primary classroom*

It is the idea of distance in the primary classroom which can be used to critically analyse the concept map. On the concept map the ellipse for a child’s funds of knowledge is a visual representation of a child’s view of the classroom, or their ontological position. Given there is no explicit intersection between a child’s funds of knowledge and the statutory curricula, except for ad hoc planning, and cultural arbitrary the distance between the child and current pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment is significant. I would reason that this is inevitable given the demands of the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary on the classroom. For example, during the UKS2 interview Lucy, an NQT, observed that, ‘It’s quite difficult to plan in advance before you actually know the children’ (T11, UKS2 interview, line 506). Next, to further explore the idea of distance in the classroom, I will use Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge.

When Moll et al. (1992) set out to extend the work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992) into the field of education they had three objectives: improving relations between teachers and families; using the improved relations to develop curriculum and pedagogy which they argued would be a significant improvement on the ‘rote-like instruction’ U.S.-Mexican children were used to at school; and subsequently improving the academic performance of U.S.-Mexican children (Moll et al., 1992, p. 132). In developing curriculum and pedagogy to improve on the rote instruction experienced by U.S.-Mexican children at school the data from my study suggests that Moll et al. were attempting to reduce the distance in the classroom. In diagram 4.5 I have amended the concept map to show how I have used the data from my study to interpret what Moll et al. attempted with their research.

*Diagram 4.5: Moll et al.’s (1992) research*

Moll et al. (1992) used their research to attempt to reduce the distance between the child and the existing pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment by repositioning children’s funds of knowledge in the classroom. By describing the knowledge and skills associated with U.S.-Mexican households’ occupations and origins as ‘historically accumulated’ and ‘culturally developed’ Moll et al. understand knowledge to be a social and cultural construct (p. 133). From this position Moll et al. challenged the dichotomy between legitimate and non-legitimate knowledge, or the knowledge valued at school and the knowledge valued at home. The knowledge valued at school is understood as legitimate, and therefore fixed, because it forms part of the school’s, or statutory, curriculum. In contrast, the knowledge valued at home is rendered non-legitimate because it is excluded from the school’s curriculum. By working with teachers to research funds of knowledge in U.S.-Mexican households, and then to use these funds of knowledge to develop curriculum and pedagogy, Moll et al. legitimised the knowledge valued at home and, in the process, repositioned it so that it explicitly intersected with the statutory curricula and cultural arbitrary. This reduced the distance between the child and pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment and led to improved academic performance. In diagram 4.6 I have amended the concept map to show how Moll et al. reduced distance in the classroom.

*Diagram 4.6: Moll et al.’s (1992) impact on ‘distance’*

The amended concept map, diagram 4.6, is evidence of the impact of legitimising the knowledge valued at home: a child’s funds of knowledge. In chapter 3, I argued that the EYFS and the National Curriculum are one-size-fits-all curricula focused on the collective not the individual and that, in effect, they are a top-down, policy-driven approach to curriculum which will not work in a diverse community without mediation by teachers, for example the school which the children from Moll et al.’s (1992) U.S.-Mexican households attended or my school (section 3.5.3). The amended concept map is evidence of how the introduction of a horizontal and situated approach to curriculum, the concept of funds of knowledge, into the classroom can contribute to an improvement in children’s engagement in learning. A horizontal and situated approach to curriculum works to reduce the distance in the classroom and, therefore, the need for mediation by teachers to improve children’s engagement in learning. The data from my study indicates that this is not because funds of knowledge replaces the EYFS and the National Curriculum, it is not an either/or choice of alternatives, but because teachers’ understanding of children’s funds of knowledge makes the EYFS and the National Curriculum, the statutory curricula, work for all. During the EYFS interview Jane, an experienced leader, exemplified this point with an observation about the EYFS and statutory assessment:

‘I’d say that what I struggle with, with the curriculum, is that if the children haven’t got the speech it’s really hard for them to progress throughout the curriculum and that really affects those children when English isn’t their first language. The only part of the curriculum we can’t assess in their home language is speaking, but if they are fluent in their home language then that is the same skill. I don’t see why, for example, a sentence in past, present and future, if they can say that in Spanish then why can’t we assess that in Spanish as well as English?’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 17).

For the Spanish-speaking child the introduction of funds of knowledge to the classroom and the subsequent legitimisation and repositioning of their home language would significantly reduce their distance from pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment and contribute to an improvement in their engagement in learning. This would lead to an improvement in their academic performance. In diagram 4.7, to further evidence this argument, I have compared the impact of Moll et al.’s research with the distance in a typical classroom in my school.

*Diagram 4.7: Comparison of ‘distance’*

Moreover, I would argue that given the trajectory of improvement at the school where I am headteacher (over a 6-year period Ofsted have judged the school’s overall effectiveness to have moved from ‘requires improvement’ to ‘outstanding’) diagram 4.7 conceptualises, and is therefore evidence of, the extent of the mediation by teachers to make the EYFS and the National Curriculum, the statutory curricula, work for all.

In summary, the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom, constructed using the codes generated from the data, is a visual description of my thinking and a visual representation of a typical classroom in the school where I am headteacher. Moreover, the concept map is evidence of the factors which impact on practice in the primary classroom and shape the experience for children at school every day by determining pedagogy, and is, therefore, justification for the three key themes foregrounded by the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers: curriculum content, cultural arbitrary and funds of knowledge.

#### 4.4.1.3 The key themes

Following my engagement in a recursive process of thematic analysis I identified 28 codes within three key themes. The three themes have been summarised in table 4.2.

*Table 4.2: Summary of key themes*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Theme | Summary |
| Curriculum content | The content of the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, is a theme evidenced in all of the focus group interviews of teachers. Across all phases of the school teachers evaluated the content of the statutory curricula by questioning the selection of arbitrary knowledge it represents and whether or not it is fit for purpose. |
| Cultural arbitrary | The use of an inductive approach to identifying themes within the data led to the gradual realisation that across all phases of the school teachers were able to recognise arbitrary meanings and values and were therefore able to identify a cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). |
| Funds of knowledge | This theme relates directly to the research question identified at the start of the chapter. Across all phases of the school teachers were able to apply the concept of funds of knowledge to their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment and in the process critically evaluate the potential impact of the concept in a primary classroom and on equality; this included identifying children’s funds of knowledge. |

In the following sections I explore the three themes. I will identify key points of critical discussion from the analysis of the data for each theme. This will be interpreted within the context of the research question and the key literature.

### 4.4.2 Curriculum content

In chapter 2 I argued that there are different perspectives on curriculum content, coherence and control, and that curriculum is a contested concept for the most part because of the ongoing debate about content (section 2.3.1). The issue which acts as a catalyst for this debate about curriculum content is our understanding of human knowledge, the dichotomy between rationalist and empiricist, and how it will shape our ideas about what education is and subsequently our ideas about what curriculum is and the role of the teacher and the school (Kelly, 2009, p. 33). Further, I argued that the EYFS and the National Curriculum are one-size-fits-all curricula which realise the technical perspective on curriculum and are focused on the collective not the individual (section 2.3.2) (Carr, 1996, p. 9, p. 11). Both the EYFS and the National Curriculum are focused on the control of knowledge leading to the polarity between essential, and therefore fixed, knowledge and non-essential knowledge, or legitimate and non-legitimate knowledge (Apple, 1996, p. 35). This is a position on curriculum content which excludes and marginalises ‘subordinate’ social groups by de-valuing their knowledge and skills and exacerbating their differences (Ibid, p. 36). Across all phases of the school teachers addressed the theme of curriculum content by questioning the selection of arbitrary knowledge the EYFS and the National Curriculum represent and whether or not these curricula are fit for purpose.

During the EYFS interview Jane, an experienced leader, made the following observation about the content of the EYFS:

‘I have always liked the early years curriculum because it is quite open in terms of the content that we have to teach and it’s always focused on the child, so even though there are skills that we need to focus on it’s all about their [the child’s] community, their family and their experiences.’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 10).

However, all of the teachers in the EYFS interview, including Sophia, agreed that the external framework of accountability measures which the EYFS operates within[[63]](#footnote-63), or curriculum control, marginalises ‘subordinate’ social groups by the use of a ‘tick box’ approach to assessment instead of teachers being able to use their ‘professional judgement’ (T2, EYFS interview, line 59). Further, all of the teachers in the EYFS interview, including Sophia, agreed that the early adopter version[[64]](#footnote-64) of the EYFS is ‘more formalised’ which led the teachers to be critical of it because it is ‘more like the National Curriculum that doesn’t reach everybody and is not diverse enough’ (T2, EYFS interview, lines 17, 106). Similarly, in the KS1 interview teachers discussed the content of the National Curriculum and were critical of how the content is ‘imposed’, for example an experienced leader, Tom, questioned the relevance of the National Curriculum:

‘I don’t think it is relevant, I think it is invented in a lot of places. I think it’s imposed through all kinds of things, through grammar, through its view of history. It’s imposed ideology and I don’t think it particularly prepares children for the future they are actually going to live in.’ (T5, KS1 interview, line 14).

During both the LKS2 and UKS2 interview teachers continued to be critical of the content of the National Curriculum and its premise of one-size-fits-all. An experienced leader in LKS2, Paula, acknowledged that the National Curriculum is working towards all children having ‘similar learning experiences’, however this is countered because every school is different and a ‘set curriculum’ will not ‘meet the needs of every community’ (T8, LKS2 interview, lines 17, 22). John, a recently qualified teacher in LKS2, expanded on this criticism by observing that the National Curriculum is an ‘exclusive curriculum’ because it works on the assumption that all children have ‘similar life experiences’ (T10, LKS2 interview, lines 37, 44). Similarly, an experienced teacher in LKS2, Hanna, observed that the National Curriculum is not ‘culturally diverse’ which is problematic for a school with a diverse community (T9, LKS2 interview, line 60). In the UKS2 interview Yaara, an experienced leader, succinctly summarised all teachers’ criticisms of the content of the National Curriculum by questioning if it ‘actually relates to the children we are teaching’ (T12, UKS2 interview, line 117).

In summary, all of the teachers that I interviewed were critical of the content of the statutory curricula for a primary school, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, because their experience is that a one-size-fits-all curriculum is not fit for purpose for a school with a diverse community. The teachers acknowledged that the aims of both the EYFS and the National Curriculum set out to secure similar learning experiences for all children, with the EYFS currently providing more flexibility to achieve this than the National Curriculum. However, this is expected to change following reforms to the EYFS which will become statutory in September 2021. Therefore, when curriculum content is focused on the control of, or fixing, knowledge the subsequent de-legitimisation of diverse forms of knowledge will exclude and marginalise ‘subordinate’ social groups suggested in the experience of the teachers at the school where I am headteacher. The following story from Serena, a recently qualified teacher in KS1, underscores this argument:

‘I had a really interesting thing happen with language in my class where at the start of the year one of the children in my class kept speaking Chinese to another child and the mum of that child came to see me and said, ‘He does not want to speak Chinese at school, he wants to speak English.’ She then asked me to make sure he played with children that would speak English to him. I explained we were having choosing time in the afternoon where they [the children] can play with who they choose. But then a little while later I saw the boy try to talk to him in Chinese again and he started waving his finger and saying, ‘No!’ I asked [the boys] what was happening and they mentioned speaking Chinese, so I said, ‘Wow! You can speak Chinese? How do you say good morning in Chinese?’ The boy that had been told not to speak Chinese was shocked and the boy that had been speaking Chinese would not say a word to me. The next day I took the register and said, ‘Good morning!’ in Chinese. The day after he [the boy that had been told not to speak Chinese] brought in a letter, written in Chinese, and translated it all for me. He was so excited that his language had been celebrated in class.’ (T4, KS1 interview, line 311).

I would suggest that the data collected from the interviews of teachers supports the argument that the rationalist perspective on human knowledge is problematic because the data is counter to the view of knowledge as objective. Moreover, the data suggests that both Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital, which fit with the EYFS and National Curriculum’s technical perspective on curriculum, are undemocratic because they determine that the role of the school is to impose a cultural arbitrary. This theme, cultural arbitrary, will be explored in the next section.

4.4.3 Cultural arbitrary

Following a critical analysis of Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge in chapter 2 I argued that the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge should both be understood as a cultural arbitrary (section 2.2.4). The difference between cultural capital and funds of knowledge is the value attributed to them by society during the process of curriculum selection, with the extent of their misrecognition as a cultural arbitrary determined by their inclusion or exclusion from a curriculum. The use of an inductive approach to identifying themes within the data led to the gradual realisation that across all phases of the school teachers were able to recognise arbitrary meanings and values and were therefore able to identify a cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). Across all of the interviews teachers discussed cultural arbitrary either in relation to Bourdieu and Ofsted’s conceptualisations of cultural capital and Moll et al.’s conceptualisation of funds of knowledge, or in recognition of their own cultural arbitrary. The discussion of cultural arbitrary led to the creation of four codes: Ofsted’s (2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital, Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptualisation of cultural capital, Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge and the concept of funds of identity.

Given the more explicit focus on the child in the EYFS, in comparison to the National Curriculum, and that the Reception year group is when children start school, during the EYFS interview discussion of cultural arbitrary included all four codes. I have previously indicated that teachers in the EYFS interview were able to determine that Ofsted’s (2021d) understanding of the concept of cultural capital is focused on exposure to specific cultural experiences, or the consumption of specific cultural objects, for example works of art (Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). Similarly, in the EYFS interview teachers implicitly demonstrated an understanding of cultural capital as an embodied state, which for Bourdieu (1986) is the fundamental representation of the concept (p. 280, p. 283). For example, when discussing the disparity in children’s word acquisition when they start school Sophia, an experienced leader, commented that, ‘For our different families at school, you’ve got some quite affluent families who obviously go to art galleries and parks a lot and have different experiences, and so their [the children’s] vocabulary is quite rich’ (T2, EYFS interview, line 203). An understanding of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge is suggested by Martha, an experienced teacher in EYFS, acknowledging that, ‘It is vital that we know where they [the children] are coming from so we can build on that because so much of what they will be learning is built at home’ (T3, EYFS interview, line 122). Invariably engagement in a critical discussion about cultural capital and funds of knowledge, or cultural arbitrary, led teachers, including Jane, to be both reflective and reflexive, and recognise their own cultural arbitrary:

‘I don’t know if others find this, but because I am from a British background and sometimes when you think about culture and community you don’t always include your own culture in that. I don’t know if that sounds odd? Just thinking about children in the class, if they talk about their families, because it’s part of your culture you don’t think of it as different or a new learning experience, but actually it is.’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 363).

During the KS1, LKS2 and UKS2 interviews, when children have transitioned to the National Curriculum, a similar pattern emerged. In the KS1 interview teachers predominantly discussed cultural arbitrary in relation to Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital and their own cultural arbitrary. Tom, an experienced leader, described Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital as ‘educational gentrification’ for the purpose of promoting a ‘certain way of thinking’, demonstrating an understanding of Ofsted’s focus on the consumption of specific cultural objects (T5, KS1 interview, line 102). A recently qualified teacher, Serena, clarified this by suggesting that the purpose of including cultural capital in the Ofsted handbook is for the promotion of ‘middle class England’ (T4, KS1 interview, line 129). Teachers in KS1, including Tom, demonstrated a more explicit understanding of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of cultural capital, ‘embodied capital’(Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283), by arguing that children’s funds of knowledge will be shaped by economic capital, ‘I think there is a massive economic element to it. It could be how many books they [the children] have at home that can impact it’ (T5, KS1 interview, line 348). Towards the end of the KS1 interview teachers, in particular Tom, became acutely cognisant of their own cultural arbitrary in the role of the teacher and its impact on the classroom, ‘It’s a politicised role; it’s a role of huge responsibility. Your language, your interactions with other people in the room, the emphasis on the curriculum that you are placing in the classroom can have a big impact’ (T5, KS1 interview, line 462).

The views and perspectives of the teachers in the LKS2 and UKS2 interviews, including the extent to which they were able to demonstrate an understanding of cultural arbitrary, were similar to those of the teachers in the KS1 interview. During the LKS2 and UKS2 interviews there were two areas of discussion focused on Ofsted’s (2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital which teachers did not address in the KS1 interview. Firstly, in the LKS2 interview, while recognising that teaching children about classic works of art and literature is important, teachers, including Hanna, recognised that Ofsted’s White, middle class thinking about cultural capital will not tackle the issues of ‘colonisation’ and ‘systemic racism’ inherent in the National Curriculum (T9, LKS2 interview, line 225). Secondly, in the UKS2 interview, teachers discussed Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital in the context of a recent Ofsted inspection of the school. When teachers mentioned to an Ofsted inspector that the children in their class had been on an educational visit to an art gallery or a museum then, from Yaara’s perspective, cultural capital got ‘ticked off the list’ (T12, UKS2 interview, line 158).

Across all of the interviews teachers, either implicitly or explicitly, were able to identify a cultural arbitrary and recognise that the difference between the concepts of cultural capital, however it is defined, and funds of knowledge is the value attributed to them by their inclusion or exclusion from a curriculum. Tentatively I would put forward that the data collected from the interviews demonstrates that teachers understand the impact on children of the either/or choice about knowledge created by the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, and the corollary of the de-legitimisation of knowledge. Teachers were further able to demonstrate their understanding of the impact of the statutory curricula on children in their critical evaluation of the potential impact of funds of knowledge on their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. This is the third theme that I will explore before concluding this chapter, and it is the theme which generated the largest number of codes across the data set: 19 codes in total.

