A critical evaluation of 'Mantle of the Expert' as a teaching and learning approach, based on pupil and practitioner opinion.

Introduction:

This small scale research is based in a school of fewer than 100 pupils, ranging from Reception to Year Six. While situated in a reasonably affluent village, the school population is drawn from local villages and towns and is of varied socio-economic circumstance, many living in rented or tied cottages. We are seen as a caring and supportive school which is "*…very successful in enabling its pupils to develop as mature, caring individuals with very good behaviour and attitudes to learning.*" (OFSTED 2001:1)

The teaching staff had been very stable with the head and deputy serving 20 and 15 years respectively. I was the most recent staff member during this period of development but have been in my current post since 1999. This low staff turnover lead to a strong, forward thinking team where leadership was distributed, open to new methods of teaching and striving to improve their practise with the intention of developing motivated, life-long learners.

Our journey into using 'Mantle of the Expert' began after the 2001 OFSTED inspection, where learning and teaching had been judged to be *'overall good'.* With the intention of moving learning throughout the school to very good and outstanding, we were encouraged to make the curriculum our own by making cross-curricular links. The learning and teaching in the Foundation Stage had been judged to be excellent or very good in all lessons so our move the leadership team investigated the factors that made foundation practice so effective. We looked closely at which aspects differed slightly or significantly between the foundation class and the rest of the school. This data was gathered through discussion with the teacher involved, lesson observation and analysis of practice. The following aspects were highlighted:

1. A focus on learning through play and first hand experiences
2. Staff commitment to reflective teaching and professional development
3. Time to work at depth rather than 'coverage'
4. Motivating curriculum, relevant to the 21st Century, incorporating pupil voice
5. Opportunity for pupil involvement in reflecting on their learning

The second step was to begin teaching literacy through cross-curricular units and the implementation of a rigorous assessment for learning strategy, in the form of 'Target Tracker'.[1] This was the foundation for our adoption of this new innovative curriculum.

We investigated models of leading practice given by schools such as Tuckswood First, who had gone through a long process from what the head described a '*crisis*' period, (Malcom *et al* 2005) through the use of Philosophy for Children, co-operative games, an inquiry based curriculum and MoE[2], to become a school where "*There are many strengths in the teaching but the one that has made the most impact on children's learning is the willingness of staff to use innovative methods that have been proved to work well for these children.*" (OFSTED 2004) Inspectors continued to describe Tuckswood as being outstanding and innovative in the educational experience they offered children.

As a result of our investigations, we began working with Luke Abbott, Lead Senior Advisor for the School Improvement and Advisory Service, who had worked with both Tuckswood and trained with Dorothy Heathcote in her 'MoE' contextual drama approach. This whole school development began slowly, but after four years the method is firmly embedded and both staff and pupils are so highly motivated and convinced of the effectiveness of this learning approach that we have become the hub school in a Primary Learning Network. This is involving us in sharing good practice with other schools, leading workshops at national conferences, children speaking to groups of interested

[1] Target Tracker: a computer based programme which tracks individual pupil targets, progress and results, giving a clear picture of next steps for learning.

[2] Mantle of the Expert

teachers and the opportunity to participate in research projects. It also gives pportunity to continue our learning as teachers through critical reflection on our practice, because according to Brookfield (1995), this informs our actions by developing a rationale for practice. Our principal aim for critical reflection is to refine and develop our teaching methods to meet the needs of our children in preparing them for the constantly changing world of the 21st Century.

In our most recent OFSTED report, the school was praised for very good learning throughout the whole school, highly motivated pupils and the development of thinking skills. We were recommended for introducing "*…new ways of teaching and learning, which focus on pupils learning through enquiry whilst studying themes across a range of subjects.*" (OFSTED 2005:3) They determined that "*The result is a programme of very interesting learning experiences, which effectively motivate pupils to become enthusiastic learners.*" (OFSTED 2005:4)

Because pupil voice has always been at the centre of our development and operation as a school, in aspects such as Governing Body Health and Safety Committees, School Council, Healthy School Committees and quite recently playing an active role in interviewing a new head teacher, pupil perception of the method makes up an essential component of this work. The purpose of this paper is to examine 'MoE' through a variety of *'lenses'*, (Brookfield 1995) that of the experienced teacher or 'colleague experience', pupil participants in the method, or 'student's eyes', and to critically evaluate it against current educational theory which Brookfield would call the lens of theoretical literature. This will hopefully begin to give us a developing picture of 'MoE' as a teaching and learning method.

Literature Review:

