Democracy in the Primary Classroom: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of three teachers' experiences of sharing decision-making with pupils.

Doctor in Education (EdD) programme

UCL Institute of Education

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Declaration

I, Mary Geraldine Ruth Rowe, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Anonymisation and transcript conventions

The transcripts presented in this thesis have been edited to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

Transcript notation

...   significant pause

[...]   material omitted

[he added]   additional material or my summary

[*laughter*]   indicating non-verbal communication

Word count 44,715

Abstract

There is a call, internationally, for educators to take an active role in fostering children's wellbeing. Whilst initiatives for early identification and support are important, children's everyday classroom experiences can have a powerful influence on wellbeing, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This presents opportunities for teachers to re-examine ways of offering classroom experiences that promote good mental health. One such approach is that of teachers sharing classroom decision-making with their pupils.

Little is known about the way in which teachers conceive of, plan for and maintain shared decision-making in the classroom. This makes it hard to advise and train teachers on how to develop shared decision-making with pupils and for school leaders to encourage and enable teachers to do so.

This thesis explored three primary school teachers' experience of shared decision-making in their own classrooms. Multiple interviews were carried out with each participant interspersed with classroom 'go-alongs' (Kusenbach, 2003). Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Key findings reveal that shared decision-making can be both joyful and unsettling for teachers. They are continually balancing the demands of a highly-prescribed curriculum with the relatively unpredictable directions a lesson can take once pupils are involved in class-level decision-making.

Participants reported that pupils' responses to opportunities to participate in class decision-making were varied, uncovering inequalities between children which participants attributed to upbringing, socioeconomic status, gender and prior school experience. Participants endeavoured to develop shared decision-making with pupils in the absence of models or theory to guide their practice. This thesis concluded that three main areas of development are needed to

support increased shared decision-making in future classrooms: a) increased awareness of the practice; b) promotion of 'teacher voice'; and c) the development of a theoretical framework and models of classroom practice.

Impact statement

There are potential benefits in terms of academic attainment and personal and communal wellbeing, to children, young people and their teachers both in this country and internationally if this research promoted greater participation in shared decision-making in the classroom.

The insights presented in this thesis could influence educational policy makers to link current interests in children's wellbeing and mental health to classroom practices and encourage greater democracy in our classrooms. It may influence teacher educators to incorporate more democratic experiences in their initial training and continuing development programmes for teachers.

Future schools might use this research to develop teachers' and children's skills in negotiation and debate around decisions that affect them. Future analysis of the state of children's rights in the UK may well be impacted if such democratic decision-making became the norm in our classrooms and schools. If future researchers extended this study, the UK could become a world leader in research into developing sustainable democratic classroom practices.

This research offers concrete examples of how teachers' classroom experiences of democracy increase their own wellbeing and could be used to explore ways of improving teachers' own wellbeing, leading to better recruitment and retention of teaching staff.

The methods used in this research offer an example of a combination of interviews and 'go-alongs' using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) that could be explored by future researchers looking to understand the lived experience of educational policies and practices, a combination that has great potential for exploring new pedagogies.

The use of 'story boxes' as a way of reporting research results might inspire future researchers to consider a similar format. This enables those unused to reading research papers, such as teachers and school students, to access research about people similar to themselves. I set out to present my research in an accessible style, and teachers and students who have read this confirm that this style worked for them.

Internationally, there is much interest, particularly in Pacific Rim countries, in developing alternatives to authoritarian pedagogies. This thesis offers rich descriptions of classroom practices developed by teachers themselves, and as such offers a set of naturally occurring descriptions of how those practices develop and take form. This research could provide material for educators worldwide looking to imagine what democratic practices might look like in their own schools.

Away from the classroom, there are implications for child welfare. Current discourses on child abuse, child sexual and criminal exploitation and radicalisation of young people could be broadened to see how giving children a sense of agency in their own classrooms might increase their ability to have a voice and be more resilient to adult manipulation as a result.

Finally, the impact on my own profession, Educational Psychologists (EPs), is potentially substantial if it helped EPs to promoting democratic classroom practices in order to benefit children's and teachers' wellbeing, social inclusion and educational outcomes.

Acknowledgements

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Reflective Statement

Six doctoral years

When I embarked on my EdD journey in September 2012, I wanted to open myself up to influences beyond the familiar Local Authority and Educational Psychology Service (EPS) environments that had been my 'home' for the past thirty or so years. This experience has certainly changed me and has contributed to my professional growth.

My first assignment for Foundations of Professionalism (FoP) was an essay: "To what extent does the 'Pact with the State' shape the Educational Psychology profession?" This FoP module armed me with a new vocabulary, enabling me to step outside my EP role and reflect on the influences that had shaped a profession which I am proud to belong to, but of which I am also critical. I began this assignment believing that the State had held back the profession, but ended up having insight into the ways in which the profession had perhaps failed to grasp major opportunities offered by legislation. This was the first of many re-evaluations that I have made during my doctoral studies.

For my second assignment, Methods of Enquiry (MOE1) I focused on student involvement in the development of school culture. Preparation for this study gave me a good grounding in both Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and Students-as-Researchers methodologies which I was then able to apply in my EP work. The MOE1 was my first attempt at writing as a doctoral researcher, and presented me with many challenges, not least that of pinning myself down to a research question. Prior to my doctoral studies, I would have said that I was quite skilled at asking 'good' questions. However, the EdD has helped me to realise the complex nature of the research question (RQ). I found a number of books particularly helpful in this respect (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; White, 2009) and although liberated by the discovery that a RQ can be adapted once the research is underway, I consider the eventual defining of my thesis RQs to be one of the many hard-earned achievements of my doctorate.

Unfortunately, my MOE 1 proposal 'Using Appreciative Inquiry to Explore the Possibilities for Student Involvement in School Discipline' was unsuitable for the much smaller-scale MOE 2 study, although I did manage to adapt this proposal for my Institution-Focused Study (IFS).

At the time of my MOE2, I was managing a multi-disciplinary Behaviour and Attendance Support Team and I decided to do some research that would support the team's work with schools. Although I was not as excited about this study as with other aspects of my doctorate, interviewing Special Needs Co-ordinators (SENCos) (about their formulations concerning pupil behaviour) gave me the chance to put into practice what I had learned about research interviewing, ethics and analysis of qualitative data in MOE1 and 2. This stood me in good stead for my thesis. The close link with my professional role meant that I was able to use my findings to plan workshops for SENCos around 'Behaviour as a Communication of Need'.

As I started planning my Institution-Focused Study (IFS) I changed jobs. I was appointed onto the Senior Management Team of The Jubilee Academy, a role that was markedly different from any of my previous ones. This was a newly opened Alternative Provision, offering accelerated learning for secondary-aged students who had been substantially underachieving or at risk of exclusion. No longer an external consultant, I was now an insider able to observe the results of any policy, intervention or action. Although at times this could be daunting, it was exciting and informative to be in a position where I could learn about the impact of different approaches taken by staff towards the students. The 'student voice' research that I had been studying on my doctorate was now even more important. I was experiencing first-hand the tensions between maintaining a safe and ordered climate through external control and placing trust in students' abilities to contribute to solutions. I decided to use my Institution-Focused Study (IFS) and Thesis to explore the balance of responsibility between students and adults in the classroom. I was able to run discussion groups with students at The Jubilee and piloted the students-as-researchers approach that I subsequently used in my IFS at another local school.

My IFS study was an ambitious one: to use Students as Researchers to investigate the ways students help each other to enjoy and learn in lessons. I learned a great deal about the complexities of running a research project in an 'institution' (a secondary school) and the effect that the 'researcher experience' had on the student researchers. However, the most memorable learning for me was the finding that teachers enjoyed being interviewed by students as much as students enjoyed doing it, and that for both students and teachers the best experiences in the classroom involved students making contributions that the teacher had not planned or predicted. Teachers said that their most exciting and enjoyable moments in the classroom were when students came up with stories or new ideas that strengthened a lesson or made it more fun for everyone. These findings shifted my focus from the students to the teachers. I had been focusing in my IFS on what happens to students who increase their participation (through the students-as-researchers role). I had not previously thought about what it is like for teachers when students get to participate more actively in class. I started to explore the research on teacher experiences of democratic pedagogies, and realised that this was an area that was possibly under-researched.

Thesis

My thesis on shared decision-making (SDM) sums up my passion for democratic education and the possibilities this holds for future classrooms. I wanted to get alongside teachers and find out what it is like for them to pursue approaches that bring their pupils into the decision-making process. By spending time with a small number of teachers, and looking in depth at their experiences, I have produced a thesis that not only gives an insight into the professional lives of these teachers, but highlights the complexity of a teacher's relationship with his or her class and the influence exerted by the decisions and opinions of those outside the classroom.

Through my thesis I have learned many things about democracy in the classroom from the teacher's perspective; how even for teachers who have a strong faith in children's ability to take responsibility for their own decisions, it takes a great deal of patience and persistence to teach in this way. The more I

have learned about the experiences of working within a system that gives participants very little say about how they use classroom time, the more I admire teachers who manage even small breakthrough explorations into classroom democracy.

I have come to realise that democracy in the classroom is a much more subtle art than I had previously imagined. When I first went along to participants' classrooms, I admit that I was disappointed to see many traditional features: the teacher's desk at the front; sticker charts; and displays of near-identical work lining the walls. Aware of the 'invisible semiotic mediation' (Daniels, 2015, p.40) of the classroom environment, I tend to anticipate styles of pedagogy and discipline when I enter a classroom, and I was hoping to see some evidence of democracy in participants' classroom layout and displays, but was disappointed.

However, it may be that the only way to survive is to 'do the conventional things in an unconventional way'. For some pupils, their lining up after break may look like any other class, but they have discussed the *purpose* of entering class in this way. Although pupils appear to be given detailed instructions for almost everything they do in class, when given the opportunity to make their own decisions about what work to do, how to do it, and who to work with, they have the skills and confidence to work well together and to produce some excellent results.

Freire warned against devising 'methods' that can be copied, but encouraged his teachers to use the practice of others to 'inspire' their own personalised practices (Freire, 2005) and recognised that collegiality can be a great support. What has become clear through my thesis is the paucity of 'authentic' examples available for teachers who would like to see what 'classroom democracy' looks like in practice. This thesis is a potential catalyst for engaging head teachers in new conversations about democratic practices in their own schools. I am shortly to put out an email inviting interested local heads to meet and discuss this together. I hope that teachers will read my research and say, 'I never thought of it like that'; 'that's what I do'; 'I felt that way too but never put it into words'. Maybe head teachers will respond, 'I can do something about this.'

This doctorate has changed me

Fielding's work has influenced me over the years. He has written prolifically, passionately and eruditely about democracy in schools. I arranged to meet him at the beginning of my doctorate. Our discussion reignited my interest in the work of Dewey, Neill and Holt (Dewey, 1916; Fielding, 2016; Holt, 1964; Neill, 1960) and Fielding introduced me to other names that I had not previously come across. What excited me about this and subsequent conversations with Fielding was the realisation that as an EP I had something *new* to offer to the discourse around democratic education, which might compliment the perspective of esteemed educationalists like Fielding. The literatures that Fielding introduced me to led to others, and although the word length limitations of the thesis demanded that I had to limit the focus of my literature review, I have been influenced and inspired, puzzled and disturbed by a far wider range of literatures than I have been able to comment on in my final thesis.

Freire and others have written about the need to distance oneself from something in order to come closer to it, to understand it better (Freire, 2005). This doctorate has helped me to do just that. Previously I had thought, 'Why can't teachers just get on and *do* it?' and have ended up being much less judgmental about teachers who appear to make all the decisions themselves. I am now also aware that teachers who are using apparently 'controlling' approaches may be using these to prepare pupils for democracy, where another teacher may be offering pupils a 'trial and error' learning approach.

I have been won over by phenomenology as a methodology and have found the reading, re-reading, reflection and analysis of data to be a highly enjoyable and satisfying experience.

Conclusion

I believe that Educational Psychology can provide the theoretical support necessary for SDM to be adopted as a mainstream practice. Over the course of the doctorate, I have had face-to-face discussions with several academics from my 'reading list' including Fielding, Cook-Sather, Hannam, Alexander, Konings, Flutter, Mitra, Mockler, Groundwater-Smith, Holdsworth, and Robinson. I have, to my knowledge, been the only EP in attendance at conferences and seminars on democracy and education. EPs are, arguably, the only professionals that have access to teachers, pupils and their classrooms on a daily basis, and this places us in a good position to develop a view of current practice. It also gives us the opportunity, should we choose to grasp it, to help schools to find ways of using SDM for the benefits of their pupils.

I began this reflection with a description of the 'pact' that EPs have with The State. I feel that it is time to consider what kind of 'pact' the profession has with children and young people, and with teachers. My FOP study raised in me a 'sense of stewardship' (Watson, 2008) for my own profession. I think that the EdD as a whole has also heightened my 'sense of stewardship' for our schools and what they can offer future generations of children and they, in turn, offer society.

(1,979 words)

Chapter 1 Introduction

In this chapter, I summarise the warrants for my research. Chapter 2 reviews the literatures in more detail.

1.1 Children's wellbeing

I have been working as an Educational Psychologist (EP) for over thirty years, holding management posts in Educational Psychology, Parent Partnership and Behaviour Support. The mental health or 'psychological wellbeing' of children continues to be a key professional focus for all EPs (Health and Care Professions Council, 2012) as an important outcome in itself and also as a factor that impacts on social and academic development.

1.1.1 Inequalities

Attention has been drawn in recent years to the major inequalities in educational, health and economic outcomes for children from low income families (The Sutton Trust, 2015), and the current focus on children's mental health and wellbeing further emphasises these inequalities (Lloyd & Emerson, 2017; The Children's Society, 2017).

Research frequently show that students in unselective schools have fewer opportunities to experience democratic experiences, compared to those in selective schools (Nieuwelink, 2016) . The literature from two top UK Public schools gives a flavour of the liberal and progressive education offered to children from well-off families:

> We seek to encourage young people to engage in a loyal dissent. While our pupils are loyal to the principles of a liberal education, respectful of genuine scholarship and appreciative of the learning process, yet they are prepared to challenge, to question and to explore the content of that learning, pushing boundaries and overturning expectations.
>
> (Westminster School, 2017)

> The academic heart of St Paul's is enhanced and lightened by [...] the encouragement everyone is given to dig deeper; to explore ideas, to challenge preconceptions and to develop their own ideas.
>
> From its very beginning, and in advance of its time, St Paul's embraced a liberal ideology. We believe that true potential can only be unlocked when given the freedom to grow. Our rules are few and relationships are relaxed, yet respectful. [...] Our curriculum is broad with plenty of opportunity for individual research, discussion and debate.
>
> (St. Paul's Girls' School, 2017)

In comparison to the 'loyal dissent' and 'liberal ideology' in the above examples, webpage content from a 'non-selective' inner-city Academy suggests that 'hard work and good behaviour' will bring these children out of poverty:

> [O]ur belief [is] that perseverance, self-discipline and determination will enable our pupils and staff to succeed at school and beyond. We will realise our vision by adopting the following core principles:
> *Excellence*: Exceptional expectations and achievement for all pupils.
> *Whatever it takes*: Pupils, teachers and parents all committed to doing everything needed to ensure that each child succeeds.
> *Responsibility and respect*: Excellent standards of behaviour and conduct in school and the local community at all times.
>
> (Bolingbroke Academy, 2017)

A trend has developed, over the past decade, of setting up what are referred to as 'no excuses' schools, both in the US and UK, in predominantly 'working class' areas. These schools, it is claimed, develop 'worker learners' who are discouraged from questioning or challenging their teachers and who hold back their opinions, learning to defer to authority figures (Dorling, 2017; Golann, 2015).

Perhaps it is unsurprising that the children most in need of democratic opportunities are the least likely to get them. Anyone who shares Rowan Williams' belief that 'the poorest deserve the best' (Williams, 2006) may find this unpalatable news.

1.1.2 Sense of agency

The link between an individual's sense of agency and their wellbeing is well documented (for example, Deci & Ryan, 1987; Glasser, 1998a; Lambe, 2006; Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011) and it has now been recognised that helping people to develop a sense of agency through participation in decision-making and active community involvement early in life could address some of the inequalities in both mental and physical health outcomes in the UK (Marmot & Bell, 2012). The Farmer Review into inequalities in mental health reported that 'half of all mental health problems have been established by the age of 14' and confirmed that children from low-income households are up to three times more at risk than their wealthier peers (Farmer, 2016, p.5). I found the 'prevention' strategies in the subsequent Green Paper disappointing as they focused on 'early identification' and 'health promotion' rather than 'prevention' (Secretary of State for Health and Secretary of State for Education, 2017).

A related government report focusing on the 'psycho-social elements' of prevention identified that children living in poverty tend to have a lower perceived social status resulting in 'stress, lower control, and low authority in decision-making' (Bell, 2017, p.19). Bell cites studies which support the idea that education can redress these inequalities (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014; Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013) suggesting that children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can increase their sense of agency through learning how to make decisions 'with authority' that do not perpetuate their disadvantage (Bell, 2017).

1.1.3 The 'classroom' factor

The school[1] is often the first setting in which children experience citizenship outside the family, and where they can explore ways of developing the sense of agency necessary to 'have this say'. Once again, research identifying the benefits of giving pupils a voice in the school setting has consistently shown that those who benefit the most include children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Alexander, 2016).

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[1] including playgroups and nurseries

As part of my degree in Occupational Psychology we studied the way in which institutions and organisational systems contribute to individual wellbeing. It is unsurprising that there are similar implications for both workplaces and schools. One of the top three factors identified by Bell as promoting good mental health in the workplace was 'increasing employee control over their work and participation in decision-making' (Bell, 2017, p.47). I propose that the experience of being directed in activities all the way through school is not good preparation for being able to engage in decision-making in the workplace, and may even contribute to mental health problems later on in life. Indeed, young people themselves see a significant link between 'having a say' at school and the quality of their wellbeing in school (Anderson & Graham, 2016).

Schools have been slow to look to their own practices to explain inequality of student outcomes. A 2008 report for the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) on the poor achievement of white working class boys described how explanations for this problem, in the decades following the 1944 Education Act, tended to pathologise the *families* while 'schools and schooling were given a neutral factor' (Mongon & Chapman, 2008, p.9).

Then, in the 1970s, 'critical' educators such as Paulo Freire, motivated to better the lot of the poor, started to focus on the way that *schools themselves* maintained and nurtured social inequalities. The NCSL report described how the subsequent 'school improvement' agenda that dominated UK educational culture, led to even greater discrepancies between the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children and their peers. The report concluded that there were still some 'profound social questions' about the role that schooling plays in multiplying disadvantage that the educational system was reluctant to address (p.9). Ten years on, I believe that little has changed. For example, the recent Green Paper on children's mental health (Secretary of State for Health and Secretary of State for Education, 2017) makes no reference to the voice of the child, nor to the way school culture might promote or mitigate against good mental health, thus presenting a child's classroom experience as a 'neutral factor' in their wellbeing. I maintain that that schools need to look at their own practices and how these impact on pupil wellbeing.

This view is supported by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). Their research found that that not only do economically and socially disadvantaged children *continue* to achieve poorer educational outcomes, but that they also miss out on opportunities to develop some of the vital life skills that could help to reduce these inequalities (Cullinane & Montacute, 2017). The initiatives in the government's £3.5 million Character Grants Scheme involved predominantly after-school activities (Department for Education, 2015). However, disadvantaged pupils are less likely to engage in such extracurricular activities than their more-privileged peers (The Sutton Trust, 2015), thus compounding their disadvantage. So, rather than seeking ways to engage this population in extracurricular activities, it makes sense to look at how the experiences that *all* children have *in the classroom* can be adapted to deliver the benefits to *all* children.

This idea, that it is what goes on *at the classroom level* that has *most impact* on pre-school and primary children, was reinforced by the EPPE study (Exploring Effective Pedagogy in Primary Education). This study found that there was a cluster of teacher behaviours that benefitted the most disadvantaged children. Amongst this list of behaviours was the avoidance of 'over control' and 'the willingness by teachers to share the locus of control and authority' (Siraj & Taggart, 2014, p.40). This identified link between disadvantage and classroom control strengthens the warrant for my research. At the 2016 Cambridge Primary Review Trust (CPRT) conference Professor Alexander also reinforced the view that it is pupil participation *in the classroom* that counts:

> [T]he real test of a school's commitment to voice lies not so much in national schemes and school structures, helpful though these are, as in what happens in the classroom; and that if a commitment to voice doesn't translate into a pedagogy that empowers children's talk, respects their ideas and thereby gives them ownership of their learning - which is what the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly requires - it has barely scratched the surface of what 'voice' should mean.
>
> (Alexander, 2016, p.7)

1.2 Participation is rare

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN General Assembly, 1989) recognised that children are citizens, not 'citizens in waiting' (Biesta, 2008) with Article12 outlining their right to participate in decision-making. Despite the UNCRC, evidence on the benefits to children of participation and government reports encouraging schools to do so (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008) it is rare to find schools where participation in decision-making is everyday practice (Alderson, 1999; Fielding & Moss, 2011; Hart, 1992; Maitles & Deuchar, 2006; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998) and classrooms in the UK do not appear to be democratic when viewed from a child's perspective (Springate & Lindridge, 2010).

Various explanations have been put forward for why democratic practices such as SDM are so rarely observed:

- That 'student voice' has been a casualty of educational reforms emphasising 'performativity' and competition, with education seen as a commodity to be marketed (Ball, 2011; Fielding, 2007; Friedman et al., 2009; Goodman & Eren, 2013).

- The reluctance of students to take responsibility for decision-making (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016; White & Gunstone, 1989).

- A tradition of teacher dominance in the classroom and a pressure to be 'authoritarian' (Reeve, 2009; 2011) meaning also that teachers have not themselves experienced democratic practices first hand in their own school days or training (Apple & Beane, 1999; Friedman et al., 2009; Mahony & Moos, 1998; Whitty, 2006).

- Fear of undermining teacher authority (Flutter, 2007).

- The rarity of teachers able and willing to use a democratic style of teaching (Rogers, 1983).

- Parenting styles (particularly in the poorest families) based on deference to authority (Hart, 1992; Michaels et al., 2008).

- A lack of imaginative discourse around democracy in our school and early years settings (Moss, 2007).

- A continuing 'dominant minority world view of children as vulnerable and in need of protection' (Tisdall et al., 2014, p.13) even though this vulnerability may be less about a lack of capacity than a lack of the power to challenge adults and exert their rights (Lansdown & O'Kane, 2014).

1.3 An 'appreciative' approach

This wide range of proposed factors suggests that there is little agreement about *why* there is so little democratic practice in classrooms, and it appears that further research is needed. However, it is a lot easier to establish why something is *present* (in some instances) than why it is *absent*, and Fielding, whose work inspired me to choose this thesis topic, acknowledges that despite the dearth of examples of democracy in our schools, there are just enough of them around to be studied. In an attempt to take up Fielding's challenge, I chose a design that sought out and studied these relatively rare teachers who already have some experience of SDM. This decision was influenced by my experience using an approach called Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is a positive approach to organisational development. AI analyses individuals' stories about positive and worthwhile experiences in their own organisations. By bringing these experiences into consciousness, individuals start to see themselves as agents of future change rather than 'subjects' of externally imposed initiatives. This process frees up energy and creativity, facilitating individual and organisational development (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003).

My own hypothesis is that SDM may be happening already in some classrooms but that teachers may not be conscious of what they are doing. Not enough is known about how this practice evolves but, like other classroom practices, it is likely to have developed organically and be dependent on the environment and people involved (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996; Porter & Brophy, 1988).

As I was writing this thesis, Ofsted was collecting evidence about the role that schools could play in mental health, as part of the redesign of the common inspection framework for September 2019 (Public Health England, 2017, p.29). This suggested that it was a good time to look at the way in which classroom practices impact on children's wellbeing, and the role that teachers play in this.