### 4.4.4 Funds of knowledge

In chapter 2, during a critical analysis of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge, I described the concept as counter to the prevalent view, evidenced in the statutory curricula and the Ofsted handbook, that learning consists of essential and non-essential knowledge or ‘discrete chunks of knowledge’ (section 2.3.6) (p. 138). I acknowledged that funds of knowledge is a problematic concept, however I argued that given the central tenet of the concept is to know the learner it is potentially a powerful tool for changing classroom practice and effecting change at a wider institutional level. This led to my third research question: how do teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment? This research question is addressed using 19 codes (see appendix 8), generated from the interviews of teachers, across the following five areas:

1. A demonstration of an understanding of funds of knowledge by applying the concept to pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment.
2. An evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of using funds of knowledge in a primary classroom.
3. An evaluation of the potential impact of funds of knowledge on equality.
4. An exploration of the concept of funds of identity.
5. The identification of children’s funds of knowledge.

In the following sections key points of critical discussion from the analysis of the data in these five areas will be explored.

#### 4.4.4.1 Applying funds of knowledge

In this section I will explore how teachers applied the concept of funds of knowledge to their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment, and I will start with pedagogy.

##### 4.4.4.1.1 Pedagogy

Across all phases of the school the teachers that I interviewed were able to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of funds of knowledge by applying it to their pedagogy, with teachers in the EYFS identifying parallels with existing practice. During the EYFS interview teachers discussed how home visits at the start of the academic year for children in both the Nursery (3 to 4-year-old children) and Reception year groups are integral to their practice. A home visit is when a teacher and an Early Years Practitioner[[65]](#footnote-65) (EYP) visit a child in their home before they start school. During the home visit the teacher and EYP will observe the child at play and ask the child, and their parents or carers, questions about their play interests. The knowledge and understanding of children’s play interests provided from the home visits is used to inform curriculum planning and provision, the resources made available for children, in the classroom. For example, Jane, an experienced leader, explained how the knowledge and understanding of a child’s play interests provided from a home visit can be used if a child is finding the start of school difficult, ‘It’s little things as well if you find a child is not settling, you think what have you seen in the home? What do you know about their family? What could help to help them settle in school?’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 237). This is similar to how Moll et al. (1992) worked with teachers to research funds of knowledge in U.S.-Mexican households, although the teachers led semi-structured interviews with parents and carers instead of an unstructured interview with a child and their parents and carers in conjunction with an observation of the child at play (p. 135). The focus on children’s play interests at the start of the Nursery and Reception year groups shapes practice in the EYFS which is demonstrated in how teachers applied funds of knowledge to their pedagogy. For example, teachers recognised that they used children’s shared play interests, or funds of knowledge, to inform curriculum planning when they knew that these shared funds of knowledge would engage the majority of children in the classroom in learning.

During the KS1, LKS2 and UKS2 interviews a pattern emerged of teachers identifying that the impact of the concept of funds of knowledge on their practice is ad hoc. From the teachers’ perspective the statutory entitlement set out in the National Curriculum limits the extent to which children’s funds of knowledge can be used to engage children in the classroom in learning. However, teachers in KS1, LKS2 and UKS2 shared examples of when children’s funds of knowledge were spontaneously identified and then used to engage children in the classroom in learning. When reflecting on the use of children’s funds of knowledge in their practice an experienced KS1 teacher, Hyo-Rin, commented that, ‘I do not think I necessarily plan for it, I think it subconsciously and naturally comes out depending on the topic’ (T6, KS1 interview, line 373). In LKS2 teachers discussed that when children’s funds of knowledge have been spontaneously identified, for example religion, sport and technology, they can be used to position the child as the ‘expert’ in the classroom. Further, when reflecting on the use of children’s funds of knowledge in their practice teachers, including John, agreed that when children start school they are not ‘empty’ and subsequently do not need to be ‘filled up’ (T10, LKS2 interview, line 39). This is a view aligned with Freire’s (1970) critique of the banking method of education which he understood to be the ‘act of depositing’ knowledge into children when they start school because they have a deficit of knowledge (p. 53). In UKS2 teachers shared these views and acknowledged that the barrier to incorporating funds of knowledge into their practice is finding the space for it; Tom, an experienced leader, observed that, ‘The more we give that space to find out what they [the children] do and don’t know and what they want to know, I think the stronger our curriculum is’ (T5, KS1 interview, line 403).

##### 4.4.4.1.2 Curriculum planning

With the exception of teachers in the EYFS, teachers’ use of the concept of funds of knowledge for curriculum planning is ad hoc. The impromptu identification of children’s funds of knowledge in the classroom will invariably lead a teacher to interrupt the planned learning to explore the funds of knowledge and then use it to engage children in the learning. Across KS1, LKS2 and UKS2 teachers were able to share examples of children’s funds of knowledge interrupting the planned learning. Moreover, teachers were able to share examples of when the interruption of the planned learning led to the inclusion of children’s funds of knowledge in curriculum planning. During the UKS2 interview teachers explored why the inclusion of children’s funds of knowledge in curriculum planning is ad hoc and they concluded by expanding on the idea of limited space. For teachers, including Faith, the barrier to incorporating funds of knowledge into their practice is finding the space for children’s interests and the barrier to incorporating funds of knowledge into their curriculum planning is finding the space to ‘know the children’ (T13, UKS2 interview, line 507). In the previous section, I identified how the focus on children’s play interests at the start of the Nursery and Reception year groups inevitably shapes both pedagogy and curriculum planning in the EYFS. Next, I will explore how teachers applied funds of knowledge to assessment.

##### 4.4.4.1.3 Assessment

The codes for pedagogy and curriculum planning were used multiple times in every interview. However, I only used the code for assessment three times. I previously identified in the EYFS interview how teachers were frustrated that, from their perspective, children’s funds of knowledge are incompatible with statutory assessment. I provided the example of how for children with English as an additional language their home language is de-legitimised in the classroom. During the KS1 interview teachers did not discuss how they applied the concept of funds of knowledge to assessment. In the LKS2 interview teachers acknowledged that if children’s funds of knowledge were incorporated into pedagogy and curriculum planning then teachers would need to change how they assess. Teachers in the UKS2 interview developed this idea by briefly considering how assessment would need to change. Sally, an experienced leader, hypothesised that guiding questions used to frame learning across a term could be re-worded to identify children’s funds of knowledge and provide an opportunity to use children’s funds of knowledge to engage children in the learning, ‘The learning outcome would be the same, but discovered through the children’s experiences and prior knowledge’ (T14, UKS2 interview, line 693).

I would suggest that all of the teachers found applying the concept of funds of knowledge to assessment problematic suggested by the infrequent use of the code for assessment and the views and perspectives shared during the interviews. In chapter 2, I used the work of Rodriguez (2013) to critically analyse funds of knowledge (section 2.3.6). Rodriguez argues that irrespective of the impact of funds of knowledge on pedagogy and curriculum planning the same measure of a child’s performance will be used to reduce the complex social interactions within a classroom to standardised performance indicators (p. 102). The views and perspectives of the teachers is indicative of their understanding, and frustration, that these standardised performance indicators will continue to exist even if the complex social interactions within their classrooms are informed by funds of knowledge. However, I would tentatively argue that providing the opportunity for teachers to consider how assessment would need to change to legitimise and reposition children’s funds of knowledge in their classroom, findings from this study point to the power of human agency to effect change both in the classroom and at a wider institutional level. In the next section, I will consider how teachers evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of using funds of knowledge in their primary classrooms. In the following section, I will consider how teachers evaluated the potential impact of funds of knowledge on equality.

#### 4.4.4.2 Evaluating funds of knowledge

In applying the concept of funds of knowledge to their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment all of the teachers that I interviewed inevitably evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the concept, and this is indicative of congruence in their views and perspectives. For teachers, applying funds of knowledge to their pedagogy following ad hoc curriculum planning is the primary advantage because it creates an opportunity to value children’s interests and position the child as the ‘expert’ in the classroom. Moreover, the child as the ‘expert’ is a role which is prevalent across the data set. Therefore, from the teachers’ perspective funds of knowledge will contribute to an improvement in children’s engagement in learning. Conversely, applying funds of knowledge to the predominantly formal curriculum planning is the primary disadvantage for teachers. According to Amelia this is, in part, because teachers do not have the ‘time, space and flexibility’ needed to identify children’s funds of knowledge, but more so because of the diversity of the community at the school where I am headteacher (T7, KS1 interview, line 443).

Across all phases of the school teachers questioned how all children’s funds of knowledge can be valued in a diverse community and concluded that if they were to attempt to do so potentially the outcome would continue to be a narrowly focused curriculum. This is because during the process of curriculum selection the emphasis would shift from White, middle class knowledge to the knowledge valued by the more dominant of the ‘subordinate’ social groups represented in the community. This is a perspective on the concept of funds of knowledge evident primarily in Oughton’s (2010) criticisms of the concept which I identified during a critical analysis of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge in chapter 2 (section 2.3.6). For Oughton, funds of knowledge represents the replacement of one cultural arbitrary, the knowledge valued at school, with another cultural arbitrary, the knowledge valued in the households of ‘subordinate’ social groups (p. 72). Moreover, Oughton argues that the knowledge valued at school is not replaced with the knowledge valued in the households of ‘subordinate’ social groups, but with the knowledge which teachers have decided counts as legitimate funds of knowledge (Ibid). While the teachers that I interviewed did not explicitly consider the impact of their value-laden judgments on the legitimisation of children’s funds of knowledge, they did demonstrate an understanding of the arbitrariness of knowledge and the subsequent either/or choice about knowledge, both of which underscore the complexities of curriculum selection.

#### 4.4.4.3 Funds of knowledge and equality

In all the interviews teachers were able to evaluate the potential impact of the concept of funds of knowledge on equality and were in agreement about what they expected the impact to be. For teachers, legitimising the knowledge valued at home, children’s funds of knowledge, and repositioning this knowledge in the classroom will lead to greater inclusion. The corollary of greater inclusion in the classroom, according to Serena, is that children can ‘see themselves in the classroom’ which will contribute to an improvement in their engagement in learning (T4, KS1 interview, line 487). At the end of every interview I explained to teachers that if they had any further thoughts or reflections following the interview then they could share these by email. Following the LKS2 interview Paula, an experienced leader, shared the following thoughts and reflections about the potential impact of funds of knowledge on equality:

‘I think it is important for children of all skills and backgrounds to feel recognised and valued in school and given their chance to shine as experts in the class, and not just in a tokenistic session that happens once a year, but through the consistent use of their funds of knowledge, where possible, in day-to-day planning. I believe it would enhance the overall engagement with the learning and enjoyment of school and would encourage children to feel confident in who they are – helping them to develop healthy, positive self-identities and a belief that they can achieve. Also, regularly exposing all children to different funds of knowledge in a positive, structured way in the classroom would help to challenge stereotypes and ensure children develop a broader understanding of society and would help to embed key values.’ (T8, LKS2 interview, line 707).

The teachers’ evaluation of the potential impact of funds of knowledge on equality is counter to Hirsch’s (1996) perspective that curriculum coherence and equality are provided by provision for the transmission of concrete knowledge, variously termed ‘core’, ‘essential’ or ‘solid’ knowledge, to children, and with the assumption that children start school with a deficit of intellectual capital (Buras, 1999, p. 70, p. 77). Conversely, the teachers’ views and perspectives support Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg’s (1992) anthropological approach to education reform in the United States which provided the impetus for Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. For Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg acknowledgement by schools of the ‘strategic and cultural resources’ which existed in ‘subordinate’ social groups, for example U.S.-Mexican households, would lead to an improvement in the engagement of children in learning in the classroom and subsequently educational equality (p. 313). This represents an epistemological starting point of equality; a position from which the school can function as a catalyst for change in a society (Pelletier, 2009, p. 142; Hattam and Smyth, 2015, p. 275). I would tentatively suggest that this provides an answer to questions identified in chapter 2: how can education start from a premise of equality? What would be the impact on curriculum development? What would be the impact on the engagement of children in learning in the classroom? In the following sections I consider teachers’ exploration of the concept of funds of identity and their identification of children’s funds of knowledge. I will then conclude this chapter.

#### 4.4.4.4 Funds of identity

Previously, I observed that across gender, ethnicity, age and experience (table 4.1), ethnic minority teachers’ focus on identity represents the significant difference in the views and perspectives of teachers more generally. When I set out the research focus and research questions in chapter 1 I did not expect the concept of funds of identity to be relevant to this study (sections 1.3 and 1.4). During a critical analysis of Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge in chapter 2 I did briefly define funds of identity and position the concept in relation to funds of knowledge (section 2.3.6). However, during the recursive process of thematic analysis a code emerged for funds of identity and, in particular, the use of home language by teachers in the classroom. During my critical analysis of the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom I shared an observation from an experienced leader in the EYFS thinking about more than what is being learned. The observation focused on who is learning, a Spanish-speaking child, and how the legitimisation and repositioning of their home language in the classroom, the legitimisation of their funds of identity, would contribute to an improvement in their engagement in learning (section 4.4.1.2). Similarly, when I explored the theme of curriculum content I shared a story of how a recently qualified teacher in KS1 valued a child’s home language, Chinese, in the classroom and therefore legitimised their funds of identity (section 4.4.2). For the teachers that I interviewed, including Jane, a child’s home language, which is an integral component of their funds of identity, is ‘the way they make sense of the world’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 178).

Moreover, in the KS1, LKS2 and UKS2 interviews the discussion of funds of knowledge led ethnic minority teachers to be both reflective and reflexive about their identity and I previously shared examples from these discussions in the interviews (section 4.1.1.1). I would tentatively put forward that the views and perspectives of the ethnic minority teachers that I interviewed support the argument that for specific ‘subordinate’ social groups a broader definition of funds of knowledge is needed. This definition should include all areas and sources of knowledge which inform our understanding of who we are, for example our heritage, and should not be limited to the culture evidenced in our household practices (Llopart and Esteban-Guitart, 2018, p. 155). When I consider the strengths and limitations of the study I will address the relevance of funds of identity to the research focus for this study (see chapter 6).

#### 4.4.4.5 Children’s funds of knowledge

I would maintain that for teachers to understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment they need to be able to identify children’s funds of knowledge. Across all phases of the school the teachers that I interviewed identified 12 examples of children’s funds of knowledge, for example domestic chores, peers and sport, which during the process of thematic analysis led to the generation of 12 corresponding codes (see appendix 8). The codes for children’s funds of knowledge for food and home language (for children with English as an additional language) were the most frequently used.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

By engaging in a recursive process of thematic analysis of the data I have identified key points which relate to my research questions. Broadly these key points can be categorised according to the three key themes: curriculum content, cultural arbitrary and funds of knowledge. For curriculum content, the key points include the arbitrary nature of knowledge and the undemocratic nature of the concept of cultural capital. For cultural arbitrary, the key point is the impact of the either/or choice about knowledge created by the existing statutory curricula. The arbitrary nature of knowledge and the either/or choice about knowledge underscore the complexities of curriculum selection. For funds of knowledge, the key points are recognition of the value of children’s interests facilitated by teachers’ ability to understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment, and the impact on equality. These key points are contextualised by the identification of the factors which impact on practice in the primary classroom and shape the experience for children at school, how the interplay of these factors determines the distance between children and current pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment and how funds of knowledge can be used to reduce this distance. In the next chapter, I discuss these key points with reference to the key literature in support of my conclusions, and I will consider the impact of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment.

# **Chapter 5: Discussion**

## **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the key findings from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers to address my third research question in the context of the key literature and the theoretical framework. The first and second research questions were addressed in chapter 3 (sections 3.10 and 3.11). To start, I comment on the relationship between the concept of cultural capital and accessibility. Secondly, I consider how the arbitrary nature of knowledge and the either/or choice about knowledge underscore the complexities of selection for statutory curricula and if the existing statutory curricula are fit for purpose. Thirdly, given teachers’ ability to understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment, I comment on the relationship between children’s interests and inclusivity. Fourthly, I evaluate the idea of ‘distance’ in the primary classroom and then consider the impact of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. In the penultimate section, I use these discussions to synthesise a problematisation of Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital before I conclude this chapter.

## **5.2 Cultural capital and accessibility**

The data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers problematises the rationalist perspective on human knowledge and Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital. All teachers questioned the selection of arbitrary knowledge the Early Years Foundation Stage[[66]](#footnote-66) (EYFS) and the National Curriculum[[67]](#footnote-67) represent and whether or not these curricula are fit for purpose. For Bourdieu and Ofsted a relationship exists between the concepts of cultural capital and knowledge. For Bourdieu, the relationship between cultural capital and knowledge is complex, however a connection exists between the acquisition of culturally defined ‘legitimate’ knowledge and the acquisition of cultural capital. For Ofsted, the relationship between cultural capital and knowledge is more straightforward, with the acquisition by children of objective ‘essential’ knowledge leading to the acquisition of cultural capital. During this study Ofsted updated the education inspection framework[[68]](#footnote-68) (EIF) (2021a) for England and the school inspection handbook[[69]](#footnote-69) (handbook) (2021d) and subsequently both of these policy texts now have a greater focus on objective ‘essential’ knowledge determined by a cultural arbitrary. First I will comment on how the problematisation of the rationalist perspective on human knowledge informs our understanding of what education is and then I will consider the impact of this on Bourdieu and Ofsted’s conceptualisations of cultural capital.