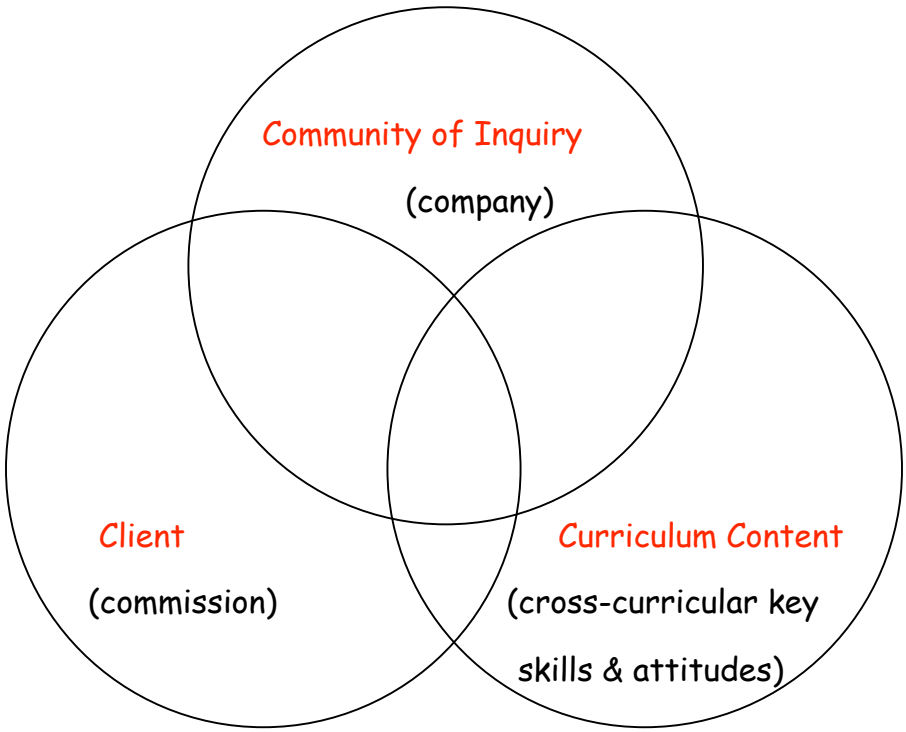
Bolton (1995) stated in his conclusion that:

"I am now convinced that mantle of the expert is the most sophisticated and enlightened approach to education to have been devised and that the future generations will benefit from its philosophy and practice." (Bolton *et al* 1995:192)

I must openly state that, although I am only beginning to understand the complexities of this method, I am of a similar opinion to Bolton. While I can not give a clear and detailed explanation of 'MoE' within the scope of this research, the literature review is an opportunity to critically test and evaluate our joint belief in 'MoE' against current educational theory.

'MoE' is a revolutionary learning & teaching approach that allows teachers to present a seamless and holistic curriculum, with explicit connections between threads of learning. Learning takes place within a relevant and motivating enterprise (challenge or commission) – always creating something new to the children. It is hung on the framework of drama conventions and allows great opportunity for imaginative speaking & listening.

<u>The three circles in which 'Mantle of the Expert' operates:</u>



This approach marries both, the community of inquiry, or company established by the learners, the needs of a client who has delivered the commission or enterprise, and the curriculum content which the teacher is planning to cover.

It is a fluid and ever changing approach as the focus or further episodes evolves from pupil interest, or teacher engineered need to cover particular skills or attitudes.

Episodes have a relevant, motivating purpose and are based in reality. They give children ownership of their work, an opportunity to make decisions and engage in activities which are found in the 'adult' world and seldom experienced within a standard curriculum. This approach provides a safe environment in which to take risks and make mistakes which might have far-reaching effects in the real world.

The key concepts I have identified, which begin to define 'MoE' as an approach are:

1. The development of a community of inquiry.
2. The acquisition and application of skills for life, relevant to the 21st century.
3. Within the frame of role-play, episodes and activities based on relevant problems which are perceived as 'real' by the community, cross-curricular and highlight clear links between threads of learning.

<u>The development of a community of inquiry:</u>

O'Neil, (Bolton et al 1995: vii - x), states that 'MoE' works most efficiently within a collaborative community as it anticipates the 21st century challenges of a real world, requiring the acquisition and application of the skills of questioning, negotiating, compromise, taking responsibility, cooperation and collaboration. These skills are all utilized by pupils in what she called the *'service'* of something greater than themselves - the community.

Guy Claxton (1999:288-289) details the work of Brown, who focussed her research on children's learning communities of inquiry. He paraphrases her detailed definition, identifying their nature and strength.

"Communities of inquiry are places that emphasise the active strategic nature of learning, where children routinely engage in a search for understanding and effort after meaning and in which they develop insight into their own strengths and weaknesses and access to their own repertoires of strategies for learning…And in communities of inquiry, members are critically dependent on each other, expertise is deliberately distributed, no one is an island; no one knows it all; collaborative learning is necessary for survival. This interdependence promotes an atmosphere of joint responsibility, mutual respect, and a sense of personal and group identity."

I see the strong emphasis on learning to learn within the community as one of its strengths but we will deal with the meta-cognitive aspects within the section of skills for the 21st century.

Fisher (2005) sees communities of inquiry as an opportunity to solve problems by utilizing the powerful tool of discussion. According to Wittgenstein, the limits of your language are the limits of your world, and I believe the community of inquiry is a chance to model and give children opportunity to apply the language of critical thinking and opinion justification, which is required in philosophy. This need not take place in what I see as the contrived manner advocated by both Lipman (1980, 2003) and Fisher (1996, 1997, 2005) with set lessons, but incidentally as the occasion arises once the initial skills are established. For this approach to P4C[3] to be effective, the teacher must watch for moral or social issues as they arise from within the frame[4], such as the wondering question of a student, *'Why were slaves always black?'* which led to a lively class discussion about the validity and moral correctness of determining the value of a people by the perceived level of development of their culture against that of our own, or just that they couldn't speak English!

[3] P4C = Philosophy for children

[4] For us the community, enterprise and specific principles in a Months of the Forest unit of work:

I have identified that communities of inquiry are based on three key principles which take both time and effort to develop.