1.4 Professional relevance

My professional life has been characterised by a strong interest in Pupil Participation. Besides my parents, two individuals stand out as having an early influence on my belief in enabling children to have a say in decision-making. In my first undergraduate year, I met and volunteered alongside Jo Ford, a retired social worker and founding member of the charity then known as 'Voice of the Child in Care' (now 'Coram Voice'). Jo worked to ensure that all children, especially those 'in care', had a voice. Later, during my professional EP training, I was introduced to Albert Kushlik, a retired physician who campaigned for the participation and inclusion rights of disabled children and young people, and put his beliefs into practice, making it possible for children with severe disabilities to be educated near their families (Whitehorn, 2009), and sharing his own home with a disabled student. These two individuals showed me the importance of children's and young people's participation in decision-making. They also taught me that anyone who supports children in this way needs to be prepared to challenge accepted 'institutional' traditions, and to expect opposition to their ideas.

As a qualified EP, this belief in the rights of children to participate in decisions that affect them prompted a colleague and I to set up a national EP Pupil Participation Interest Group in 2000, meeting twice-yearly, and led to a national conference in 2004, attended by over one hundred EPs, to promote and share

approaches designed and collected by the group. In the intervening years, it may appear that 'pupil participation' and 'student voice' have become much more 'mainstream'; Pupil Voice has been taken up by Ofsted; the inclusion of the views of children and young people is now an accepted part of statutory assessments of special educational need and disability (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015); Democratic Citizenship is a mandatory part of the curriculum (at least in secondary schools); and the overwhelming majority of schools have a School Council.

However, this thesis is not about school councils or one-off consultations with pupils, nor is it about PHSE and Citizenship lessons; it is about how teachers involve pupils in everyday decision-making in the classroom. I believe that this is the area of 'pupil voice' and participation which can make the greatest difference to wellbeing, and the place where substantial change is yet to take place.

1.5 Summary

Greater classroom democracy has a key role to play in fostering children's wellbeing and is an essential element in any plan to address the long-term mental health of children. Disadvantaged children, who have the greatest need for shared decision-making (SDM) are the least likely to experience it. There is both national and international interest in helping children and young people to develop the skills and attitudes for participation and in meeting their right to have a say in decisions that affect them, in line with the CRC. More immediately, SDM helps children to take ownership of their classrooms, feel a sense of self-worth and agency, belonging and freedom. If every child is to benefit from educational approaches such as SDM, then the classroom has to be the focus as this is the territory available to all pupils.

The time is right to consider how children's participation in classroom decision-making can become mainstream practice. As this can only come about with the active engagement of teachers, more needs to be known about how teachers might experience such SDM. This thesis contributes to that knowledge through

an exploration of the practices, attitudes, beliefs and experiences of three teachers who were already using SDM to some extent.

1.6 Conceptual framework

There are two main concepts that underpin this thesis: shared decision-making and teacher perceptions.

1.6.1 Shared decision-making

The practice of shared decision-making (SDM) is central to a range of educational approaches that are generally described as 'critical', 'progressive', 'liberal' and 'democratic' and there are many debates around all these terms (Kohn, 2008; Michaels et al., 2008; Simon, 1998; Wisby & Whitty, 2007). However, in this thesis, I have chosen to use the term 'democratic' to describe practices relating to SDM where there is a democratic intent.

My definition of SDM combines the concept of 'participation' used by Fielding and Moss (2011) - where pupils take part in the deliberation, the decision-making and the enacting of classroom decisions - with that used in an extensive study into impact of participation in UK schools, which described 'participation' as 'involvement in a collective decision-making process with a recognisable social and/or educational outcome' (Davies et al., 2005, p.5). These outcomes include decisions about curriculum, classroom and resource management, and environmental design.

This SDM is distinct from choices and decisions made by pupils individually or in groups (about how to tackle a given academic task, for example). The essence of SDM is that the decision-making process is public, involves collaboration between the teacher and pupils, and concerns decisions about issues that potentially impact on the whole class. The definition does not imply anything about the prevalence of SDM.

Although there are overlaps between the concepts of 'participation', 'pupil voice' and 'democratic schools/classrooms', 'shared decision-making' was chosen as the focus of this study for four main reasons:

1. Although the term 'participation' has been used synonymously with SDM (see above), the term may have connotations for teachers that do not relate to active participation in decision-making, but refers to levels of engagement and enthusiasm of pupils. Whilst SDM involves elements of collaborative problem-solving, and vice-versa, SDM specifically relates decisions about curriculum and classroom governance where collaborative problem-solving has a broader remit.

2. 'Pupil voice' is a term that has been used to describe a broad range of activities of which SDM is a subset.

3. The various pedagogies that could be described as 'democratic' - including Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1976); Freinet's Ecole Moderne (Temple & Rodero, 1995); Glasser's Quality Schools (Glasser, 1998b); and Systeme Escuela Nueva (Colbert & Arboleda, 2016) for example – all have shared decision-making in common as a key feature of school and classroom culture.

4. Of all the features of participation, pupil voice and school democracy, shared decision-making is the one that has been identified as making a significant contribution to wellbeing (see 1.1 above).

1.6.2 Teacher perceptions

The climate of a classroom, democratic or otherwise, is strongly influenced by the experiences, beliefs, values and actions of the teacher (Pajares, 1992) and teachers are frequently seen as 'the ultimate gatekeepers of change' (MacBeath, 2009, p.84). Pajares recommended that teachers' beliefs need to be the focus of educational research as they are the best predictor of behaviour and claims that the thousands of hours as students has more influence than initial teacher training on subsequent practice.This study sought to clarify when and how participants thought it was suitable to use SDM; what SDM meant to them (what it is for), and what it felt like to work in this way. In accordance with IPA principles outlined in Chapter 3, the focus on participants' 'lived experience' of SDM, requires the researcher to interpret that experience within a wider context. Having regard to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), and Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998a), I was aware that this 'context' included participants' prior experience of SDM; the reasons they became teachers; the influence of their own personal needs on the value they place on SDM; perceptions of how 'normal' SDM is amongst teachers; and 'perceived control' around the choice to use SDM.

Another feature of IPA is that at the time that reflections and perceptions are recorded, it may not be immediately obvious how directly they related to the phenomenon being studied. However, when it comes to analysis, they contribute to the interpretation of the 'whole' experience of SDM. This required me, as IPA researcher, to remain flexible in the way I guided the interviews, influenced by this 'phenomenological stance' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In the first part of this chapter, I outline the arguments offered for schools to be more democratic, and some objections to this view. I then offer some examples of ways in which pupil participation in decision-making can positively impact schools, classrooms, and the pupils themselves.

The second part of this chapter offers an overview of what is already known about teachers' experiences of SDM. I use the biographical reports of teachers and research with teachers as participants to draw conclusions about 'what it takes' to share decision-making with pupils.

2.1 Democracy and education

Just over a century has passed since John Dewey wrote Democracy and Education (Dewey, 1916). Since then many have criticised the lack of democracy in schools (for example, Apple & Beane, 1999; Ball, 2013; Biesta, 2008; Moss, 2007).

Mursell, writing over 60 years ago, commented harshly on undemocratic schools:

> If the schools of a democratic society do not exist for and work for the support and extension of democracy, then they are either socially useless or socially dangerous. At best they will educate people who will go their way and earn their living indifferent to the obligations of citizenship in particular and of the democratic way of life in general [....] But quite likely they will educate people to be enemies of democracy - people who will fall prey to demagogues, and who back movements and rally round leaders hostile to the democratic way of life. Such schools are either futile or subversive. They have no legitimate reason for existence.
> (Mursell, 1955, in Apple & Beane, 1999, p.43)

In many ways, it seems that things have not changed that much; the lack of democracy in schools in democratic societies such as the UK and the USA has been, and continues to be, addressed by educational commentators. For

example, Lundy reminds us of the significance for schools of Article 12 of the UNCRC by quoting from the Committee:

> Children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates. Thus, for example, education must be provided in a way that respects the inherent dignity of the child and enables the child to express his or her views freely in accordance with Article 12(1) and to participate in school life.
>
> (UNCRC/GC/, 2001, in Lundy, 2007, p.939)

2.1.1 Preparing pupils for future citizenship

In the 1980s the UK government recognised the role that schools can play in preparing young people to play a fuller part in democratic citizenship. The Citizenship Order (Crick, 1998) obliged schools to teach Citizenship and encouraged them to do this through lessons in Citizenship and by offering pupils experiences that would give them a taste of real-life democracy. A study of the impact of the 'active participation' elements of this Order was conducted with a selection of 'more than usually participative' secondary schools (Hannam, 2001, p.6).

The results, mostly anecdotal but overwhelmingly positive, indicated that student participation improved pupils' self-esteem, motivation, sense of ownership and empowerment. These benefits were found for all students, irrespective of gender or social background. Indeed, teachers reported that this active participation was transformational for some students, notably those who were not doing well in the school previously. Hannam found a 'benign cycle' at work, in that the participative nature of the activities, which had a strong element of SDM between teachers and students, generated motivation and a sense of independence and ownership in the students. This, combined with improved communication skills, recognition from others and a sense of personal and social efficacy would now be given the umbrella title of 'wellbeing', a term not in common use at the time. Tellingly, the increased responsibility and motivation of pupils for the 'participation activities' carried over into the formal curriculum. The study also identified the importance of commitment to

participation from the head teacher and senior leadership team (Hannam, 2001).

I found it interesting that an order that set out to create the conditions for democratic citizenship ends up focusing on well-being. Maybe this suggests that as well as democratic participation impacting on the mental health of individuals, well-being of all citizens might well be a key feature of a democratic community.

Attempts have been made to place democratic participation into a typology. These include Hart's Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992), Shier's Pathways to Participation (Shier, 2006), Treseder's model of Degrees of Participation (1997) and Fielding's Patterns of Partnership (Fielding, 2012a). Although these typologies have helped me develop my thinking over the years, I am not sure that they are particularly helpful way of encouraging teachers to start using SDM, as they were based on a model that was originally designed to provoke (Arnstein, 1969) rather than encourage or guide.

In contrast to a current 'lull' in public debate around pupil participation in schools, there has been a resurgence in interest in democratic participation in Higher Education in the UK and Ireland. The foreword to the report of a working party on participation in Irish HE establishments opened with these words:

> It is axiomatic that higher education institutions (HEIs) in democratic societies have a responsibility to model democratic practices in their decision-making and routine functioning. Active citizenship is best learned if imbued in the culture and processes of the institution. It acquires life and meaning in practice. In this way Irish HEIs can become the seedbed of democratic culture and practices for future generations who have been socialised into it through their encounter with higher education.
> (Collins et al., 2016, p.1)

The idea that SDM is 'axiomatic' for some educational institutions and not others is absurd. The view of colleges and schools as 'seedbeds' links well with the idea of the interactions between teachers and pupils being 'prefigurative', that is,

> Schools should not merely reflect the world of which they are
> a part, but be critical of it, and show in their own processes
> that its shortcomings are not inevitable, but can be changed.
>
> (Dale,1988, in Fielding, 2007, p.544)

2.1.2 The current situation

The most recent call for the teaching of democracy in UK schools came with the Prevent Duty, a governmental approach to tackle radicalisation of young people, which obliges secondary schools to follow a citizenship curriculum which includes the following prominent objectives:

> Provide pupils with the opportunity to learn how to argue and
> defend points of view [and] demonstrate how democracy
> works by actively promoting democratic processes.
>
> (HM Government, 2015)

There has yet to be a review of the effectiveness of this curriculum, but it provides another argument for increasing SDM in schools. At the same time as the Prevent strategy was being rolled out, the UK Government was being examined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to see how well it was complying with the CRC. The report noted that

> Despite positive steps, children are still not systematically
> involved in decisions that affect them, especially under 11s,
> and discrimination remains wide-spread for certain groups of
> children' especially children in care and those subject to
> domestic violence
>
> (Williams & King, 2016, p.4).

A report from Children's Rights Alliance on The State of Children's Rights in the UK (Williams & King, 2016) decried the disappearance of the role for a Government Minister with responsibility for the rights of all children, and predicted that with a preoccupation with Brexit there is a danger that children's rights and participation will completely disappear from government agenda.

Nevertheless, pupil participation is still of interest to schools, and I was pleased to see the following on a school website recently:

> We feel that we still have a huge amount to learn from the
> voice of students. The more work that we do in this area, the

clearer it is to us that student voice, whether it be in interviewing staff, providing feedback on lessons or helping to shape the strategic direction of the school wall, is a major resource that we neglect at our peril [...] At present the education system is neglecting the best school improvement partners that we have: the students themselves. If we spend just a fraction of our resources on improving the way in which we listen to students, the impact upon the education system in the UK could be more profound than any school improvement project that we have yet seen.

(Lawrence Sheriff School, 2017)

2.1.3 Critics of democratic education

Democratic and 'child-centred' or 'learner-centred' pedagogies (Watkins, 2015) are not without their detractors. In the early 20th Century, Dewey and Holmes were criticised for their progressive ideas. Some believe that democratic practices devalue the status of teachers (e.g. Furedi, 2009; Kitchen, 2014; Spencer, 2013) whilst others believe it to be a 'free-for-all' (Oakeshott, 1970). The views of these writers are important to be aware of as, in my experience, they reflect the views of many teachers and parents. For my part, I feel that there is a need to move away from polarisation of progressive vs. traditional education and through this study I hope to understand better the 'blend' that works for today's children and is achievable for teachers in UK classrooms where state-imposed demands, parental expectations and new technologies are a reality.

2.2 Pupil participation research

In an era where the 'accountability' agenda dominates teacher practice (Bahou, 2011; Cook-Sather, 2007; Roberts & Nash, 2009; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006) a sense of pupil advocacy has motivated much of the research on pupil participation. Studies have shown that pupils have a valuable contribution to make to school development and challenge the idea that adults alone have the ability or desire to make decisions about school and classroom practices.

Since the1980s, research studies including the large-scale Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Teaching and Learning projects (including

Kellett, 2005; Leitch et al., 2006; Rudduck et al., 2003) have made a strong case for pupil involvement in decision-making in education from both a citizenship (Biesta, 2008) and an educational benefits perspective (Flutter & Ruddock, 2004). One of the difficulties with this is that participation then becomes an 'intervention' whose worth needs to be supported by evidence that it leads to *something else* such as academic attainment, improved discipline, increased school attendance and so forth - the understanding being that these things have already proved their value, whereas participation, as an outcome in itself, has yet to demonstrate its worth (Yamashita et al., 2010).

2.2.1. Purpose of participation

Fielding, inspired by Macmurray, distinguishes two ways of regarding the relationship between teachers and pupils. The motivations for people to form working partnerships can be either *relational* (working in partnership because it helps relationships) or *functional* (partnership as a means to other outcomes such as academic achievement or better discipline). Fielding explains how these two aspects are both separate and interdependent (2012b). As an EP I am interested in both these perspectives, but especially interested in the additional dimensions of how participation contributes to pupil wellbeing. I am also concerned that school approaches to participation offer equal opportunities for *all* pupils to access their participatory rights, irrespective of home background.

Fielding identifies the ultimate purpose of classroom democracy 'as a way of young people and adults living and learning together on a daily basis' (2013, p.47) helping people from different generations to work together 'for the common good'. Although this is an outcome I accept, I value the 'rights-based' approach; that democratic participation needs to be valued as an outcome, rather than a means to another end.

2.2.2 Additional workload

The teachers in Hannam's citizenship study, in common with much other 'participation' research, involved pupils and teachers in time-consuming exercises, and report teachers' comments regarding the additional workload

that participatory activities gave them, even though they felt that the increased job satisfaction was worth the investment of time and effort (Hannam, 2001). Numerous studies, such as those on students-as-researchers (Alderson, 2001; Fielding, 2004; Kellett, 2005b; Roberts & Nash, 2009; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998), students as learning partners (Chopra, 2014; Fielding, 2012; Healey, 2017; Middlehurst, 2013; Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, 2013), participatory design studies (Clark, 2001; Könings et al., 2007; 2017) and consultation surveys (Arnot et al., 2004; Maitles & Deuchar, 2006; Rudduck et al., 2006) tend to imply that participation is somehow an 'add on', rather than something that can develop organically at a rate suitable for the teachers and pupils concerned. Unfortunately, such studies leave the impression that participation is a 'bolt-on' practice, involving 'additional workload' rather than replacing an existing (redundant) approach with a new one.

2.3 The psychology of 'having a say'

Some children enter school already equipped with a sense of agency (Deci & Ryan, 1987) and the ability to communicate their opinions and wishes in a way that gets a positive response from their teachers. Others have not yet learnt how to do this in 'acceptable' ways and may either keep their views to themselves or find that their rudimentary attempts to 'have their say' meet with a constant stream of sanctions (Bragg, 2001; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015). When children are unable to communicate what they want, they can feel as though they have no control over what happens to them. Feelings of powerlessness can have destructive consequences for motivation and behaviour in the short term and impact on long term educational and health outcomes (Davey et al., 2010; Quicke, 2003; Robinson, 2014; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012) and motivation:

> I believe that the need for power is the core - the absolute core - of almost all school problems. Even the good students don't feel all that important in school, and the students who receive poor grades certainly can't feel important from the standpoint of academic performance. So they say to themselves, 'I won't work in a place in which I have no sense of personal importance, in which I have no power, in which no one listens to me'.
>
> (Glasser & Gough, 1987, p.658)

When an individual feels that their views are taken seriously and acted upon, this positively impacts on their psychological well-being (Weare, 2015). This well-being, including the sense of belonging, personal agency (as outlined in Chapter 1) and resilience is an important precursor for learning and has long-term implications for an individual's mental health (Holen et al., 2013; Pianta et al., 2008; Roffey et al., 2016; Thorne & Gersch, 2016). Conversely, when children do not have a voice, this can lead to disengagement and de-motivation (Cook-Sather, 2006; Mitra, 2004). Neuroscientists have found that when individuals lack a sense of belonging and do not feel that their views have status this also impacts on the brain.

Diamond points out, for example, that active involvement in learning, feelings of social belonging and self-efficacy enhance the working of a child's pre-frontal cortex, which plays a key role in the development of executive functions (which include reasoning, concentration, planning and persistence):

> It is quite likely that being a member of a cohesive group working toward the important shared goal of helping one's community or helping to make the world a better place [...] could improve children's thinking skills and at the same time bring them joy, increased self-confidence, improved fitness, and a social support group.
>
> (Diamond, 2014, p.218)

This suggests that SDM could contribute to development of a child's reasoning and confidence. Diamond also notes that children from disadvantaged homes tend to have poorer executive functioning (EF), and that these children benefit the *most* from attempts to improve EF.

Using laboratory manipulations to study the effect of powerlessness on adults, Smith et al. found that when individuals were placed in a 'low-status' position 'goal-maintenance' was disrupted and their EF was impaired. They concluded:

> Individuals who lack power are guided by situational constraints and circumstances rather than by their goals and values, and view themselves as the means for other people's goals.
>
> (Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & van Dijk, 2008, p.446)

These findings go some way to explaining how the human nervous system responds differently when individuals perceive they have either much or little control over what happens to them. It appears that humans are naturally disposed to participate in decision-making, and that perceptions of powerlessness can have adverse effects on the working of the nervous system.

2.4 Social aspects of decision-making

A recent collaboration between the UCL Institute of Education and other universities in Europe and the US emphasised that the most effective educational mechanisms for reducing inequality are those which enable individuals to maintain a sense of control over their lives, learn how to tackle major life decisions and take an active stance in civic engagement (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2017). One of the research papers contributing to this study described how young people's 'civic engagement' (that is, voluntary activity that is 'collective' and 'addresses issues of public concern') is an important factor for a successful transition to adulthood (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). They indicate that this civic engagement is largely shaped in the school years and explain why it is so important for democratic societies: communities need people who care about social issues and know how to put ideas into action; children and young people benefit socially and emotionally from civic engagement; and such engagement makes it less likely that individuals will be attracted to risky and irresponsible behaviour later on. Such findings further reinforce the importance of shared decision-making in the classroom.

2.5 Teachers and shared decision-making

When teachers are asked what they think about democratic practices such as SDM 'in theory', irrespective of their own practice, they are generally ambivalent, claiming to support democratic principles, but worry about the maturity of children and adolescents to come up with sensible ideas (Lundy, 2007; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Dewey commented that it was the very 'immaturity' of children that gave them the 'possibility for growth', and therefore 'immaturity' should be seen as an opportunity, not a threat (Bynum, 2015). This has been labelled 'The 'ideology of immaturity' – that is, the assertion that

children simply do not possess that wherewithal to make decisions, simply because they are children (Grace, 1995, quoted in Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p.225).

Teachers may also anticipate personal criticism from their pupils if they invite them to offer their views about what goes on in the classroom (Chopra, 2014). Teachers tend to be most positive about pupils' abilities to share decision-making when asked about the impact of *school-level* activities, such as School Council membership, and it may be that there is less potential conflict between pupil and teacher intentions here than participation about school and classroom governance (Alderson, 1999, quoted in Bucknall, 2009). Even when teachers are asked to comment on their experience of 'students as researchers' projects into teaching and learning, few problematic issues are raised, other than the possibility that students may be disappointed if their ideas cannot be responded to (Cox et al., 2010).

Commentators have recognised that school improvement is the 'safe ground' for student voice (Fielding, 2004) (Julia Flutter, personal communication, August 15, 2014) and I have found that this is reflected in the slightly anodyne nature of comments such as 'pupil-teacher relationships are strengthened'; 'self-esteem is raised' in the conclusions of many studies on participation (for example, Cook-Sather, 2007; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

A correlation has been identified between teachers' positive sense of efficacy and a positive attitude towards SDM, irrespective of gender (Cheon & Reeve, 2014; Topkaya & Yavuz, 2011). This reflects the research evidence on inclusive teachers where a similar sense of self-efficacy has been identified (Miner, 2013). In addition to this, the more experience teachers have with SDM, the more positively they view the practice (Rudduck et al., 2003).

In a school culture where 'fitting in' is considered a sign of success for newly qualified teachers (Beyer, 1996), it would be surprising to hear strong dissent amongst teachers, and it is not unlikely that when working with external researchers - with little chance of dissenting views remaining anonymous -

loyalty to the school, and a wariness of being out-of-line with colleagues' responses may prevent teachers from saying what they really think.

2.5.1 Teachers as participants in a research intervention

In an extensive UK-wide enquiry, researchers consulted with pupils about teaching and learning, and then invited teachers to respond to the data by incorporating the pupils' ideas into their teaching, and give feedback on this experience (Rudduck et al., 2003). Teachers were pleasantly surprised at the quality of pupil ideas and pleased that some of them concurred with their own proposals for change (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). However, although anonymously collected, teachers were sometimes able to identify pupils by the nature of the comments and tended to judge the quality of the idea according to their perception of the pupil's trustworthiness and ability. Before consultation, many teachers were worried about being on the receiving end of personal criticism, but found that their fears were ill founded once the project was under way. Feedback from teachers who had taken part in the consultation exercise suggested that they had gained 'a deeper insight into young people's capabilities; the capacity to see the familiar from a different angle; a practical agenda for improvement; and a renewed sense of excitement in teaching' (Rudduck et al., 2003).

The irony emerging from this research is that it takes trust for teachers to embark on consultation with pupils, but it is only through teacher *experience* of consultation that trust can really develop. The different ways in which the teachers responded to the pupil feedback in this study interested me. Some teachers who were initially resistant to implementing pupils' ideas ended up sustaining classroom changes long after some of the 'early adopters' had given up. A couple of teachers who immediately put a number of pupil suggestions into practice found that they had over-estimated the ability of the class to handle so much change so soon, ended up disillusioned and failed to sustain the changes.

In the Teaching and Learning project described above, consultation with pupils was carried out by researchers and subsequently *communicated to* teachers. A

more recent study focused on teachers in a US High School as they *directly* consulted with pupils around instructional design to research the impact of such consultation on teachers, pupils and classroom instruction (Chopra, 2014).