Previously I positioned the concept of cultural capital within key perspectives on the concept of curriculum (section 2.3.1) and a specific example of a curriculum, the National Curriculum (section 2.3.2), which led to the identification of issues, debates and questions in the field. To be specific, that Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital can be positioned within the technical paradigm for curriculum, and that the EYFS and the National Curriculum realise this perspective: content and coherence is specified by an expert and control is exerted by the use of testing to evaluate impact (Carr, 1996, p. 9, p. 11). I argued that this determines the role of the school is to impose a cultural arbitrary, or a monoculture, by applying arbitrary meanings and values to what constitutes knowledge or a cultural object (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). For a school to realise this role a rationalist perspective on human knowledge is needed; knowledge needs to be objective to make content and coherence universal and control the remit of the state (Kelly, 2009, p. 34). Further, given the focus of the EYFS and the National Curriculum is the control of knowledge a tension is created between essential and non-essential knowledge, or legitimate and non-legitimate knowledge (Apple, 1996, p. 35).

However, the data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers problematises the perspective that knowledge is objective and subsequently the tension between essential or legitimate knowledge and non-essential or non-legitimate knowledge. In a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community, the majority of children are from a range of minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language, one-size-fits-all curricula will not work. In this context, a focus on objective essential/legitimate knowledge makes the statutory curricula inaccessible to the majority of children. In effect, according to Sophia the EYFS and the National Curriculum are ‘not diverse enough’ (T2, EYFS interview, line 106). All of the teachers were able to substantiate their criticisms of the EYFS and the National Curriculum by sharing their views and perspectives on their experiences in the primary classroom. How in the Reception year group a focus on the child enables teachers to use children’s interests to make the EYFS accessible to all, how in Lower Key Stage 2 (LKS2) the exclusivity of the National Curriculum needs to be mediated by teachers and how in Upper Key Stage 2 (UKS2) the National Curriculum, according to Yaara, is unrelatable ‘to the children we are teaching’ (T12, UKS2 interview, line 117). This problematisation of objective knowledge is supported by Tatham-Fashanu’s (2021) argument that for super-diverse communities, which the school where I am headteacher is, the tendency is to adopt a policy of reduction and try to manage diversity by simplifying it (p. 15). I advance that this policy, statutory curricula, is further evidenced in how the measure of a child’s performance will be used to reduce the complex social interactions within a primary classroom to standardised performance indicators, for example standard attainment tests[[70]](#footnote-70) (SATs) in Key Stage 1 (KS1) and UKS2 (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 102).

In the context of this study, the problematisation of the perspective that knowledge is objective informs our understanding of what education is because it changes the role of the school from ‘knowledge-getting’ to ‘knowledge-making’ (Kelly, 2009, p. 53). Knowledge-getting is the current focus of the EYFS and the National Curriculum because the aim is to provide children with ‘essential knowledge’ and ‘an outline of core knowledge’ (DfE, 2013b, p. 6). The data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers points to how this reification of knowledge would work to exclude and subsequently marginalise ‘subordinate’ social groups from education without mediation of the one-size-fits-all statutory curricula by teachers. Moreover, the data suggests that when the knowledge valued by ‘subordinate’ social groups is acknowledged, if the focus is on knowledge-making instead of knowledge-getting, then the content of the one-size-fits-all statutory curricula becomes more accessible (Kelly, 2009, p. 53). Across all phases of the school teachers were able to share stories of how a focus on knowledge-making works to improve the engagement in learning of children from ‘subordinate’ social groups. In particular, this is highlighted when teachers legitimised and repositioned a child’s home language in the primary classroom. In the Reception year group this strategy supported the Spanish-speaking child to access more of the EYFS content and in KS1, according to Serena, this supported the Chinese-speaking child to access more of the National Curriculum content and further develop peer relationships, ‘He was so excited that his language had been celebrated in class.’ (T4, KS1 interview, line 326). Next, I will consider the impact of acknowledging the knowledge valued by ‘subordinate’ social groups, a focus on knowledge-making instead of knowledge-getting, on Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital.

For Bourdieu (1986) the fundamental representation of the concept of cultural capital is ‘embodied capital’ and how it interacts with the concepts of habitus, field and practice to determine position in a society (p. 280, p. 283). Further, for Bourdieu cultural capital includes knowledge of cultural objects which have been legitimised by a dominant social group and cultural knowledge legitimised by an academic qualification (p. 285). For Ofsted (2019) cultural capital is a stand-alone concept and is the ability to consume cultural objects and realise the status of full citizenship (p. 8). However, both of these conceptualisations of cultural capital determine that the role of the school is to impose a cultural arbitrary, or monoculture, with a focus on knowledge-getting. For Bourdieu the school is a social institution used to get legitimised knowledge of cultural objects and legitimised cultural knowledge. For Ofsted the school is a vehicle for the transmission of ‘essential knowledge’, an overall body of concrete knowledge, which it is the ‘entitlement of every child’ to get (Ofsted, 2019, p. 7). Bourdieu and Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) have conceptualised cultural capital as a resource. A deficiency in this resource leads to a ‘subordinate’ position in a society and partial citizenship respectively (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283; Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). Therefore, Bourdieu and Ofsted have created a deficit narrative for ‘subordinate’ social groups which is perpetuated by the existing knowledge-getting role of the school. However, the data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers indicates that if a school acknowledges the knowledge valued by ‘subordinate’ social groups and focuses on knowledge-making the content of the one-size-fits-all statutory curricula becomes more accessible. Given this, in the context of the school where I am headteacher this study suggests that the concept of cultural capital is less relevant, irrespective of how it is conceptualised.

For Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) equality is an end point which is used to explain and justify a starting point of inequality (Pelletier, 2009, p. 142). Previously I argued that if education was to start from a premise of equality, then there is the potential for the school to challenge the unequal structure in a society by functioning as a catalyst for change and that this would have implications for the usefulness of the concept of cultural capital, how knowledge is conceptualised and how knowledge is selected (section 2.3.3). The data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers can be used to provide an answer to the three related questions I considered: education can start from a premise of equality by acknowledging the knowledge valued by ‘subordinate’ social groups. Acknowledgement would start by not accepting the subject positioning of the children in these groups: using the label ‘diverse’ instead of ‘subordinate’ to describe the children in these groups. At the school where I am headteacher teachers work to mediate the statutory curricula so that children from diverse social groups do not occupy a ‘subordinate’ position. Therefore, I do not agree with the use of the label ‘subordinate’ because in our community this is not how children from diverse social groups are positioned. At a school level there would be minimal impact on curriculum development because teachers already, informally, use the knowledge valued by diverse, not ‘subordinate’, social groups to mediate the statutory curricula. At a classroom level the statutory curricula would become more accessible which would improve the engagement of children in learning in the classroom. In summary, if the role of the school is knowledge-making then the statutory curricula become more accessible to children. At the school where I am headteacher, according to Paula, we have utilised ‘the needs of our community, their aspirations in life, their experiences’ to make the EYFS and the National Curriculum more accessible to the children we teach (T8, LKS2 interview, line 82). In the next section, I will consider if the statutory curricula are fit for purpose.

## **5.3 Statutory curricula and selection**

The data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers, their views and perspectives, suggests that the policy of securing similar learning experiences for all children by using statutory curricula is not fit for purpose. In the previous section, I argued that all of the teachers that I interviewed were critical of the content of the statutory curricula for a primary school, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, because their experience, according to Paula, is that a one-size-fits-all curriculum will not secure similar learning experiences for all children in a school with a diverse community: a ‘set curriculum’ will not ‘meet the needs of every community’ (T8, LKS2 interview, lines 17, 22). In this section, I will discuss that when curriculum content is focused on the control of, or fixing, knowledge the subsequent de-legitimisation of diverse forms of knowledge will exclude and marginalise diverse social groups and if this makes a curriculum unfit for purpose.

Currently curriculum content for the statutory curricula is focused on the control of knowledge because curriculum content needs to be measurable. In chapter 2, I used Hyatt’s (2013) Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame (frame) to support my understanding of how Ofsted defines cultural capital, to suggest how they would define knowledge and the relationship between these two concepts. In particular, for the deconstructing element of Hyatt’s frame I used the criteria of modes of legitimation (p. 840) to evidence how within the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d) moral evaluation is used to promote three desirable outcomes from the introduction of cultural capital as a measure of a school’s performance: all children will become ‘educated citizens’; all children will ‘succeed in life’; and no child will be ‘disadvantaged’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38; Ofsted, 2021a, p. 8; Ofsted, 2019, p. 8). However, in the context of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community the findings from this study are counter to the existing control of knowledge to enable curriculum content to be measurable. For example, across the school teachers, including Sophia, John and Hanna respectively, observed that a ‘tick box’ approach to assessment, for the EYFS and the National Curriculum, marginalises diverse social groups (T2, EYFS interview, line 59) and that the National Curriculum is an ‘exclusive curriculum’ (T10, LKS2 interview, lines 37) which is not ‘culturally diverse’ (T9, LKS2 interview, line 60). Moreover, in conjunction with the use of the label ‘subordinate’ to describe children from diverse social groups the language used to describe children’s performance in SATs, for example ‘expected standard not achieved’, reinforces the subject positioning of children from these groups (STA, 2019b). If a cultural arbitrary determines the objective ‘essential’ knowledge which is valued then, subsequently, it will determine what is assessed, the outcome of which is the continued subject positioning of children from diverse social groups.

In chapter 1 I argued that the discourse of neoliberalism continues to shape the meaning of the identities, practices and institutions of education and that this is evidenced, in part, by the entrenchment of competition between schools facilitated by a comparable measure of children’s performance and a continued commitment to using market mechanisms to facilitate educational practice (section 1.9). The entrenchment of a comparable measure of children’s performance works to prioritise what is measurable, including curriculum content. This is the impetus for the current statutory curricula: to enable equal access to objective knowledge. However, the data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers problematises prioritising measurable curriculum content. This is because the data contradicts the aim of the statutory curricula to provide for the ‘education of every child’ by enabling equal access to ‘core knowledge’, or the essential/legitimate knowledge which is valued (DfE, 2013b, p. 6). This is suggested by the views and perspectives of the teachers, including Jane and Paula respectively, on the measurable content of the statutory curricula: how the EYFS works to delegitimise a child’s home language, ‘I don’t see why, for example, a sentence in past, present and future, if they can say that in Spanish then why can’t we assess that in Spanish as well as English?’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 17), and how the National Curriculum creates a ‘negative identity of being black’ by focusing on slavery when ‘there is so much more to Black history’ (T8, LKS2 interview, lines 302, 303). All teachers acknowledged that the aim of the statutory curricula is for all children to have similar learning experiences: to access a basic curriculum entitlement. However, by prioritising measurable curriculum content, which Tom labelled ‘imposed’ content (T5, KS1 interview, line 15), all teachers, for example Yaara, questioned if the statutory curricula ‘actually relates to the children we are teaching’ (T12, UKS2 interview, line 117).

For a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community the existing statutory curricula are unable to provide equal access for all children to the knowledge which is valued. Given this, I would question if, in this context, the EYFS and the National Curriculum are fit for purpose. This problematisation of measurable curriculum content is supported by Young’s (2013) argument that no curriculum is able to reduce social inequalities because this is ‘primarily a political task of establishing a more equal society, not an educational task’ (p. 114). In the next section, I will comment on the relationship between children’s interests and inclusivity.

## **5.4 Children’s interests and inclusivity**

The data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers suggests that teachers’ ability to understand the concept of funds of knowledge demonstrates their understanding of the value of children’s interests and how they can be used to promote inclusivity in the primary classroom by reducing the distance between the child and pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. In this section, I will discuss the relationship between children’s interests and inclusivity, and in the process evaluate the idea of ‘distance’ in the primary classroom. To frame this discussion I will refer to the following diagram, introduced in the previous chapter, which is a concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom constructed using the codes generated from the data. The concept map is a visual description of my thinking about children’s interests and inclusivity and a visual representation of a typical classroom in the school where I am headteacher. It is specific to my school however, I expect there would be similarities with the schools that my school works in partnership with and local primary schools. The concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom is shown in diagram 5.1.

*Diagram 5.1: A model of practice in the primary classroom*

In summary, the concept map evidences the factors which impact on the classroom and how they interact to shape the experience for children at school every day by determining pedagogy. The position of the codes on the concept map is indicative of the distance in the classroom between children, or children’s interests, and current pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Further, the concept map evidences how the introduction of funds of knowledge into the classroom and the subsequent legitimisation and repositioning of children’s interests, for example religion, television programmes and video games, would significantly reduce children’s distance from pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment and, I contend, contribute to an improvement in children’s engagement in learning.

In effect, I have used the idea of distance in the primary classroom to think about the data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers and subsequently problematise the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, in conjunction with an exploration of the concept of funds of knowledge as a practical alternative to the statutory curricula. To clarify, this is not an argument for replacing the statutory curricula with funds of knowledge. It is not an either/or choice of alternatives. However, what I advance is that funds of knowledge provides a set of conceptual tools which can and is being used, albeit implicitly, by teachers to enrich the basic curriculum entitlement of the EYFS and the National Curriculum. Funds of knowledge can and is being used by teachers to mediate the statutory curricula as text. In the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for the statutory curricula by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom. It is my view that the data from this study suggests that the pedagogical challenge to maximising children’s engagement in learning in the classroom is how to reduce the distance between the children from diverse social groups and pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment because their interests sit outside of the cultural arbitrary and subsequently the EYFS and the National Curriculum. In the school where I am headteacher funds of knowledge, the valuing of children’s interests, can and is being used to reduce this distance and, therefore, promote a more inclusive primary classroom by ensuring relevance to children’s lived experiences. Further, by engaging in this mediational process, transforming the statutory curricula as text into curricula as lived experience, teachers ensure that no child is labelled ‘subordinate’.

To underscore this argument I will use the work of Young (2013) which sets out the main principles for designing a knowledge-based curriculum and, in particular, the difference between curriculum knowledge and everyday knowledge (p. 109, p. 110). For Young the content of statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, should be selected by subject specialists and limited to the key concepts of subjects (p. 110). This limit on the content of statutory curricula secures a common knowledge base for children and autonomy for a school (Ibid). For a school with a diverse community this autonomy provides flexibility in how children access the statutory curricula in support of a more inclusive classroom. Young argues that curriculum knowledge, the content of statutory curricula, is different to everyday knowledge. Everyday knowledge is the flexible ‘everyday concepts’ that children accumulate which enable them ‘to make sense of the world’ in a specific context, for example their family or a community (Ibid). This everyday knowledge will, invariably, include children’s interests. However, everyday knowledge is context specific, in contrast to curriculum knowledge which is not context specific; children need to progress from everyday knowledge to curriculum knowledge to generalise beyond their lived experience and this is the purpose of schooling (Ibid).

Given this, I would argue that if children need everyday knowledge to make sense of the world then they need everyday knowledge to make sense of a school and the statutory curricula which schools teach to be able to progress to curriculum knowledge, to access the statutory curricula, and generalise beyond their lived experience. When teachers utilise children’s interests they enable children to make sense of the EYFS and the National Curriculum, promoting accessibility and subsequently inclusivity in the classroom. Further, it is accessibility and inclusivity which lead to equity in the classroom. I would maintain that for a school with a diverse community, the concept of funds of knowledge is integral to children’s necessary progression from everyday knowledge to curriculum knowledge because the distance between the lived experience of children and the statutory curricula as text is greater and, therefore, to reduce the distance requires significantly more mediational work by teachers. To reiterate, the findings from this study indicate that funds of knowledge, the valuing of children’s interests, offers a set of conceptual tools which can be used by teachers to mediate the existing statutory curricula as text. Funds of knowledge can be used to reduce, or bridge, distance in the classroom which secures equity by making the content of the EYFS and the National Curriculum accessible to all children irrespective of their social group. Next, I consider the impact of COVID-19 on teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. I will then problematise Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital before I conclude this chapter.

## **5.5 The primary classroom and COVID-19**

When I set out the research focus and research questions in chapter 1 I did not expect to conduct my study during a pandemic. Data from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers points to the impact of COVID-19 on teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment which I will discuss in this section. In the previous chapter, I provided an overview of how I adopted an inductive approach to identifying themes within the data and therefore I coded the data without a ‘start list’ of codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 58). By engaging in a recursive process of thematic analysis I generated initial codes before I identified 28 codes within three key themes across the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 86). At the start of the thematic analysis I generated a code for the impact of COVID-19 on teachers’ pedagogy. I did not include this code in the 28 codes I eventually used for the thematic analysis because it did not fit within the three key themes. However, on reflection, I think the impact of COVID-19 on teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment should be discussed because inadvertently it supports the use of the concept of funds of knowledge by teachers to mediate the existing statutory curricula as text.