A. A class ethos of risk-taking, security and sense of belonging
B. The social aspect of learning through collaboration to construct knowledge
C. Teacher as facilitator and co-creator of knowledge

A class ethos of risk-taking, security and sense of belonging:

In discussing powerful learning environments such as the community of inquiry, Fisher believes they feature specific characteristics such as cohesion, a sense of belonging and shared purpose but they require loyalty, trust and support. There is also a need for the group to be dynamic, with high expectations and strong communication skills. Fisher suggests that they are all about constructing shared knowledge. (Fisher 2005)

I believe that this supportive environment is also essential for the teacher to feel able to take risks as a co-learner with the children. The element of risk taking is a key aspect for the teacher using 'MoE', as teachers are moving away from the traditional 'subject boxes' of the curriculum and handing over elements of control to the community or pupils. (Fisher 2005, Rogers et al 1994, Lipman 2003, Craft 2005, Bolton et al 1999, Freire 1970) We will deal with this concept in more detail later.

The ethos of a community which is built on tolerance, respect, valuing all ideas, caring for the conventions of collaborative inquiry and listening to alternative points of view, provides a suitable environment in which to deal with challenging ethical questions and concepts such as good and bad, fairness, rules, friendship and betrayal. As the DfES document *Excellence and Enjoyment* suggests, pupils need to feel *"safe, settled, valued"* and have a sense of *"belonging"* for optimal learning to take place. (DfES 2004:49) This ethos of a class or school is the prerequisite before any community of inquiry can be established, as it allows the participants to take risks. A community's ethos protects what furthers its beliefs and ours is that children are central to learning, their ideas are of value and that since they are going to make all the decisions in the future, they

need opportunity to practise now when there are very few costs for failure. (Bolton et al 1995) Dewey also described this back in 1921, when he talked of education not being *'knowledge centred'* but *'child centred'.*

The social aspect of learning through collaboration to construct knowledge:

Educational theorists have much to say on the point of learning being social in nature. Wood (1998) summarises some of these views: Brunner suggested that social experience and culture play a main role in development. Although Piaget believed there are stages of optimal learning readiness, he also believed that social interaction and communication play a formative role in learning. He promoted active learning with problem solving at its heart as he thought that knowledge was a product of *'joint construction'.* The belief that children construct their own knowledge is a key point supporting the concept of a social based collaborative learning community such as MoE. Vygotsky believed that language and communication is the core of intellectual and personal development. He stated that knowledge is constructed by interactions in society or communities of peers and that all thought is social in nature. Vygotsky was perhaps best known for his concept of the *'zone of proximal development'*, which is the belief that what we can achieve in a group is greater than what can be achieved alone. He believed that skills and knowledge could be applied and that what we could do in a group today, we can do alone tomorrow. This is a form of scaffolding that is applied within the community, where the teacher or more often an able peer supports the learning of others. (Vygotsky 1986, Fisher & Williams 2004)

The social aspect of learning makes use of what Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins (2002:30) would call *'synergy',* the energy created when groups of people work together, combining their strengths and ideas. 'MoE', in its use of communities of inquiry, would fit into the social family model of learning, where the collective energy of the group is greater than the individual parts. It also meets the criterion of learning taking place through social dialogue. Hopkins et al (2002) suggest that this social model of learning promotes

positive energy through a sense of connection, greater motivation, positive feeling through cooperation, increased self-esteem and developed social skills.

Peer collaboration forms the heart of MoE and is described by Hertz-Lazarowitz & Miller (1992:25-28) as children working closely together at all stages, resulting in equal ownership and equality. It is another example of the group providing the stimulus for greater quality work. "*The students provide an audience for one another, generate details, locate promising topics, and provide each other with moral support.*" (Hertz-Lazarowitz et al 1992:61-74)

This is a clear description of MoE at work, where the company or community has a commission from the client, for which they have agreed collective responsibility. Work is shared amongst smaller groups of children who take responsibility for aspects of the commission until the task is completed by the whole community. The children work in separate groups which are dependent on one another to complete the task, whilst knowledge is constructed and sought together. Jerome Brunner suggests that a curriculum is most effective when it is *'participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative and given over to constructing meanings rather than receiving them".* (Brunner cited in Haynes 2002 :47) This type of learning involves the skills of listening to different opinions, challenging ideas, looking for evidence, drawing inferences and indulging in critical thinking. The construction of knowledge requires continual and prolonged dialogue and while we can be trapped into focussing on the end product as the evidence of learning having taken place, Dewey lamented that the major mistake of education in the past has been to neglect the process. (Lipman 2003:20)

The strength of this communal approach is that the expertise and responsibility is constantly changing within the group, giving children of lesser academic ability opportunity to showcase their strengths. Hertz-Lazarowitz et al (1992) continues to describe collaborative learning as an absence of competition, because while it fosters high levels of engagement; it destroys the co-operative climate of the community, which needs to be protected at all costs.