Once again, the more experience teachers gained in collaborating with their pupils, the more positively they viewed the process, and *each other*. Chopra identified a difference in perception of pupils' abilities to collaborate meaningfully between teachers who came into the project with a more 'progressive' disposition and those taking a more extreme 'traditional' stance - some of the latter group never really engaged in the project. She also identified the importance of school leaders and the catalytic role of the university representative on the research team; an outsider being able to both facilitate discussion and introduce ideas, perspectives and challenge that can develop teachers' thinking about themselves and their pupils.

Although the importance of the role of school leaders had been raised by previous researchers (Arnot et al., 2004; Rudduck et al., 2003; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007) Chopra defines this in more detail, saying that school leaders need to develop new forms of co-planning and co-facilitation of practices with teachers and students for participation to become embedded in the school (Chopra, 2016).

2.5.2 Teachers who choose shared decision-making

Reports of teachers' own 'self-styled' classroom SDM provide some of the most revealing evidence of teacher experience. Of these, the accounts of Shor (1996) and Hannam (2014) offer engaging and detailed reflections on issues described by other practicing teachers (Apple & Beane, 1999; Enright & O'Sullivan, 2016; Herzog, 1995; Hyde, 1992; McDermott, 2015). Despite the vintage of some of these teachers' accounts, they reflect classroom experiences that would be recognised by teachers in UK schools today.

Ira Shor describes the unilateral nature of his decision to share power:

> an unsolicited attempt to distribute authority to some people
> who are not expecting it; to negotiate a mutual relationship
> with a group that has not asked for mutuality.
>
> (Shor, 1996, p.19)

It sometimes appears from the literature that a teacher's motives or intentions are not questioned when their style is autocratic and the lesson is teacher-dominated, but somehow democratic practices attract more questioning. It is as if by following the dominant classroom approach, any failure can be excused - because the teacher was just doing 'what everyone else does', but any departure from this puts the teacher at risk of personal blame for any consequent shortcomings.

In Hannam's (as yet unpublished) autobiography (2018) he describes how he developed SDM in his own primary and secondary classrooms in the 1960s and '70s and provides a background to explain his motivation. He reports that even as a child he had an awareness of, and impatience with, the way in which adults assumed they could make decisions without consulting him. For example, decisions were *made for him* about which piano exam he should be entered for and which pieces he should play. Interestingly, this is in line with evidence that children can feel strongly about decisions which may be considered trivial from a teacher's perspective (Cox et al, 2010). Hannam had studied philosophy (self-taught) and was already familiar with the arguments for democratic education of Rousseau, Dewey, Russell and Neill, so he entered the teaching profession bringing with him a 'proclaimed democratic intention' (Fielding, 2012, p.60). This meant that from 'day one' of his teaching practice it felt most natural to invite his pupils to talk about their lives and hobbies and participate in decisions about the classroom.

Later, as an Ofsted inspector, Hannam carried out research that led to 'participation in democratic decision-making and responsible action' being included in the Citizenship Order for the national curriculum for all 14-16 year-olds in English state schools - commonly referred to as the Hannam Report (Crick, 2002). He was subsequently involved in defending Summerhill, one of the best-known democratic schools in the UK, after Ofsted tried to get it closed

down (Cunningham, 2000). The success of Summerhill's appeal is a reminder that those assessing the workings of democratic schools and classrooms need to be able, as Hannam was, to understand and explain democratic pedagogy. The importance of a theory of democratic pedagogy has been a theme raised by other writers (Beyer, 1996; Goodman & Eren, 2013) usually in the context of being able to describe and justify their practice to colleagues who do not practice SDM - something Hannam claims he never quite mastered in his days as a class teacher (Hannam, 2018).

2.5.3 Colleagues and parents

Teachers, who have colleagues who do not use SDM, or who may even oppose it, report how they manage their differences. Some place the 'building of bridges' with colleagues at the centre of their practice (Herzog, 1995; Miner, 2013), others ensure that their pupils do at least as well as, if not better than, other classes on school and national assessments (Glasser, 1998b; Hannam, 2018) in part, to silence the criticism of colleagues. Hannam reported how, presented with such data, colleagues would still try to argue that the teacher using SDM somehow had an 'advantaged' set of pupils to start with. Whilst some colleagues showed interest in SDM and started to have a go themselves, others were scathing and ready to make complaints against Hannam for what they perceived as 'unprofessional behaviours'; of giving children a say rather than making all the decisions himself (Hannam, 2018).

Teachers who write about their own SDM report that parents not only accept but welcome this practice. Whilst colleagues may make comments about 'playing all day', parents see the growth in their children's confidence and motivation for school and feel more involved themselves. It seems that when children realise that their views are valued, their family and community also feel valued (Mongon & Chapman, 2008).

Teacher education is becoming more field-based, relying on existing teachers to act as mentors to teacher trainees. One of the outcomes of this is the 'unreflective socialisation of prospective teachers into the accepted norms, mores, and folkways of the profession as it is currently practised' (Beyer, 1996;

Lassila et al., 2000; Short, 2013). Consequently, in order to be seen as succeeding, student teachers feel the need to 'strategically comply' with institutional practices of their host schools. An 'apprenticeship-oriented' approach could lead new teachers to accept 'an unexamined embrace of the status quo' (Beyer, 1996, p.7). Beyer, a teacher educator, collected the accounts of seven teachers who analysed their own democratic practices. He observed that a strong hidden curriculum tells young teachers 'how things are' in classrooms and gives a strong message about social expectations. He believed that children require certain crucial skills, forums, opportunities, habits and moral commitments in order to have significant input into choices affecting their lives, and that these can best be offered by the establishment of participatory communities in classrooms. Beyer's teachers reported that the sense of isolation for those who go against 'traditional approaches' can be difficult to cope with. The evidence suggests that it helps teachers to have colleagues with similar democratic dispositions, and that a community of 'supportive, like-minded teachers' outside the school can also be highly supportive (Beyer, 1996, p.39). This idea is reinforced by other researchers (Chopra, 2016; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).

One of Beyer's teachers felt that there was a very strong pressure in her school to 'conform, perform, and be uniform' (1996, p.53) and others felt they were seen as being 'unprofessional' if they diverged from the status quo. Many of them described the 'openness, unpredictability, and spontaneity in day-to-day classroom life that [was] bounded by commitments to democratic teaching' (1996, p.153). This 'unpredictability' and 'spontaneity' was seen by their colleagues as 'failure to have students under control' or insufficient planning, which these teachers felt was definitely *not* the case for them. Classrooms where SDM is taking place could be 'noisy, exciting, even turbulent places' (Beyer, 1996, p.154). Another teacher described how

> Whenever there are group decisions to be made, the chance that disagreements will break out is great. But when students are faced with an abrupt end to a popular project about which they cannot work out their differences, complex negotiations begin to take place that are often surprising. These negotiations aren't always successful, of course. Sometimes I have to help sort out what the problems are.

But sometimes I can't. The democratic process is nothing short of unpredictable.

<div align="right">(p.154)</div>

As well as criticisms from colleagues, other, more subtle influences were at work on Beyer's teachers. They commented in particular on the institutional definitions of success which made their democratic approaches seem even more risky. Beyer suggested that teacher preparation programmes need to pay more attention to the 'why?' questions than the 'how-to' questions of classroom practice, giving teachers a theory upon which to base practice.

Beyer concluded that much of the preparation of teachers seems to focus on getting them to 'fit in' with how things are in the schools right now; a focus on survival skills for the classroom. This need to survive and 'fit in' both with the school culture and with the accepted mores and codes of the teaching profession is possibly as relevant now as it was for Beyer's teachers, and this thesis explores and updates these issues.

2.5.4 Pupil responses to shared decision-making

In contrast to the overwhelmingly positive responses of students in 'intervention-based' research described earlier, the first-hand reports of teachers portray a rather more mixed response from pupils. Hyde, a teacher at an Australian High School, describes the range of student reactions to her invitation to negotiate the maths curriculum with pupils who 'have had seven years' experience of being told how to learn' as 'thankful and amazed;' 'suspicious;' 'dismayed;' and 'contemptuous' (Hyde, 1992, p.53).

Enright and O'Sullivan's research in a girls' secondary school in Ireland involved the researcher working with a single PE teacher and five student researchers. The project involved students in negotiating the PE curriculum. The researcher and teacher expressed both amazement that previously disaffected students started engaging in lessons, but at the same time were surprised that some students showed a less than enthusiastic response to the idea of helping to design the curriculum:

> I had, now naively I realize, expected them to be almost grateful that finally they got to be involved in choosing what and how they wanted to learn. While some of them were happy about the opportunity [...], it really didn't seem to register with a couple of the girls or at least they didn't seem to care [...] and one student [...] thought I was trying to dodge my teaching responsibility and load the students with all the work: 'That should be your job shouldn't it. So what are you going to be doing, if we're doing your job?'
>
> (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2016, p.213)

The *fear* of personal criticism from pupils, expressed by teachers who have not used SDM themselves, does not appear to materialise in practice. Perhaps the teachers who choose SDM have already decided not to take criticism personally or, through showing trust in pupils, this trust has been reciprocated. What does emerge from teachers' stories is that there may always be pupils who either hold back from participation or actively resist it. White and Gunstone quote Baird and Mitchell's (1986) description of the occasion where two students came to their science teacher to express dismay at his invitation to participate in decision-making:

> 'We see what all this is about now,' one said. 'You are trying to get us to think and learn for ourselves.' 'Yes, yes,' replied the teacher, heartened by this long-delayed breakthrough, 'that's it exactly.' 'Well,' said the student, 'We don't want to do that.'
>
> (White & Gunstone, 1989, p.585)

One Languages teacher using SDM reasoned that pupils may sometimes see tasks that are 'unfamiliar' as 'harder', and so prefer to revert to the passive roles they are more used to, or even try to get the teacher to revert to a more authoritarian role (Moreno-Lopez, 2005). When teachers start to use SDM, they perceive that pupils can be confused as to who is responsible for certain things and may even blame the teacher's change of role if they forget to do things, such as hand in their home work (Moreno-Lopez, 2005). Interestingly, this reluctance of pupils to respond to SDM opportunities is never mentioned in the literatures on participation with children in early years and foundation stage settings (George, 2009; Miller, 1997), suggesting that factors other than 'lack of maturity' need to be sought to explain resistance to SDM in older pupils.

Teachers have found their own ways of transitioning from a more authoritarian into a more democratic role: by inaugurating 'a new speech community' from day one of a new course of study, discussing the syllabus and how the course might be assessed (Shor, 1996, p.30); by having one task or issue each lesson where new forms of collaboration are explicitly encouraged (Mazur, 1997); or by discussing openly with pupils the dilemma the teacher has with moving from one role to another (Hannam, 2018).

Shor describes the need to carry out a 'transition' phase for pupils not ready to take on this new pedagogy of SDM. It has also been suggested that teachers may need to identify pupils who continue to need a higher level of teacher support and reassurance in a democratic classrooms than their peers (Rogers, 1983).

Hannam talks about how trusting pupils meant he sometimes let them try out their own solutions to a class problem which he did not think would work, being prepared to allow them to experience and learn from failure. Frequently they made *sure* these solutions worked however improbable they had appeared to their teacher. This has been the experience of other teachers; that having participated in a decision, pupils will put energy into making it a success: 'we chose it so we do it' (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2016, p.216).

2.5.5 The teacher's role in shared decision-making

In my experience, discussion around SDM with non-teachers frequently attracts reflections along the lines of 'Well, you know what happened in Lord of the Flies' suggesting that not only is a teacher relinquishing all power when they choose SDM, but also that a single piece of fiction is an accurate representation of children's civic decision-making. SDM is, as Fielding put it, a *partnership*, not an abdication of power and responsibility (Fielding, 2014). Teachers using SDM may recognise that their role involves being 'equal but more mature' than their pupils. One such teacher quotes Dewey on how the complex responsibility of the teacher in SDM is not to 'control and impose' but to 'guide and organise' (Kaplan, 2000, p.399). Dewey felt educators had a duty to offer their own experience to pupils:

> It is then the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading. There is no point in his being more mature if, instead of using his greater insight to help organize the conditions of the experience of the immature, he throws away his insight. Failure to take the moving force of an experience into account so as to judge and direct it on the ground of what it is moving into means disloyalty to the principle of experience itself. The mature person, to put it in moral terms, has no right to withhold from the young on given occasions whatever capacity for sympathetic understanding his own experience has given him.
>
> (Dewey, 1938, p.38)

Teachers using democratic approaches have to be highly vigilant to ensure that all voices have an equal chance to be heard and valued. Teachers develop their own ways of ensuring that a small number of confident pupils do not dominate the debate, and Hannam's observation from his own classroom was that this was one of the crucial roles for the teacher (Hannam, 2018). There is also recognition that children from more disadvantaged backgrounds may need more training and encouragement to develop civic participation than others (Hart,1992). This view has been reinforced by a recent study in the Netherlands comparing the experience of democratic decision-making between adolescents from 'vocational' and 'academic' schools (Nieuwelink, 2016).

2.5.6 What does shared decision-making *mean* for teachers?

In considering teacher motivation for SDM, there may also be a sense, for teachers who *choose* to work in this way, irrespective of wider school practices, that 'we chose it, so we do it.' The experience of teachers who have come to SDM through a research project, an 'enlightened' head teacher, or through a commercial accreditation such as Rights Respecting Schools (Covell, 2010) or Philosophy for Children (P4C) (Lipman, 1982) has not been documented in depth. However, research on the impact of Rights Respecting Schools suggests that teachers rarely change their classroom practice as a result of such initiatives (Phoon, 2015).

Forming partnerships with pupils is an emotional experience. Paying attention to emotions is important if we are to understand the experiences and interactions

between individuals. Whilst recognising that a 'shared emotional connection' is an essential element in partnerships, it is an understudied area of teacher-pupil partnerships (Felten, 2017; Healey et al., 2014).

In her doctoral research, Miner (2013) used critical ethnography to explore, through interviews, observations and internet postings, the perceptions and experiences of three U.S. primary school teachers who 'incorporated aspects of democratic inclusion into their teaching practice'. Herself a teacher, Miner was interested in the democratic practices these teachers had developed and, like me, sought to answer the question, 'How did these teachers come to be democratic educators?' (2013, p.4) Miner's participants had all been on the receiving end of democratic teaching during their initial teacher training, could identify examples of some personal exclusion in their own school days, and had parents who encouraged them to care for people less well-off than themselves. One teacher had a supervisor who had identified that he was naturally teaching in a 'democratic' way and encouraged him to develop this as a personal approach.

All of Miner's teachers shared details of their personal lives with their pupils and showed interest in pupils' lives beyond the classroom. For all participants, SDM was a strong element of 'democratic teaching' and the motivations identified by these teachers included having high expectations for the class, having fun together and building new traditions as a class. One teacher commented,

> I allow the students to learn what is going on in my life and
> we form connections through our likes and dislikes. These
> connections are built on trust, laughter, and honesty.
> (2013, p.102)

One of Miner's teachers viewed SDM as 'a gradual release of control' and worked towards passing over control to students whenever possible: 'Usually a student will come to me and say there is a problem and I'll ask if they think the whole class would be interested in forming a solution' (2013, p.164). Although these participants made reference to 'pupil-readiness' and the dissonance between teaching in a democratic way and the demands of teaching in the U.S. public school system, there was no indication that they doubted the efficacy of a

democratic teaching approach, nor any sense that they held or sought any theory to explain the mechanisms whereby this approach achieved the community and character building they aspired to for their pupils. Maybe this is because they came from schools where senior managers had embraced democratic ideas and therefore colleagues understood the culture.

A Scottish study into the nature of pupil participation across primary and secondary phases, looked at teachers' perceptions of active citizenship and found a perception from primary teachers that anything they do to encourage active participation will be under-utilised once pupils transfer to secondary school, and this was borne out by the responses from secondary teachers that indicated a lower expectation of participation and a view that pupils lacked the maturity to be ready for active citizenship upon transfer (Ross & Brown, 2013).

2.5.7 Teachers need a 'voice'

If children do not have a say, then what about their teachers? In many cases, teachers may be involving the pupils in decision-making *despite* themselves lacking a 'voice' in the school (Basu & Calabrese Barton, 2010; Thomson & Gunter, 2008; Wisby & Whitty, 2007).

> The development of student voice at the expense or to the exclusion of teacher voice is a serious mistake. The latter is the necessary condition of the former: staff are unlikely to support developments that encourage positive ideals for students which thereby expose the poverty of their own participatory arrangements.
>
> (Fielding, 2001:106).

A study of teachers who were themselves excluded from democratic decision-making in their own schools identified that teachers coped by adopting one of four subcultures of democratic practice:

> *Compliance*: simply obeying orders - adopted mainly by trainee and newly-qualified teachers;
>
> *Non-compliance*: downright refusal to follow top-down initiatives, as a sign of rebellion;

Subculture of subversion: teachers used democratic principles in their own classrooms but potentially 'best' practices remained in that teacher's classroom, and were not subject to rigorous inquiry or examination;

Subculture of democratic inquiry of practice: teachers collaborate with each other and subject personal practice to scrutiny. Through this they model democracy to their pupils and colleagues and the wider community.

(Friedman et al., 2009)

Freidman et al. concluded that there was a need for teacher education to teach new teachers how to 'rock the boat and survive'. They emphasised the importance of 'democratic communities of inquiry' and support for teachers to become researchers of their own practice, and suggested that teachers need to be 'enactors of reform rather than recipients' (2009). This makes sense given the recent evidence that even offering teachers training with follow-up support does not necessarily lead to adoption of evidence-based interventions (Sharples, 2017) that they have not had a part in designing.

A study into the relationship between student participation and the cultural dimensions of an Australian secondary school identified twice as many cultural dimensions that had an *inhibiting* impact on student participation than those that *enhanced* it (Wilson, 2002). Lack of teacher voice featured as an inhibitor. Teachers also felt that the written policies on participation were there 'for show'; and they felt continually 'under the microscope' from external forces and parents. Teachers described how they had come to adopt an 'accountability mentality' that was at odds with participation and felt they had to go 'Cap in hand' to the head when they wanted to make a decision. They were held back by an understanding that 'curriculum [was] the province of the professional' and that students lacked the motivation and skills to participate in decision-making. The study identified a characteristic described as 'wanting in', that is, having 'a strong desire to be involved in change', a belief in the right to participate, and 'the tenacity to persist in the face of difficulties'. It was a few students and teachers with *this* characteristic who were responsible for driving the few positive aspects of participatory culture in the study (Wilson, 2002, p.94). Most of the enhancing dimensions of participation in the school came down to the attitudes and beliefs of individuals. For other teachers, there was a kind of

'tuning out' as any discussion about teaching and learning was seen as something 'it would be nice to engage in if we had the time' (2002, p.86).The strongest personal feature of teachers who had strong participatory practices was that they held what Wilson calls 'celebratory perspectives of youth' (p.90). That is, they had positive perspectives towards young people and would support them in personal projects outside the classroom as well as encouraging SDM and encouraging student innovated projects. Wilson concludes that for participation to thrive, students *and teachers* need to be given the scaffolding by school leaders to develop the skills and opportunities to 'have a say' in school development.

When teachers articulate the purpose behind the use of SDM, they make strong connections between this approach and the development of skills and dispositions that will help pupils in their life beyond the classroom. Hyde, negotiating the Maths curriculum with pupils, is clear that hers is 'not just a wishy-washy attempt to let students do what they feel like. It is a process by which [she] can help to develop the students' confidence and self-direction, often against all experiences and conditions of both teacher and student.' (Hyde, 1992, p.57)

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have shown how SDM has been viewed, variously, as a right; a useful preparation for citizenship; a tool for 'school improvement', and as an important contribution to improving children's wellbeing, motivation and behaviour. This literature review offers some indications around 'what it takes' for teachers to use SDM: some experience of this practice in their own schooling or teacher education; a supportive non-authoritarian school leadership and culture; a 'democratic' intent; some personal experience of social exclusion; opportunities for teachers to themselves have a voice; pupils prepared and able to respond to SDM opportunities; 'time' for participatory activities; faith that future teachers value and nurture SDM; the means to describe and defend their classroom practice; and a 'celebratory perspective of youth'.

2.7 Research Questions

The literature review highlights that where studies have collected views of teachers around SDM, these have tended to focus on outcomes for students rather than on the experience of teachers. This study is, to my knowledge, the first to use a phenomenological approach to provide a deeper insight into the teacher experience of SDM. With this in mind, two research questions were identified:

1. What are teachers' experiences of SDM?

2. What might the implications of these experiences be for future SDM practice?

These questions were operationalised by the following aims:

a. *To develop an understanding of what SDM looks like in the teaching environments of the participants.*

b. *To understand how this practice develops.*

c. *To understand the meaning that SDM holds for teachers.*

d. *To understand the uniqueness, commonalities and divergences of teachers' experience of SDM.*

e. *To identify possible implications for education, policy and future research, based on these findings.*

Chapter 3 Methodology

I chose a phenomenological approach in order to give participants the opportunity to express their beliefs and values, and to offer them the time and space to dwell upon, reflect and reconnect with their own experiences and emotions. Phenomenology is the study of 'lived experience' (van Manen, 1990) and the use of phenomenological approaches 'forces us to slow down, to pause, to re-examine taken-for-granted assumptions and the idea that we already know this phenomenon' (Finlay, 2014, p.1).This fitted well with my aim to go beyond existing research by attempting to understand what it is like to be a teacher who shares decision-making with pupils, and to shed light on the meaning that such a partnership has for these teachers. I describe below how interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approaches this.

3.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

There are different ways of doing phenomenological research (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) suited my research questions and aims because, in common with other phenomenological approaches, it uncovers in depth the stories and perceptions of individuals rather than attempting to generalise, and attempts to get closer to phenomena that in themselves may be difficult to define or describe and may be rarely experienced. IPA differs from earlier phenomenological approaches, such as that of Husserl (Smith, 2004), in that rather than trying to find the *essence* of the phenomenon (shared decision-making (SDM) in this study), IPA aims to understand participants' *lived experience* of the phenomenon.

IPA is an approach with four main theoretical underpinnings:

- It is phenomenological – phenomenology dates back to the work of the philosopher Husserl, who believed that science was very much a second hand study of natural phenomena, with too little attention paid to the various lenses through which scientists studied a phenomenon. He introduced the idea of using a series of 'reductions' (different

investigative 'lenses') to get to the 'essence' of the experience of a given phenomenon. Husserl felt that scientists needed to pay more attention to their own assumptions, experiences and beliefs as these ultimately affected the way that they perceived a phenomenon. His idea, that scientists should identify and 'bracket' these personal characteristics so that they should not contaminate the phenomena under investigation, is an important aspect of Husserl's legacy (Finlay, 2009).

- It is ideographic – that is, there is no attempt to generalise results, and the value is that we get in depth accounts capturing the particular experiences of a small number of individuals (Finlay, 2014b) whilst attempting to draw broader messages from these accounts.

- It is hermeneutic – the researcher interprets the participants' interpretation of their own lived experiences. Being a linguistic approach, the participants express their own feelings and perceptions about the experience. The researcher has to be very aware about his or her own assumptions, preconceptions and prejudices both before interviewing and throughout the interviewing and analysis phases. This repetitive process of listening, interpreting and 'wiping clean the slate' is referred to as the 'hermeneutic circle' (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

- It is analytical and interpretative – IPA embraces, rather than 'brackets', the researcher's own experience and skills, allowing full and explicit use of the researcher's own theories and knowledge.

Researchers using IPA need to be prepared for a constant adjustment of focus as an important aspect of IPA is that of reflexivity. Each part (story, phrase, utterance) is interpreted in relation to the whole (including biographical details), and the whole (the lived experience of the individual) can only be understood by studying the part. The analytical stage of IPA has been likened to the repeated opening and closing movement of an accordion (Wagstaff et al., 2014).

IPA researchers make no apology for their small sample size on the basis that a qualitative study of a even single individual may be much more valuable in understanding an experience, and what is needed to support that individual, than quantitative data from a large cohort (Oxley, 2016).