In response to COVID-19 the government made remote education statutory (DfE, 2020e). Remote education is the provision of teaching at home for children unable to attend school due to COVID-19. At the school where I am headteacher the remote education provision included both live and pre-recorded sessions. During these sessions teachers were teaching children in their home, for example in their kitchen or living room, and depending on the age of the children with a parent or carer present too. In the KS1 interview, during a discussion about pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment, a recently qualified teacher, Serena, commented that for remote education ‘We had to be creative and think, what do the children in our class have at home? And what will everyone have?’ (T4, KS1 interview, line 182). In effect, and in accordance with Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg’s (1992) anthropological approach to education reform, the teacher started to consider more broadly the ‘strategic and cultural resources’ which existed in children’s households and how they could be used to support remote education (p. 313). This led Amelia, an experienced leader, to make the following, more explicit, observation about remote education and the concept of funds of knowledge:

‘I also think that there is a point around, for us, the time we are at, at the moment we

are having a very different insight to children’s funds of knowledge. Whereas before

they would be in school all the time and you would have that relationship with them,

you’d learn a little more and speak to their parents. We haven’t had that in the same

way, we’ve had that in a very different way because we have had telephone calls

where we have had to speak to them for longer and we have found out more, or

actually now we are doing the live lessons you are almost going into their home and

their culture, you’ll see much more of what it is like for them.’ (T7, KS1 interview, line

225).

Given the data collected from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers I would tentatively argue that the impact of COVID-19 on teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment is that the subsequent need for remote education led to an improvement in relations between teachers and families, and the development of curriculum and pedagogy. When Moll et al. (1992) further extended the work of Velez-Ibanez and Greenburg (1992) into the field of education by working with teachers to research funds of knowledge in U.S.-Mexican households, improving relations between teachers and families, and the development of curriculum and pedagogy had been two of their objectives (Moll et al., 1992, p. 132, p. 135). For Moll et al. this led to a methodology which focused on teachers conducting household interviews with the expectation that teachers would use the knowledge and skills found in the households, funds of knowledge, to develop ‘innovations in teaching’ (Ibid).

It had been my intention to adapt Moll et al.’s (1992) methodology for this study; in chapter 3 I explained why I did not adapt this methodology (section 3.7.3). However, I would suggest that the onset of COVID-19 and the subsequent development of remote education forced teachers at the school where I am headteacher into children’s households, albeit virtually, and to explicitly utilise children’s interests, their everyday knowledge, for pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment to enable children to access the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, outside of the classroom. With the change in guidance for schools (DfE, 2021c) from September 2021 there is less of a need for remote education, however it continues to be statutory. I think it would be useful for future research to explore the impact of remote education on pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment in more depth. This is because I think it would strengthen the argument for the use of children’s interests to secure equity by making the content of the EYFS and the National Curriculum accessible to all children irrespective of their social group.

## **5.6 A problematisation of Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital**

For knowledge to be controlled it needs to be measurable and, therefore, objective which leads to the reification of knowledge. Ofsted’s (2021a, 2021d) intense focus on objective ‘essential/legitimate’ knowledge (section 2.2.2) led to the further reification of knowledge. In a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community the further reification of knowledge further marginalises children from diverse social groups. Given the findings from this study (Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the Ofsted policy ensemble (2019, 2021a, 2021d), semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers and the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom) I contend that Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital commodifies knowledge by making it a resource. This is problematic for the following reasons:

1. A deficit narrative is created which leads to the subject positioning of children from diverse social groups.
2. For children from diverse social groups the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, become less accessible. This makes the primary classroom less inclusive which will impact on equity.
3. The purpose of a school is knowledge-getting with equality an end-point.
4. The political task of creating a more equal society is confused with the educational task of children progressing from everyday knowledge to curriculum knowledge.
5. The creation of a cultural arbitrary excludes the interests of children from diverse social groups from the primary classroom.
6. In a school with a diverse community excluding the interests of children from diverse social groups from the primary classroom increases the distance between these children and pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment, and subsequently increases the mediational work needed from teachers to make the statutory curricula accessible to all children.
7. The negation of curriculum as a complex space creates a disparity between curriculum as text and curriculum as lived experience which makes the progression from everyday knowledge to curriculum knowledge more of a challenge for children from diverse social groups.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have identified and discussed the key findings from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers in the context of the key literature and the theoretical framework. In a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community if the focus is knowledge-making, instead of knowledge-getting, then the statutory curricula become more accessible to children. This is because in this context the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, are unable to provide equal access for all children to the knowledge which is valued. Given this, I would question if, in this context, the EYFS and the National Curriculum are fit for purpose. The findings from this study suggest that teachers can, and do, use the knowledge valued by diverse (not ‘subordinate’) social groups to mediate the statutory curricula, or to enrich the basic curriculum entitlement of the EYFS and the National Curriculum. This mediational work by teachers is integral to children’s necessary progression from everyday knowledge to curriculum knowledge. Further, the findings from this study indicate that the concept of funds of knowledge, the valuing of children’s interests, offers a set of conceptual tools which can be used to reduce, or bridge, distance in the classroom, and which makes explicit the difference between curriculum as text and curriculum as lived experience. To reduce distance in the classroom is to secure equity by making the content of the EYFS and the National Curriculum accessible to all children irrespective of their social group. Previously I have set out what, in my view, is the mandate of a headteacher. The key findings from this study challenge my mandate as a headteacher with further questions and areas which need to be explored, not least: the problematisation of Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital; an understanding of the potential risks of changing, or not changing, how we engage with the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum; and the impact of remote education on pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. In the concluding chapter, I will address the research questions and make recommendations for policy and practice. I will consider my original contribution to knowledge and evaluate the strengths and limitations of this study. This will be followed by recommendations for future research.

# **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

## **6.1 Introduction**

In this concluding chapter for my study I start by addressing the research questions and then, ahead of making recommendations for policy and practice, I summarise my reflections and subsequently synthesise my thinking on the question: what is a curriculum? Given the field my study is located in and the ‘issues, debates and questions’ I have identified to fit my study in this field I think it is necessary to address this question (Ridley, 2012, p. 24). Next, I set out my original contribution to knowledge, followed by an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of the study. In the following section, I make recommendations for future research which will include an update on developments in 2021. Finally, I reflect on my research journey.

## **6.2 Addressing the research questions**

In September 2019 Ofsted updated the Education Inspection Framework[[71]](#footnote-71) (EIF) (2021a) for England and this led to the publication of an updated school inspection handbook[[72]](#footnote-72) (handbook) (2021d) and a special edition school inspection update[[73]](#footnote-73) (SIU) (2019), and the subsequent constitution of a policy ensemble (Ball, 1993, p. 14). The handbook makes a reference to the concept of cultural capital within a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides (p. 37, p. 38). At the start of the study I set out to investigate: how Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) have adapted the concept of cultural capital; the potential impact on equality in education of introducing cultural capital into the EIF (Ofsted, 2021a); and alternative concepts which might inform teachers’ practice, including the concept of funds of knowledge originally defined by Moll et al. (1992). In the following sections, I will address each research question.

### 6.2.1 How have Ofsted adapted the concept of cultural capital to improve equality in education?

It is my view that the concept of cultural capital is a cultural arbitrary; it is the knowledge valued, or the funds of knowledge, of a dominant social group. This makes cultural capital a construct for explaining and rationalising inequality in a society. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1986) the fundamental representation of cultural capital is ‘embodied capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283) and its interaction with the concepts of habitus, field and practice (Ibid, p. 280). For Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) cultural capital is a stand-alone concept and it is the ability to consume cultural objects, for example works of art (SIU, 2019, p. 8). The evidence from the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the Ofsted policy ensemble suggests that instead of adapting Bourdieu’s broader definition of cultural capital Ofsted have reduced the concept to a measure of a school’s performance; a standardised performance indicator confirming the persistence of a deficit narrative which others those groups in society that are not White, middle class and British. Further, in conjunction with the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers and the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom, the CDA of the Ofsted policy ensemble evidences that by reducing cultural capital to a standardised performance indicator Ofsted have limited the concept’s usefulness as a lens for exploring inequality in a society and, therefore, its potential for improving equality in education. Subsequently, instead of supporting the school to effect change, and successfully address government aspirations for equality and inclusion, Ofsted’s use of cultural capital entrenches the role of the school in reproducing inequality in a society.

The concept of cultural capital is introduced as a standardised performance indicator in the Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) policy ensemble because it is a problem constructed to fit the intended solution of the acquisition by children of ‘essential’ knowledge (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38): an example of a ‘circular discourse’ (Wood, 2019, p. 790). Ofsted’s intense focus on objective ‘essential/legitimate’ knowledge further reifies knowledge, and in the conceptualisation of cultural capital as a standardised performance indicator, commodifies knowledge by making it a resource. This focus is problematic not least because it makes the curriculum in the primary classroom less accessible for children from diverse social groups and, therefore, less inclusive, which impacts on equity. In summary, Ofsted have reductively re-conceptualised a construct for explaining and rationalising inequality in a society in an attempt to improve equality in education. However, for Ofsted equality in education is achieved by commodifying the consumption of objective ‘essential/legitimate’ knowledge which, contrastingly, works to counter an improvement of equality in education because it reduces accessibility for children from diverse social groups to the objective ‘essential/legitimate’ knowledge that is valued in the Early Years Foundation Stage[[74]](#footnote-74) (EYFS) and the National Curriculum[[75]](#footnote-75). The CDA of the Ofsted policy ensemble led to a consideration of what alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice.

### 6.2.2 What alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice?

At the start of the study the concept of funds of knowledge seemed to be more of a fit for a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community. At the end of the study and, in particular, given the views and perspectives from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers I would maintain that this reasoning is validated, not least because teachers were already using the knowledge valued by diverse social groups, children’s interests, to adapt their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment.

When I employed funds of knowledge as an alternative concept which might inform teachers’ practice I did not set out to replace the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, by positioning funds of knowledge in opposition to the statutory curricula as an either/or choice. I would argue that the study suggests that funds of knowledge should be understood and utilised as a set of conceptual tools which support teachers to value children’s interests within their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Teachers can then use children’s interests to mediate the statutory curricula and reduce, or bridge, distance in the primary classroom. These pedagogical strategies make the EYFS and the National Curriculum accessible to all children irrespective of their social group, thereby securing equity.

### 6.2.3 How do teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment?

I have used the views and perspectives from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers to inform my subsequent conclusions about how teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Broadly these conclusions can be grouped into four areas. Firstly, in the context of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community I question if the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, are fit for purpose. The views and perspectives of teachers at the school where I am headteacher, including Tom, repeatedly pointed to the inaccessibility of the statutory curricula and how teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment constantly need to be mediated to make the EYFS and the National Curriculum work for all children:

‘I don’t think it [the National Curriculum] is relevant, I think it is invented in a lot of places. I think it’s imposed through all kinds of things, through grammar, through its view of history. It’s imposed ideology and I don’t think it particularly prepares children for the future they are actually going to live in.’ (T5, KS1 interview, line 14).

Secondly, in the context of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community I would reason that teachers either explicitly or implicitly use the knowledge valued by diverse social groups, children’s interests, to adapt their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment to mediate, or enrich, the basic curriculum entitlement of the statutory curricula. For Tom, this mediational work by teachers is integral to children’s necessary progression from everyday knowledge to curriculum knowledge, ‘Or sometimes it is ad hoc [planning]. You have found out about it [a child’s fund of knowledge] one day and you have adapted your planning because of that the other days’ (T5, KS1 interview, line 389). Thirdly, in this context, and as set out in the previous section, I advance that the concept of funds of knowledge offers a set of conceptual tools which by supporting the mediational work of teachers, the enrichment of the basic curriculum entitlement of the statutory curricula, can be used to reduce distance in the primary classroom. Fourthly, at the school where I am headteacher, and as set out in the previous chapter, teachers’ understanding of the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment foregrounds a problematisation of Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital (section 5.6). Given the field my study is located in, and the work I have completed to fit my study in this field, in the next section it is necessary to address the question: what is a curriculum?

## **6.3 What is a curriculum?**

In chapter 2 I explained that curriculum is relevant to the study because the concepts of cultural capital and funds of knowledge fit within different perspectives on curriculum content, coherence and control (section 2.3.1). In the process of reflecting and synthesising my thinking on what a curriculum is I would reason that the intense focus on and ongoing debate about curriculum content, for example Ofsted’s legitimisation of E. D. Hirsch’s (1996) idea of ‘core knowledge’ (Ofsted, 2019, p. 8), inevitably impacts on coherence and control and works to negate a definition, and my developing understanding, of curriculum as a complex and changing space. In chapter 4, I constructed a concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom to contextualise the themes identified from the thematic analysis of the data generated from the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers (section 4.4.1). In effect, the concept map is a visual description of my thinking about the factors which impact on practice in the primary classroom and shape the daily experiences for children at school by determining pedagogy and curriculum. Further, the concept map is a visual representation of practice in a typical classroom in the school where I am headteacher. The concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom is shown in diagram 6.1.

*Diagram 6.1: A model of practice in the primary classroom*

At the end of the study, and towards the end of a Doctorate of Education, my developing understanding of curriculum is that it is more than content. I contend that the primary classroom is a dialectical space and the factors which impact on practice in the primary classroom, represented in the concept map, impact on curriculum. The statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, exist as policy texts which require mediation by teachers. At the school where I am headteacher teachers either explicitly or implicitly use the knowledge valued by diverse social groups, children’s interests, to adapt their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment to mediate, or enrich, the basic curriculum entitlement of the statutory curricula to create curriculum as lived experience accessible to all children. Similar to the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom, to support my thinking on what a curriculum is I have used the factors I previously identified to construct a concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space. The concept map is a visual description of my thinking about the factors which impact on curriculum and shape curriculum as a daily lived experience for children and, therefore, the concept map is a visual representation of curriculum at the school where I am headteacher. The concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space is shown in diagram 6.2. Next, I will describe the concept map in support of my developing understanding of what a curriculum is.

*Diagram 6.2: Curriculum: a complex and changing space*



At the start of the study I visualised curriculum as text: the statutory curricula and the school curriculum developed by the teachers which uses the backward by design pedagogy (section 4.2). On the concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space (diagram 6.2) statutory curricula and pedagogy impact on curriculum space. Similarly, statutory, or summative, assessment and formal planning impact on curriculum space and support the visualisation of curriculum as text. However, I would argue that the findings from this study indicate that assessment in the classroom, teacher or formative assessment, and ad hoc planning impact on curriculum space. For example, when reflecting on the impact of children’s funds of knowledge on their curriculum planning Hyo-Rin, an experienced KS1 teacher, commented that, ‘I do not think I necessarily plan for it, I think it subconsciously and naturally comes out depending on the topic’ (T6, KS1 interview, line 373). I would describe these factors, teacher assessment and ad hoc planning, as curriculum as process: actions taken to mediate, or enrich, the statutory curricula and adapt pedagogy. In effect, processes which enable teachers to use their professional knowledge and judgement to mediate the statutory curricula and pedagogy. The introduction of these factors into curriculum space starts to transform the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, from a fixed, textual space to a more fluid, complex space.

Implicit in teacher assessment and ad hoc planning, and suggested by the study, is the co-construction and mediation of curriculum by children with Jane observing that, ‘[The curriculum is] focused on the child, so even though there are skills that we need to focus on it’s all about their [the child’s] community, their family and their experiences’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 10). On the concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space (diagram 6.2) a child’s funds of knowledge, and the child’s interests, impact on curriculum space. Similarly, a teacher’s funds of knowledge will be a factor which impacts on curriculum space. For a teacher this will be both their everyday funds of knowledge, from everyday living, and their professional funds of knowledge, from teacher training and experience. However, I did not collect data for teachers’ funds of knowledge, everyday or professional, during the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers. This will be addressed when I consider the strengths and limitations of the study (section 6.6.2). The impact of these factors, a child’s and a teacher’s funds of knowledge, is to make curriculum space less of a fixed, textual space and more of space governed by increasingly complex and interacting processes.

Similarly to a teacher’s funds of knowledge, I did not collect data for funds of identity. However, during the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers, ethnic minority teachers explicitly discussed identity when questioned about their understanding of children’s funds of knowledge and if they were able to think of examples. Teachers, including Paula and Jane respectively, observed that a child’s identity is shaped by their experiences at home and at school and that the statutory curricula works to create a ‘negative identity of being black’ (T8, LKS2 interview, lines 295, 302, 303), and that a child’s identity, is ‘the way they make sense of the world’ (T1, EYFS interview, line 178). Given these responses, I advance that funds of identity will be a factor which impacts on curriculum space, making it even more complex and fluid. On the concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space (diagram 6.2) I have not made a distinction between a child’s and a teacher’s funds of identity because the findings from the study are limited, but I think it can be conjectured that, similar to funds of knowledge, both of these factors would impact on curriculum space.

I have previously argued that cultural capital, however it is conceptualised, is a cultural arbitrary (section 2.4). It is the funds of knowledge of a dominant social group. Therefore, a cultural arbitrary will be a factor which impacts on curriculum space and is included on the concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space (diagram 6.2). This is pointed to by the study when, during the semi-structured focus group interviews, teachers across all phases of the school, including Lucy, questioned ‘if there is a perceived better type of [school] experience’ for children (T11, UKS2 interview, line 230). Towards the end of a process of reflecting and synthesising my thinking on what a curriculum is, I would suggest that in the context of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community curriculum is a complex and fluid space where interacting processes work to transform the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, from curriculum as text into curriculum as lived experience accessible to all children. Implicit in this definition is an understanding and acceptance that the school curriculum will change and evolve from day to day. This definition of curriculum necessitates further discussion in two areas: Ofsted’s (2021d) current framework for evaluating a school’s curriculum and teachers’ professional knowledge and judgement.