Teacher as facilitator and co-creator of knowledge:

One of the greatest challenges to the teacher contemplating using MoE as an approach is the relinquishing of power within the classroom. Gone is the age-old view that children are vessels to be filled with knowledge or as Paulo Friere (1970:53) calls it *'banking education'*. Rather, in agreement with Piaget's view, pupils are co-constructing knowledge as a community with the teacher. Freire sees the community as a chance for all involved to be both teacher and learner at the same time and the purpose of learning as becoming a critical thinker, which involves asking difficult questions. "*The students - no longer docile listeners - are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher." (Freire 1970:62)*

Lipman (2003) describes the critically reflective paradigm of teaching as one based within a community of inquiry, where children are stirred to think by problematic but linked knowledge, by a teacher who as seen as *'fallible'*. That is the key. The teacher is no longer the fount of all knowledge but a co-learner with the children. (Craft 2005)

Within MoE, Bolton and Heathcote (1995) see this taking place when the teacher steps into 'role' within the imaginary world of drama conventions[5]. They suggest that this initially disturbs children into taking responsibility of the situation until they become more familiar with taking greater control of their own learning. Bolton et al (1999:124) suggest that the total power shift changes the atmosphere within the community forever, as "*… 'colleagueness', once shared, can never be entirely lost."*

The word 'If' also plays a prominent role in the questioning which encourages this shift of power, such as "Suppose that…, If we could…, If people would let us…., I bet if we tried hard we could…." The teacher also uses the tools of withholding information and provocation to stimulate critical thought and discussion. (de Bono 2000) There are multiple roles for the teacher to manage within MoE, as the *'expert'* scaffolding learning outside the frame, as a *'facilitator'* who manages, questions and encourages collaboration

[5] Appendix 1

while in 'role' within the frame and lastly, as a *'participant in role'* who challenges, widens horizons and introduces the tensions of provocation - often as 'Devil's Advocate'.

The acquisition and application of skills for life, relevant to the 21st century:

In their research into the needs of today's companies, Dryden and Vos (2001:65) identify that "*The educational need is for thinking and conceptual skills, risk-taking, experimenting, and openness to change and opportunity.*" This involves focussing on the skills for life which will enable children to become lifelong learners, who have the skills to become economically successful in the adult world or have *'economic wellbeing'*.[6] (DfES 2003:7)

We live in a constantly changing, complex and socially challenging world where you can no longer expect to have one job for life. The most valuable skill our children can learn, to help them function as critical and creative citizens of society, is the ability to both think critically and apply their skills to new situations.

The National Curriculum identifies key and thinking skills as the cross-curricular focus for all learning, some of which include *learning how to learn, problem solving, social skills, communication, use if ICT, information processing, enquiry, reasoning, creative thinking and evaluation.* (DfES 1999) I believe that 'MoE' provides a safe social environment in which to acquire and apply these skills, some of which are utilized within the imaginary world of drama conventions, where pupils have access to experiences and situations normally unavailable within the confines of the average classroom and standard curriculum.

It is just three of these skills I want to look at more closely within the confines of this literature review, creativity, meta-cognition and critical thinking.

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6 Economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life. *Every Child Matters*

Creativity:

According to Fisher and Williams (2004:8) "*… creativity can be seen as a property of people (who we are), processes (what we do) or products (what we make).*" It is obvious to see that this definition fits within the concept of a community of inquiry. Creativity ties directly in with meta-cognition and critical thinking skills, as Fisher *ibid* suggest it is developed when unusual and challenging questions are used, connections between learning are made, visual, kinaesthetic & auditory representations are made and the consequences & results are critically evaluated. The only other aspect they specify as essential in the development of creativity is that of imagination. "*… imagination is the capacity to conceive possible (or impossible) worlds that lie beyond this time and place.*" (2004:9) Here is a clear link to the MoE method of moving into 'role' and using the imagination to access worlds and situations unavailable to the standard curriculum.

Fisher suggests that the keys to creativity are motivation through having a worthwhile purpose, collaboration, inspiration and gestation, or the time to allow for what Claxton (1999) calls *'soft thinking'*. This time, unobtainable within the overfull 'subject box' curriculum is freed up when a cross-curricular approach is taken.

Metacognition:

In their 13 steps needed for a 21st century learning society, Dryden & Vos (2001:87) suggest that "*The three main subjects taught at school*" should be "*learning how to learn, learning how to think and learning how to become a self-acting manager of your own future".* Metacognition can be defined as '*leaning how to learn*' and an effective learner must have the ability to develop their own goals, plan how to achieve them and monitor their own learning. These skills must be modelled before they can be acquired as there is a whole new vocabulary to be used when talking about learning. (NSIN 2002:1-8) O'Neil suggests that through using 'MoE' children do become experts. "*They become experts at leaning.*" (Bolton et al 1995:ix) This includes understanding and planning to allow for their own particular learning styles and though sometimes controversial, multiple intelligences. (Smith 1996, Gardner 1999) MoE clearly enhances

the use of *interpersonal intelligence*, that of social awareness and allows for the use of *intra-personal intelligence*, that of understanding self and learning.

Claxton (1999:15-58) focuses on three key skills that lifelong learners need to develop - *resilience, resourcefulness* and *reflection*. That is the ability to keep going when it gets tough, 'know what to do when you don't know what to do', and to reflect on your learning, the key aspect of metacognition.

Thinking skills:

" *… before the century is out, no curriculum will be regarded as acceptable unless it can be shown to make a contribution to the teaching of thinking."* (Nisbet, 1993 cited in McGuiness 1999) This requires time to be given to thinking, talking about the thinking process and reflection on learning, all within a powerful learning environment. Fisher suggests that thinking skills require explicit teaching, but are best *'infused'* across the curriculum through active learning situations which extend pupils higher order thinking skills such as analysis (pulling ideas to pieces), synthesis (creating something new) and evaluation (evaluating knowledge). (Fisher 2005:1)

In revision the National Curriculum for 2000, one of the main aims was to deal with the spiritual, moral, cultural and cultural development of the pupil, in preparation for adult life.