IPA suited my role as a psychologist and this thesis, as it focused on individual practitioners in order to offer teachers an in-depth and highly personal insight into the lives of professionals working under conditions similar to their own. I chose to use IPA for a number of reasons:

- IPA would enable me to use semi-structured interviews with flexibility to explore areas that came up which I had not anticipated, and enable me to supplement interviews with the classroom go-alongs described below.

- The ideographic nature of IPA appealed to me in that I could give my full attention to a single participant at a time and not make any assumptions that there would be commonalities between them.

- An in-depth analysis of an individual's experience has the potential to 'speak' to fellow human beings, even though experiences are highly personal. I share Warnock's belief that there is something universal to be found in the detailed account of the individual (Warnock, 1987).

- IPA allows the complexity of experience to be retained and inspected, including all the contradictions, exceptions and inaccuracies. This reflects the reality of day-to-day life for us all; we all have 'ideal selves' and 'ideal' ways of operating in our work lives, and fail to meet these ideals on a daily basis, and research should reflect this.

- As an EP my work involves constant analysis of what individuals say and do. I attempt on a daily basis to make sense of the experiences of children, young people and their teachers and parents, with reference to

psychological theory. I therefore feel at ease with the phenomenological interview and the 'interpretative' character of IPA.

- The researcher's own experience and background is both acknowledged and valued in IPA, and so this approach enabled me to use my professional experience to the full, in line with the nature of a professional doctorate.

- Although there is the option, where multiple participants are involved, to make comparisons between cases, the priority in IPA is to get to the essence of the personal experience of single participants. As 'democratic teachers' are not the norm, I welcomed an approach that validated the use of a small sample - it has even been proposed that a doctorate could be on a single case if that case provides rich enough data (Smith & Osborn, 2004).

- There is a paucity of examples of IPA use in Education as IPA's 'home' territory has generally been in Health Psychology (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). In many of the IPA studies I have read, the participants have had very specific 'experiences' that they 'found themselves in' such as *becoming* a teenage father (Sheldrake, 2010) or *suffering* post-traumatic stress disorder (Blore, 2011) whereas in this study, I am looking at the meanings and values of teachers of whom it could be said, by choosing to use SDM they have 'created' their own situations. Those studies which involve individuals making choices such as the study on unprotected sex in gay men (Flowers, Smith, Sheeran, & Beail, 1997) are closer to my study, despite the vastly different subject matter.

IPA is an approach developed by psychologists but only recently used in the field of Education. I am adding to a small but growing number of Educational Psychology research studies using IPA (Charles, 2012; Hayton, 2009; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Lander, 2010; Majors, 2009; Oxley, 2016; Sheldrake, 2010; Short, 2013). I believe that this study is the first to use IPA to study a

teacher's perception of shared decision-making and by using IPA in this study I am taking an existing research approach into a new field.

Studies of teachers' feelings and beliefs about their practice traditionally employ questionnaires, surveys and interviews. Semi-structured interviews seemed appropriate for this in-depth study. However, I wanted an approach which would encourage participants to feel as though they were reliving classroom experiences as they spoke. This is sometimes referred to as 'hot cognition' – where individuals are interviewed whilst the emotions from the experience are still 'warm' as opposed to interviews where the emotional aspects of the experience have 'cooled' and likely to result in less emotive responses (Abelson, 1979; 1963 in Ajzen, 1985). I felt that interviews alone would not achieve this.

I was interested to read about a method called 'process tracing' and 'stimulus recall' (Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996) as a way of engaging participants' 'hot cognition' where a lesson is recorded and later reflected upon with the researcher to find out how decisions were made about how and what to teach next. However, given the likelihood that some lessons may not contain any SDM at all, this was not appropriate for this study. Instead, I decided to include an adaptation of an ethnographic instrument, the 'go-along'.

3.1.1 The go-along

The go-along (Kusenbach, 2003) is a kind of 'hanging out' with the participant to get a feel for what it might be like to be in their shoes; to give a context for their future stories and accounts; to provide some shared experience between researcher and participant; and to raise participants' own awareness of their practice and experiences, helping them to become more self-aware in preparation for subsequent interviews. I hoped that such an approach might replicate aspects of 'hot cognition.'

My go-alongs lasted between one and two hours and all started and ended in the classroom, following the class if they went into the hall for an activity. Although I did not plan to interact with the pupils, I agreed with the participant

that if pupils initiated a conversation, I would respond. I invited the participants to talk to me about what was going on, when this fitted in with the lesson. My go-along notes consisted of a sketched plan of the seating; displays and positioning of teacher and any teaching assistants; notes regarding the activities; and any dialogue and incidents that might be used to 'situate' the subsequent interview (Neumann & Neumann, 2017). I made it clear that this was not an 'observation' but rather a means of understanding 'what it is like to be' the participant. Participants introduced me to the class as 'Geraldine, who is here to find out about Year 5 classrooms'. The go-along-interview combination is described in more detail in the Chapter 4.

3.2 Ethical Issues

This research followed the Code of Ethics and Conduct from the BPS (British Psychological Society, 2014) including secure storage of all audio recordings, notes and transcripts. All data from interviews were anonymised and confidentiality guaranteed to participants. I have DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearance to work with and around children and vulnerable adults and prior to commencing this research, ethical clearance was given by the UCL Institute of Education.

This research was based on a belief that it is worthy to encourage SDM in the classroom. My methods were non-invasive and I did not use any form of deception or direct intervention with the participants. The methodology of IPA has been described as intrinsically ethical (Stahl, 2005) in that it considers the dignity, value and respect for the position and perception of the 'other'. As the research could be considered as critical research, in that the results could in some way challenge the status quo of classroom relationships, I have been open to the reality that the participants may have a different 'ideal future' to my own and I have taken care throughout not to manipulate information about their experiences and beliefs to promote my own 'ideal future' of increased SDM in the classroom.

The ethical considerations around this research included:

- Gaining consent from participants including clarity about what to do if they felt overwhelmed by research task demands, or if life events meant that they were unable to continue (in which case I would have offered personal support or the possibility of opting out).

- The maintenance of teachers' confidence and good relationships with their students.

- The effects on pupils - they are participants in the sense that it is the practice in their classrooms that is part of the analysis.

- Agreements around confidentiality – with detailed analysis of data from a small sample, it may be possible to identify the participants from personal details. I made it clear to participants that if they identified themselves to others as participants in this study, it would be easy to recognise which of the three participants they were.

- Disturbance of participants' preparation and follow-up time - I made it clear at the outset the length and number of interactions we would have over the course of the research, negotiating any changes as they arose, and also worked to develop a relationship where participants could voice any concerns they had about the project.

Chapter 4 Method

In this chapter I describe how I recruited participants, designed and piloted my interview framework, and analysed my data.

4.1 Recruitment

Given my belief, outlined in Chapter 3, that most or all teachers *at some time* may experience *some level* of democratic partnerships with their pupils, I could arguably have selected at random a small number of teachers and, given enough time, identified some beliefs and meaning around SDM for each of them. However, I felt that I would get a better quality of data by targeting teachers whose classrooms were 'greater than usually' participative, using similar criteria to Hannam (2018).

The sampling for this research was purposive (Patton, 1990) and opportunistic (Cohen et al., 2007). As my methodology is phenomenological I sought out teachers whose experience was central to my topic: that they would be using some SDM in their classrooms, on a regular basis. As Seidman advises:

> Because hypotheses are not being tested [in phenomenology], the issue is not whether the researcher can generalise the finding of an interview study to a broader population. Instead the researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects.
>
> (Seidman, 2006, p.54)

Accordingly, I was more interested in the 'quality of the experience' than the quantity of participants.

My intention was to target primary or middle school teachers working mainly with one class as they would have more opportunities to develop SDM than secondary school teachers. Recruitment was problematic for a number of reasons, some of which only became apparent once I started the process.

Despite the interest in research concerning pupil participation it is still relatively rare, in my experience, to come across classrooms where teachers *regularly* encourage pupils to play their part in making decisions about what goes on there. I knew that participants might be hard to find and recruitment turned out to be quite a 'treasure hunt.'

My initial efforts to recruit participants by directly contacting head teachers through letters (Appendix I), emails and follow-up phone calls failed to identify any participants. Although I managed to talk to several head teachers, the examples of 'participation' these head teachers were able to identify in their schools were generally *outside* the classroom, typically involving school council membership. I then focused on asking friends and colleagues who work closely with teachers if they knew of any whose practice corresponded with the examples described on my flier (Appendix II).

Through this process I made telephone contact with four primary school teachers. Although these all had a strong learner-centred ethos, offering choices to pupils individually and making learning an active and enjoyable experience, all of them said that *they* made all the decisions themselves about curriculum, discipline and classroom management. All these teachers said that they were interested in learning more about democratic classrooms but said that they had never thought about sharing decisions in this way. In order to harness these teachers' interest, and also as a possible means of attracting further participants to this study, I set up a Pupil Participation Interest Group for teachers and emailed the head teachers of all the Primary and Middle schools in my Local Authority. I received twelve indications of interest although only six could make the initial meeting. Once again, the teachers who came along to this group were very interested, but claimed not yet to be involving their pupils in any SDM in the classroom. A number of teachers came along because they had been asked to take on responsibility for the school council, but all of them said that the idea of sharing decision-making in the classroom was something they said they had not previously considered.

4.2 Participants

In accordance with IPA's requirement for a small but homogeneous sample (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) I recruited three participants, all male teachers of primary-aged children. I recruited my first two participants through direct personal involvement during work I was carrying out in my role as their schools' Link EP. It was during discussions about individual pupils that I recognised these teachers' democratic leanings and invited them to take part in my research. My third participant was recommended by one of his school governors, an acquaintance of mine. IPA encourages researchers to use a relatively homogeneous sample and my participants met this criterion in that they were all white British male teachers with some experience of using SDM. Carl and Michael were in their second year of teaching and Philip had been a teacher for sixteen years (not their real names). Details of participants' backgrounds are included in Chapter 5.

All participants teach in state maintained schools that have White British heritage as their largest ethnic group and serve populations with a broad social mix. All taught Year 5 classes during the course of the research, although for his first two interviews, Carl was teaching Year 3.

A sample size of three allowed for individual in-depth analysis paired with the possibility of some comparison for convergence and divergence as recommended by Smith and Osborne (2007).

4.3 Research Design

I chose to combine in-depth, semi-structured hour-long interviews with classroom go-alongs. My interview design was compatible with a phenomenological approach (Englander, 2012) and influenced by the interview framework proposed by Seidman; an initial interview established context and biographical data and subsequent interviews enabled the participants to reconstruct their experience with regard to this context. This enabled a gradual increase in 'depth of meaning' to be sought and the opportunity to return to previous themes so that each interview provided 'a foundation of detail that

help[ed] illumine the next' (Seidman, 2006, p.23). I organised initial interview dates with a go-along to each participant's classroom prior to each follow-up interview (see Table 1 below for schedule).

4.3.1 Multiple interviews

My design was partly cross-sectional and partly longitudinal (Robson, 2011, p.127) in that participants 1, 2 and 3 were interviewed over a period of thirteen, eight and five months respectively. This design enabled me to follow my first participant from one class to the next, providing the opportunity to study his perceptions of experiencing SDM with two classes; to follow a second participant over a school year with one class; and a third participant to triangulate experiences to see if any patterns emerged. A design featuring repeat interviews with the same participant has recognised benefits and challenges (Flowers, 2008). I was aware that multiple interviewing 'maximises the potential for contradictory narratives within each participant' (Flowers, 2008, p.25) but saw this as an advantage given my research questions.

I selected an iterative design that enabled me to incorporate what I had learnt from the experience of one interview into the design of the next. I found the Responsive Interviewing Model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) to be a reasonable fit to my requirements, as this model is traditionally used for repeated interviews with the same subject. In this model, 'you redesign your interviews to elicit examples of the concepts and themes that are central to the interviewees' understanding, ask about each, and then follow up for detailed examples.' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:53). Rather than relying solely on predetermined questions, I planned to ask follow-up questions based on the responses of a participant so that I really understood what they were saying, taking care not to lead them to a particular conclusion.

I went into this research aware that I would have to analyse each interview prior to the next and ensure that data was reported in a way that was faithful to the order in which it was collected. The disparity in the number of interviews for the three participants also meant that an ideographic report of the results was predetermined, as there would be inconsistencies between participants

regarding the number of sessions that data had been collected. Participants consented to between two and four interviews during our original discussion. When I realised that it would make sense to add another interview and go-along to Carl's schedule, he agreed as he was finding the experience a very positive one. I reminded participants between each interview that they were free to withdraw at any time, and re-checked their consent. Table 1 illustrates the overall schedule.

Table 1: Interview and go-along schedule.

	CARL	MICHAEL	PHILIP
May 2016	Initial discussion		
Jun 2016	**Interview 1** Go-along 1 Interview 2		
Jul 2016		Initial discussion	
Aug 2016			
Sep 2016			
Oct 2016	Go-along 2 Interview 3		
Nov 2016		**Interview 1** Go-along 1	
Dec 2016		Interview 2	
Jan 2017			Initial discussion
Feb 2017	Go-along 3	Go-along 2 Interview 3	
Mar 2017	Interview 4		**Interview 1**
Apr 2017			
May 2017			Go-along 1 Interview 2
Jun 2017		**Interview 4 (Final)**	
Jul 2017	**Interview 5 (Final)**		**Interview 3 (Final)**

4.3.2 Interview format

Interview location is an important but frequently-neglected component of design (Herzog, 2012). I initially felt that as the school setting was the participants' 'home environment' this would go some way towards addressing the power imbalance that can sometimes exist in research interviews (Herzog, 2012). However, my first participant preferred to be interviewed over the half-term break. We decided together that the interviews would take place in a quiet room in the building where I work, at a time convenient to us both. This participant asked if the second interview could be on a Saturday morning, so I booked a room in the library adjacent to my base, which was walking distance from his home. All other interviews were held in participants' schools at their request.

4.3.3 Pilot interview

In order to trial my provisional interview schedule I carried out a pilot interview (Robson, 2011) with a Special Needs Co-ordinator I work with who has used SDM in her work with gifted and talented groups, but does not currently have a class of her own. As a result of the pilot I introduced a more frequent use of prompts and probes to elicit more detailed descriptions of the *emotional* experience of participants. This teacher's feedback regarding the interview experience was useful as she validated the use of questions that brought the discussion back to her own experiences when the focus moved to other people. She enjoyed the interview and did not find the questions intrusive, despite my frequent prompts and probes.

Following the pilot interview, I wrote an introductory script and a revised 'bank' of potential interview questions to use as an 'aide-memoire'. As the interviews were semi-structured, I was able to take a 'phenomenological stance' and use follow-up questions to explore the participants' responses to get as full an understanding of their experience as possible.

I held preliminary face-to-face discussions with each participant once they had expressed interest, to check that we shared an understanding of the nature of pupil participation in classroom decision-making, to offer information about the

research and to describe the nature of the consent I was requesting. They took away a copy of the Information for Teachers (Appendix III) and Consent Form (Appendix IV) which they signed before the first interview.

The interview guide contained questions that were common to all participants for first, second and final Interviews (see Interview Guide in Appendix V). The purpose of the additional interviews - two for Carl and one for Michael - was to explore data from previous interviews in more detail, discover new examples of SDM, and capture, longitudinally, any developmental aspects around SDM (for example, if participants' experience changed over the academic year, or between classes).

I made handwritten notes during the go-alongs, as described in the previous Chapter. I recorded interviews using a table-top audio recorder. As soon as possible after the interview I made notes about my initial impressions as advised by experienced researchers (Wagstaff et al., 2014).

I transcribed the interviews into the central area of a template with wide margins to the right and left of the main text, as suggested by Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009). I used separate colours for the respective utterances of researcher and participant. I made a note of pauses using an ellipsis except when they lasted for more than a second, where I made a note of the length of pause. I italicised any words that were stressed by the participants to maintain the sense of the phrase. I noted laughter and physical activity such as tapping fingers on the table or where the tone of voice changed in a notable way, for example if the participant imitated a child's voice or raised or dropped their voice in a particular way. I divided the transcript up into sections representing around100-200 words or where a new idea emerged, whichever was the shorter (see Appendix VI for a sample transcript). I found that this length of section made it easy to locate quotations and was a useful unit for analysis of themes and ideas. At certain points I included a note of the time on the recording to be able to listen to the original recording if needed during analysis to check accuracy of transcription. I then listened to all recordings whilst checking the transcriptions for accuracy.

Recordings and transcriptions were stored on a password-protected computer, and originals wiped from the audio recorder.

4.4 Data Analysis

Analysis was carried out on data from interview transcriptions. Notes from the go-alongs were not analysed but were referred to where they helped to explain my interpretation of interview data.

The developers of IPA advise that is no single way to 'do' IPA and it is not about 'following a set of steps' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.81). However, as a novice in this approach I initially followed their 'step by step' guidance and then made changes to this plan, as needed, to realise my objectives. As described earlier, I set out with the view that contextual data was valuable. So, even when participants' comments did not initially appear to relate *directly* to SDM, I was aware that they could *potentially* aid my interpretation of their experiences of SDM. Consequently, in the first three phases described below (4.4.1- 4.4.3) *all* data was included in the analysis, including data around biography, beliefs and values, school, pupil and environment.

4.4.1 Reading and re-reading

I read and re-read each interview transcription four or five times, trying to put myself in the participant's position, and attempting to see his words from his perspective. I then listened to the recording again whilst following the text, to get an overall feel for the participant's responses and reflections. This ensured that I continually moved from the general to the particular, in a process referred to as the 'hermeneutic circle' whereby 'to understand any given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.28). At this stage, I was aware of taking a 'sympathetic' stance to the participant, putting my own judgements about their practice or reasoning aside, as required in IPA. This research is not about evaluating or assessing participants' practice, but about understanding what it means to be a teacher who sometimes chooses to share decision-making with their pupils.

4.4.2 Initial noting

Because this study was exploratory I did not have a pre-established coding scheme (Miles & Huberman, 1994) but was guided by my research questions and adopted 'a phenomenological attitude' (Finlay, 2014b). This requires the researchers to 'break away from [their] own "natural attitude" and find a way to remain open to new understandings' (p.122) which meant that I was sometimes analysing in detail a participant's story without knowing at that stage what relevance it might have in the light of future interview data.

Whilst reading and re-reading the text, I started to write comments in the right hand column, entitled 'Exploratory Notes' as I came across key words, issues or language of interest. I also highlighted any sections of text which at this stage I felt evidenced my comments, or which I considered notable quotes that particularly captured the participant's beliefs, use of language or emotion (Finlay, 2014a).

4.4.3 Developing emergent themes

I then developed a list of Emergent Themes from these Exploratory Notes (Smith & Osborn, 2004) and recorded these in the left-hand column (example provided in Appendix VI). At this stage, I had not determined themes that related solely to SDM, but was getting to the heart of the overall classroom experience of each participant as a foundation for later, more focused, analysis of their 'SDM experience.'

4.4.4 Searching for connections across emergent themes

In an attempt to reduce my themes for each participant into a manageable number (Miles & Huberman, 1994) I used a process of weeding and combining themes (still on an 'individual participant' basis). For each theme I identified supporting quotes. It was at this point that I experienced, along with many previous IPA researchers, the feeling of being overwhelmed by themes (Wagstaff et al., 2014). In carrying out this thematic reduction I was starting to feel as though this was sacrificing the richness of participants' stories, and that I was treating data that was essentially 'contextual' as 'focus' data. That is, I was

giving biographical and contextual data as much weight as data describing the experience of SDM. I was reassured to learn that a broad initial focus is not uncommon in IPA studies. Smith et al. acknowledge that 'there may be a pattern of shifting from generic explanations to the specificities of particular events' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.82). I do not regret the many weeks spent on analysis of all aspects of the transcriptions as I believe that every detail captured in the interview has some potential relevance as they each help me 'to immerse [myself] in the participant's life world' (p.84).

4.4.5 Synopsis for each participant

At this stage, I provisionally halted my search for themes, listened to each interview again and wrote a brief summary from memory of each participant's experiences, interview by interview. This enabled me to step away from my previous interpretations and listen anew to the participants' own words and emphases. By now, I felt able to separate out the experiences most closely relating to SDM and those which provided a context for my interpretation, and when stories emerged which warranted full retelling I collected these into 'story boxes' for each participant. I provided a synopsis at the end of each participant's summary linking their experience with my research questions and aims.

4.4.6 Moving to the next case

I attempted to analyse only one participant at a time, to avoid any comparison or confusion. Although there was inevitable overlapping of interviews and analysis in my schedule, I managed to plan my work so that I was only ever analysing one participant in any one week. This was particularly important when I was doing all my analysis after work and at weekends so I needed to make it as easy as possible to 'tune into' a participant's world without the distraction of other data. In IPA the researcher needs to immerse themselves in the data and dwell on ideas, moving back and forth between the whole and the parts of the data (Finlay, 2014b) which meant that I became very familiar with the data over the months of analysis.

4.4.7 Considering collective participant themes

Once all the data had been collected and analysed ideographically, I was ready to look at all how the three participants' themes related to each other. In this new 'composite' stage, I was aware that there were three distinct 'jobs' that I wanted my data to achieve, all of which are tied in with the EdD requirement to have relevance for professional practice:

- To draw out those aspects of participant experience for further analysis with respect to existing literatures and professional practice.

- To be able to understand the phenomenon of SDM more deeply – the 'essence' of it, as evidenced by participants.

- To offer educational professionals a set of ideas to serve as a 'starter reference' for individual, group and organisational discussion and deliberation.

After weeks of developing cross-participant themes (Smith et al., 2009) I was becoming even more familiar with my data. With increasing awareness of the value of the *ideographic* aspects of IPA, I felt that in my attempt to reduce the data into cross-participant themes I was weakening that ideographic element (Finlay, 2009). I therefore redirected my efforts away from cross-participant themes and concentrated on ensuring that the *individual* themes represented the essence of the reported experiences (Smith, 2004).

The idiosyncratic way that these three participants had experienced SDM added to the difficulty of identifying cross-participant themes. I was assisted at this stage by studying the work of phenomenologists outside the 'IPA school' including Moustakas (1994), van Manen (1996, 2002, 2008) and Bach (2016). This exercise gave me the courage to trust my own perceptions and spend more time taking a 'helicopter view' of the data. My next step, influenced by Moustakas, was to create a 'composite textural description' (see Chapter 6). Through this, I was able to reflect concurrently on all three participants'

experiences without feeling that I had to 'shoehorn' these into distinct themes. The 'composite description' exercise enabled me to reflect on aspects which whilst not appearing important for the individuals, took on greater relevance when considered communally.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the semi-longitudinal approach I took meant that there were relatively fewer data from each subsequent participant with most data from Carl (five interviews and three go-alongs) and least from Philip (three interviews and one go-along). It is worth saying that Philip was arguably the participant who had the least to say about his experience and I felt I reached data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015) by the second interview. Nevertheless, I was aware from my contact with teachers over many years that Philip's experiences may well be representative of many other teachers, and for this reason his data had a particular value. Having said this, I felt that the lack of 'depth' in his data would not have disappeared had I interviewed him further.

Chapter 5 Results

In total, I carried out twelve interviews and six go-alongs with three participants over thirteen months. In this chapter I report results ideographically, participant by participant, describing their SDM experiences and providing contextual details (as previously mentioned, stories which warrant full retelling are presented as 'story boxes' for each participant). After this, a synopsis is presented for each participant under three Themes that relate to the aims and research questions:

Theme 1 - the meaning and value participants place on SDM; why they do it; and how SDM relates to beliefs about themselves and their pupils;

Theme 2 - the perceived challenges, including the skills needed and barriers identified; and

Theme 3 - perceived rewards of SDM; positive impacts on participants, pupils and society; what motivates participants to do more SDM.

Whilst each participant had his own approaches, thoughts and responses to SDM, an overall picture emerged of how the experience of sharing decisions with the class can be both liberating and troublesome. A composite description based on all three participants' stories follows in Chapter 6.