When Ofsted updated the EIF (2021a) and the Ofsted handbook (2021d) and introduced a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides they incorporated a new framework for evaluating a school’s curriculum in the judgement. The framework is focused on a school’s ‘educational intent’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 36), the ‘implementation of the [school’s] curriculum’ (Ibid, p. 38) and ‘the impact of the education provided by the school’ (Ibid, p. 41). For Ofsted (2021d) ‘intent’ is the knowledge and skills set out in a school’s curriculum, ‘implementation’ is how the knowledge and skills are taught and assessed and ‘impact’ is children’s outcomes e.g. standard attainment tests[[76]](#footnote-76) (SATs) (p. 36). In chapter 2, I explained that the technical paradigm for curriculum is about instruction (section 2.3.1). In the technical paradigm experts specify curriculum content, teachers deliver the content and testing is used to evaluate the impact of a curriculum and exert control (Carr, 1996, p. 9, p. 11). I argued that Bourdieu (1986) and Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisations of cultural capital fit with the statutory curricula because of the realisation of curriculum as a technology. Ofsted’s (2021d) use of ‘intent’, ‘implementation’ and ‘impact’ as a framework for evaluating a school’s curriculum works to embed an understanding of curriculum as a one-size-fits-all technology: curriculum as text with objectives, organised in a linear sequence, which can be datafied. This understanding of curriculum as a one-size-fits-all technology sits in opposition to the findings from my study and the understanding of curriculum as a complex and fluid space where interacting processes work to create curriculum as lived experience accessible to all children.

The findings from this study indicate that teachers use the knowledge valued by diverse social groups to adapt their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment to mediate, or enrich, the basic curriculum entitlement of the statutory curricula. In effect, teachers use their professional knowledge and judgement to mediate the statutory curricula and pedagogy. The understanding of curriculum as a complex and fluid space is an outcome of teachers’ professional knowledge; teachers’ in-depth knowledge and understanding of children and their communities. The creation of curriculum as lived experience accessible to all children is an outcome of teachers’ professional judgement; teachers’ decision making about how to use their knowledge and understanding of children and their communities to adapt their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Therefore, the acknowledgement and validation of the mediational work of teachers works to underscore trust in the professional knowledge and judgement of teachers. A position which fits with my understanding that teaching is the application of informative professional judgement, not the application of technical causal interventions. However, similar to my understanding of curriculum this sits in opposition to Ofsted’s (2021d) understanding of curriculum as a one-size-fits-all technology. Ofsted’s use of ‘intent’, ‘implementation’ and ‘impact’ as a framework for evaluating a school’s curriculum and their use of SATs to exert control indicate that teachers cannot be trusted to deliver curriculum content. A position which fits with the technology of performativity which continues to govern education policy in England.

## **6.4 Recommendations for policy and practice**

Given my study, I will now make four recommendations for policy and two recommendations for practice.

### 6.4.1 Policy

My first recommendation for policy is to remove the reference to the concept of cultural capital from the quality of education judgement in the Ofsted handbook (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). My study is highlighting a contradiction in Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) policy ensemble and how it frames cultural capital. Ofsted have reductively re-conceptualised a construct for explaining and rationalising inequality in a society which reduces curriculum accessibility for children from diverse social groups and is, therefore, counter to an improvement of equality in education. At the least, I would recommend that teachers continue to contest the reference to cultural capital in the handbook. For Ofsted cultural capital is an additional measure of a school’s performance, or a standardised performance indicator, which is an outcome of a ‘circular discourse’ and leads to my second recommendation for policy (Wood, 2019, p. 790).

Ofsted will frequently construct a problem to fit their intended solution. For example, the policy text *Bold beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools* (Ofsted, 2017) problematised the concept of school readiness, the idea that pre-school children need to start school ready to learn, and led to a revision of the EYFS. Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) use of the concept of cultural capital as a standardised performance indicator further evidences a pattern of Ofsted using its power to promote ideologies, determine policy agendas, define effective practice and inevitably shape outcomes for children (Wood, 2019, p. 793). I would recommend that when presented with solutions by Ofsted that are the outcome of a circular discourse teachers adopt a critical position and not accept Ofsted policy texts as ‘truth’ because it is my view that this is an unethical use of power by Ofsted which may sustain or exacerbate inequality as suggested by my study (Wood, 2020, p. 11). Moreover, if education is a moral practice then we, teachers, have a moral responsibility to question Ofsted’s ‘truths’.

My third recommendation for policy is to reframe the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, as a basic curriculum entitlement. If the statutory curricula were limited to the key concepts of subjects there would be flexibility and space for the mediational work needed by teachers; mediational work which is integral to children’s necessary progression from everyday knowledge to curriculum knowledge. This would work in support of a more inclusive primary classroom and secure a common knowledge base for all children (Young, 2013, p. 110). For Paula, currently the statutory curricula are not meeting ‘the needs of every community’, however adapting curriculum space to acknowledge and validate the mediational work of teachers will lead, I would reason, to all children having ‘similar learning experiences’ (T8, LKS2 interview, lines 17, 22). Given the findings from my study, and in support of my third recommendation for policy, my fourth recommendation for policy is the inclusion of children’s interests and the conceptual tools which can utilise children’s interests, for example the concept of funds of knowledge, in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) course content.

### 6.4.2 Practice

The two recommendations for practice build on the idea of ‘distance’ in the primary classroom. My first recommendation for practice is that at a macro, or school level, children’s interests should be included in the pedagogical framework to reduce distance between children from all diverse social groups and the statutory curricula. If the statutory curricula are reframed as a basic curriculum entitlement to acknowledge and validate the mediational work of teachers then there will need to be a change in practice in support of this change in policy. I have previously set out that in the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for the statutory curricula by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom. At the end of the study I understand in more depth that learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the primary classroom are those learning opportunities which reduce, or bridge, distance. The findings from this study indicate these learning opportunities need to be focused on children’s interests and, in particular, to value the interests and funds of knowledge of children from diverse social groups.

My second recommendation for practice is that at a micro, or classroom level, and supported by the recommended change in practice at a macro level, children’s interests need to be explicitly used to inform pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment to reduce distance between children from all diverse social groups and the statutory curricula. The findings from the study support these two recommendations for practice with teachers, in particular Paula, observing that ‘it is important for children of all skills and backgrounds to feel recognised and valued in school … not just in a tokenistic session that happens once a year, but through the consistent use of their funds of knowledge, where possible, in day-to-day planning’ (T8, LKS2 interview, line 707). Moreover, acknowledgment of the mediational work by teachers needed for children from diverse social groups to access the basic curriculum entitlement, two of the recommended changes for policy, and the explicit use of children’s interests at a school and a classroom level, the recommended changes for practice, would work to reposition the teacher as expert and signal a move from the current position of curriculum as technology to a more equitable, albeit a more complex and fluid, position of curriculum as interacting processes. In the next section, I will set out my original contribution to knowledge, followed by an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of the study.

## **6.5 Original contribution to knowledge**

In the context of a larger than average-sized inner-city primary school with a diverse community I would suggest that the study, my work, makes an original contribution to knowledge in six areas. Firstly, the study is a critical analysis of a recent change in education policy: the addition of the concept of cultural capital as a standardised performance indicator for a school in the Ofsted handbook, a policy text which sits within an Ofsted (2019, 2021a, 2021d) policy ensemble. The subsequent problematisation of Ofsted’s conceptualisation of cultural capital, highlighted by the study, led to the identification of contradictions and inadequacies in current education policy: the continued commodification of knowledge is counter to an improvement of equality in education. Secondly, the study is an investigation of alternative concepts which can be used to inform teachers’ practice and create a more accessible, and therefore equitable, primary classroom. The semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers led to the creation of a rich data set which identified a set of conceptual tools, the concept of funds of knowledge, that can be used by teachers to reduce, or bridge, distance in the primary classroom. Thirdly, the identification of contradictions and inadequacies in current education policy, in conjunction with the identification of a set of conceptual tools that can be used by teachers to reduce distance in the primary classroom, led to an original contribution to knowledge with the four recommendations for policy set out in the previous section.

My fourth original contribution to knowledge is the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom and the idea of ‘distance’ which developed from this visual description of my thinking. Given the concept map evidences the factors which impact on practice in the primary classroom and how they interact to shape the daily experiences for children at school by determining pedagogy and curriculum, I would maintain that there is the potential for transferability to a different context. In a different primary school the factors which impact on the classroom may be different, but the concept map could still be used to position the factors and determine distance. My fifth original contribution to knowledge is the two recommendations for practice set out in the previous section, an outcome of my thinking about the factors which impact on and determine distance in the primary classroom.

Finally, the concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space is an original contribution to knowledge. My experience is that teachers struggle to reconcile curriculum as text, the statutory curricula and the school curriculum, with the curriculum that is taught and experienced in the primary classroom. The concept map for curriculum as a complex and changing space is evidence that a curriculum is more than text; an outcome of the intense focus on and ongoing debate about curriculum content. Curriculum is a complex and fluid space made up of interacting processes that work to shape the lived curriculum experience of children and which will change and evolve from day to day. Similarly to the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom and the idea of ‘distance’, it is my view that there is the potential for transferability for this understanding of what a curriculum is for the following reasons:

1. It will create a position from which teachers can contest and question the ‘truths’ of the dominant discourses which shape current education policy in England.
2. It will support critical thinking about the statutory curricula, the EYFS and the National Curriculum, and how they could be adapted to create a more inclusive primary classroom and secure a common knowledge base for all children.
3. The acknowledgement and validation of the mediational work of teachers; underscoring trust in the professional knowledge and judgement of teachers.
4. The inclusion of children’s interests in a school’s pedagogical framework and in teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment.
5. It will support the repositioning of the teacher as expert.
6. It will support the development of learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the primary classroom leading to an improvement in accessibility and, therefore, making a contribution towards greater equality in education.

Further, I am conscious that engagement in a process of inquiry, the Doctorate of Education, has transformed my thinking and led to an in-depth understanding of my ontology and epistemology, and subsequently a fully realised understanding of why I became a headteacher: to make a difference to children’s lives by challenging the hegemony of education policy in England. From this critical position I have asked questions, not least the questions which were the impetus for this study, for example what is an ‘educated citizen’? (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 37, p. 38). To the questions foregrounded at the end of the study, for example what is a curriculum? Moving forward I intend to maintain my critical position and continue to ask questions.

## **6.6 Strengths and limitations of the study**

In this section I set out the strengths and limitations of the study, including changes I would make if I repeated the study.

### 6.6.1 Strengths

Firstly, the study is a critical analysis of current education policy in England which contributes to the wider discourse on education, for example a critical analysis of the use of the concept of cultural capital as a measure of a school’s performance and a critical evaluation of how curriculum is defined. Secondly, the study is an investigation of alternative concepts which can be used to inform teachers’ practice, including the concept of funds of knowledge. Thirdly, the semi-structured focus group interviews facilitated a critical insight into how teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Further, the use of semi-structured focus group interviews provided the necessary flexibility, in the form of open-ended questions and the technique of probing, to enable teachers to give in-depth answers and share their stories which led to the creation of a rich data set. Fourthly, the focus group format of the semi-structured interviews contributed to the breadth and depth of the data collected because it worked to mitigate the impact of interviewer effect by making the teachers feel safe and secure to engage with the interview questions, provide open and honest answers and ask questions. A final strength of the study is that my critical position led to six recommendations for policy and practice and the identification of six areas where I have made an original contribution to knowledge.

### 6.6.2 Limitations

Firstly, the study is a small-scale study focused on one school, albeit a larger than average-sized primary school. Secondly, it is possible that in the primary classroom there is an intersection between specific funds of knowledge for a child and a teacher, for example home language, religion or sport. However, I did not collect data for teachers’ funds of knowledge, everyday or professional, during the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers. If I repeated the study I would collect data for teachers’ everyday funds of knowledge to support a more in-depth understanding of the factors which impact on and determine distance in the primary classroom. This omission from the concept map for a model of practice in the primary classroom, teachers’ everyday funds of knowledge, is shown in diagram 6.3.

*Diagram 6.3: Funds of knowledge: teacher*

Thirdly, when I set out the research focus and research questions in chapter 1 I did not expect the concept of funds of identity to be relevant to this study (sections 1.3 and 1.4). It is possible that in the primary classroom funds of identity will be a factor that will have an impact on distance and that there is an intersection between specific funds of identity for a child and a teacher, for example ethnicity. Similar to teachers’ funds of knowledge I did not collect data for funds of identity, child or teacher. However, during the recursive process of thematic analysis a code emerged for funds of identity and, in particular, the use of home language by teachers in the classroom. If I repeated the study I would collect data for children’s and teachers’ funds of identity. Fourthly, it is possible that my existing relationships with the teachers impacted on my objectivity and therefore my ability to challenge the teachers during the semi-structured focus group interviews. A final limitation of the study is that the semi-structured focus group interviews of teachers did generate a large amount of data which led to the transcription of the interview data becoming a time-consuming process and, in particular with the KS1 and UKS2 interviews which included the largest number of teachers, a complex process. In the next section, I will make recommendations for future research which will include an update on developments in 2021 and then to conclude this chapter, and the study, I will reflect on my research journey.

## 

## **6.7 Recommendations for future research**

At a national level, in March 2021 the third national lockdown due to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic ended and the government set out extensive operational guidance for schools to support the return to face-to-face teaching for children (The Education Hub, 2021). In August 2021, the government launched a back-to-school campaign for the start of the academic year with significantly reduced operational guidance for schools and the promise of a ‘more normal year’ (DfE, 2021a). In October 2021, the government announced that SATs would be re-introduced in 2022 and was met with opposition from headteachers (Day, 2021). In November 2021, Ofsted announced that all schools would be inspected by 2025 to determine ‘how well education is recovering from the pandemic’ (Ofsted, 2021b). It would seem that the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily paused the technology of performativity which continues to govern education policy in England instead of prompting an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing policy frameworks. At a school level, teachers and Early Years Practitioners[[77]](#footnote-77) (EYP) in the EYFS phase have started to work with the School of Education at the University of Sheffield on a research project focused on recognising, reflecting on and responding to children’s interests and inquiries. The intention is that the findings from this research project will be shared across the school and the multi-academy trust (MAT).

My first recommendation for future research is to contest and question new ‘truths’ that emerge from the dominant discourses which shape current education policy in England. Given the problematisation of Ofsted’s (2019, 2021a, 2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital future use of a circular discourse by Ofsted to mandate for additional standardised performance indicators for a school should be the focus of critical analysis to identify contradictions and inadequacies in policy. To research teachers’ everyday funds of knowledge and how these impact on and determine curriculum space and distance in the primary classroom is my second recommendation for future research. The findings from this study suggest that at the school where I am headteacher teachers either explicitly or implicitly use the knowledge valued by diverse social groups, children’s interests, to adapt their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment to mediate, or enrich, the basic curriculum entitlement of the statutory curricula to create curriculum as lived experience accessible to all children. On the concept maps for the curriculum as a complex and changing space and a model of practice in the primary classroom I have identified that teachers’ funds of knowledge impact on and shape curriculum space and pedagogy respectively. I would argue that a more in depth understanding of how teachers’ everyday funds of knowledge impacts on curriculum space and subsequently distance in the primary curriculum is needed to determine if teachers’ interests make the primary classroom more or less accessible for children. In the primary classroom if children’s and teachers’ interests intersect then distance could be decreased and accessibility increased, but if these interests diverge then distance could be increased and accessibility decreased, effectively creating a barrier to children’s learning.

Similarly to teachers’ everyday funds of knowledge, my third recommendation for future research is how children’s and teachers’ funds of identity impact on and determine curriculum space and distance in the primary classroom: what is the impact of intersecting and diverging funds of identity on accessibility? My final recommendation for future research is the impact of remote education on teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. In December 2021, Ofsted published an annual report and stated that the majority of children ‘have been affected by the pandemic, with long-term consequences unknown’ (Ofsted, 2021c). I would suggest that remote learning affected children. At the school where I am headteacher remote learning forced teachers into children’s households, albeit virtually, and to explicitly utilise children’s interests, their everyday knowledge, for pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment to enable children to access the statutory curricula outside of the classroom. I think future research on the impact of remote education would strengthen the argument for the use of children’s interests in the primary classroom.

## **6.8 Research journey**

Towards the end of my research journey I have reflected on the knowledge and skills I have developed, the challenges I have experienced and how I have changed as a practitioner by engaging with the Doctorate of Education. I have learned how to design, plan and execute a research project, and I have learned how to write a thesis. The research project and the thesis have supported the development of my problem solving, team working and time management skills. I have deepened my knowledge and understanding of education in many areas, but primarily education policy including the EIF and the statutory curricula, and concepts in education including curriculum, cultural capital and funds of knowledge. Moreover, I have learned to be critical; a catalyst for the challenges I have experienced and continue to experience. My research journey has transformed my thinking and led to a deepened understanding of my ontology and epistemology, a position which I find is increasingly at odds with the technology of performativity which continues to govern education policy in England.