"the school curriculum should pass on enduring values, develop pupils' integrity and autonomy and help them to be responsible and caring citizens capable of contributing to the development of a just society … promote equal opportunity and enable pupils to challenge discrimination and stereotyping." (DfES 2000:11) This fits in with Friere's view that pupils should be critically aware of their world, reflect on the injustices within it and act upon them. He called this *praxis* and believed that *"… apart from inquiry, apart from praxis, individuals cannot be truly human."* (Friere 1970:53) The whole purpose of MoE is to look carefully at how we interact socially, critically discuss ethical issues and take action to improve our wider community.

Within the frame of role-play, episodes and activities are based on relevant problems, perceived as 'real' by the community, cross-curricular and highlight clear links between learning:

Many documents and theorists state that all learning should keep pupils at the centre "*… the curriculum should build on pupils' strengths, interests and experiences…"* (DfES 2000:11) MoE uses pupil interest and knowledge as a foundation on which to build the work and their interests determine its direction.

Friere and Rogers (Rogers & Freiberg 1994) suggest that pupil motivation improves when tasks are relevant or seem real. *"As the children are posed problems which relate to themselves in the world, they become more challenged and motivated and show greater commitment." (Freire 1970:62)* The imaginary aspect of MoE allows greater scope for a range of 'true to life' adult problems to be dealt with within the classroom. Rogers continues by stating the pupils must be confronted with problems, issues and difficulties which will lead them to becoming responsible citizens. Business consultant Handy wrote of an ideal school which prepared children for the future:

"*The upside-down school would make study more like work, based on real problems to be solved or real tasks to be done, in groups of mixed ages and different types of ability, all of them useful. Not only would people learn more in such a school, because they would see the point and purpose of what they were doing, but it would give them a better idea of the world they would be entering."* (Handy 1989 cited in Dryden et al 2001)

The other issue is that of making clear connections between strands of learning. "*Learning is most likely to be enhanced when the links are clear and recognisable to the children."* (DfES 2004:29) The commission at the centre of MoE provides the focus and purpose for all learning; it links all learning across the curriculum to the task. It is also what Rogers calls '*just in time learning*' , (Rogers et al 1994) the pupils identify their learning needs as they become highlighted within the process of completing the commission.

The key issues drawn from this literature review are that effective learning takes place in a community of inquiry, where pupils take increasing control over their learning as they develop key skills for life. Learning is social, based in dialogue and is a matter of co-constructing knowledge. Learning activities stem from the prior knowledge and interests of pupils. This is an exact description of the learning method 'Mantle of the Expert'.

Aims of Research and Research Questions:

The aims of my research are to examine Dorothy Heathcote's 'MoE' contextual drama approach as a teaching and learning method through Brookfield's (ibid) lenses, of experienced 'MoE' practitioner, experienced child participant and current educational literature. The purpose of this scrutiny comes from being critically reflective as a school and since Bell (1999:13) suggests, a case study often identifies common problems or themes within establishments, these can become the focus for further school improvement.

The key questions I am hoping to address are listed below:

1. What perceptions do both experienced teachers and pupil participators in 'MoE' have of it as a teaching and learning method?
2. How do both these perceptions of 'MoE' and the method itself compare to current educational theory?
3. What, if any, implications does this have for schools and teachers who want to use 'MoE' as a teaching and learning method?

Methodology:

This piece of research is an evaluative case study, (Stake 1995) following the interpretive approach as a research methodology. It is qualitative and interpretive in nature, ethnographic in design as it focuses on the perceptions and opinions of the

participants in relation to current educational theory. The data collection method had to reflect the focus and aims of this research as it is about people, their perceptions and attitudes.

Data Collection Tools:

A variety of data collection methods were considered for this investigation and the need to identify the most effective way to gather the information required was carefully considered. The semi-structured interview (Cohen & Manion et al. 2000:273) was chosen as the data collection method because it gives the researcher opportunity to delve deeper into the responses of the interviewee.

"A major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which a questionnaire can never so. The way in which a response is made can provide information that a written response would conceal." (Bell 1993:91)

Issues:

The interviewees were easily accessible and ethical issues involved in setting up and carrying out the research were easily addressed. Permission to carry out the investigation was gained from the headteacher in the very initial stages of the planning. (Bell 1987)

Informed consent was obtained from both pupil and parent with a permission slip which accompanied an explanation of the research task and a record of the initial questions I intended to ask. Teacher practitioner consent was gained through signature of the question sheet and presence at the actual interview. All parties involved were informed of the protection to be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

"All social research gives rise to a range of ethical issues around privacy, informed consent, anonymity, secrecy, being truthful and the desirability of the research." (Blaxter et al 2001:158)

Sample:

This is an intrinsic case study utilizing interviews with a representative sample of Year Five and Six children in two videoed interview groups. The sample included two children each of higher, middle and lower ability, along with SEN[7] children of balanced year group and gender, making a total of eight children in the focus group. The volunteer children selected have all experienced 'Mantle of the Expert' as a teaching and learning method for a minimum of two years, while two have also been involved in sharing their knowledge and experience of this method with groups of interested teachers, Headteachers and educational advisors.[8]

Pupil interviews were carried out in two gender and ability mixed groups whilst being videoed by the interviewer, their current teacher. The children were excited about helping with the research and appeared confident and comfortable within the school setting. Each student group interview was allotted approximately 30 minutes, though there was flexibility for extension as the group approach involved an element of dialogue and discussion between participants.