I have chosen to use a variety of tenses in much of what follows to reflect the unfolding nature of the analysis, as befits IPA. I have generally used the past tense when recounting events in the past, and the present tense when drawing more general conclusions from participants' reflections.

5.1 Participant 1: Carl

Carl is a 31 year old primary school teacher. He trained in the school where he now teaches. I invited Carl to take part in this study after a discussion we had about one of his pupils, who had been referred to the Educational Psychology

Service. When I returned a couple of weeks after a consultation where I had offered some recommendations for Carl to consider, he told me that he had discussed my recommendations with the whole class who had suggested an adapted version of the intervention. This is the only time in over thirty years that I have come across a teacher independently discussing an EP's recommendations with the whole class. Further discussion suggested that he regularly involved pupils in classroom discussions and decision-making.

5.1.1 Interviews 1 and 2 - June-July 2016 (Year 3 class)

Before entering teaching, Carl studied History and worked in sales and cafés, but 'had it in his head' that he would end up working as a teacher. These experiences as well as captaincy of a football team have some possible bearing on the type of teacher he is today. His focus on History has taught him to take a 'long view' of his pupils' education; his football has convinced him of the advantages of teamwork; and his sales experience has perhaps convinced him that

> I'm not going to force [...] thirty children to do something they don't want to do – it's a waste of my energy. So you shape it so that they drive it (C1.49-50[2]).

In a similar vein, successful salesmanship depended on building relationships rather than using coercion.

Carl identified people who have had an impact on how he is as a teacher: his mother, also a teacher, who had unending patience with him as a teenager; and some of his own memorable teachers:

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[2] The letters and numbers in brackets refer to the participant, interview number (G for go-along notes) and paragraph. For example, (C1.49) means that this idea or quote can be found in paragraph 49 of Carl's first interview. Similarly, (CG1) refers to notes made at Carl's first go-along.

The other teachers that I got on *well* with… were the teachers who you could have a … *conversation* with. They're the ones that took more of interest … in *me* basically. One teacher just said, 'Don't … ever just do what you're *told*, ask *why* you're doing it and ask *for a reason*'". And that's *fair*. I don't think anyone should ever say, 'Because I *told* you to.' That's *ridiculous,* because … you can't get *along* like that. And there were just some teachers who cut through *everything - all* the cr** of being a teacher - and would just talk to you like a *person*. And I *liked* that. [...] And I think that *is* important. As a teacher, you've *got* to treat every child like a person, otherwise you can't *help* them. That's what we're there to *do* … at the end of the *day* (C1.94).

Another influence was a teacher Carl observed during his training who said the teacher's job was to 'teach children not to need them' (C1.33).

Tucked-in Shirt

In secondary school, Carl was 'one of these kids who had a loose tie, and a shirt untucked.' His head teacher made it clear that he didn't mind pupils dressing like this, as long as when they were doing something important they were smart. 'And he told me, he's like, "You can walk around like that wherever you want, but if it's something important, you make sure you're smart, because this is your school."' Carl remembers thinking, 'That's fair. That I can get on board with. I'm not being shouted at and screamed to for no reason to tuck my shirt in, and that's cool' (C1.91).

As Carl moves between his many roles – initiator, observer, and mediator of classroom activities - he is aware that some of these roles are planned and others are taken on in response to the moment. There are roles that he tries to move away from, such as 'policing' the children's activities, and handing out punishments. He chooses the times when he makes and communicates judgements - 'that's enough now' - and at other times he simply reflects back to the class what he is seeing and hearing so that the pupils can make their own judgements and responses.

At the time of our first interviews, Carl was coming to the end of his first year as a qualified teacher. He had been teaching his Y3 class (7 to 8-year-olds) for nine months and was feeling satisfied that this was a good profession for him.

Right at the start of the academic year, Carl told me, he made sure his pupils knew that they could say what they wanted and would be heard (C1.15; C1.60).

Wanting to find a way to do this that would feel natural, minimise self-consciousness and capture the interest of the children, he and his class watched YouTube videos together on a range of topics. Through discussing together the feelings of people in the videos and how *they* might respond in similar situations, he made sure the children knew they could say whatever they wanted and it would be accepted and valued. As a result, pupils started to talk in front of classmates without feeling self-conscious and very soon pupils were leading conversations and making suggestions themselves (C1.13).

Landscape

In a Maths lesson on co-ordinates, the pupils had been given instructions to work in pairs to draw a table on which to record their results. After a few minutes, a boy approached Carl and suggested that the table would fit better on the page if they turned it sideways and completed it in landscape view instead of portrait. Carl said, 'That's a good idea, why don't you suggest it?' The boy turned to the class, tucked the book under his arm and clapped to attract the attention of his classmates. They looked up and clapped a response. He offered his suggestion; they stopped what they were doing to listen; and many of them took up his idea (CG1).

Despite his invitations to participate, and giving time and space for discussion, Carl is aware that some children are less competent and confident to contribute verbally to SDM and also to listen and respond to the contributions of others. He attributes this to a mixture of home background, a fixed perception about themselves (see *Sharkey* below) or simply the lack of opportunity to learn and practice the skills of expressing a view.

Sharkey

At Parents' Evening, Shaun's mother asked Carl what could be done to help her son to think more highly of himself. 'I told his mum I was going to brainwash him. I said "I'm going to make him more confident. I'm going to fix his self-esteem" and she laughed. She went "How are you going to do that?" and I said "I'm going to brainwash him… It's simple, he's seven! It can't be that difficult, can it?"

In Carl's school, Resilience is represented by a fish; children are encouraged to 'be like a fish' and keep going when things are tough. Carl continues: 'So, for the first six months I was calling him "Sharkey" so he wasn't just a fish, he was a *super fish* who was going to learn to be the most resilient person in the school. So he became "Sharkey" and all the other children started calling him "Shark" and I put a picture of a shark above my desk. I didn't say anything. I don't know if he's noticed, someone else did. [...] And he's like… He's *better* now' (C2.05)

One day the Head came into class to hear the children giving EU Referendum speeches. Shaun was reluctant to get up. All the other children offered encouragement, urging him on, 'Remember when you couldn't do anything… When you just used to cry…go for it!' and 'He got up and did it'.

The head teacher was very complimentary and Carl was pleased to witness not only Shaun's growing confidence but also the powerful encouragement of his peers and the added affirmation from the head teacher: 'As far as self-esteem goes, you can't be much better than the head teacher telling you you're good, can you?' (C2.8)

Carl's Sharkey story illustrates three points: Carl's belief that every pupil in his class is important; his recognition that some children need nurturing in order to participate fully; and the role the teacher can play in changing both the child's own self-perception, and also the way that he is regarded by his peers. Carl recognises that some pupils needs teaching the basic skills for SDM such as how to get the attention of an adult who is already engaged in conversation - 'with a group this size, you just say, 'excuse me' to get attention' (CG1). There are other pupils who for a range of reasons have become 'outliers'. Carl designs classroom routines to encourage *all* pupils, not just those who work hard or behave well, to have a say in how things are done.

> Please be Patient with me
>
> On my second go-along, which was my first visit to Carl's Year 5 class, I saw one boy wandering around the room when the class had been instructed to form lines and later, when they were playing Dodgeball, he was taking part sporadically. Carl's explanation was highly relevant to this study: he explained how nine-year-old Ben had spent a large amount of time on his own with a Teaching Assistant since he started school, due to his antisocial behaviours.
>
> Carl wanted Ben to become a valued and participating member of the class and he described how he had asked the class to be patient with him [Carl] as he was going to be patient with this boy and he told them that there would be times when it might appear as if Ben was getting away with things that they would get into trouble for. He told me that the class had understood this plan and all agreed to it. My observations confirmed this (CG2).

Carl sets up routines whereby everyone gets the chance to contribute to decision-making such as 'Odd and Even'.

> Odd and Even
>
> In order to make SDM fun and random, two pupils volunteer to be 'decision-makers' and they both pick up a card from the teacher's desk, and the one with the odd-numbered card gets to make the decision. Other voting mechanisms have developed. For example, they sometimes vote without discussion or vote without looking at other people (C1.39-42).

The pupils frequently spend time simply chatting together as a class in a relaxed and informal way and Carl described how they have some very relaxed times of the day when 'we just sit on the floor and I will just sit back and let them talk' (C1.17). He sometimes 'backs off' to see if pupils can learn from each other first, aware that whenever *he* responds first, it is unlikely that another child will have a go at assisting their classmate. He discusses his decisions with the class and asks for their input.

Corey's Computer Time

Corey was struggling to behave in class and settle down to work, and had become a kind of social 'outlier'. A colleague had previously agreed with Corey and two others that they be rewarded for concentration with extra computer time. Carl felt uneasy with the arrangement, particularly for Corey:
'I said, "Well that's ridiculous. That takes him out of the class for half an hour and his reward is being away from everybody else?" Carl explained to Corey why he wanted to adapt the proposal: "... You can't have it every day, because I want you in here practising to be part of the class". Carl involved the class in the decision-making. 'I got everybody's attention, and I said, "Look, this is the deal: these three guys have their own reward system, [...] and they are going to get 15 minutes of computer time each. Is that okay with all of you? Please don't talk, but put your hand up if you've got a problem". So one boy puts his hand up, and I say, "Okay Billy, what's up?" He says, "I don't think it's fair". "Why not?" "Because ... they're getting rewarded and we're not". So I said, "Okay, that's fine. But why are they getting rewarded?" And he couldn't explain it. It's fair enough ... and it just wasn't fair ... and it's not fair really. I explained to them that they are getting rewarded because they need the practice: "I understand they get rewarded for something you guys already do, but they need an incentive to do it. Once they do it comfortably then they won't be rewarded any more".
He said, "Okay, whatever, that's fine." I said, "Okay. Well what would *you* like to do? What do *you* think would be fairer?" And he says, "Okay. Well what about if they got to choose someone to go with them?" I said, "Okay, that's fine, we can do that. What happens if they choose the same person every time?" And he says, "No. They've got to choose a different person each time". That's fine, no problem. So now that's what they do. They have 15 minutes computer time each, one person gets to choose one person to take with them. And every week, if they get the time, they get to choose a different person. Which means they'll be spending 15 minutes eventually with people that they don't normally speak to. Which is lovely. So yeah, it was a brilliant idea. And it fitted perfectly' (C1.43-47).

This story brings out some of Carl's qualities: firstly, he is prepared to question and amend school approaches, traditions and routines; he involves the whole class in decisions about individual interventions; and he uses naturally-occurring events as learning for democratic citizenship. This 'practising to be part of the class' permeates Carl's practice, and it feels highly satisfying when it

results in dialogue such as that above. There is a lesson for life going on here. Pupils are learning that the adult doesn't always have the best ideas; that 'talking things out' in front of the class is okay; that it is important that all pupils are comfortable with what goes on in their classroom; and a recognition that decisions about an individual have implications for the class community.

If pupils express resistance to an idea, Carl will ask them about it, and is happy to admit when he has made a mistake, taking responsibility for a less successful lesson:

> But there's other lessons where a lesson's gone really badly. At the start of the year, especially when I was practising [SDM], and I said 'look the lesson was horrible. It's not your fault. It's all me. And I'm sorry. And I will try and get better.' And I made sure that they knew that I was on a learning curve as well (C1.76).

By modelling 'failure' in his own decision-making he shows that this is nothing to be ashamed about, and something to learn from. As there are risks associated with expressing views in class, Carl wants his pupils to be able to feel safe to take those risks. Accordingly, he tries not to reprimand children for their actions *per se*, but uses opportunities to teach them that there is a 'time and a place' for all behaviours:

> I love it that they jump and sing, but not here, not now (C1.91).

He has found ways to make the institutional routines, such as lining up and sitting still in assembly, have a valid meaning for the pupils so that they rarely simply follow them without question. He wants pupils to feel free to question adults' instructions and explanations, to know the reason why they are doing things and to offer their own alternatives.

Carl builds a sense of community in his class, talking to them about ways they could help each other to behave in socially-supportive ways. Carl uses what could be described as 'communal voice' activities, to help the children get used to vocalising 'publically' in a safe and enjoyable way. Carl's football interest

means that he naturally imports community-building ideas from team sports, as he describes here:

> They give themselves a name and make up a communal chant: I start, 'We are the Lions' and the class all scream, 'We work together, we try hard!' (C1.87)

Carl makes it clear to his class that there are school rules, a National Curriculum and other requirements where there is little room for negotiation. He explains the things that *he* has to do, and stuff *they* have to do, making it clear when external factors, such as school and government policies, are driving decision-making (C1.63). He encourages pupils to conform to school expectations but invites them to discuss their own reason for a rule that makes sense to them. Carl accepts accountability for what goes on in his classroom and whilst he is clear with his pupils that *he* is in charge: 'I set the rules, it's my classroom,' (C1.62) he is prepared to change his practice when children question it or offer alternatives. His approach to curriculum planning is to have a number of different possible lessons 'in my head' rather than *one* lesson that he is determined to deliver in *one* way: 'I plan very loosely so it's very easy for them to take on, to let them shape the lesson' (C1.48).

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Jungle Book

Although Carl doesn't accept that the pupils choose what they are going to study, or how lessons are planned, he recognises that his approach to planning enables pupils to play an active role. For example, the class had been studying The Jungle Book, and the pupils asked if they could make Jungle Book masks. Carl agreed and they made the masks during the Art lesson. Following this the pupils kept asking if they could use the masks in Drama to do a performance of The Jungle Book.
This gave Carl opportunities to weave in aspects of the curriculum that he knew need covering: 'And then you kind of just *tailor* it. So we looked at direct speech and *drama*, and we looked at making a *script,* using a script *rather* than direct speech and what the differences were, and then *they* did the play with their masks on' (C1.48).

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Throughout these first interviews, Carl made reference to SDM practices he planned to take forward to his next class in September. He was starting to question whether it was his approach that was successful or whether he just had a very nice set of children this year; a particularly easy class.

5.1.2 Interview 3 - October 2016 (Year 5 class)

At the time of this interview, Carl had been teaching his *new* class for seven weeks. It was his second year as a qualified teacher and the first time that Carl had taught Year 5 (nine and ten year-olds) and he was already becoming aware of the conflict between the academic pressures and nurturing priorities. He was frustrated that these pupils did not know how to work and talk together, but was aware that he had been chosen by his head teacher to take this class specifically because they needed a nurturing teacher after a particularly unstable year. His colleagues had warned him that Year 5 pupils are often challenging due to 'hormones' and that he would have to take a firm line with them. The warning (that 'children will become nastier and more out-of-control because of their hormones') conflicted with Carl's own beliefs about children. He felt so positive about his last year's class and now started to question his previous perceptions about children's competencies and goodwill.

Carl picked up very early on how, unlike his Year 3 class, there was a very strong gender split in this class and two or three boys had a history of disrupting the class and being sent out or taught apart from the others. He saw the inclusion of these 'outliers' and co-operation between the genders as two challenges for the class community, and shared these concerns with his class.

Carl had a Teaching Assistant (TA) who did not share his vision about involving children in decision-making. Whilst it was not easy working alongside this TA, I was impressed how Carl extended to her the same right to hold and express views as he did his pupils, even when these views were at odds with his own.

Carl continued to get encouragement from his head teacher and this helped him to carry on with his approach. Some additional pressures and frustrations appear to have strengthened rather than weakened Carl's resolve to allow

pupils the time and space to plan together and sort out problems between themselves, despite his patience being tried by both pupils and colleagues. Carl was questioning his own judgement about SDM and through this self-analysis was starting to theorise about how a class develops the ability to make decisions as a community.

Not only was *Carl* aware that there are some issues where individuals feel they have to vote with their friends, but the *pupils* were now highly sensitive to the social pressures at play in SDM, and Carl was finding pupils spontaneously discussing what kinds of decision-making would suit the issues involved.

Voting about Voting

Carl's pupils liked the idea that they could propose a vote but he hadn't predicted what would happen next: not only did they sometimes call for a vote themselves, but they started discussing the whole process: 'They like the democracy. Even in subjects as trivial as doing the votes, now they argue about whether it's going to be a blind vote or if we are going to see, and [...] they do enjoy that.'
The pupils started discussing what they were voting for recognising that if, for example, they were voting for 'some kind of a reward' they felt they had to vote with their friends. They discussed situations where they were likely to be 'swayed by peer pressure' by a public vote.

Debates about whether to 'vote blind' or not were made with growing confidence: 'They have started to 'call it' now. They know that if they know they want to make an honest vote, but they feel if people see them they'll have to vote the other way [and the other day] they ended up having a vote on whether or not it was going to be blind. It's ridiculous!' (C3.71)

Despite the length of time that it was taking for this class to start to take some responsibility for their own behaviour, Carl was patient and had concluded that the more he intervened to sort out class discipline, the less they would do for themselves. An example of this was the way in which he had relinquished his previous intolerance for the class telling each other to 'shush!'

Shushing

Carl finds it really annoying when pupils tell each other to 'shush!' and he used to tell them, 'Don't, that just makes more noise. If you just look after yourself, slowly everyone will sense the mood and look after themselves and the classroom will be quiet.' However, this didn't seem to be working and he decided that maybe if he could organise things so that the people who were 'loudest for longest' realised that they were really annoying everyone else, social pressure might mean that they would stop being so loud.

So he let them 'just argue a little bit about how to behave'. He believed that by discussing behaviour together, the children would be 'deepening their understanding of behaviour and how it is important to be quiet'. So he let them shush each other a lot more and let them have a go at each other and he 'just waited'. In the final interview he reported that it was not perfect, but that it was taking them less time to quieten than it had previously (C3.72-73).

5.1.3 Interview 4 - March 2017

Halfway through the year, Carl was feeling worn out. Although he put some of this down to sleep deprivation, having just become a father, he also felt that the task of developing a sense of community and responsibility through SDM in his 'divided' class was an exhausting business. However, he was able to give examples of progress such as having a whole class science lesson where they chose their own groups, designed their own experiments, and sorted themselves out, taking turns to use a small space and share equipment. Where previously there would have been fighting and children walking out of the class, they worked as a community for a whole hour while Carl and two other members of staff 'just sat and watched them'. Carl was particularly pleased to observe one of the 'outliers' (who finds noise and group work particularly distressing) visibly taking time to breathe and count to 10 before getting back to his work. Previously, he would have left the classroom, fought with others or disrupted their work as a way of coping.

Carl started taking some of the issues that were preventing them from working together as a community, and brought these into the curriculum. One example was that he wanted to break down the boy/girl divide in the class which was very strong right from the start. So, in English, when they were studying persuasive writing, Carl got them to look at powerful women in the past and speeches they made. The children enjoyed this and it worked well.

Carl was worried that introducing SDM in Y5 was too late. As all the focus was now on getting ready for SATs in Y6, he just felt that there were not enough weeks left for them to make the changes that he knew required time and patience.

He had some children in his class from 'unhappy homes', who 'appear sad' when they walk through the door in the morning. He felt it was part of his job to 'cheer up' his pupils and this was exhausting him, as their 'family factors' were out of his control. His head teacher suggested that he change his perception of his role in order to protect his own well-being, and he realised that he needed to ensure that his own needs were met as well as those of his pupils. Carl saw that some of his own solutions may not meet with universal approval: he would really have liked to 'chill out and just let them be for a little while' but perceived that this would be 'frowned upon' if it reduced the rate of work expected in Y5.

Carl was, by his own admission, 'worn down, one hundred per cent' and was looking forward to holidays more than ever before. 'I have days when I think, "Ah, this class is getting there", and there are days when I just think it's like the Wild West again. It's madness [...] It is tiring and it is exhausting and sometimes it is really sad.' Nevertheless, he still wanted to teach and he still wanted to be a nurturing teacher who shares decision-making and 'takes things on': 'I can't help it. Without that… I wouldn't be who I am.'

5.1.4 Interview 5 - July 2017

When I met Carl in school for our final interview, two weeks before the end of the school year, he said he felt exhausted. The first thing he told me was that he

had all but given up on SDM: 'It's just kind of… It's just gone out the window' (C5.5). When I asked him what had been so tiring about the year, he said,

> Constantly having the same conversation… constantly having to tell someone… or being *told,* 'No*'*. And you just say… 'You *know* that it's the wrong decision, the one that you're making, but… make it… when you're ready, come back' (C5.32).

suggesting that allowing children to learn from experiencing the consequences of their own decisions is tiring for the teacher. Reflecting on how exhausting it was to allow children to learn from their own decision-making, he said he would find the alternative *more* stressful: 'But, it would be the same, if I was… authoritarian. Except instead of saying, "Go and make your decision", I'd be saying, "You're *in* at break time!"' (C5.33)

I reminded Carl that he had told me at the start of the school year that his head teacher had specially matched him to this 'difficult' class who needed his kind of nurturing approach and Carl said that it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture when in the classroom. He said that our interviews are the only time he gets to really reflect on how things are going:

> Oh I love these sessions man. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't had these once a term. Because now, my day was really bad, up until this point. I didn't, I remembered you were coming but I just put it out of my mind when I was teaching and it's just been… one of those days when everything gets to you. It's a hot stuffy Monday and I don't want to be here and is just one of those… Really close days where everything is just that little bit sharper. But now I feel all right. And these sessions have been lovely because it's just, it's a chance to straighten out my thoughts. And to kind of take stock I think. Well I haven't done that bad a job, really. I have done what I wanted to do. And I've kept trying and that's all you can ask of a kid? You've just got to keep going (C5.79-80).

He reflected on how it is part of teachers' culture 'to dwell on our failures' (C5.81) and acknowledged that teaching children SDM requires more perseverance than teaching them maths: 'You wouldn't stop trying to teach

someone how to divide, why can't I carry on teaching someone how to make the right choice?' (C5.81)

Encouraged to reflect, Carl could think of several examples of improvements in confidence and cooperation of individuals and the class as a whole. He was unsure of whether his democratic approach had worked better than the alternative, but he could not see himself becoming an authoritarian teacher, even though he sometimes felt like shouting at the children.

Carl was to be teaching a Year 4 class in September. His head teacher felt that maybe SDM was more suited to younger children. Whilst Carl was happy to teach Year 4, he said he would like to teach Year 5 again when he has more experience. By the end of the interview he was much more upbeat and made it clear that whilst he was exhausted, he was not stressed.

> See I haven't been stressed this year. Because I've just 'let them be.' And I've been *myself*. But I can understand that. I think if I'd have come in and had to be strict for a long period of time, it would have really got to me. Come in, put a game face on and be that person till the end of the day. That would have been horrendous (C5.95).

He agreed that some of his tiredness may result from being in his second year of teaching, where, compared to last year, he had half the planning time, no Mentor, a larger and notoriously difficult class, and a whole new curriculum to learn and teach, as well as a 'difficult' TA: 'So it makes sense that it would be exhausting!' (C5.97)

Carl was planning to continue to use SDM with his new class, but recognised he had 'just got to fine-tune the craft.' (C5.12). He reflected on whether he might need to 'show he is in charge' and start off with fewer 'negotiables' although, as he reflected, he realised that he was describing the type of teacher he does not want to be. Carl was clear that he can only remain in teaching if he teaches in a way that feels right for him, that is, a participatory one. Despite this, he was still feeling uncertain about the impact of his approach.

5.1.5 Synopsis of points made by Carl regarding SDM.

Theme 1: Meaning, beliefs and values

Beliefs about the value of co-operation vs. coercion

Carl feels that there is 'no point forcing thirty children to do something they don't want to do', and so it is important that they are able to communicate how they feel about the things that he asked them to do, and give feedback him to assist in future planning.

He does not believe that the message that the present school system can give children - that all that matters is their own personal achievement- is 'good for humanity' and believes it leads to low academic achievers being ostracised (C5.75). Carl said that whilst he has found it exhausting to involve pupils in decision-making, he is driven by a strong belief that such inter-personal skills need a place in the curriculum.