I think I now have a more fully realised understanding of the complexities of how children learn and subsequently the challenges of being a teacher. For children learning is a complex and fluid process which can be impacted by a multitude of factors either making learning more accessible or constructing barriers to learning. Understanding how factors impact is not straightforward because a one-size-fits-all approach will not work for children at any stage of their education. For a teacher to be able to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom they need to be an expert. This is an exacting standard for a profession and even more so when existing policy frameworks do not recognise the teacher as expert. To look forward, I continue to be committed to making a difference to children’s lives by challenging the hegemony of education policy in England. I have acquired new knowledge and skills to support this commitment. I intend to maintain my critical position and I will continue to ask questions.

# **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1: Interview schedule**

Interview schedule

February 2021

1. Statutory curricula (EYFS/National Curriculum)

* What are the strengths and weaknesses of the EYFS/National Curriculum? [Prompt: think about assessment and planning.]

1. Cultural capital

* What do you think about how Ofsted use the concept of cultural capital? [Prompt: think about impact on standards and whose culture is being promoted.]

1. Identifying children’s funds of knowledge

* What do you understand by children’s funds of knowledge?
* Can you think of examples of children’s funds of knowledge? [Prompt: in home and community contexts, play, on/offline? Share examples e.g. parents, siblings, peers, etc.]
* To what extent are you able to use children’s funds of knowledge in your curriculum planning? [Prompt: Share examples or discuss why it may be difficult to access and use children’s funds of knowledge.]
* How could the use of children’s funds of knowledge contribute to equality in education?

If you would like to share any further thoughts or reflections following the research conversation then please email.

## **Appendix 2: Pre-research conversation information for teachers**

Funds of knowledge in the primary classroom

Pre-research conversation information for teachers

February 2021

**Objective of the proposed study**

The objective of the proposed study is to investigate the concept of cultural capital, the potential impact of the inclusion of cultural capital in the 2019 Education Inspection Framework and the limitations of cultural capital in securing equality in education. The alternative concept of funds of knowledge will be explored.

**Key concepts**

1. Cultural capital

The 2019 Ofsted handbook refers to ‘cultural capital’ within a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides. In general, theorists define the concept of cultural capital as an indirect outcome of wealth. In contrast, Ofsted define cultural capital as the ability to value great works of art, music and literature. Before the research conversation please read how Ofsted have defined cultural capital (section 178, page 43): <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843108/School_inspection_handbook_-_section_5.pdf>

1. Funds of knowledge

Funds of knowledge are generally understood to be cultural bodies of knowledge and skills which exist within households and are essential for the functioning and well-being of the household.

**My ideas**

1. Cultural capital

I think cultural capital is a construct for explaining and rationalising inequality within a society.

1. The National Curriculum

I think that the National Curriculum, as an example of a statutory curriculum, is a selection of knowledge valued by a dominant social group; it is legitimate knowledge. The content of the National Curriculum is specified by an expert and control is exerted by the use of testing to evaluate a school’s performance. I would argue that this aligns the National Curriculum with the concept of cultural capital because they both work to impose a monoculture.

**What I would like to explore with teachers**

In the role of headteacher I have a mandate to facilitate the design of a pedagogical framework for statutory curricula by enabling teachers to construct learning opportunities for children which maximise engagement in learning in the classroom. The National Curriculum’s focus on imposing a monoculture will determine the design of a pedagogical framework within a school. Moreover, the pedagogical framework designed by a school will shape teachers’ pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. Following the inclusion of the concept of cultural capital in the education inspection framework and its alignment with the National Curriculum, ideas about what cultural capital is will have an impact on classroom practice. I would like to have a research conversation with teachers to explore if the alternative concept of funds of knowledge could be used to inform pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment, and if it did would it contribute to equality in education.

## **Appendix 3: Interview pilot study schedule**

Interview pilot study schedule

February 2021

1. The EYFS/national curriculum

* What do you think about the EYFS/national curriculum?
* What are the strengths of the EYFS/national curriculum? [Prompt: think about assessment and planning.]
* What are the weaknesses of the EYFS/national curriculum? [Prompt: think about assessment and planning.]

1. Cultural capital

* What do you think about how Ofsted use the concept of cultural capital? [Prompt: think about impact on standards and whose culture is being promoted.]

1. Identifying children’s funds of knowledge

* What do you understand by children’s funds of knowledge?
* Can you think of examples of children’s funds of knowledge? [Prompt: in home and community contexts, play, on/offline? Share examples e.g. parents, siblings, peers, etc.]
* To what extent are you able to use children’s funds of knowledge in your curriculum planning? [Prompt: Share examples or discuss why it may be difficult to access and use children’s funds of knowledge.]
* To what extent do you think the use of children’s funds of knowledge would change your pedagogy/how you teach? [Prompt: context/hook for learning, method of teaching e.g. direct instruction, inquiry based learning, etc.]
* How could the use of children’s funds of knowledge contribute to equality in education?

If you would like to share any further thoughts or reflections following the research conversation then please email.

## **Appendix 4: Ethics approval letter, School of Education**



## **Appendix 5: Participant consent form**

Funds of knowledge in the primary classroom consent form

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Please tick the appropriate boxes** | | | **Yes** | **No** |
| Taking part in the research project | | | | |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated January 2021 or the project has been fully explained to me. [If you will answer no to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.] | | |  |  |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | |  |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include:  Being interviewed in a focus group by the headteacher to explore my understanding of funds of knowledge and if I can identify children’s funds of knowledge. | | |  |  |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw myself from the project before it starts in February 2021; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw myself. Support will be available from an independent trusted colleague. | | |  |  |
| How my information will be used during and after the research project | | | | |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address, etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in the project. I understand that I will not be named in the project. | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs. | | |  |  |
| So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers | | | | |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | | |
| Name of participant [printed] | Signature | Date | | |
|  |  |  | | |
| Name of researcher [printed] | Signature | Date | | |

**Research project contact details for further information:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Researcher | Ross Silcock  Headteacher  Wingfield Primary School  2 Ensign Street  London SE3 9GJ  Tel.: 020 8856 1167  [rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk](mailto:rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk) |
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## **Appendix 6: Participant information sheet**

Information sheet: teacher

January 2021

1. **Research project title:** Funds of knowledge in the primary classroom
2. **Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to participate in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

1. **What is the research project’s purpose?**

Please note that this project adheres to the current government guidance for schools during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

A copy of the school’s full opening plan and risk assessment which adheres to the current government guidance is available on the school website:

<https://www.wingfield.greenwich.sch.uk>

Further, please note as headteacher of the school, permission to conduct the research will be requested from the governing body of the school. I will write to the Chair of Governors including all relevant documentation and request written permission to conduct the research. The research will not start until I have written permission from the Chair of Governors.

The 2019 Ofsted handbook refers to ‘cultural capital’ within a new judgment focused on the idea of the ‘quality of education’ that a school provides. In general, theorists define the concept of cultural capital as an indirect outcome of wealth. In contrast, Ofsted define cultural capital as the ability to value great works of art, music and literature. Ofsted argue that the inclusion of cultural capital in the education inspection framework (EIF) will contribute to equality in education. I wish to investigate this claim and think about how equality in education could be improved. There are three research questions for this project:

1. How have Ofsted adapted the concept of cultural capital to improve equality in education?
2. What alternative concepts might inform teachers’ practice?
3. How do teachers understand the concept of funds of knowledge in the context of their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment?

If you take part in the project you will be thinking about the third question which can be divided into two parts:

* To explore your understanding of funds of knowledge.
* To explore if you can identify children’s funds of knowledge.

1. **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you are a teacher at Wingfield Primary School.

1. **Do I have to take part?**

Participation in the project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, there will be no negative consequences. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). If at any time you wish to withdraw from the project you should say so. You do not have to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the project, please contact Ross Silcock ([rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk](mailto:rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk)). Please note, with the expectation of completing this research during the 2020-21 academic year I will not be leading professional development conversations for teachers during this academic year.

1. **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you agree to take part you will:

* Be interviewed in a focus group by the headteacher to explore your understanding of funds of knowledge and if you can identify children’s funds of knowledge.
* Be supported by an independent trusted colleague, for example a senior leader from within our partnership of schools.

Interviews will be in focus groups to provide peer support and interview questions will be semi-structured so interviewees can expand on ideas. Further, interviewees will be able to ask questions. It is intended for the interview to be a professional/research conversation. Interviews will be audio recorded and will be approximately 1 hour. If current government guidance for schools during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is still necessary then interviews will be conducted virtually.

1. **What do I have to do?**

In order to participate you need to read the information sheet and consent form, agree to participate and sign and return the consent form.

1. **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

The risks or disadvantages of taking part are negligible. If you have concerns, Ross Silcock will be available at any time to discuss any issues raised by the project.

1. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that by being involved, you will reflect on and develop your thinking about teaching and learning. Further, I contend that using cultural capital to measure the quality of education in a school is a significant revision of government policy on curriculum which is already effecting change in schools. This project presents an opportunity to explore the potential impact on primary-aged children of this revision of government policy. It is possible that this project will lead to future curriculum development.

1. **Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

A participant consent form will be signed by all participants before recording equipment is used. All the information that is collected about you during the course of the project will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher. Neither you nor your school nor the location will be identified in the project. Anonymisation of names will be applied from transcription phase onwards. A copy of the transcription of the interview data will be shared. Data analysis will be on a password protected and encrypted computer in the researcher’s home or office. Only the researcher will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022. Physical documents will be stored in locked cabinets which only the researcher will have access to. Physical documents will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022. Any physical documents scanned electronically will be stored with password protection and encryption on all files. Physical documents scanned electronically will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022.

1. **What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University’s Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

1. **What will happen to the data collected and the results of the research project?**

A participant consent form will be signed by all participants before recording equipment is used. All the information that is collected about you during the course of the project will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher. Neither you nor your school nor the location will be identified in the project. Anonymisation of names will be applied from transcription phase onwards. A copy of the transcription of the interview data will be shared. Data analysis will be on a password protected and encrypted computer in the researcher’s home or office. Only the researcher will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022. Physical documents will be stored in locked cabinets which only the researcher will have access to. Physical documents will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022. Any physical documents scanned electronically will be stored with password protection and encryption on all files. Physical documents scanned electronically will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022. The project is expected to be published by September 2022 and a copy of it will be shared with you.

1. **Who is organising and funding the research?**

Ross Silcock is the researcher. No funding has been made available for this project.

1. **Who is the data controller?**

The University of Sheffield will act as the data controller for this project. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

1. **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved by the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Education.

1. **What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?**

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the project please contact:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Researcher | Ross Silcock  Headteacher  Wingfield Primary School  2 Ensign Street  London SE3 9GJ  Tel.: 020 8856 1167  [rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk](mailto:rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk) |

In the event of you still being dissatisfied your complaint can be investigated by:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supervisor | Professor Elizabeth Wood  University of Sheffield  School of Education  241 Glossop Road  Sheffield S10 2GW  Tel.: 0114 222 8142  [e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk) |

Alternatively your complaint can be investigated by:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Head of department | Professor Rebecca Lawthom  Head of the School of Education  University of Sheffield  School of Education  241 Glossop Road  Sheffield S10 2GW  Tel.: 0114 222 8142  [edu-hos@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:edu-hos@sheffield.ac.uk) |

It is not anticipated that the research will stop prior to completion. If this is necessary due to any reason, you will be informed and the data collected will be destroyed.

1. **Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?**

Interviews will be audio recorded. A participant consent form will be signed by all participants before recording equipment is used. All the information that is collected about you during the course of the project will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher. Neither you nor your school nor the location will be identified in the project. Anonymisation of names will be applied from transcription phase onwards. A copy of the transcription of the interview data will be shared. Data analysis will be on a password protected and encrypted computer in the researcher’s home or office. Only the researcher will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022. Physical documents will be stored in locked cabinets which only the researcher will have access to. Physical documents will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022. Any physical documents scanned electronically will be stored with password protection and encryption on all files. Physical documents scanned electronically will be destroyed at the end of the project which is anticipated to be July 2022.

1. **Contact for further information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Researcher | Ross Silcock  Headteacher  Wingfield Primary School  2 Ensign Street  London SE3 9GJ  Tel.: 020 8856 1167  [rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk](mailto:rsilcock@wingfield.compassps.uk) |

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and the consent form to keep.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