Of the teachers in the interview sample, they were all experienced practitioners from within the school, who have been working with this method for range of 1 - 3 years. They have all been part of the development process within the school, playing an active role in leadership, training, educational reading and critical reflection of the MoE method. The sample consisted of four female staff members who have experience between 10 and 20 years and include the head-teacher, deputy head and two classroom practitioners. These individual interviews were allocated up to one hour each though tended to take approximately 40 minutes.

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[7] SEN: Special Educational Needs

[8] 2004 A delegation of ten head-teachers, lead-teachers and educational advisors from Newcastle observed the class after which the children shared their understanding of the method in the form of a Power Point and answered questions.

2005 Two Year 5 girls accompanied me to a meeting with teachers to share our work on Tudors, a Mantle of the

All participants were thanked at the completion of interviews. The children were interested in finding out the key themes rising from the research whilst the practitioners showed interest in reading the completed research paper.

While recently the teaching staff has had a 66% turnover, due to retirement and promotion, the original staff members who helped develop the method within our school have formed the practitioner sample.

Justification:

In conducting the interviews truth, reliability, objectivity and validity were considered. I recognise that, due to the time constraints, this research is very small scale as it only represents a snap shot from within one school and that the pupil perceptions were gathered from within only one class. The aim however is for robust internal validity as since this is a case study, I am not concerned with significant external or generalisable validity. However, I aim to have made the research as valid as possible by choosing the pupils who have had most exposure to the method and have the greatest ability to express their opinions.

Year Five and Six children were singled out over and above children further down the school as I deemed them more able to articulate their thoughts, able to relate and evaluate their learning experience to knowledge of their learning styles and preferences. (Smith 1996, Gardner 1999) This is because they have been taught to and had opportunity to use the relevant language with which to explain their thought processes, opinions and evaluate their learning. I believe the older children also have a clearer understanding of the constraints on teachers along with the skills and attitudes that would be useful to them as independent and motivated life-long learners in an unpredictable 21st Century. (Dryden et al 2001)

The practitioner sample also creates a balance, covering both leadership and general teachers from Reception through to Year Six.

In research all possible limitations such as bias have to be acknowledged and all steps taken to minimise them. All attention was given to accurately recording the exact response of the practitioner and student. At all times, the interviewer confirmed the response before recording to clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings. In the case of the students, these responses were recorded on video, while the practitioner interviews were recorded directly onto the computer.

Another possible area which could invalidate the research is the interviewer's over emphasis of particular points thus prompting the participants to give a biased response. Children's responses in particular might be affected by the interviewer. This is called reactivity and can be described as the behaviour of research participants being distorted by the interviewer's position of control or familiarity with the interview group. (Cohen et al, 2000:156) As I am both the interviewer and the class teacher there is a certain amount of reactivity to be expected though our favoured way of working within the class is within a learning community which, might limit the adverse effect.
The culture of our classroom is one of constant evaluation of learning and looking for ways to improve learning for both teacher and pupil. Pupils are constantly confronted with a teacher who seeks to improve and values honest pupil opinion. At the beginning of the interviews, this attitude was emphasised and their responses to question three[9] lead me to believe that they felt confident enough to give their own opinions.

<u>Results & Implications:</u>

In defining MoE as an approach, the key point from both teachers and pupils was that it is motivating, exciting and fun.

"You are having so much fun that it doesn't feel like you're learning at the same time."

The children thought this was due to their having opportunity to *do* things rather than just be *told* and that they had an element of control or choice within the approach.

[9] *Would you/how would you change Mantle of the Expert to make it a better way to learn?*

"You get to pick what you are going to do within the task, something you are interested in."

The teachers agreed on this score but also recognised MoE as an ideal way to address the personalised learning agenda, pupil voice and they suggested that it took prior learning into account as required by the National Curriculum. (DfES 2000)

"It values and takes account of their prior learning, giving them time and opportunity to communicate it."

The second key point highlighted was that all of the teachers interviewed mentioned that MoE

"… promotes key skills and thinking skills over content."

The pupils were clear in that it both promoted 'skills for life' and helped you gain confidence to take risks. This fits well with Dryden and Vos' (2001:65) view that these children's future employers will be looking for people who are confident at taking risks and experimenting.

"This learning prepares you for when you are older and get a job as it helps you know what is expected."

"It prepares you for when you leave school because you are practising social skills when you work in the company."

One of the most important of the key skills the teachers identified was that of metacognition. They identified that pupils …

"…no longer look at the product as the only evidence of learning. They value the process, the thinking and what they have learned along the way. They are much more effective at evaluating their learning processes."

This would have pleased Dewey who valued the learning gained through the process rather than only focussing on the end product. (Lipman 2003:20)

Both teachers and pupils were clear in the fact that MoE is firmly founded within a community of inquiry. The children were excited by the opportunity to work in groups and recognised that they all supported and encouraged one another. They also identified the concept presented by Vygotsky,

"Working in a group you can do better work than by yourself."

The pupils also stumbled across the concept that many educationalists promoted - the co-construction of knowledge. (Claxton 1999, Lipman 1980, 2003, Fisher 2005, Freire 1970)

"In our groups we become the teachers, we are in charge."

The learning within this community was both controlled by the pupils, purposeful and what Rogers would call *'just in time learning'*, (Rogers et al 1994) as it was driven by need.

"Because I was making something, I wanted to find more information about it."