> We just don't teach it. It's a *throwaway* lesson isn't it in schools? Your teachers will say 'this is done, that's good, that's good, please don't argue. Get out.' But they spent so much time teaching maths and teaching everything else and not enough time teaching people *how* not to argue. People *are* going to argue, but learn *how*. Learn how to do *nicely*... then how to resolve your conflicts *yourself*. [...] It should be more *apparent* (C5.78).

Sense of Community

For Carl, community is at least equal to and may be more important than achievement.

> It's trying to get children to make a decision based on what's good for the group, primarily. Honestly they've got to make decisions that are good for them, but they have to think about the group first. So being, it's being community-minded, isn't it? It's not selfless but it's going towards it. We've got to learn that we have to live for everyone. Not just yourself.

We all need to be better at sharing. Not just children. Everyone has to. Everyone has to be more community minded so definitely, massively. But it's just… It's so tiring! [*He laughs*] It is... it is!

Well it's a need isn't it, in society? Or in schools - yeah! Big-time! Definitely! I mean you get taught, up to maybe Year 1 or 2, about sharing. And then that's gone. It just doesn't happen again. But that's what it is (C5.72-73).

Carl sees SDM as an important community-building skill. Inclusion of the 'outliers' in his community is a priority, as they are the very pupils who have been excluded from SDM in the past. He sees involvement in decision-making as a necessary way of closing the gap between more and less privileged members of society. Carl says that his belief in nurturing social responsibility of children stems from his own experience of being a difficult teenager himself, and of having friends who were themselves 'outliers'; not academically successful but who are now 'wonderful human beings.'

Carl likes to feel free and able to be himself in his classroom community and for his pupils to be free to be themselves also:

I think in the long run they'll be, *we'll* as a class be better off for it because they *will* be themselves, and they *will* know how to treat each other, person-to-person, personality to personality, rather than pupil to pupil. I think the bonds will be… tighter (C3.26).

He feels that the stronger pupils need to develop the skills and a taste for SDM in order to prepare for ethical leadership: '(T)here are some that need more help, not just with writing and stuff, but don't have as loud a voice. And I'd like to think that the ones with louder voices will speak for them' (C1.32).

View of children

Carl believes that if children are given guidance and opportunity, they can learn to self-regulate themselves as a group. This takes time and patience from the teacher and involves the children learning from mistakes and placing value on

the outcome that is valued by teachers, namely an orderly and cooperative environment, with minimal conflict and noise. Sometimes children can solve problems that adults cannot and sometimes their ideas are better than those of adults. Children need to be given the same respect as adults and this includes being given a reason for the things they are asked to do in class. Even when things are difficult he believes that with patience and coaching, they will sort things out for themselves. However, he continues to be pleasantly 'surprised by children's level of empathy and understanding' (C1.72).

Lifelong learning

The classroom is a great environment to learn about handling choice and experimenting with different options, according to Carl. For some children, they leave school, the authority figure disappears and suddenly they are lost. The most important lessons children can learn at school are about getting along with each other, caring for each other and helping each other to learn. The curriculum is a tool for achieving this, not the other way round.

> ...at the end of the day, they're not always going to be in school so they need to learn how to use choice and they need to learn how to make good decisions. Not necessarily the *right* decisions, because the right decision for each person is going to be *different*. But good decisions that take into account the environment they're in, is important to learn. So, [we have] to teach them not to need us. You know, to be in a situation where maybe they've got to make the rules themselves, or there aren't any rules necessarily, and they have to know to make good decisions and good choices.
> I think there's still the element of pleasing me.
> I think if I stand beside the behaviour board, decisions get made a lot more quickly which is just what every teacher does. You insist on *this*, you insist on *that*, and they have to do it because that's the rule.
> So there is still an element of that. [...] When that authority figure disappears suddenly you're lost. I think the earlier they get choice and the earlier they get options, the *better* really. Especially when it's in such a harmless environment. Having the time and space to get things wrong.
> And I just think that there is an element of these, [...] they're in school to do what they're told and if they're not being told what to do, they don't *know* what to do or how to do it (C4.20-27).

Carl feels that SDM in the classroom is an important way to teach children to interact with adults outside the family, 'how to be respectful and nice to a person who is respectful and nice' (C5.68). He recognises that, for some children, their teachers are the only adults they interact with on a daily basis outside the family, so the classroom is maybe the best place to learn how to get along with adults and make decisions together.

Theme 2: Challenges

The 'system'

Carl realises that he is part of a wider system and as such is influenced by, and has to take into account, the practices and expectations of parents, colleagues, managers and Ofsted. Carl feels that there is an unspoken expectation of '*what school wants from the teacher'* (C2.50) which teachers can fall into without realising:

> Teaching [...] becomes mechanical doesn't it? If you put your hand up and say something the teacher says, 'Thank you, put your hand down,' and picks the next person with their hand up.
> [I want it to feel] more like a conversation that they've always been having, then one comment to the next comment should be in theory a little bit more… free, I guess? It's rather than just responding to the teacher then put your hand down, and being like a robot - you know you can't speak unless you're asked to - you should get people who are putting up their hand in response to someone and who are listening more closely because… that's how it's always been. And sometimes you, I do let the debate go and just let them talk over each other. But they have to practice responding to each other properly (C3.26).

Carl is aware of the children's experience with other teachers, past present and future. It takes a lot of practice, opportunity and encouragement for some children to learn to express opinions and wishes without fear in the classroom and Carl feels that the longer pupils spend in authoritarian or highly teacher-led classrooms, the harder it is for them to recover the natural problem-solving abilities that they practised and developed in Foundation Stage: 'That's how they *live* down there' (C5.61). He feels that if children were given more of a say

in negotiating how things were run in all classrooms, they would get used to it and teachers would have less of a struggle introducing it for the first time in Year 5, for example.

> And I do wonder if Year 5 is too far along for that this kind of practice to be effective because when they've had… like I said, two or three years of, 'these are the rules black and white' [*Carl taps the table as he says this*] this is what you do, it's difficult to come out of it. I mean, two or three years at age 10 is a big chunk of their life (C4.22).

Children's responses

What wears Carl down is the children's resistance and reluctance to take responsibility for themselves. Despite giving them all the same opportunities to talk and share decision-making in the classroom, some children are better placed than others to benefit from these opportunities. Carl says that his role here is to help children change their perception of themselves and each other so that all feel equally able to make requests and express opinions and suggestions. Some children have not had practice at home to form and communicate their own opinions and wishes. Carl sees it as his job to build confidence and teach the skills for both social and 'civic' interaction in the class community.

Lack of a theory

Carl is aware that he lacks a clear progression map against which to plot children's SDM abilities and the related individual and communal developments in 'responsibility' and 'sense of community'.

> But how do you measure that? [*He breathes out slowly pfff...*]
> Well I don't know (C5.73).

The lack of a theory or way of measuring progress of SDM contributes to Carl's uncertainly about using SDM with his class:

> We won't know with this class if they'd had a different
> teacher they would have come out differently. We'll never

know. So I don't know if my way was better or worse. I don't know if in September they'll be ready for Year 6 more quickly because of me, or if they'll be ready for Year 6 more *slowly* because of me (C5.17).

Teacher stress (mental and emotional demands)

Carl feels that lessons involving discussion and negotiation take a great deal more mental power and have less predictable outcomes than lessons where children simply have to follow his instructions to the letter - the type of 'formal' lesson that Carl describes as 'soul destroying' (C4.25). It can be exhausting to feel out of control as a teacher, even when one sets out to 'relinquish control'. This is multiplied by the pressure from colleagues to have a class who just 'gets work done'. He says that it is difficult enough to decide how well SDM is working without having to deal with judgments based on National Curriculum and suspicion from colleagues. When nobody is measuring output, he feels he is doing fine because he can concentrate on the 'important job' of building community and confidence in the children.

Colleagues

All year, Carl has had a TA alongside him in the classroom who does not agree with his approach 'So it makes sense that it would be exhausting!' (C5.97) Whenever he shares his problems with colleagues, they encourage him to use more external control and sometimes blame his use of SDM for the problems he is experiencing. Even when he can see that the class is progressing in their ability to get along with one another and take responsibility for themselves, this is not always perceived by colleagues and it is difficult for Carl to find a way to communicate this to them in the absence of any theory or measures.

Theme 3: Rewards.

Head Teacher support

Carl says he has a supportive head teacher who approves of his approaches, is patient with him and his children, and with whom he can be completely honest about how things are going.

Positive Feedback from Pupils

When children respond to the opportunities to share in classroom decision-making, it can be an intensely satisfying and enjoyable experience for Carl, providing unexpected and successful solutions to commonly-experienced problems. Seeing the class change and 'outliers' becoming part of the community makes it all worthwhile for Carl.

Teacher's own wellbeing

Carl feels that by teaching in this way he feels free to be himself in the classroom and sees teaching as 'the perfect job' (C1.6). However, the wellbeing he gets from SDM is offset by the tension between being the teacher he wants to be and 'the teacher the system wants me to be… What school wants from the teacher' (C2.50). Carl feels uneasy telling people what to do when he believes things could be agreed in a more democratic way, and so SDM with his pupils feels more natural than the alternative. He believes that if teachers had more of a say in what goes on in schools and classrooms, that there would be no problem recruiting people to 'this amazing job'.

Carl feels generally that SDM may be at least no more stressful than a more authoritarian approach. He envisages that if he was able to master SDM his workload could be lightened as he would be able to delegate more planning and classroom activities to the class themselves, rather than having to do them all on his own.

5.2 Participant 2: Michael

I first met Michael in the summer term of 2016, following a request for EP involvement with a pupil of his who had great difficulty communicating and connecting with people, and who was finding school a highly distressing place to be. I was struck by Michael's deep empathy and the unusual lengths to which he had gone get to know this boy and find ways to include him in classroom life. In this conversation, I heard about the way Michael had engaged the class in discussions about helping their classmate and I was impressed by Michael's willingness to adapt his approaches to meet his pupils' needs. Following this meeting he accepted an invitation to talk again with a view to participating in my research. Michael felt his classroom practice was consistent with that described on my recruitment flier and gave some examples from his own practice which confirmed that he sometimes shared decision-making with his pupils and valued the concept. I had also heard from his deputy head that Michael's classroom was highly participative.

5.2.1 Interviews 1 and 2 - November to December 2016

Michael decided when he was five years old that he wanted to be a teacher. At that age he felt that teachers had 'that kind of celebrity status' (M1.1) and liked the idea of a career around 'learning':

> I've always been a learner. Even now as an adult I still go on learning things in the background while I'm teaching (M1.1).

He feels very lucky with the education he was given and described it as 'a really, really solid good education with some very, very good teachers' (M1.4). He wants to give children the same kind of education that he had. His memorable teacher was his Year 5 teacher:

> I just remember her being incredibly kind. [...] I always remember knowing where I stood with her and [...] she could have a really big laugh and joke with you and you could be howling away as a child at something she's doing, but you automatically knew when that had ended and you had to go back to 'right we are learning now, we are behaving' (M1.6).

> I remember being really sure on where I stood with her and what the rules were and what was allowed and wasn't and I think she really does create that element of safety as well from that.
>
> You knew where you stood and everything was safe because you knew what was allowed and wasn't and you knew that if someone did something that wasn't safe she would deal with that. So that was definitely there.
>
> And on top of that just her general teaching skills, like I just remember always understanding what she was saying. She was very clear when she explained things, very visual. Her general teaching practice was really good from what I remember of it (M1.8-9).

Michael had to support himself through university and, looking back, he did not really enjoy those years. However, his favourite job was as Display Designer in a department store where he was given a free hand in bringing together items of merchandise for a 'topical' display. He enjoyed the freedom and creativity this allowed.

Michael was in his second year of teaching and had been teaching his Year 5 class for ten weeks at the time of our first two interviews and intervening go-along. He explained that he was finding this class 'hard work' and whereas he felt able to let his previous class steer the curriculum – see Animal Reports below - by comparison, he feels that his current pupils cannot make decisions about themselves as individuals, let alone decisions that would affect others in the class.

Michael suggested that the teacher is instrumental in assessing and teaching the skills for SDM:

> [The previous pupils] already had all of those underlying social skills in order to do [SDM], whereas this year I feel like *no* class I get in the future is going to be quite as antisocial as this one. That is exactly how I feel because they *were* very bad so I don't think; yeah I don't actually think that in future I'll have quite as bad an issue. But with this class in particular I really do think they *need* those building blocks because they can't do *anything* on their own [*he laughs*] (M1.112).

Animal Reports

Last year, Michael introduced his class to a range of non-fiction texts which they read together. They discussed the idea of different groups approaching different topics in different ways and having a choice in how this was done. Having delivered some 'English formal teaching' and research techniques, Michael then chose Animals as the topic. Pupils paired up, decided on which animal they were going to research and got down to work. They were 'very, very involved in the learning, because it became *their* animal'. They discussed ways of doing searches, gave each other tips and questions they could ask about the animals and showed interest in each other's work. Once they had completed their research, the pupils planned how they would present their own animal project.

Although Michael had planned for the work to stop there, '[he] was so amazed by how good they were' that he invited them to make a display of the work and the class discussed how this might be done. They decided on the idea of a Class Book, a communal project, which they wrote up and illustrated themselves.

Even with this extra task of compiling the Class Book, Michael found that they had completed all of the learning and objectives a week-and-a-half earlier than planned. Some of these pupils have since returned to look at this Class Book, which is still on display in their old classroom (M1.80).

The telling of this story illustrates how, once he had set the parameters for the work and assessed the risks; Michael was sufficiently freed up by his pupils' motivation, excitement and involvement to allow further improvisation and deviation from his plan. As he described the project, he became animated himself, strongly associating himself with the emotions (and tone of voice) of the children:

> No one else is doing this animal, it's my animal, our partner's animal. And we know everything about this animal. You know everything about dolphins but I know everything about chinchillas (M1.79).

Michael was proud of the way he had given pupils ownership of the topic and of the differentiation this created. In this highly-negotiated piece of work, Michael saw his role as animator and facilitator, as improviser and encourager. He found it difficult to find words to describe how he felt when this project was in full flow:

It was very much like that… but it was really like, I can't really tell you. It was really interesting and it was just such a lovely positive project to do. 'I was so amazed by how good you were.' Like, I really was. 'That,' I said to them, 'This is probably the best piece of work, every single one of you has created all year and we need to do something with that' (M1.79-80).

Michael had been able to be much more participative with his *previous* class 'pretty much in all lessons I chose to' by the end of the year, and the extent to which he used SDM was limited not by his pupils' responses, but by his own need to take a highly 'active' role as a teacher. This was illustrated by his conclusion that at those times when he was 'able to stop being a teacher and start being a facilitator [...] it [did] actually get a bit boring to be honest' (M1.72).

In exploring Michael's experience of negotiating the project and experiencing the powerful learning and joyous interaction this unleashed it became clear that the more Michael freed the class up, the more he freed up *himself* to be creative, share more of himself, follow his own interests and focus on the learning in hand rather than the 'curriculum objectives' which, in the end, 'looked after themselves'. He drew in other teachers who could contribute to the class's endeavour, extending 'collaboration' even further. For once, Michael was not having to shut down pupil's learning but was able to 'extend', 'take it that far' and encourage pupils to be more courageous, as he *himself* was becoming.

Michael was surprised at how much quality work the pupils managed to do when he gave them more freedom in their learning. He described how communal ownership of class achievement was developing: 'something we could create that we could be really proud of [...] it was kind of like an element of pride in doing that' (M1.81). Michael was genuinely surprised that by a combination of setting the parameters, negotiating approaches and trusting the children's abilities, they had covered all the curriculum content in a shorter time than planned. This freed him up to use his own creativity and bring his own interests into the project.

Because Michael enjoys researching himself, he tended to do this for the pupils rather than getting them to do it for themselves. Michael's description of his approach to Reciprocal Reading sums up some of his beliefs about his pupils' abilities: he identified an opportunity; he provided the structure within which to work; he told them, 'how you lead yourselves within that structure and how you learn is sort of up to you-ish.' Michael feels that if he gave them 'total freedom' he does not think they would get there: 'But it's about kind of creating those opportunities and in particular the projects' (M1.74). When Michael talked about 'formal' teaching, he referred to it as 'stand up' teaching. This expression reminded me of Michael's reference to his previous teacher as someone who entertained the class with jokes, and his own performances as a singer at weddings and charity concerts. There is a sense that when the children are entertaining themselves, or doing their own research, he feels slightly redundant: 'So I did very little' (M1.72).

Michael incorporates many unconventional activities such as singing and dancing with his pupils in lessons and ways of encouraging them to help each other and work collaboratively. At the same time, he appears to retain responsibility for the majority of decisions in his classroom. Previously, I might have described such an approach as 'highly controlling'. However, having interviewed Michael at length, I would describe his lessons as 'highly crafted' as he takes great care in planning to increase pupils' likelihood of succeeding at classroom tasks. I have come to see Michael as a teacher who 'does conventional things in an unconventional way.'

Michael agreed that he likes to do things that are a bit different. Talking about his hobbies, he told me:

> I've tried to find something, in as many aspects as I can, that
> I *do* enjoy, without it being the thing that everyone does, not
> to be mainstream, just because I know that I don't like that
> (M1.31).

Michael tries to protect his pupils from failure through direct instruction, modelling and the building of classroom traditions. He frequently models in detail how tasks should be performed - such as the precise way in which they

should apply the glue from a glue stick. At the same time, he is transparent with his pupils about how he makes his decisions, for example how and why he has sorted them into groups according to reading ability. He lets them know that they can challenge his choice and can ask to change groups if they want to.

He empathises with the pupils, recognising how they have come to expect the teacher to make all decisions, and also recognises that it takes a lot of investment from the teacher at the start of every year to de-institutionalise the pupils. At this stage in the research, an annual cycle was emerging:

> I think [SDM] is really hard actually. [...] Children actually aren't used to it. So when you go about introducing things like that it's actually really hard for *them*, because they've not done that before either. Especially from having five or six years of formal education to then suddenly have the ability to, it's almost like going back into Foundation Stage in a sense because they've got all of that choice then. So they're kind of used to it from there.
> I think it will throw *them* in as much as, 'Well hang on a minute, where is all this coming from?' I think the other thing that makes it really tricky is that for it to *begin* to happen, it takes a lot of kind of work from the teacher to begin with I think and I see it as overall, not saying that by the end not so much but then obviously you get to September again and start over (M1.115).

Michael's classroom practice had *evolved*, rather than being a response to his training or school traditions and he sometimes felt lost for ideas, ways of implementing a more democratic approach. He had ideas but said, 'It's actually really hard to *visualise* because I don't know what it would look like' (M1.115). However, he felt comfortable allowing the children to have control over how they used the space in the classroom: 'I might say to them, "You know, if you're not learning very well where you are because of where you're physically sat, you can *move*"' (M1.115).

As the interview progressed, Michael appeared to be visualising ways of freeing the children up in the classroom to decide simple things for themselves. Perhaps it was just that the question needed asking:

> I think there are more aspects of, *physical* aspects of the classroom that I could open up to them more, so for example if they're struggling with something in maths and there's a tray of counters over there, rather than me having to say, oh okay counters would help you and go over and get them, maybe if there was a situation where as an individual or as a group they thought, oh actually maybe if we got the counters out and put them over here then that would be something that could help us with this (M1.116).

A natural analyser, Michael was starting to explore the complexity of skills and thinking that this might take:

> But that would take them: knowing where they are; knowing that they would help them with that particular thing they're doing; and then opening that up as a group activity for themselves. So that's quite, there's a lot of thinking in that and that's just the idea of using counters for an activity (M1.117).

The details that Michael then went into offers an insight into his 'teacherly' thought processes, and are worth including in full:

> Yes it's… I think it would have to be very small building blocks and I would say that I probably would imagine if I was having a long-term goal towards *getting* that kind of classroom culture it probably wouldn't *happen* until term 6 [the final half term]. I think it would take a very long time to do. The downside with that is that as much as I would enjoy that and I would see them thriving and that would be the kind of learning that I'd like to see and I think they'd *like*, they go into Year 6 and that would go again anyway. Because their next teacher won't carry on doing what I'm doing, they'll teach in their *own* way which will probably be more authoritarian (M1.118).

There was evidence of some 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger, 1957) as Michael started to realise the full implication of SDM in a culture where this is not the norm. There was a possibility that he might devalue SDM the more he realised what he was up against, in order to reduce the dissonance. He wants to *prepare* his pupils for the existing society, but he does not talk of *changing* society. However, Michael suggested that the 'fun' he and his pupils get out of this approach might be a good enough reason to keep going. It was at this point that he expressed most awareness of the need for some theory to explain the

benefits of shared decision-making for the children themselves. Almost to himself he asked, 'What would it look like in here?' and immediately answered it with, 'I don't know'. He questioned me about what a more participative classroom might look like, showing genuine interest. He wanted help to visualise it for himself and I sensed openness to new approaches. The school already involves pupils in staff interviews and has a school council, which Michael only hears about, but has no knowledge of what they do there.

Michael mulled over the challenges he would have to overcome in order to extend SDM: the improbability that future teachers will nurture this approach and the confusion this could cause the children.

Michael's class have developed many 'traditions' that give them the chance to have fun together. As he described how they create routines for maintaining classroom order Michael adopted different voices and postures mimicking the children's participation in these scenarios, as though re-living their experience.

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Victorian Classroom

Michael welcomes pupils' suggestions for traditions and routines to overcome the need for constant instructions and reminders. For example, as soon as he puts on the James Bond theme, they automatically stop their maths, put their books away and move into their places for English. Although this was Michael's initiative, pupils now suggest their own routines, often related to their Topic. For example, to get order they decided that Michael should say the words 'Victorian classroom!' and they would all sit upright and in unison, with their best 'queenly' impressions, say 'We are not amused!' and get back to work with less noise (M1.103; M1.111).

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Michael was really happy describing the novelty of their approaches and the fun they have together in the classroom. He both entertaining and being entertained by his pupils:

> It's quite fun to come up with things like that (M1.104).

> So many questions and answers they give just 'make my day' and I wish I could just go and tell everyone what they said and I always forget them' (M1.106).
>
> Stuff like that really makes me laugh (M1.107).

Having involved the pupils in creating and adapting routines, Michael felt freed from the stress of maintaining order:

> And actually since having that, I don't need to tell them anything because it's done. It's enjoyable and it's done (M1.111).

Michael does not make assumptions about children's ability to do things but makes it very clear and explicit the *way* he wants things done and expects them to do things. Once again, as with his own memorable teacher, 'you know where you are' as Michael's pupil. As he sees an important part of his job is to model the kind of behaviours and interactions he would like to see in his pupils, he has a heightened awareness of what the children observe him doing:

> A lot of it is modelling, in both the way I speak in the way I do things like, generally, I'm not very good at it this year, making sure that *my* space is tidy… and they can physically see me looking after my things (M1.109).

In teaching pupils to care for each other, he has found that they also care for him, and in this second year of teaching he was beginning to realise that there was something he was doing that was creating an ethos he liked, although he was not quite sure what this was (M1.59).

The Driving Test

The day Michael was taking his driving test his pupils got together and wrote a whiteboard message "Good luck Mr Parker" [pseudonym]. They asked the teaching assistant to send him a photograph of the class in front of the message. She said, 'Just remember that he might not pass, and in that event don't worry because I'm sure the picture will cheer him up'. One of the pupils said, 'He can't fail - he's Mr Parker'. Michael didn't receive the message until late afternoon by which time he'd already failed his test. The next morning he told his class, 'I'm an adult and I failed and that's fine'. He told them that he had already booked his next test, that he would try again and that he would pass (M1.32).

Michael sees the sharing of details of his life as a kind of partnership with his pupils. 'I was able to turn that into a perseverance thing. And I loved that they were already involved in beforehand because they genuinely cared about me passing. It was really cute' (M1.32).

Michael was experimenting with offering his pupils more decision-making powers, but did not yet have enough confidence to let go of the final decisions.