## **Appendix 7: Coded interview transcript Key Stage 1**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Line | Code | Text |
| 1  10  20  30  40  50  60  70  80  90  100  110  120  130  140  150  160  170  180  190  200  210  220  230  240  250  260  270  280  290  300  310  320  330  340  350  360  370  380  390  400  410  420  430  440  450  460  470  480  490  500  510  520 | CC-KS1  CC-LKS2  CC-UKS2  CC-KS1  CC-LKS2  CC-UKS2  CC-KS1  CC-LKS2  CC-UKS2  CC-KS1  CC-LKS2  CC-UKS2  CC-KS1  CC-LKS2  CC-UKS2  CA-CCO  CA-CCO  CA-T  CA-CCO  CC-KS1  FOK-DIS  EQ-DIV  COV-PED  FOK-PED  FOK  COV-PED  FOK-ON  FOK-REL  FOK-ID  FOK-ID  FOK-FO  FOK-LAN  FOK-LAN  FOK-PED  CA-CCB  FOK-OCC  FOK-CH  FOK-TV  CA-CCB  FOK-CH  FOK-PL  FOK-PED  FOK-ADV  FOK-ADV  FOK-PL  FOK-PED  FOK-PED  FOK-PL  FOK-DIS  FOK-PED  FOK-PL  FOK-DIS  FOK-DIS  FOK-EQ  CA-T  FOK-EQ  FOK-EQ  FOK-EQ  CA-CCO  FOK-EQ  FOK-EQ  CA-CCO  FOK-EQ | ~~INT – The idea behind this is it is a professional / research conversation, ask questions if you would like to, not just of me but to each other. There are not that many questions, but I do think once you get into it, they might prompt quite a lot of thinking.~~  ~~INT - First question (anyone can go first) – is, what do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the National Curriculum? And I should just say this is your absolute honest opinion, you may think it is wonderful, you think it’s not wonderful, that is absolutely OK but it’s just what you think.~~  ~~T5 – I think it exists and I think that is a positive thing and I think there are places that don’t have a curriculum in the same way and I don’t think that is, you know like France is a very different approach to the curriculum. I think that is a strength.~~ I do think it is aspirational and that is good, I do think it has some of the high expectations that we have in other countries, I do think that was a good change. I don’t think it is relevant, I think it is invented in a lot of places. I think it’s imposed through all kinds of things, through grammar, through its view of history. It’s imposed ideology and I don’t think it particularly prepares children for the future they are actually going to live in. So, I think it has a lot of focus on some areas which are very old school, private school approach to that, but actually the world the children are going to live in is going to be very different to our world and it doesn’t really prepare them for that.  ~~INT – OK Great, thank you. T6 / T4 any thoughts on the National Curriculum?~~  ~~T4 – I agree in some capacity with T5,~~ I think some of the stuff in there is quite imposed I guess, and somewhat irrelevant or potentially irrelevant for the future, but I also think that some elements are quite vague and actually you can be quite creative with it, I think. I think as well, for example, the history section, doesn’t tell you to teach specific knowledge such as specific events but it tells you to introduce the concept of things like continuity and change for example, which actually you can be quite creative with those things as teachers and there is some flexibility in how you approach that.  ~~INT – So some room to manoeuvre?~~  ~~T4 – Yes exactly, especially, for me, the history section, its more the concepts of historical thinking that I feel it’s what we need to teach and its gives examples, such as, you could teach about Christopher Columbus but it is not that you have to teach how great Britain was when we had the empire or anything like this, I feel like it’s quite vague and you can teach those concepts in which ever context you like. I think it requires a lot of creativity and thinking on the teachers or the schools behalf of how you can adapt that to be more open.~~  ~~INT – Yes, yes that’s great thank you T4. T6 any thoughts?~~  ~~T6 – Yes. So to add to what T4 is saying she spoke about the curriculum being quite vague sometimes, T4 spoke from quite a~~ ~~positive way in how we can add our creativity to it, but I think also when you are new to teaching and you have not used a National Curriculum before, it can be vague and then the new teachers can feel a little bit lost, so that is probably why the schools would have to provide more information as to what needs to be taught specifically.~~ But also, I like the National Curriculum in the sense it can be quite consistent across the country, there is the clear expectation around what needs to be taught at what age. ~~When I was writing my dissertation for my first degree, my dissertation was a comparative study looking at the learning perception in the individualist country and the collectivist country, so I used England and Korea as an example.~~  ~~INT – OK, Yes~~  ~~T6 – One of the things I did was comparing the National Curriculum for mathematics, and what I have noticed is that it was practically the same, it was just translated in Korean and the other written in English and particularly spoke about globalisation as well and having all children having, I suppose it’s not always equal because different countries approach differently but in terms of that knowledge being quite similar in different countries and different continents as well, I thought was quite good.~~  ~~INT – Yes, and~~ I guess with Maths that is a subject where you can to a certain extent have that concrete objective knowledge. So, it does make it easier to map out what you need to do at certain ages and so on. ~~OK brilliant thank you.~~  ~~T7 joins interview.~~  ~~INT – OK, I’m going to go on to the next question. Just to catch up T7 I just asked everyone what they thought the strengths and weaknesses were of the National Curriculum.~~  ~~T7 happy to move on.~~  ~~INT – This question links in with the pre-interview reading that I gave you. What do you think about how Ofsted use the concept of cultural capital? So, they have introduced this concept of cultural capital into the education inspection framework, you can see it in the section 5 handbook which is the link that I gave you, any thoughts about how Ofsted are using that concept?~~  ~~T4 – We are just looking at it now as a reminder, and I think ‘essential knowledge’ that pupils need to be educated citizens, I think teaching them to the best of what has been thought and said,~~ who is saying what is the best that has been thought and said? What I think might be the best, and what another teacher thinks might be the best, could be completely different. What a child in my class thinks might be the best could be completely different too. So maybe what I was saying about the National Curriculum, whether you see it as putting a cap on something or that statement (maybe I’m being naive as a new teacher or overly aspirational) but who says what is the best that has been thought and said, and actually that is such a subjective statement. ~~I could be teaching one thing in my classroom and T6 could be teaching something in their classroom. I also think we still have the capacity, it’s not really that specific in my opinion, an appreciation of human creativity for example we have model boats in my classroom, who says that’s not an appreciation of human creativity!~~  I think it is a vague statement and that’s how they are defining knowledge and cultural capital, actually if that is their definition, then we still have the capacity to build on that and choose what we think is the best.  ~~INT – OK great, thank you T4.~~  T5 – It is kind of educational gentrification, it’s this idea, a certain way of thinking and looking is better than other things and I think there is a perception of a very knowledge based approach to curriculum and if you give such knowledge and this is cultural knowledge and then that will ultimately solve all of society’s ills. ~~It doesn’t really understand about giving someone a tool but you have to teach someone how to use it, or how to apply it in a new situation and I think those skills are essential in education. I think in some ways more essential than just the exposure to ideas and concepts and so we have to, ideas can be dangerous, they can have negative impacts on society, and we have to consider that children have to be critical thinkers and able to evaluate and be able to recognise what is true and what is fake and things like that.~~  ~~INT – Thanks T5.~~  ~~T7 – I was going to say~~ I think it is interesting how Ofsted use the term cultural capital with knowledge and sometimes I think that is quite hard for schools to tie up with in the National Curriculum and it can be very based on the school and the teacher and what their views and beliefs are, so sometimes it’s very difficult to measure it or put it into the National Curriculum because it is so personal to you as a teacher or how you present things and you probably do a lot of things subconsciously, such as the way you talk or the way you put emphasis on certain things so although there might be this ‘term’ or certain steps you can take to do cultural capital it will be very different and interpreted differently.  ~~INT – Thank you T7. What do you think, in terms of who’s the best, who are they talking about and T5 talked about it being cultural knowledge, so if you had to hazard a guess at who’s culture Ofsted are promoting, who’s culture do you think that would be?~~  ~~T4 – I completely agree,~~ I do think it is potentially middle-class England that they are trying to push on everyone, however actually it says for year 1’s in English, exposure to fairy tales, well who says that has to be a British fairy tale. Fairy tales exist in all cultures, so although I do think that is the intention of the National Curriculum, I do think that you can manipulate what is said in the National Curriculum to be not pushing a white middle class agenda.  ~~INT – Yes I think that there is scope in there, I would agree with that and I would agree as well that it is, very much, a white British middle class culture that they’re pushing. T6 did you have any thoughts around that at all?~~  ~~T6 – I am questioning myself if I was in a position where I had to write the National Curriculum, where would I start and I don’t actually have a solution so I am thinking, whoever has written the National Curriculum do you think they may have had the same problem and they just thought that we would have to stick to the English culture because we are in England, so I just don’t know where I would start personally,~~ just thinking about funds of knowledge and think about the knowledge our children bring into and making that really valuable, it’s impossible to consider all of those factors as we know so I just don’t know what would be the best approach really, so that is what I keep thinking.  ~~INT – Well that is the million-dollar question, I think! To know that every country is trying to solve that in some shape or form, what is the best curriculum?!~~  ~~T5 – I wonder if we feel that more intensely because we are in London?~~ You know, with the diversity that we have here, because I do see it in the children’s faces sometimes, their faces fall when they ask me about things, they are very interested in you aren’t they such as family, culture and languages and some things like that and when I literally present the most blandest answer, you can see it in their face, their hearts almost sink, there isn’t that understanding.  ~~INT – London is obviously more diverse than I would say the majority of the country, so maybe we do as teachers feel that more or maybe we are more attuned to that but actually we are teaching a much broader range of cultures so therefore maybe that’s why we see the National Curriculum in that way. Maybe if we taught out in the Kent countryside you wouldn’t feel that same way about it potentially.~~  ~~T6 – I think that some families purposefully move to different countries so that they can experience a new curriculum. So, they may not want us to think about their original culture because I know a lot of families move to England because they really like the National Curriculum, they’ve heard a lot about it and they just like the idea of it and I don’t think that some families mind the English National Curriculum either, so I think it all depends.~~  ~~INT – Brilliant thank you. Moving on to the next four questions, they are all around Funds of Knowledge. The first question is, what do you understand by children’s funds of knowledge? There is no right or definitive answer for this. Funds of knowledge is a reasonably loose concept. It is not a specific answer.~~  ~~T4 – T6 and I had a chat the other day about how it is an interesting time right now because where, normally when you are in class you plan a lesson, for example teaching time, we can get them to make a paper clock, however some are at home and they may not have a paper plate and they may not have a clock! What shall we do…?~~ And so we had to be creative and think, what do the children in our class have at home? And what will everyone have? Or what might they have and actually the learning at home time has really made us think, what do we need to give the children or how can we equip them to do the learning at home? We are really having to think about their home lives as well and what they have and who they have. What knowledge are we taking for granted in class that we can give and share with them so that they can achieve their learning. ~~Maybe its tenuously linked but we talked about how actually we are having to consider the funds of knowledge within children but also within their home and what they are equipped with at the moment and what else they need to do what we are asking them to do as a school.~~  ~~INT – OK great thank you T4. T5, T7, T6 anything to add?~~  ~~T5 – Time is a really interesting one because that is something where you go to teach it and then suddenly you have vast waves of children, sometimes quite surprising children, who are already very confident with it and it can be a completely unexpected thing~~ so funds of knowledge are the unspoken knowledge, the things they know already before they come into the class room.  ~~INT – Where do you think, as T4 mentioned it can be knowledge from the home, what do you think, where do they get that knowledge from in the home, what would be those sources do you think?~~  ~~T5 – There would be a cultural element because I think homes can mean very different, to different people. Some people have a much broader group of people around them so they will acquire knowledge from that, sometimes it would be immediate family, but I do also think, it also ties into thinking about where the children are coming from and going to, that its very different to our experience. They are bombarded with information and they can get their knowledge from all kinds of places. A three / four year old on you tube is going to acquire a graft of knowledge that you just wouldn’t expect. Even with access to libraries when we were little, they absorb so much information, they are bombarded with it, they pick~~ ~~up words, terms, knowledge and that can be very exciting but obviously there is that danger that they may acquire knowledge that at the moment they do not have that maturity to fully understand.~~  ~~INT – Thank you T5. T7 / T6?~~  ~~T7 – I was going to build on that. I think that children these days are in a very different time to have access to knowledge and it is quite normal now for children to have access to the internet and all that information is there, at their fingertips. So I think it’s very different to when we were younger, as T5 said, we would have to go to the library or you would have to go to an adult that may know that you would have to find out things very differently, whereas now it’s there and you can get that information quite quickly.~~ I also think there is a point around, for us, the time we are at, at the moment we are having a very different insight to children’s funds of knowledge. Whereas before they would be in school all the time and you would have that relationship with them, you’d learn a little more and speak to their parents. We haven’t had that in the same way, we’ve had that in a very different way because we have had telephone calls where we have had to speak to them for longer and we have found out more, or actually now we are doing the live lessons you are almost going into their home and their culture, you’ll see much more of what it is like for them.  ~~INT – Yes thank you T7. T6 did you have anything to add?~~  ~~T6 – Yes, just re-iterating what everyone else is saying.~~ I think some funds of knowledge are created collectively with people, but I think, thinking about our exposure to media and the internet I think children are probably building a lot of funds of knowledge independently ~~and that is probably a bit of a danger, as T5 was saying, can they handle that information but because they are getting so much knowledge, do they even have time to discuss this, do parents have time to sit down and discuss this, are they familiar with this knowledge so I think it’s quite complex in that sense~~. I think religion as well, they probably get a lot of funds of knowledge from religious things. Some people take it a bit more seriously, that impacts the family values.  ~~INT – I think you are right, it is complex. For example, even if you think about yourself and your funds of knowledge and I know this has been mentioned, talking about what you as a teacher brings to the classroom, so actually we have funds of knowledge and that will influence how we teach, so it is quite complex.~~  ~~T6 – I was just wondering is there any research about~~ funds of knowledge and identity?  ~~INT – Yes there is.~~  ~~T6 – I only ask as I am thinking about myself and my little sister,~~ so I’ve spent half of my life in Korea and half of my life in England, where as my little sister as spent most of her life in England and she sometimes gets these anxieties, so I ask her what she thinks is causing it, her reply is she is always so confused about who she is, when she is at home she feels she is constantly criticized because she is too ‘English’. ~~So I think even within the family, there is confusion in terms of funds of knowledge. I think it can really impact who you are.~~  ~~INT – Yes. The original Funds of knowledge started around 1991 / 92 and it was around Latino communities in the US, that’s where it originated from and then it has gone off in all sorts of different directions. So you have funds of knowledge which talks about households, you have children’s funds of knowledge but that can be different as well, depending on a primary aged child or a secondary aged child where you get the funds of knowledge from. And I’m pretty certain there are funds of identity, is~~ ~~something like that, I shall check and let you know, but there is something around that as well. The original idea has snowballed into different directions, but all with the same underlying meaning.~~  ~~The next question, which we have kind of touched on, but can you think of examples of children’s funds of knowledge? So could you give some really specific examples of what you think children’s fund of knowledge would be? So for example, T6, I know you said religion, so that could be if you grow up in a Muslim household, probably, that religion would be a funds of knowledge for a child in that household. Any other ideas around examples.~~  ~~T6 – I’m not sure this is really answering questions,~~ but I know food is quite a big thing as well, so for example, when I had my first parents evening with a child’s Mum in autumn term, a parent was asking if it was OK to bring some Asian food. She was really worried that other children would laugh at the kind of food she as bringing to school. We said that we really celebrate different types of food and the children get the opportunity to talk about it. But I remember when I was young when in the Midlands, and my Grandma made me some rolled up sushi and I was so embarrassed about taking that to school because no one else did that. But I think that maybe that’s because we’ve got quite diverse families in London and in Kidbrooke at Wingfield and at that time I was the only Asian girl in the entire school. So, I felt so uncomfortable and I think that culture and that food as well.  ~~INT – I think food is a fund of knowledge, because if you think about it, yourself as an example, what you as a child would have learned about food and understood about food from your family, would be very different to another child in a different household. So, you would have come to school and that would have been a source of knowledge for you. Another example, if one of your parents was a chef or something like that, that is a source of knowledge and information that you would probably learn from but coming to school, a teacher may not know that. They may not know that actually T6 has all this knowledge about Asian food and her parents are chefs and she knows about these different types of kitchen utensils. If you think about DT and food science, that’s a whole source of knowledge there that you would have that your teacher may not know. So, I do think food can be one.~~  T6 – And I think similar to that it’s probably a language as well. Some families think I am so proud that I can speak three different languages, whereas some children might come to think, oh no one else is speaking that language, I don’t really want to talk about it.  T4 – I had a really interesting thing happen with language in my class where at the start of the year one of the children in my class kept speaking Chinese to another child and the Mum of that child came to see me and said ‘he does not want to speak Chinese at school, he wants to speak English.’ She then asked me to make sure he played with children that would speak English to him. I explained we were having choosing time in the afternoon where they can play with who they choose. But then a little while later I saw the boy try to talk to him in Chinese again and he started waving his finger and saying NO! I asked what was happening and they mentioned speaking Chinese, so I said ‘WOW you can speak Chinese? How do you say good morning in Chinese?’ The boy that had been told not to speak Chinese was shocked and the boy that had been speaking Chinese would not say a word to me. The next day I took the register and said ‘good morning’ in Chinese. The next day he brought in a letter, written in Chinese, and translated it all for me! He was so excited that his language had been celebrated in class and not something that was stamped down. ~~So, I think that definitely language is something, but I think there are opportunities to glean children’s funds of knowledge and it permeates everything in class I feel because, for example, when we do artwork, I suggest an art gallery and a child the other day asked what an art gallery was. Another child explained and another child said you have to be quiet. I think it’s those opportunities where you suddenly understand. Whether it’s reading a story and something happens in that story and a children relates it to a personal experience, I think that exposes funds of knowledge, experience and what that child knows and gives it an opportunity to be shared with the classroom and the school.~~  ~~INT – T7 and T5, did you have anything to add in terms of funds of knowledge.~~  T7 – I was going to mention, outings. Outings that children have been exposed to out of school, so if they have gone to an art gallery or if they have gone to a museums. I think about family’s occupations as well, that brings a fund of knowledge. Then within the household things such as chores can break down stereotypes and what they see. Caregiving within families, what that looks like and how that is for them. And basic ones such as TV shows. That really adds of their funds of knowledge.  ~~INT – absolutely, thanks T7. T5 anything to add?~~  ~~T5 – Yes definitely.~~ I think there is a massive economic element to it. It could be how many books they have at home, that can impact it. It can also impact in unusual ways, maybe some children who come from families who are struggling economically but could have a greater understanding of money because they are going to the shops or Mum is sending them to the shops with £5 and they know about change and they know about these kinds of things in a way in which other children aren’t, where Mum could be using a credit card and the children aren’t seeing it! ~~It is a more complex thing. I also think it affects our behaviour management more then we realise and I think that is something I’m more aware of as a man, when I started teaching I had that ‘I’m good at behaviour’ and I thought that, but actually what I realise is there is a massive gender imbalance that I benefit from because for most children the disciplinarian in the house is male and that is the voice that they are used to. That is the knowledge they have gained, when they hear that deeper voice they have got to stop, and you benefit from that as a man within the culture of primary education. And I think that is there and we don’t think about it, it is there as knowledge, that has been acquired at some point. They’re not conscious of it but it’s there.~~  ~~INT – Thank you T5. Two more questions. To what extend are you able to use, children’s funds of knowledge in your curriculum planning? So, thinking about all these different funds of knowledge we have talked about, parents’ occupations, about their economic status, about TV’s, language, religion. To what extend can you use any of that?~~  T6 – I do not think I necessarily plan it, I think it subconsciously and naturally comes out depending on the topic. When we are teaching, we obviously have a learning objective, you sort of know whether a child may find this lesson particularly interesting because they have the funds of knowledge, but I think that within the lesson you have these conversations and children bring other knowledge into that. ‘What do you think, last time I spoke to you, you knew a lot about this.’ You just have that knowledge in your mind and whenever you get the opportunity, I think you just really value their funds of knowledge. Sometimes you can plan it, sometimes it comes out naturally.  ~~INT – So sometimes it can be ad hoc and in the moment so a child may mention something, and you think you might use that because you have triggered something there. OK great thank you.~~  T5 – I think when I have used it, it has been the most exciting moments of my career.  ~~INT – Do you mean when you have planned to use it?~~  T5 – Yes when I have planned to use it. Or sometimes it is ad hoc. You have found out about it one day and you have adapted your planning because of that the other days. I think those times where you are almost flying free, there is a piece of knowledge in there which needs to be explored further or you suddenly realise there is a piece a knowledge that isn’t there in the class collectively which is essential and you kind of go for it! I can remember a moment teaching negative numbers, and suddenly realising in the class room, the lack of understanding about money, and actually how much things cost and doing a lesson of that. And every single year that I taught negative numbers that was incorporated into my planning. I understood they didn’t have this knowledge of what it really means, what it means to balance a certain amount of money, it only goes so far. ~~Children would say after those lessons they understand when they go around the supermarket they can’t ask Mum for all this food. They now suddenly see there is a consequence to it.~~ So the more we give that space to find out what they do and don’t know and what they want to know, I think the stronger our curriculum is.  ~~INT – OK thank you. Can I just ask then, if it is often you find funds of knowledge when it crops up in your planning, it’s a bit unplanned and, what do you think is difficult or prevents you from using children’s funds of knowledge in your planning. Consciously, as in when you sit down and write your weekly English plan.~~  T5 – Consciously, it’s having to think about things in advance. If you have got to do a medium term plan even if that has got to be complete at the start of a term by the time you come to ask the children what they know about that, you’ve got that planning. As soon as you get into the term you just don’t have the space and the time to do things differently, you do do it, but not to the extent where I think it would be really effective. I think the more we could view planning as working documents the more you could embed that culture. I think that would have an impact.  ~~INT – OK thank you T5. T4?~~  ~~T4 – I think having more flexibility because you don’t know when a child…. Having opportunities to glean those funds of knowledge definitely.~~ At the start of the year for example you don’t actually know the children who are coming into your class. Apart from Reception where they do home visits which sounds like a nice opportunity to get to know the children when they are in their home environment. ~~But year 1 and above, we don’t do those. So, we don’t know the families, we don’t know the children until they arrive in September. So, it does take a while and we have to prepare things in advance for that term.~~ But also, every child in your class has a different fund of knowledge. So, for example if I was to plan a week where we explored something specific to one child’s fund of knowledge, it may expose more things and it can be adapted as we go through the week. But there would have to be that flexibility because you’re narrowing it in a way, and I’m not saying that we aren’t already narrowing it in a middle class white British way, but I just mean because everyone has a different fund of knowledge one lesson based on something someone has said it is not necessarily going to tap into everybody. It might do but it requires creativity from a teacher I guess, to be able to plan in advance and adapt on the spot to pull in all those funds of knowledge from 30 children.  INT – ~~Yes great, thank you T4. T7 did you want to add anything?~~  T7 – Yes, I think we have all picked up on the points that it is impacted by time, space and the flexibility you need to really expose the funds of knowledge, so I suppose the question or problem it poses is how do you get that information when you don’t know the children or it’s the beginning of the year or you haven’t quite had that time to really get to know them. ~~Does that make sense?~~  ~~INT – Yes absolutely. Thanks T7. Final question. We often in education talk about equality and we are always striving for equality in education. How do you think the use of children’s funds of knowledge could contribute to equality in education? So, if you were able to build children’s funds of knowledge into your curriculum planning on a daily basis, what impact do you think that would have on equality in education?~~  T5 – I think it would have an immensely positive impact because I think it would help to destroy some of the barriers. When I listen to T6’s story about anxiety over lunches and saying stuff like that, it wouldn’t even enter into my mind that, that would be something that someone could experience because of course I’ve never experience that with my background. ~~It’s that consciousness of how much am I~~  ~~doing when I stand in front of that room, and I know it’s the direct teaching and expert, and that’s very ‘in vogue’ now, and saying things like that~~ but it’s a politicised role, it’s a role of huge responsibility. Your language, your interactions with other people in the room, the emphasis on the curriculum that you are placing in that classroom can have a big impact. ~~And the more you talk to people, there’s some people that kind of go ‘oh actually I’m a very quiet person because once my teacher told me off for something, so I chose never to speak up again’. You can have a huge impact.~~ The more we understand where these children come from, the more we will be able to overcome that and allow them to achieve the most in their life. There must be so many times when children are sitting there, in the classroom, listening to you thinking ‘what an earth are they talking about’. ‘They are talking about something that has absolutely no relevance to me.’ ‘This is not relevant to my life what so ever’. ~~I think we can be conscious of that when children come from quite tricky back grounds. For example if their parents were arguing in the morning, shouting and screaming, and then they come into school and someone says, ‘this is how you divide a fraction’. Why would we expect someone to find that difficult but equally if we are talking about Guy Fawkes, it’s an odd thing to putting such an emphasis on when there is so much out there that is essential.~~ I think the more we understand it the better we can do to enable our children to achieve.  ~~INT – Great thank you T5.~~  T4 – Just talking about equality, I definitely think it could contribute to encouraging greater equality. I think that equality is not everyone seeing themselves down the opera when they are in their thirties which, I guess, the concept of cultural capital, pushes. Or everyone appreciating Mozart or Jane Austin but I think that if children can see themselves in the classroom, can see their culture within their classroom and within education and see that sharing their culture and their ideas and their background, I think if they could see that sharing that and learning from one another about that, it actually will create equality in a way because everyone in that classroom is sharing and celebrating one another’s cultures. ~~Also, I think that as a child, if you can see your culture bring~~ accep~~ted and shared and explored, actually it will encourage you to want to explore and share your culture and learn about other peoples.~~ Which in turn leads to this love of lifelong learning which will increase equality because the children will learn that everyone has value and are equal.  ~~INT – Thank you T4. T5 and then T6.~~  ~~T5 – I think if we do think about our roles as teachers, our roles as teachers is to think about how their funds of knowledge will change as they get older. I think that is our responsibility. It’s to see where they are now and understand where they need to be in the future, so we are guiding them to that process and also understanding how their culture will change as they get older and they will be exposed to new things.~~ That was bought up by T4 talking about Opera, that view at the moment is that wouldn’t it be a good thing if all children went and appreciated Opera. But Opera was at one point a popular genre. ~~It’s about us looking at the world now and thinking about what is it going to be like in 20 years times when these children are adults and how can we get them ready for it.~~  ~~INT – Great thank you T5. T6?~~  ~~T6 – Re-iterating what T4 said. I think if we see funds of knowledge as, lets write down all the knowledge that the children know and lets map out how we are going to celebrate and acknowledge that, I think it would be an impossible task but I think, as T4 said,~~ if we create a culture where children can openly talk about it and the more they will experience, I think they will feel more comfortable and confident to talk about it. So I think creating that culture, like we do already at Wingfield, I think it could be really important and making those opportunities more regular as well.  ~~INT – Great thank you. T7, did you have anything to add?~~  ~~T7 – nothing to add.~~  ~~INT – That’s all of my questions, so thank you all very much. If you go away and you think about something, or you think I’d wish I’d said that or something pops into your head, I’d really love if you would pop it into an email. Because sometimes I know you think ‘I wish I’d said that!’ or you think about things over the course of the day and then suddenly later on you think of something.~~ |