There are major implications for any school or teacher brave enough to use MoE as a teaching and learning approach. According to all of the teachers interviewed, before any community of inquiry can be established, the school has to have reached a certain point in its development. It has to have:

"A culture of trust and respect, of staff working together in pursuit of effective learning strategies, of high priority for CPD[10] and everybody being a learner within the community. Staff must model what they expect in the class, within the school community."

The development of this school 'ethos' is essential for both staff and pupils to have a sense of *"belonging"*, to feel *"safe, settled,* and *valued"* enough to take risks with their joint teaching and learning. (DfES 2004:49) MoE could be seen by some as a threatening approach which pushes the boundaries, puts the pupil centre of learning and expects teachers to step into 'role' at the drop of a hat. But with the support of a

[10] Continuing professional development

wider school community, teachers can also take risks, modelling their very expectations to the class.

The second implication for teachers is life changing.

"It is being prepared to give away the power and not believe that the teacher is the font of all knowledge." (Freire 1970, DfES 2004, Rogers1994) Rogers advocated this concept when talking about personalised learning, where he suggested the teacher act as facilitator, while Heathcote (Bolton et al 1995) went a step further by suggesting the teacher, through role play, should also become a co-participator in learning. (Bolton 1995) Rogers believed that there are four clear threats to the development of a pupil centred approach such as MoE, which include: teacher fear of power sharing, the risk of trusting teacher/pupils, student reliance on direction and finally, the perceived threat to school organisation and management systems. (Rogers 1994:213)

Finally, all of the four experienced teachers interviewed identified that using MoE effectively required a practitioner who is:

"…secure in the knowledge of how children learn, flexible and able to think on their feet. They have to be critically reflective of their own teaching and maintain rigorous assessment for learning."

They were keen to point out that as this method gave opportunity to scaffold individual learning, it was built on:

"A deep understanding of the way children learn and the teacher awareness of how to move children through the zones of proximal development." (Vygotsky 1986, Fisher & Williams 2004)

Evaluation of Research Process:

This was a very small scale case study with a limited number of participants. Triangulation using several data collection methods to investigate the research questions would have improved the validity of the enquiry, given some external validity to the limited conclusions and also provided opportunity to extend the research. This

small scale research had construct validity in that it provided an appropriate method to investigate the intended purpose. (Robson 1993:69, Cohen et al 2000:125) An improvement to this research design would be to gather pupil opinion from a wider range within the school, covering both juniors and infants, with the questions adjusted according to age.

One difficulty with the design of this research project was that it gathered too much information, some of which was not relevant to the research question. On repeat, I would initially trial the questions, making adjustments so they gathered only information directly relating to the research question.

The interviews were carried out in a relaxed manner and the structure of the questions enabled me to confidently follow the plan while also taking time to discuss and clarify points of confusion or interest. One member of the adult sample did not have access to the questions prior to the interview process and it can be seen in the responses that she found it more difficult to express thoughts in concise but detailed manner. To rectify this difficulty, I would ensure that all participants had access to the questions prior to the interviews.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Although of a very small scale, the literature review balanced with pupil and practitioner perception suggests that MoE fits within the social family of learning. Knowledge is co-constructed within a community of inquiry who are engaged in completing imaginary commissions, which allow them to acquire and apply key skills for life. It is a highly motivating way of leaning which builds on the prior knowledge and interests of the pupil. Moe also encourages pupils to recognise and begin to take control over their own learning.

Whether or not you choose to engage in Mantle of the Expert as an innovative approach to learning, I have two recommendations for teachers and schools who want to build powerful learning environments:

1. Within your school, build strong effective learning communities which co-construct knowledge through dialogue. Develop an 'ethos' which puts children, their views and needs at the centre of learning.
2. As practitioner, become more critically reflective of your practices by utilizing Brookfields (1995) lenses of 'student eyes' or pupil voice (as they take more control of their own learning), the wider school learning community including colleagues, alongside current educational literature, to continue your quest for life-long learning.

Reflection:

This has been a personal journey of reflection and critical analysis of an approach that I am motivated and excited by. I have found it both challenging and very enjoyable to extend my reading on the subject during the literature review and have a long list of references I intend to follow up.

I realise that while my personal belief in MoE as a learning method has been supported, empirical evidence needs to be gathered regarding its effectiveness. This would be a challenging task that might include observations of time spent on-task, comparisons between class' SAT results or pre-post test results of a topic. There are a number of difficulties inherent in testing or measuring the acquisition of key, social and thinking skills, because as they develop learners for life, obviously a lifetime of evidence needs to be gathered for their acquisition to be proved.

The next step which is essential before other teachers can adopt this way of teaching and learning, is to develop clear but simple instructions on how MoE can be effectively introduced and planned for within the classroom.