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The Awful Music Lesson

Just before the end of term Michael had a music lesson with his class that was, in his opinion, 'just awful because they would not stop talking. [Michael told them:] I need to talk to you about something [...] I just personally don't feel that the way we are behaving as a class at the moment is very positive. I don't feel like it's very effective for our learning and I don't particularly enjoy being here. I'm not sitting here, standing here now to tell you off about it. I'm standing here to tell you how I feel. [He continued,] And what I would like you to do is talk about how *you* feel, and then we'll talk about that together.'
He then allowed them to have time to talk together. Some of them owned up to their own lapses in behaviour saying such things as, 'Actually I agree, I think it's quite unfair the way a lot of us are behaving'. They acknowledged that they were causing their teacher a lot of stress and were able to identify the additional work he had to do as a result.
Having established that he was not the only one who was disturbed by the behaviour, and felt it needed change Michael addressed them,
'Okay, so that's our starting point then. You are all in agreement with me that the way we are behaving isn't okay. Put your hand up if, like - honestly I'm not going to tell you off - put your hand up if you don't agree with that and if you think that the way the class, we are behaving *is* okay.'
When nobody responded, he invited them to think about ways of 'fixing the situation' (M1.61-64).

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Michael was surprised at how honest the children were, and particularly how they owned up to their own lapses in behaviour. Michael described this conversation with the class as 'a bit PSHE-like' (M1.64). This suggests that he views discussions about what goes on in the classroom as belonging in a certain lesson, or maybe that he recognises that this type of talk is valuable for

children to learn personal, social and health skills. Michael said that he was 'very honest with them' but as he did not feel optimistic that any change would come about, he then had 'an authoritarian chat' (M1.68) with them and decided to introduce the 'traffic light' system his line manager had previously suggested (M1.66). Michael spent a lot of time over the holiday thinking about what he could do with his class' behaviour. However, when they returned, 'they just weren't like that anymore. It was really bizarre'. Michael repeated 'it was bizarre' three times in his description, suggesting that he was mystified as to how the change had come about. He had no theory to explain what had made the difference, and said that his line manager would say it was his 'authoritarian chat' and the threat of Traffic Light punishments. He was planning to have another conversation with the class but in a positive way, and thought he might say, 'If you think back to that chat we had...actually, well, look at *you* guys!' (M1.70)

A rather different experience was Michael's 'collaborative' setting of class rules.

> Class Rules
>
> Michael 'kind of cheat[ed]' when he involved pupils in discussions about class rules. He admits that whilst giving pupils the impression that he was summarising their list, ended up presenting them with a 'catch all' set of 4 rules 'designed by an expert' . Michael wanted to 'rescue' the class from the 30 rules they had come up with as they lacked 'clarity and consistency'. Michael does not view pupils as 'experts' in this context. Rather, he views children as 'quite egocentric (in that) when they're making decisions for themselves it's for themselves anyway.' (M1.99) and claims that as children cannot yet make decisions for themselves they will not be able to make decisions on behalf of the class community. However, he admits that it is mainly *his own* personal inexperience of SDM that prevent him doing more of it: 'I've probably not done many kinds of things of that scale before so I'm probably either a little bit apprehensive about it or actually just haven't got any ideas *yet* as to what I would like to do and how I would like it to go' (M1.99).

Despite Michael's doubts regarding his pupils' abilities to make decisions for themselves, he handed over control to the class more readily when he felt he

would not be judged by others on the outcome. His account of the work following a day with Google employees illustrates Michael's surprise and joy at the way his pupils made and carried out their plans when he allowed them to decide how they would express their learning from the day.

The Google Visit

Following a day when Google employees came in to demonstrate the latest virtual reality technologies, Michael planned for pupils to come back and do some poetry work on it. However: 'when we got back here I said, 'Do you know what, actually I've changed my mind I'm not going to tell you what to do.' I said, 'You're not allowed to do art because we're doing another two hours of art this afternoon, so that's a bit much. But other than that I really don't mind what you do, what you do with what you've just learned about.' And I just said, 'There's the scrap paper drawer, there is A3 paper, there is A4 paper, there's lined paper. You do what *you* want with what you've just learned.' And their work was brilliant! (M2.13)

Around this time, Michael's head teacher was insisting that all male teachers wore ties. Michael has his own stylish way of dressing which doesn't include tie-wearing. When composing a sample letter to teach 'persuasive writing' he wrote a letter 'to a head teacher' to persuade him that it was unfair to insist on male staff wearing ties when female teachers did not have to. This is one example of an 'independent streak' characteristic of Michael.

By the end of the second interview, I sensed that some additional dissonance had been created between Michael's beliefs about SDM and his realisation that he was frequently making all the decisions for the class.

5.2.2 Interview 3 - February 2017

Michael was pleased with how his class was progressing now that they had 'found their own boundaries' (M3.18) and were sorting out interpersonal and educational problems for themselves. He put this down to continual modelling of choices and decision-making. There was a good sense of community and

Michael was continuing to find opportunities to let his class hone their decision-making skills. SDM did not always fit in with certain school 'traditions':

Star of the Week

Every week there is an assembly where teachers identify pupils who have 'shone' academically or socially.   Michael wanted to introduce some SDM into this tradition:

I gave them all a slip and I said, 'I want you to decide who the star of the week should be. So I want you to vote for someone. But I'd also like you to give a reason like *I* do in assembly.' And overall it didn't work [...] Not because they couldn't do it [but] because there were far too many different people being voted for.

It was like, 'I'm going to vote for so-and-so because I know they found this lesson really hard but they tried really well' or, 'I'm going to give it to this person because they've been a really good friend this week' and things like that. So, things that were quite personal to them.

So what I said to them was, 'I can't use this to actually give the stars of the week in assembly for two reasons: one because if I gave it to all of you that would be really unfair on the other classes because they only get two' but also I said, 'No one has really got a majority vote because you've all been so kind and voted for so many different people.' So I said, 'I'm not going to do that. I'll still do it myself next week but what I will do is I will share all of these with you because they're all lovely.' So I just sat and read them all out. And it was really nice. It was quite a nice morale boosting little five minutes of just things children had said about each other. And I said, 'I'm not going to say who has written them but if that person wants to own up to it, then you can do.' So they were like, 'Yeah that was me.' It was quite sweet (M3.25-26).

The children were frequently working in twos or threes by now and if Michael had to interrupt their collaborative talk, he sometimes apologised, acknowledging that *their* talk might take precedence over his. By this time in the year, pupils knew a lot about Michael. For example, they knew that Michael was adopted and they knew his adoptive father's name. He purposefully puts himself on a 'level playing field' with the children helping them to visualise that he was once a child like them (M3.39). Although he was ready for more SDM, he was feeling 'held back' (M3.47) not only by the curriculum and local and national

expectations, but also by his own lack of skill and confidence. He had 'too much uncertainty' (M3.48) and not enough evidence that SDM leads to better learning and outcomes for the pupils. He was still concerned that he may be doing his pupils a disservice using SDM rather than keeping tight control over everything in the classroom.

5.2.3 Interview 4 - June 2017

There were only four weeks to go before the end of the school year when I meet Michael for our final interview. On a personal and professional front, he was feeling good as he had recently been appointed as Head of Year. He was apologetic, saying that he may not be able to talk very much about SDM as he had been spending less time in the classroom recently as a result of this new role.

Although he was finding pupils more responsive in lessons, he was becoming exasperated by their lack of 'bonding' with each other:

> When I dismiss them for break time I sort of just want to run out of the door and get to the staffroom as quickly as possible because I know one of them will come to me, [*he puts on a whiney voice*] 'So-and-so's done this. I've done this to her blah, blah,' and it just… I know it sounds really bad, because obviously I care about the children, but you only get a fifteen minute break! (M4.7)

This newly-expressed sense of disorder may have been in response to the changes pupils had had to adjust to as their teacher was not with them every day. Michael was making the most of the opportunities that his new position had opened up to 'have a say' himself in how things are done. For example, he told me about his proposal for a radical reorganisation of the Key Stage 2 timetable to which the head teacher had responded very positively.

Another initiative Michael had discussed with colleagues is highly relevant to this thesis. He proposed that staff organise their lesson planning as year groups and involve rotating groups of pupils in planning the content and delivery of the curriculum. He wanted to introduce what he described as the 'child's mind's eye

within the learning' (M4.11) into lesson planning. I asked Michael how he got this agreed with his head teacher. He said that his proposal coincided with the Senior Leadership Team asking all staff to involve children as participants in their learning. Michael was showing greater confidence in using SDM:

> I think overall, I know in my head that the theory of it is solid, and it *does* work and it's *important* and it gives them a sense of pride and all the rest of the things I've mentioned. I just think the practice of actually doing it *consistently* on a daily basis is really dependent on *so many factors* that it can be really hard. But I've never let any of that… knock the fact that I think it's a good idea, if that makes sense. ....um, I just think it is *really hard* to do (M4.31).

I reminded Michael that in a previous interview he had described the conditions that he felt were not yet in place to support SDM: it was difficult to see how it might look; and teachers do not have the skills and the ideas about how to put it in practice in the classroom. I mentioned that it seemed from the way he was talking about his future plans that these were no longer holding him back and he replied:

> I think being in the leadership role… allows me to have more ideas about how it could work because I can view it from a leadership perspective. So I can think, well okay we can get them involved in planning because I'm allowed to say 'they can do that.' So that's a bonus, yeah. Whereas when I was *not* Head of Year, I couldn't have said 'let's bring children along to planning meetings' because [...] I'd have to have agreed that with someone else and she might have said 'no'… and those sort of things [were] kind of a barrier I guess (M4.32).

In his new role as Head of Year, Michael was putting SDM into practice with his Year 5 team (M4.34-35) which was a new experience for them and was proving to be highly enjoyable for Michael and well-received by colleagues.

Interestingly, Michael described how it can be at least as difficult, if not more, to involve *adults* in SDM:

> Actually they were fairly inexperienced as a team. [We] sort of sat round a table, not giving much, and it was like drawing blood from a stone for a little while. So that was quite difficult

as well. It can be almost as hard with adults as it is with *children* [*laughs*]. But, I was very clear with them. I said, 'I'm *not* just going to say this is what we are doing because is not about *me*. It's about us together doing what *we* want to do.'… But it was hard [*laughs*] (M4.44).

Michael was feeling much more able to have a say in decisions that affect him and saw the parallel with his pupils' position. He now had personal experience of the difference that 'having a voice' can make. When I asked him how this felt, he replied:

> *Exciting*, I think, because it's really nice to be able to put my ideas across for the first time [...] and actually not just be *listened* to but actually come to fruition in some way. I also really like the fact that my confidence in expressing my ideas to the rest of the team is *met* with confidence from them to say 'No'. Which I really like [*laughs*] (M4.36).

This promotion had helped Michael to experience what it is like to be given more of a say over his own life in the classroom, and he recognised that this power feels good, and he wanted more than ever to give his pupils a voice. Michael was looking forward to seeing how his plans would turn out: 'I can't wait for September. We're going to start doing our long-term planning tomorrow after school' (M4.22).

Despite his lack of time in the classroom, Michael was able to update me on his new idea about introducing SDM into the weekly Star of The Week assembly:

> Do you remember how ages ago we spoke about the idea of children choosing the Star of The Week? I'd like to go back to that but do it differently: I'd have another box with some voting slips by the side but I'd want it to be quite specific with it which is why I think where it failed last time (M4.29).

Michael was planning to link the voting to the school's focus on Values, so that the children would offer evidence for how the person they voted for demonstrated a particular 'value'. He had taken what he has learnt from his SDM experience and was seeking ways to apply SDM beyond the classroom; he had learnt from his 'experiments' and was not allowing setbacks to prevent

him from developing new approaches. Michael described how he put his ideas to his head teacher:

> Yeah, I suppose it was me being a little… Wanting to be forward thinking and proactive and I suppose it was a little bit 'ballsy' from the point of view that I pretty much did go and meet with the head teacher and said 'these are the issues that we have. I want to fix them' (M4.12).

Interestingly, at the same time as Michael was generalising SDM beyond his own classroom, he discovered that his pupils were building on the SDM they had experienced in class by offering their own input in another teacher's lesson: Michael's student teacher had given out lolly ices as a class treat and one of the children said,

> 'We should do a tally and a bar chart about who's got what flavoured ice cream. [*Michael puts on an 'enthusiastic' voice*] Yeah, let's do that!' And Miss A was like, 'All right, go for it' and they did. And they're a class that actually, it's the bottom set for maths, so they don't, they don't *like* maths as such all of the time, and they can find it a real struggle… but they had a moment of 'this is what we want to do' and she said 'yes' and they did it (M4. 26).

5.2.4 Synopsis of points made by Michael regarding SDM.

Theme 1: Meaning, beliefs and values.

The right to decide

Michael believes that decisions should be made by those who are most affected by them. He feels that all too often the decisions about what rights to grant groups are decided by people outside that population:

> Yes. So like, as an example - it's quite a personal example that I don't mind sharing - if you look at things like gay rights, the majority of people that decide what gay rights are, are straight people. So the way I have to live my life and the countries I'm allowed to visit and things like that are limited by people that don't understand my way of life. And that makes no sense to me. And that's kind of where I'm coming from with it.
> It's the same with racism. Lots of decisions in the past about

how black people or Jewish people were treated were made by people that weren't black or Jewish. And that, that bothers me. I think that's a problem. Because I should, or people in general shouldn't have to live their lives in the way that's affected by people that have *nothing* to do with them. So that's a fundamental basis of where my beliefs come from. It's that you should be out to make those decisions that affect your life for yourself (M3.40-42).

Michael is aware that school can become a kind of 'bubble' whose practices have little relationship to the outside world (M1.119) in which there is little 'restorative justice' (something his school practices) and where decisions get made by those with the most power.

He is honest about teachers feeling the need to have the last word, even whilst giving the impression that they are handing over decision-making power to the class. He has a strong sense of 'being fair to the children' (M1.36) and where possible avoids what he refers to as the 'fantasy classroom bubble' (M1.50) where teachers are not open with their pupils about how decisions are made. He is aware of situations where he has deliberately designed approaches to *prevent* pupils trying to question his judgement and change the outcome. For example, the Traffic Light system where pupils get additional penalties for trying to talk Michael out of giving sanctions: he intentionally did not have the class points display on the wall so that the children would not 'question why it is that they are not being rewarded'. So what Michael is saying is that by making decision-making 'visible', it makes it possible for children to question the teacher's judgement: 'So they're not allowed to ask me if they're allowed to move back up... So they need to understand that *that's* my choice' (M1.47).

It is good for children and it is what they are good at

Michael believes that children who are always told what to do 'lose their imagination' (M2.21). He enjoys the opportunity to be creative (M1.22) and feels creative when he facilitates his pupils' creativity. However, he has mixed views on democracy:

> If I'm teaching them something in English and I do it in a democratic way and the outcome I get isn't as good as if I just led it myself, then I would think actually if the *outcome* is not as good then the *learning* hasn't been as good. But I think that would be the case with most things you do as a teacher. If the quality was suffering you wouldn't do it. I'm not saying that *is* the case but that would be something I would be concerned about. Even if that high-quality output takes more time, that's fine. Well, within reason (M2.57).

Michael believes that children are naturally good at making decisions about their own cohort, especially when they can see that others benefit:

> I think children naturally like helping [...] I think that they *like* being involved and helping and doing things that support other people (M3.30).

Children know best what motivates them and SDM allows children to let their teachers know about their own experience and interests:

> So it might bring out, you know, 'Oh we really like this thing that's, you know, on TV at the moment, can we base the lesson around that?' We've not, we wouldn't think in that way because we're not children. So I think yet more the child's sort of mind's eye within the learning… What would bring with it? Probably a higher sense of… fun for the children. I think they'd enjoy it more.… A sense of ownership, probably around their learning and they'd value the things they were doing…um just general communal involvement I think. Yeah (M4.10).

Theme 2: Challenges.

Need for models and exemplars

Michael finds it hard to involve pupils in SDM because he has not seen it in practice and there are no traditions of doing this in his school. Most of Michael's other teaching and classroom management approaches he claims to have picked up from the teachers he was on placement with during his training (M1.43). As he was never placed with a teacher who involved pupils in decision-making, he has not seen examples of this working first hand, so has to make it

up as he goes along. He feels he does not have the skills needed for SDM, as this was never covered in his initial teacher training.

Need for careful planning

Michael believes that children need to be able to make decisions for themselves as individuals before they can take part in communal decision-making. The classroom has to be a safe place for the pupils and the teacher. SDM has its risks and it is the teacher's responsibility to assess and manage this risk. He believes that the more that SDM can be about routines, the less time and energy has to be put into the smaller decisions. For example, the routines that Michael and his pupils have devised, and continue to adapt, for lesson changeover and tidying up become *their* routines, and *their* procedures, which makes them easy to follow. He has concluded that there are three parts (M1.98) to creating a classroom culture where decision-making can be shared: 1) you first have to develop the culture of individual responsibility; 2) you need to have experienced it yourself (SDM in the classroom); and 3) you need to have more control over your own classroom, for example, seating arrangements (M1.102).

The 'planning dilemma'

Michael sees that when the class decide amongst themselves what approach to take, they are energised and creative and produce their best work ever. However, the direction they take it in is unpredictable and this is a problem for teachers in a culture where they feel they are required to assess all work on an 'individual pupil' basis, and pupils are expected to complete work in a uniform way.

Time

Michael sees use of time as a constraint: *either* teach *or* have discussions. He does not yet see the relationship between discussion and learning and how teaching might be through discussion. He feels constrained by not having 'any free time'; his time is all accounted for and he has little flexibility if any:

In order for me to have a meeting or discussion like that I have to not teach, because there is no other way in this system to do it. I don't have any free time. We have a five-minute registration then we have lessons all day by the hour and then there is a registration and then there's home. There isn't a block like a blank bit ever (M1.127).

Need for a theory and means of assessing outcomes

When Michael involved the class in discussions about behaviour, for example in The Awful Music Lesson, he did this because it felt the right thing to do. However, he has no theory to refer to for this practice and no way of assessing his outcomes other than subjectively. He puzzles over what it is exactly that is helping him to get 'the ethos he likes'. He also seeks a theory for what SDM does to the children.

His big question is:

Is that better for them, are they going to get a better learning experience from [SDM] and actually is their progress going to be better with me because of the way I'm doing that? Or actually in the long run is it a waste of time because their progress will be the same and actually they're going to go back to someone that's completely different next year anyway (M1.119).

When Michael gives the class a free rein to decide how they will approach the follow-up to an educational input he almost cannot cope with the variety of high-quality output they produce, and is puzzled about how the class were able to achieve so much without his instruction following the Google visit:

Every single thing is different. Not one of them is the same. Not one of them have had the same idea. They've all done very different things in very different ways but they've all [...] completed the non-existent task that I gave them, which is a really odd thing to say isn't it. Because I haven't actually given them a task, but I *have*. And they've *done* it. So I didn't expect them to do anything in particular… But what they've done is sort of what I expected them to do. It doesn't make any sense does it?' (M2.13).

Teachers need to have control over their own classroom

Sharing a classroom with other classes for certain periods each week means that the desks have to be arranged in a way that suits all teachers who use that space. Michael feels that teachers today have little 'say' in what and how they teach, so it does not feel natural to offer that 'say' to pupils:

> My democratic beliefs are that the things that they should be learning about and how the time should be spent in school isn't represented by government. So I don't get that anyway. So if I don't get that as someone with a degree, that's been to 'uni', that knows how to teach children, who has that rapport with them, and can kind of have that vision of where I personally, this is just a personal thing, think that they should be between now and the next seven, eight years, if *I* don't have that how can we give that to a minor? (M3.44)

The children

Michael identifies that his pupils are not used to SDM, they do not expect it and take a long time to get used to it. They lack the skills and practice and also lack the experience of adults:

> I don't think a lot of children have the foresight to see the importance of certain things that they need to know. I don't think they've got that idea of, like, at the age of nine you really don't care about what you going to be doing when you're 18 do you? Do you know what I mean? So you don't have that foresight involved (M3.43).

When I asked Michael what it would be like for him if he involved pupils more in SDM:

> *Oh,* it would be interesting because I know that I'd end up playing that game you always play in the classroom of 'let's see if the children can get to what's in my head.' So you kind of… Yeah you sort of... I go into the conversation with, 'this is what I'd do,' and then I'd wait for the children to arrive at what *I'd* want to do. And that's really hard not to do. And I think it's also really hard when you want to let them… do whatever it is they want to do, then in your head it's actually that lesson's not going to work because of this, in that you have to be a practical one that then shoots it down after.

> Yeah, so I don't, I think it would depend on whether it was effective or not as to whether I'd keep doing it. It's something I've got to try (M4.11).

The system is not SDM-friendly

To get SDM up and running takes a lot of teacher investment, and could become an endless chore: 'You get to September and have to start over again,' (M1.14) with no faith that the next teacher would carry it on: Michael thinks that 'they'll teach in their *own* way which will probably be more authoritarian' (M1.118). In addition, he finds some classes more challenging than others and so different approaches have to be taken with different classes (M1.99). There is no blueprint.

Michael is concerned that parents, Ofsted and others expect uniformity of practice and outcome for children. Michael has found that this is the one thing that does not happen when children get to decide.

Michael feels most free to involve pupils in decision-making when 'it doesn't matter' (M2.14), that is, when he is not going to have to account to someone else for every pupil's performance on a task. Michael is happy to be challenged by his pupils and does not take it personally, but fears less for the outcomes for the pupils than for the consequences for him as a teacher, if things do not turn out right (M2.49).

Although Michael feels that his pupils do not judge him, he thinks that his colleagues sometimes say to themselves, 'What is this guy doing?' (M2.2)

Theme 3: Rewards.

Children are full of surprises

When Michael gives the children the opportunity to decide, they come up with unexpected ideas. When left to decide as a class how to tackle an issue they utilise all their skills and imagination, are highly motivated and do some of their

best work. Behaviour is best when they have decided how to work. When given the choice, Michael's pupils work in mixed ability groups (M2.16) and work well together. This surprises him.

Self-worth

Michael has aspirations for himself and his class. He sees himself, in some respects, as a 'self-made' man and gets satisfaction from seeing his pupils do the same for themselves.

Love and belonging

Michael feels great whenever the class get together to plan something as a surprise for their teacher, such as their good wishes for his driving test and the time before Christmas when, completely unbeknown to Michael, every child had somehow taken part in the hidden manufacture (under their tables) of a giant 'communal' paper chain that they presented with a flourish at the end of the lesson (MG1). Michael is aware that there is something he is doing in the classroom that is creating the ethos he likes (M1.59) but he cannot quite define what it is.

Fun

Michael is motivated by novelty, change and challenge. He enjoys trying new things (M1.18, M1.24) and he enjoys the unexpected and novel things that happen with SDM. He wants to know how things work, and likes to create routines for the class, which he invites them to design collaboratively. He spent some time during his training in a school where the children all sat quietly, and he 'hated it'. Although he does not like 'battling' with his pupils (M1.42) he does enjoy a class where there is more interaction and challenge from pupils.

Although he is ambivalent about whether SDM helps children in the long term, Michael finds it is more fun than taking an authoritarian stance, and so will probably continue to find ways to do this:

> But then is that [SDM] more fun? Yes, okay it was probably the best way to go then (M1.119).

Michael shows obvious joy when describing what happens when his pupils participate in SDM which suggests it speaks to something within him. When he judges that there is a reason why he needs to curtail their decisions, he can feel torn, such as the time when a boy wanted to devise a drama in response to the Google input:

> Everything *in* me wanted him to do that [...] if I could have done that, I would have done it in a heartbeat. It would have been really cool. And I've got no idea what their outcome would have been. I don't know what that would have become. That would have been really interesting (M2.18-19).

5.3 Participant 3: Philip

Philip was identified as a potential participant for this study by an acquaintance of mine, Rob (a pseudonym), whose daughter Philip taught. Rob's daughter loved being in Philip's class and he felt that Philip really understood children's needs. As a governor of Phillips school, Rob remarked that the School Council had flourished with Philip's contributions. With Philip's consent, Rob gave me Philip's email address and I contacted him, sending a copy of the teacher information sheet and flier, and arranged a telephone conversation. When we spoke, Philip confirmed that he sometimes used SDM with his class, and said that he was strongly involved with the School Council and was responsible for Pupil Voice throughout the school.