## **Appendix 8: Table of codes**

| Code | Description | Sub-code | Description | Teachers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Early Years Foundation Stage | | | Key Stage 1 | | | | Lower Key Stage 2 | | | Upper Key Stage 2 | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| CC | **Curriculum content**  A teacher evaluating the content of the Early Years Foundation Stage or National Curriculum. | CC-EYFS | Early Years Foundation Stage. | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| CC-EYFS-EA | Early Years Foundation Stage early adopter. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| CC-KS1 | National curriculum for KS1. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 19 |
| CC-LKS2 | National curriculum for LKS2. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 21 |
| CC-UKS2 | National curriculum for UKS2. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 22 |
| CA | **Cultural arbitrary**  A teacher demonstrating an understanding of the idea of cultural arbitrary by recognising arbitrary meanings and values (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 5). | CA-CCO | Ofsted’s (2021d) conceptualisation of cultural capital. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 14 |
| CA-CCB | Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptualisation of cultural capital. | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 11 |
| CA-FOK | Moll et al.’s (1992) conceptualisation of funds of knowledge. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| CA-T | Teacher recognising their own cultural arbitrary. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| FOK | **Funds of knowledge**  A teacher demonstrating an understanding of the concept of funds of knowledge by:   1. Applying the concept to their pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment. 2. Evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of using the concept in a primary classroom. 3. Evaluating the potential impact of the concept on equality. 4. Exploring the concept of funds of identity. 5. Identifying children’s funds of knowledge. | FOK-PL | Curriculum planning for funds of knowledge. | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 23 |
| FOK-ADV | Teacher example of advantages of using funds of knowledge. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| FOK-DIS | Teacher example of disadvantages of using funds of knowledge. | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 14 |
| FOK-PED | Pedagogy for funds of knowledge. | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 35 |
| FOK-ASS | Assessment for funds of knowledge. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| FOK-EQ | Potential impact of funds of knowledge on equality. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 23 |
| FOK-ON | Children’s funds of knowledge: online engagement. [1] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| FOK-REL | Children’s funds of knowledge: religion. [2] | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| FOK-FO | Children’s funds of knowledge: food. [3] | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| FOK-OCC | Children’s funds of knowledge: parent/carer occupation. [4] | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| FOK-TV | Children’s funds of knowledge: television programmes. [5] | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| FOK-VI | Children’s funds of knowledge: video games. [6] | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| FOK-CH | Children’s funds of knowledge: domestic chores. [7] | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| FOK-LAN | Children’s funds of knowledge: home language for children with English as an additional language (EAL). [8] | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| FOK-COM | Children’s funds of knowledge: extended family/wider community. [9] | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| FOK-SP | Children’s funds of knowledge: sport. [10] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| FOK-PE | Children’s funds of knowledge: peers. [11] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| FOK-TE | Children’s funds of knowledge: technology e.g. iPads, iPhones, etc. [12] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| FOK-ID | Funds of identity. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |

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1. The education inspection framework sets out how schools in England will be inspected (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The school inspection handbook sets out how inspectors will evaluate a school and make judgements (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A school inspection update provides further information and guidance about how a school will be inspected (Ofsted, 2019, p. 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A publicly-funded school in England will get extra funding from the government to help improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged children (DfE, 2020d). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Introduced by the Childcare Act 2006, the Early Years Foundation Stage is a statutory curriculum for children from birth to 5-years-old (DfE, 2020b). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, with the latest revision in 2014, the National Curriculum is a statutory curriculum which sets out for schools in England which subjects should be taught to all 5 to 16-year-old children and the content of those subjects (DfE, 2013b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A state secondary school with admission determined by an attainment test (Ball, 2017, p. 75). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A state secondary school for children not selected for a grammar school (Ball, 2017, p. 75). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A state secondary school with no admission criteria (Ball, 2017, p. 78). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A technology is a policy framework which organises human resources into a network of power (Ball, 2003, p. 216). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. At ages 7 and 11 children have to complete standard attainment tests in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling (STA, 2019a). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The compare-school-performance service produces school performance tables from school performance measures, for example SATs (CSPS, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For teachers in England pay progression is linked to performance based on evidence: ‘an incentive for continuous improvement’ (DfE, 2013a, p. 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. An academy is a state funded independent school financed directly by central government instead of by a local authority (Rayner et al., 2018, p. 143). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Following an Ofsted inspection a school will be given an overall effectiveness grade of either ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 33). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Information and communication technology used to be a subject in the National Curriculum. In 2014, the Department for Education removed it from the National Curriculum and added computing (DfE, 2013b, p. 178). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The National Strategies were introduced in 1997 and were an attempt to improve standards in the teaching of core subjects at the national level (DfE, 2011, p.2). Core subjects included English and mathematics for primary schools, with the addition of science for secondary schools. In addition to the National Literacy Strategy for English and the National Numeracy Strategy for mathematics, both for 5 to 11-year-old children, the National Strategies programme included the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for 3 to 5-year-old children, and the Key Stage 3 (KS3) Strategy, for 11 to 14-year-old children (Ibid). The programme ended in 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. AST is a role introduced in 1998 to encourage excellent teachers to continue teaching (DfES, 2006, p. 1). To achieve AST status a teacher had to demonstrate that they met additional teacher standards (Ibid). Having been assessed to meet the standards an AST had to engage in outreach work, sharing skills and experience with other teachers and schools, and progressed to a higher pay scale (Ibid). The introduction of Specialist Leaders of Education (SLE) in 2014 superseded the AST role (DfE, 2014b). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. A Teaching School Director leads a Teaching School Alliance (TSA). A TSA is a group of local schools led by a teaching school. A teaching school coordinates the delivery of CPD, school-to-school support and ITT. To become a teaching school eligibility criteria need to be met, for example an overall effectiveness grade of ‘outstanding’ following an Ofsted inspection (DfE, 2018c). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The Reception Year is usually the start of compulsory full-time education; children have to start full-time education when they reach compulsory school age which is 5-years-old (DfE, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. In 2011 the government set up the Priority School Building Programme to rebuild schools in urgent need of repair (ESFA, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, with the latest revision in 2014, the National Curriculum is a statutory curriculum which sets out for schools in England which subjects should be taught to all 5 to 16-year-old children and the content of those subjects (DfE, 2013b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. In section 5.2 I explain why I prefer to use the label ‘diverse’ instead of ‘subordinate’ to describe these groups in a society. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The education inspection framework sets out how schools in England will be inspected (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The school inspection handbook sets out how inspectors will evaluate a school and make judgements (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. A school inspection update provides further information and guidance about how a school will be inspected (Ofsted, 2019, p. 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. For Ofsted ‘impact’ is the outcomes achieved by children (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Early years education is from birth to 5-years-old (DfE, 2020b). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. A maintained nursery school provides preschool education for 3 and 4-year-old children and is funded by a local authority (DfE, 2018a, p. 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Disadvantaged pupils are children supported by pupil premium funding. Pupil premium funding is extra funding from the government made available to publicly-funded schools in England to help improve the progress and attainment of children when their parents get paid benefits from the government, for example Income Support (DfE, 2020d). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Following an Ofsted inspection a school will be given an overall effectiveness grade of either ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 35, p. 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. For Ofsted educational ‘intent’ is the knowledge and skills set out in a school’s curriculum (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Sixth-form provision is from 16 to 18-years-old (DfE, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. At ages 7 and 11 children have to complete standard attainment tests in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling (STA, 2019a). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The compare-school-performance service produces school performance tables from school performance measures, for example SATs (CSPS, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Freire (1970) critiqued the banking method of education which he understood to be the ‘act of depositing’ knowledge into children when they start school because they have a deficit of knowledge (p. 53). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. With the onset of COVID-19 this mandate is now applicable to the home too. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. With the onset of COVID-19 the label of key worker would seem more appropriate for myself, and is a label which I would argue starts from a premise of equality. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. In March 2020 due to the onset of COVID-19 Ofsted indefinitely suspended all routine inspections of schools (Ofsted, 2020a). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. In 2007 the Department for Education and Skills changed its name to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and then in 2010 it changed its name to the Department for Education (DfE). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The education inspection framework sets out how schools in England will be inspected (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Introduced by the Childcare Act 2006, the Early Years Foundation Stage is a statutory curriculum for children from birth to 5-years-old (DfE, 2020b). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, with the latest revision in 2014, the National Curriculum is a statutory curriculum which sets out for schools in England which subjects should be taught to all 5 to 16-year-old children and the content of those subjects (DfE, 2013b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. The school inspection handbook sets out how inspectors will evaluate a school and make judgements (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. A school inspection update provides further information and guidance about how a school will be inspected (Ofsted, 2019, p. 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. A publicly-funded school in England will get extra funding from the government to help improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged children (DfE, 2020d). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Following an Ofsted inspection a school will be given an overall effectiveness grade of either ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 35, p. 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. A newly qualified teacher is a teacher who has just achieved qualified teacher status (QTS) and needs to complete an induction period (DfE, 2018b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The upper pay range is a pay range for teachers who can demonstrate that they are ‘highly competent’ and make a ‘substantial and sustained’ contribution to a school (DfE, 2020f, p. 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The early learning goals set out the expected level of development a child should have attained at the end of the Reception year (DfE, 2020b, p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. In June 2020 the government announced a catch up premium to support the catch up of children following school closure (DfE, 2020a). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. A state funded independent school financed directly by central government instead of by a local authority (Rayner et al., 2018, p. 143). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. In 2011 the government set up the Priority School Building Programme to rebuild schools in urgent need of repair (ESFA, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. A publicly-funded school in England will get extra funding from the government to help improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged children (DfE, 2020d). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Following an Ofsted inspection a school will be given an overall effectiveness grade of either ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 35, p. 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Due to the onset of COVID-19 standard attainment tests (SATs) for KS2 were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 (STA, 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Introduced by the Childcare Act 2006, the Early Years Foundation Stage is a statutory curriculum for children from birth to 5-years-old (DfE, 2020b). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, with the latest revision in 2014, the National Curriculum is a statutory curriculum which sets out for schools in England which subjects should be taught to all 5 to 16-year-old children and the content of those subjects (DfE, 2013b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. A newly qualified teacher is a teacher who has just achieved qualified teacher status (QTS) and needs to complete an induction period (DfE, 2018b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The upper pay range is a pay range for teachers who can demonstrate that they are ‘highly competent’ and make a ‘substantial and sustained’ contribution to a school (DfE, 2020f, p. 22). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. From the recommended list of ethnic groups used in the 2011 Census of England and Wales (GSS, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. The school inspection handbook sets out how inspectors will evaluate a school and make judgements (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. At the end of the EYFS a child’s attainment and readiness for Year 1 is assessed using early learning goals to determine if they have met the expected levels of development or if they have not reached the expected levels (DfE, 2020g, p. 19). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. The EYFS will be subject to reforms which become statutory in September 2021. A school had the option to adopt the reforms early and become an ‘early adopter’ school. For ‘early adopter’ schools the reforms then became statutory from September 2020 (DfE, 2020g, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. An Early Years Practitioner is a specialist practitioner that supports the educational, physical and social development of children up to the age of 5-years-old (DfE, 2021b). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Introduced by the Childcare Act 2006, the Early Years Foundation Stage is a statutory curriculum for children from birth to 5-years-old (DfE, 2020b). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, with the latest revision in 2014, the National Curriculum is a statutory curriculum which sets out for schools in England which subjects should be taught to all 5 to 16-year-old children and the content of those subjects (DfE, 2013b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. The education inspection framework sets out how schools in England will be inspected (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. The school inspection handbook sets out how inspectors will evaluate a school and make judgements (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. At ages 7 and 11 children have to complete standard attainment tests in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling (STA, 2019a). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. The education inspection framework sets out how schools in England will be inspected (Ofsted, 2021a, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The school inspection handbook sets out how inspectors will evaluate a school and make judgements (Ofsted, 2021d, p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. A school inspection update provides further information and guidance about how a school will be inspected (Ofsted, 2019, p. 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Introduced by the Childcare Act 2006, the Early Years Foundation Stage is a statutory curriculum for children from birth to 5-years-old (DfE, 2020b). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Introduced by the Education Reform Act 1988, with the latest revision in 2014, the National Curriculum is a statutory curriculum which sets out for schools in England which subjects should be taught to all 5 to 16-year-old children and the content of those subjects (DfE, 2013b, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. At ages 7 and 11 children have to complete standard attainment tests in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling (STA, 2019a). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
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