DRAMA CONVENTIONS

ICONIC: icons, symbols, images, drawings, film

SYMBOLIC: language, writing, verbal, charts, maps, maths, music, dance - representing thoughts through language

ENACTIVE/EXPRESSIVE: Physical action

1 Role actually present, naturalistic, yet significantly behaving, giving and accepting responses.	2 The role actually present, except framed as a film. That is, people have permission to stare but not intrude. 'Film' can be stopped and re-started or re-run.	3 The role present as in 'effigy'. Can be talked about, walked around and even sculpted afresh if so framed.	4 The role present as in 'effigy', but with the convention that effigy can be brought into life-like responses and then returned to effigy.
5 The role as portrait of person. Not three dimensional, but in all other ways the same as effigy.	6 The role as portrait or effigy activated to hear what the class is saying. This causes selective language.	7 The role as a portrait or effigy, but activated to speak only and not be capable of movement.	8 The role depicted in picture: removed from actual life, as in a slide of a role, a painting, a photograph or drawing. This includes those made by the class, as well as prepared depictions.
9 A drawing seen in the making, or someone important to the action, as on a blackboard.	10 Stylised depiction of someone e.g. identikit picture made by the class in frame - as detectives.	11 Stylised depiction of someone except made beforehand, so it is 'fait accompli'.	12 Life sized (cardboard) model with clothing (real) or role e.g. framed as if in a museum or sale rooms. 'This is the dress worn by Florence Nightingale when she met Queen Victoria after Scutari'.
13 Life sized model, except the class is dressing the model so as to see 'how it was' on the day when these events happened.	14 Clothing of person cast off in disarray e.g. remains of a tramp's presence, or a murderer and escape as in a highwayman situation.	15 Objects to represent a person's interests. Works as above, but more closely can indicate concerns rather than appearance e.g. a ring of Borgia.	16 An account of a person by another person in a naturalistic fashion e.g. 'Well, when I last saw him, he seemed alright. I never dreamed anything was wrong'.
17 An account of a person written as if from that person, but read by someone else e.g. a diary entry or letter.	18 An account written by a person who now reads it to others e.g. a policeman giving evidence or a confession. The role is present in this case but in contact through their writing as an author might well be.	19 An account written by someone, of someone else and read by yet another.	20 Story told of another, in order to bring that person close to the action, e.g. 'I saw him open a safe once. It was an incredible performance. I'm not sure if he would assist us though'.
21 A report of an event by formalised by authority or ritual. E.g. an account of bravery in battle on the occasion of presenting posthumous medals.	22 A letter read in the voice of the writer. This is an emanation of a specific presence, not just any voice communicating the words.	23 A letter read in the voice of the writer, but the letter is read by another with no attempt to portray the person who wrote it, but still expressing feeling.	24 Letter read without feeling e.g. as evidence or accusation in a formal situation.
25 Voice of a person overheard talking to another - informal language i.e. naturalistic tone.	26 Voice of a person overheard talking to another, but in formal language.	27 A conversation overheard (persons not seen). Deliberate eavesdropping as in spying.	28 Report of a conversation, written and spoken by another.
29 Reported conversation with two people reading the respective 'parts'.	30 Private readings of conversations, reported as overheard.	31 The finding of a cryptic code message e.g. 'tramps' or 'spies'.	32 Signature of a person found e.g. a half-burned paper.
33 Signs of a particular person delivered e.g. Scarlet Pimpernel (his special mark).			Notes from MoE Terling Network meeting 12.1.06 - Allana Taylor

Appendix 2

Pupil Perceptions of MoE as a learning and teaching approach

I would like to ask your child some questions about enquiry based learning or 'Mantle of the Expert'. This is the approach to topic work which we have been taking in our school for the past couple of years, where the children form companies, solve problems and complete commissions. This work is to form part of my Master's assignment for Anglia Ruskin University.

Your child will be in a group of four during the interview process and their responses will be videoed and later transcribed to be used in the assignment.

The video will be shown to no-one and their names will not be used - they will remain anonymous.

Here is a list of initial questions I will be asking.

1. How would you explain MoE to a new child in our class?
2. Is/why is MoE a good way to learn?
3. Would/how would you change MoE to make it a better way to learn?
4. What/if any skills do you learn or practise in MoE that you might not otherwise learn?
5. Does/how does MoE make you more responsible for your own learning?
6. Does/how does MoE improve you social skills?
7. Does/how does MoE cater for your learning style?
8. Does/how does MoE prepare you for life as an adult?

I give permission for my child to answer questions to form part of an assignment on enquiry based learning - Mantle of the Expert. I understand that the material gathered will remain confidential and be used only for this purpose and that my child will remain anonymous.

Date:	Name:	Parental Permission:

Appendix 3

Teacher and Pupil Perceptions of MoE as a learning and teaching approach

Thank you for taking part in my masters assignment enquiry into teacher and pupil perception of the enquiry based *'Mantle of the Expert'* as a teaching and learning method. I hope to gather views from a variety of practitioners in this method, with the aim of presenting a collective opinion of MoE from both teachers and pupils, in relation to current educational theory and research.

The data from this interview will be used to form the basis of my assignment. Your anonymity will be protected and all responses will be confidential.
Your informed consent will be assumed to have been given by either a signature or the completion and return of this form.

Name:	Experience with MoE:
Signature:	

1. How would you define MoE as an approach?

2. In what ways/if any, has MoE changed your teaching?
   A) Cross-curricular approach?
   B) Attitude & motivation
   C) Creativity
   D) Other

3. What effect/if any, does using MoE have on unmotivated or disaffected students?

4. What allowances/if any does MoE give for differentiation and meeting individual learning needs?

5. In what ways/if any has MoE affected the quality of work produced by pupils?

6. In what ways/if any has MoE affected pupil social, speaking and listening skills?

7. In what ways/if any has MoE affected pupil thinking and/or metacognition skills?

8. In what ways/if any does MoE develop the skills for life-long learning in pupils?

9. What implications/if any does teaching MoE have on:
    A) Planning
    B) Classroom organisation
    C) The wider community
    D) Other

10. What /if anything needs to be in place within a school before they can begin working with this approach?

11. Explain the reasons why you would/would not recommend this approach to other teachers?

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