5.3.1 Interview 1 - March 2017

Philip had been a teacher for seventeen years, all in the same primary school. He recalled his own schooldays with pleasure alongside what he referred to as a 'traditional' family life, with attentive and caring parents who spent time playing outdoors with their children and encouraged Philip to work hard at school. The state primary school Philip attended was run by a non-traditional head teacher who kept animals, believed in children spending time outdoors and did not insist on school uniform. Philip believes that this experience gave him a lifelong interest in animals and ecology. This unorthodox head teacher may also have provided a democratic role-model for Philip.

Philip worked hard at school but never really had any ambitions and when his peers were talking about going to university he had no wish to commit himself to any particular career. It was by following his father's sporting hobbies that he eventually took a degree in Sport Science, did 'a bit of coaching' and found himself doing a P.G.C.E. in Secondary P.E.. Still with no real idea what he wanted to do, he was working as a sports coach in several primary schools and ended up running some sessions in the school where he now teaches. Even though Philip immediately liked the atmosphere, he did not respond initially when the then head teacher offered him a job, and it took all of his father's persistence and encouragement for Philip to eventually accept the offer to.

Seventeen years later, Philip still feels 'a bit of a fraud' alongside 'primary trained' colleagues, never having trained as a primary teacher.

By his own admission, Philip was a 'borderline' grammar school student and had to work hard. He values a sense of obligation in himself and others and believes that there are times when people need to be 'forced to do things for their own good', maybe because he perceives that in his own life he needed pressure from his teachers and parents to get the best out of him, in the absence of any real inner drive.

As a teacher, he always felt that he related well to children and valued those of his own teachers who had a relationship that was 'casual....without being too informal' (P1.7). He has positive memories of one particular teacher in his sixth form who would invite students to prepare the content of lessons at home and then design the lesson around their contributions. This teacher made a special effort to get to know them 'as people', and was a role-model for Philip.

Philip felt that up until about six years ago, when he became a father, he used to feel like a child himself and was as interested in his pupils' interests, music and hobbies as they were. He said that after that he related better to his pupils' parents, still wanted to have a close relationship with his pupils, but felt that in becoming a parent he had formally 'registered' that he belonged to a different generation than his pupils.

At the time of our first interview, Philip had had his Year 5 class for nearly two terms (seven months). As with the other two participants, Philip told me that the class he had *last year* was the best; that they participated well and he could involve them in SDM much more easily than his present class. In particular, Philip bemoaned a lack of interest from the boys in having a relationship with him, their teacher. He was finding little reciprocation from the boys to his attempts to have conversations or discussions. They seemed content with the relationship they had with each other and he felt they did not have any space in their lives for a relationship with their teacher as well. The girls were more responsive to his efforts to share decisions, but even they were not as

participative as he would have liked them to be. He put this down, in part, to their parents (see below) and partly down to the amount of time - the boys in particular - spent 'on screen' affording little practice in two-way verbal interaction.

Parents

Philip described his own parents as 'just like something out of a Ladybird book' (P1.3). His mother was Chair of the PTA and was 'quite active in school' (P1.5).
Philip reported that many of his pupils' parents fall short of his expectations. He offered the observation that his pupils are an unresponsive lot, and that they 'don't probably have the motivation from home' (P1.21). He saw the pupils' unresponsiveness reflected in their parents' behaviour and contrasted the responses of pupils' parents to that of his own parents:

If I took my message book home at South Barn and my Mum had seen that I was on a report card or have something in there I think my Mum would have done something about it. We have these parents in for parents evening. 'Right, your little Johnny who is on report…' Yeah. You're expecting something back.

Or I'm having parents evening with you and I'm telling you, 'He doesn't do this he doesn't do that,' and I don't get anything back off the parent. And I know which parent I'm talking about. You can see in the parent what the child's like. So I don't know if it's the parent or… I'm talking to the parent and saying, 'Right, blah, blah, he's not engaged in lessons, doesn't take care, doesn't finish their work,' and they just sit there and don't say anything' (P1.21-22).

In our initial discussion about the research, Philip said that he was really interested in pupil participation, that he had school-wide responsibility for Pupil Voice, and ran lots of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Philip's Pupil Voice role was, it emerged, restricted to organising the School Council meetings and over the course of our three discussions Philip volunteered no links between his Pupil Voice role and SDM in the classroom.

As with other parts of his life, Philip made no pretence of having any great ambitions for himself or his class and this seemed to extend to his steps

towards SDM in the classroom. He welcomed and responded well to guidance and suggestions from his head teacher and as 'participation' was a key concept of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) training his head sent him on, he employed the participatory activities from P4C in his classes from time to time. Philip described how it was the *pupils*, not he, who started bringing P4C communication protocols into wider classroom use. Philip always starts the year involving the pupils in setting 'class rules':

The Class Rules

We just basically bash it out [*he laughs*] in that they sit down, [...] and we say, 'Right, okay. How do you want this class to run?' They come up with the rules. We write them all down on the board and then we say, 'All right, are any similar?' We mesh them together. 'Are there any [you] don't want?' Usually I say, 'Right, *maximum* of about 10 because otherwise you can't, ten's too many'. I say to them, 'Actually they will need to be 'positives' so rather than we *will* not, we *will*. So, 'We will not throw rubbish,' that's a really bad example, 'We will keep the classroom tidy.' And so there's things like that… [And then what happens to those rules?] They're displayed upon the wall there. Although I do think actually we need to do it better because we don't really refer to it as well as what we possibly could.

Philip believes that the rules the pupils come up with are 'old hat' and others are 'not *manageable'* or rules 'they want you to hear. Like, we will listen to each other in class.... We will respect other's property. That kind of thing which, yeah, they should do anyway? It's more like they're not necessarily school rules they're kind of whole-life values. So they probably should do them anyway. And actually, if we're going to use them we should keep kind of referring to them and say, 'Okay we said we were going to listen to one another in class. Are we?' (P1.24)

Philip expressed the opinion that if a teaching approach is popular, if 'everyone is doing it' then it 'must be good'. P4C fulfilled this requirement, along with several other commercial 'packages' that the school had recently bought into. Philip told me that his head teacher came in to observe an English lesson on Similes recently and suggested that instead of Philip deciding the lesson objectives, he could involve the class in agreeing what these might be. Philip then tried this and found that the pupils enjoyed it and came up with sensible

ideas: 'So I have done that a couple of times and is quite good because it actually gives a bit of ownership for their work' (P1.26).

Philip puts effort into getting to know his pupils, and was happy to take on his head teacher's ideas for classroom participation. However, I got the feeling that Philip saw SDM as a 'useful tool' in his toolkit rather than it being essential to his teaching.

Philip said that the culture of the school fostered relaxed and informal interactions between staff and pupils and that although there is not much 'formal' SDM, there are many informal conversations between staff and pupils where their ideas are sought and responded to. He does not see his own relationship with pupils as being very different to those of his colleagues, describing the school as a very 'nurturing' and 'paternal' environment (P1.30) where pupils can just go and talk to the teachers very freely; a place where you can sense 'the gentle hubble-bubble' of constant communication (P1.33).

Nevertheless, Philip recognised that there are some teachers in the school who see it as 'revolutionary' that children can be allowed to get up and walk around the classroom to pick up their own worksheets or be invited to prepare content at home to deliver to classmates in a future lesson – things he says he does frequently.

Philip's perception was that the leadership team make decisions and the teachers implement them. Whilst enthusing about how well staff are listened to, he commented on how little influence he has regarding school policy:

> I've been here fifteen, sixteen years so… I would question whether everyone feels they have a voice. I think it's through being here… quite a long time. But I always felt like after the kind of first couple of years of being the new boy, I feel you've always had a voice. It might not have always been *listened* to…and I don't think that's part of management. I think they listen... they listen but then *they* decide what they're going to do with it (P 1.34).

Philip said that he gives frequent opportunities for participation in class discussions, which he said 'gives the children a voice':

> It allows them to talk about things are kind of… the bigger things in life. So, Donald Trump for example [*he laughs*]. The other thing, it's good, great they're kind of listening skills and valuing people's opinions and realising that you might disagree with someone's opinion but you're not actually disagreeing, it's not a personal affront on *them*. [...] The way that I planned it into kind of lessons in the past is an alternative way of delivering the curriculum in that you're looking at kind of bigger issues that they can implement into their learning (P1.36).

Philip described the kind of lessons he would like more of:

> I think the best teaching is when you've actually got a lesson plan in front of you [*he laughs*] you know where to start, you know what your end goal is and you've got all this stuff in the middle you want to do. But actually, you just kind of, you start, you've got your skeleton and you just kind of go off on a tangent because actually, I think the best teaching is when you start your lesson and then every kind of five or ten minutes you're doing all these little mini-plenaries (P1.28).

Philip explained that he stops frequently to ask the class how the lesson is going for them. Although he does this to gauge whether his pace and explanations are working for them, he suspects that sometimes pupils just copy the response of others around them, and he is not certain that pupils always give an honest response.

He described a one-off project where he gave the class six topics to research and present to the class. This worked well. One of the unexpected but positive outcomes was that he was relieved of some of his planning tasks: 'but actually that means I didn't have to teach six lessons on those [topics]' (P1.46).

5.3.2 Interview 2 - May 2017

Two months after our first interview I visited Philip in his classroom for a go-along, followed on the same day by our second interview. This go-along enabled Philip and I to share some classroom experiences, heightened his

awareness of what was going on in the lessons, and offered some concrete examples to aid our exploration of his SDM experiences. I commented on the calm way in which pupils entered the classroom after the lunch break. Philip attributed their orderly behaviour to whole-school approaches, rather than his own efforts, saying that *all* pupils in the school come into their classrooms in this way, getting settled for a period of silent reading without the teacher needing to say a word. The atmosphere of the class was relaxed and calm and did not feel at all regimented.

Philip continued to compare his class unfavourably to previous classes he had taught. However, he felt his present class had responded well to the P4C 'training' techniques for whole class discussions. Philip had been pleasantly surprised that pupils had independently started using some of these for classroom deliberation more generally.

Philosophy for Children (P4C)

I don't feel [P4C is] threatening, no one is ever kind of… um told that they have to speak. The only thing that I make, that people *do* have to do is they have to [...] show that they're actually *engaging.* If you agree with someone you put your thumbs up, thumbs to the side [*he shows me the hand signals*] ...used by pupils to show they are listening, agree, disagree, or want clarification.
So even if they don't want to actually say anything, they can kind of show that they are actually [listening]. It stops children just sitting like this with their hands crossed because that just shows that their actively involved. [...] The teacher doesn't choose who does the speaking so if you just put your point across about religion and I've got my hand open, then you choose me because I've got my hand open. If I haven't got my hand open you don't ask me.
[In P4C] I am called a Facilitator. The child who's just *spoken* chooses the next person, not the adult. The good classes [...] were so well-trained in P4 C if they wanted to say something they would start putting their hands open just in a normal kind of class situation. And [something] which is *really hard* to do, because children are so trained to speak to *you*, it's actually getting them to not speak to *you* [the teacher] '*I* don't want to know the answer, I *know* the answer.' it's actually to turn around and tell the class (P1.38-40).

In this account, Philip showed that he valued having a system that overcame some of the common issues of class discussion, such as including less vocal children. He showed genuine pleasure when describing how pupils started to generalise the hand signals independently in the classroom for other discussions. Philip was using SDM to agree ways of improving concentration and behaviour, or in lessons where he had already decided that the outcome could be flexible, and was not subject to formal teacher assessment.

However, I got the feeling that Philip was perhaps using SDM as a 'last resort' when he has tried everything else. An example of this was the time when he did not know what to do about class behaviour:

> Secret Student
>
> We had a real heart-to-heart as a class. And I said this isn't working. I said, I'm coming in every day, I'm being really grumpy because you're not doing what I'm asking you to do. I didn't say that… Actually this is no fun for me, this is not how I teach. Okay, I want to be able to kind of come in and be normal. So actually at the moment this is no fun for me, and actually this is no fun for *you*. And so we kind of bashed around some ideas, I can't remember, we had things like, 'Oh when someone's naughty they have to stay for the whole of lunchtime…' you know the things that. Kids came up with some ideas and we came, I came up with some ideas and I said, 'this is what I've done with the class bang, bang, bang, bang, bang' (P2.15-18).
>
> Having offered his list, Philip invited the class to generate and discuss ideas, and they chose 'Secret Student' something Philip had seen on a TV programme. Philip chooses a pupil at random, but doesn't tell the class which pupil this is. He monitors this pupil's behaviour throughout the day and at the end of the day reports to the whole class how this pupil behaved and worked. Only if the report was positive does he reveal the name of the pupil.

Although Philip had learned some practical techniques for facilitating class discussions from P4C, he claimed he was initially chosen as the person to go on the P4C training because he had the personality and teaching style to do this well. By his own admission, Philip has never felt threatened by having his ideas

or authority questioned by children. At the same time he believes that sometimes children 'question the wrong things' (P2.27) in that he likes pupils to know that the teacher is the 'ultimate judge' of what may and may not *be* questioned.

Philip described how the boys and girls in his class responded differently to the opportunities to discuss issues affecting the class: the girls 'have the skills to do it or the maturity to actually do it. Whereas the boys ... it's an opportunity to kind of… talk and not do what they're supposed to be doing' (P2.5). Philip referred several times to 'maturity' or lack of it to explain why pupils would or would not participate in class discussions or respond to the opportunity to make decisions, but was unable to explain this further. He felt that in order to be able to use more SDM pupils, particularly boys, would need to 'be more mature' and 'need to try harder' (P2.39).

Two thirds of the way through the school year, Philip was feeling that he had done everything he could to encourage this class to take more responsibility for their learning and behaviour, both individually and as a class. He was starting to wonder whether this was out of his control. The pupils were *doing* what he asked them, but he believed that they did not want to put in the extra effort required to make decisions for themselves:

> I've got to the point now where actually it's not my fault. It's not my fault that they… don't do - not don't do what I want them to because they *do* do what I want them to do - they don't do it as *well* as I want them to do it, or they actually ...they are not *getting* it. One of the reasons they're not getting some of it is because they're just not *listening* or they're not engaged or they just can't be bothered. It's got to that point where [...] I'm not taking responsibility (P2.36).

5.3.3 Interview 3 - July 2017

Seven weeks later I returned for our third and final interview. I was interested to know if Philip had finally warmed to his class and to see if I could understand what the phenomenon of SDM meant for Philip *emotionally*. Despite being able to give me a few examples of SDM, Philip's responses focused more on the

aspects of 'participation' that related to pupils being 'engaged and busy' (putting energy into activities that adults have initiated and designed) rather than participating in SDM. My impression was that this third interview was failing to generate further breadth or depth to the data from earlier interviews and confirmed that Philip's use of SDM was largely tied to P4C sessions and the implementation of other 'commercial' approaches. Philip reiterated his perception that this year's pupils were a disappointment and said he would not be sad to part from them at the end of the year. He said that teachers can sometimes get a class that 'hasn't worked' (P3.4) and this class was one of them:

> We've got the nice class, [...] the real kind of naughty class, and then you get the class that I get (P3.4).

Philip once more reflected on last year's class, reinforcing the sentiment expressed in our first interview:

> You've come in the wrong year! (P3.48)

Since the second interview, Philip had gone on a training day with his head teacher for something called 'Compass for Life', which, like P4C, he was now 'delivering' to his class, and the head was 'rolling out' through the school, with sets of lessons and assemblies on themes of Resilience, Persistence and so forth. Philip made reference to the fact that now that he had been teaching for such a long time (seventeen years) he was not as worried about planning for the coming year as he used to be; 'It gets done when it gets done' (P3.2). Philip was a bit annoyed that at the same time as introducing this new 'exciting' approach, the head had also bought a new curriculum package requiring teachers to completely rewrite their lesson plans. The way in which Philip recounted these changes suggested that although he complained about the rewriting of lesson plans, he enjoys novelty because this 'sparks' and energises his pupils, and he thrives on being given clear guidance on new approaches.

When I asked Philip about his plans for SDM with his next year's class, he said that he hoped that they would have more 'sparks', 'bounce', 'eagerness to learn' and 'animation in the classroom' than his current class (P3.54). Philip described

pupil enthusiasm and engagement as outcomes in themselves. Even so, he did not volunteer anything to suggest he was planning to use SDM to enhance pupil engagement, despite his inference in the first interview that there was increased motivation when pupils felt they had some share in decision-making. I felt that he was avoiding the question, so I did not persist.

As Philip was the member of staff most involved in the School Council, I thought it might be more fruitful to ask him to tell me more about his involvement and future plans for this group:

The School Council

Philip told me proudly of the large sum of money that was raised for charity by the School Council through cake sales, a baby photo competition and other inter-house events.

Well last term they organised Cancer Research Week so they did four things… We did an assembly on Monday, well Cancer Research *does* it, then during the week we organised where we had a Cancer Research sign and they had to fill it out with coppers and silvers and so [the members of the School Council] did that. [...] It was crazy. And then on Friday we did a 'sprintathon' [and] raised £800! Which is crazy. So they did that (P3.13).
[I asked him about his role within the School Council]
So I'm just the secretary. I kind of *push* them in the right directions [...] and "make sure" that they do things in the right way (P3.15-16).

Philip believes that without his prompting, nothing would get followed up, as the School Council members tend to bounce from one idea to another without making any specific plans.

So they'll come up with all these *ideas*, and then [I say] 'So what are you going to do about it?' 'We want [...] to paint the *fence*.' 'Okay, you want to paint the fence.' [They say] 'The next thing on the agenda is that we want to do this…' [I say] 'Wait a minute, hold it! [*laughing*] you want to paint the *fence*! So what are you going to do about painting the fence?' (P3.16)

Philip also felt he needed to 'make sure' that they turn up to things like subcommittee meetings, that they give out letters, and follow-up agreed actions.

> He 'gives' the Talent Show to the School Council to organise each year:
> So in March they have a talent show and they organise all that so they get the entrance forms out, they sort out the categories, they do the whole 'Ant and Dec' thing. They stand on the stage [and] they present everybody as they come up (P3.17).

Philip was proud of the achievements of the School Council, and satisfied that he fulfilled his role as Pupil Participation lead in this way.

5.3.4 Synopsis of points made by Philip regarding SDM.

Theme 1: Meaning, beliefs and values

Respect for children

When given time to reflect, Philip gives some reasons why he believes SDM is important:

> It's their school [*Quiet laugh*] [...] What's the [SDM] for…? Because actually they've got to come here every day and it's got to be somewhere they want to be. And if someone says, if I, I was being taught by someone and they said, for want of a better word, 'Shut up, your opinion doesn't count,' then I might be pretty much… shut down. Or not want to be here (P1.30).
> If someone tells you to do something, you feel a bit of an affront don't you? [...] But actually, if they kind of come to their own decisions then they're more [...] likely to do it (P1.49).

In these brief reflections, Philip has summarised the purpose of SDM as being a right; important for a sense of belonging, ownership and self-worth; and pragmatic: if they have decided it, they will make it work.

Philip welcomes his pupils' involvement in and questioning of decisions about how things are in class, and he also sees some of his pupils' *behaviour* as a kind of questioning. Although he thinks that sometimes pupils question 'the

wrong things' he never feels threatened when pupils question the way he does things.

> I do think they're engaged in that they do question, but sometimes they question the wrong things. In that, actually, not even verbally. So for example, they go into the classroom just then and they're running around. I don't think that's so much bad behaviour, I just think that's kind of they're not questioning authority. But they just do what they want to do. So it's questioning… I think that's a type of questioning, a decision-making of their own (P2.27-28).

Part of my role

Philip started involving pupils more formally in whole-class discussions about issues they choose, as a result of being sent on training for P4C by his head teacher. This training introduced him to techniques to help pupils to communicate with each other and listen and express their views in a group. Philip is happy to have a go when his head teacher encourages him to involve pupils in SDM, such as his suggestion that Philip invite them to set the outcomes for the lesson on Similes.

Participation as an outcome

Philip sees engagement and participation as an end in itself; his responses suggest that he values getting children to be more independent (P1.47), responsible for their own learning (P3.29-30) and engaged in their learning (P3.12). Pupils are more likely to be engaged if they are involved in decision-making and Philip's responses suggest that he does not see any great difference between decision-making on an individual or a class basis. They are 'all among the same kind of lines' (P1.27).

Children's wellbeing

Philip considers that 'It's healthy for children to be able to bounce ideas off each other' (1.48). He also sees the freedom of children to be able to express themselves as important, even though he doesn't relate this directly to SDM:

I like the children to be kind of… be able to be themselves in the classroom (P2.28).

Theme 2: Challenges

The pupils

Phillip's experience on the School Council has taught him that pupils cannot be trusted to see things through without adult input, nor to look at things from a practical point of view. Philip feels there is little a teacher can do when pupils do not want a relationship with him.

Teacher voice.

Philip feels that staff all get along and are able to say what they think, but in the end it is the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who make most of the decisions.

Colleagues

Philip is also aware that in order to be accepted by other staff a teacher needs to be seen as 'a team player' and 'your face has to fit' (P1.35).

Institutionalisation of children

Philip told me how difficult it can be to get pupils to address their comments to the class rather than to him as their teacher because they are so used to the teacher being the decision-maker: 'children are so trained to speak to *you*, it's actually really hard getting them *to not* speak to you' (P1.40). He found P4C training gave him techniques for such situations. For example:

> So, I don't look at the child who is speaking [and] what I normally do is I have a book or sheet in front of me and I'm kind of tracking what questions they've said, where [the discussion] has gone to. So actually, I'm not looking at them anyway (P 1.41).

The parents

Philip feels that if parents cannot even take part in discussion about their own children, it is not surprising that the children lack the skills for SDM. He also feels that some parents fail their children when they give in; when children say they 'don't want to read', for example.

Teacher stress

As with other 'initiatives' staff are asked to take on board, Philip sees SDM as just another thing for a busy teacher to remember to do:

> But it's just, [...] I mean you know about teachers, it's just like that's another thing I've got to refer to in the classroom (P1.25).

Theme 3: Rewards

Pupils

Philip was pleasantly surprised when pupils started generalising the techniques for group discussion he had taught them in P4C into other lessons. He felt good seeing children enjoy the projects they were asked to undertake on the School Council: pupils have fun and can be good organisers, as long as they have guidance from an adult.

Teacher's own wellbeing

Philip associates SDM with personal freedom. Several times Philip uses a 'liberation' metaphor to describe SDM:

> You're giving them that opportunity to go off track because [...] again you're kind of letting the shackles off a bit aren't you?

And, explaining why he keeps both classroom doors open,

> I have them open on purpose. Because, a) I'm quite happy
> for people to come in - and actually *want* people to come in.
> Also, if you close the doors then it's like… It's like prison, [...]
> it's enclosed isn't it? (P2.20)

Heart-to-heart

Philip is motivated when he feels his efforts to communicate with his pupils are reciprocated. He sees SDM as 'a two-way thing' (P 1.22) and describing the times when they *really* talk about what's going on in the classroom he uses the phrase, 'a real heart-to-heart' (P2.15) suggesting that it is at these times that an emotional connection is made with his pupils.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In this chapter, I address the first research question: 'What are teachers' experiences of SDM?' by combining aspects from all three participants in a 'composite textural description' (Moustakas, 1994). The second research question regarding 'implications for future SDM practice' is addressed in Chapter 7.

6.1 What shared decision-making looks like

When I analysed participants' examples of SDM they appeared to be confined to a fairly narrow group of practices:

- Design/adaptation of routines.

  - The *teacher* devises routines whereby pupils can be involved in decision-making (for example, voting techniques; use of P4C sessions).

  - Routines are devised *with pupils*. For example, the class discuss a way to select pupils to carry out classroom tasks.

  - Routines are *suggested by pupils*. For example, a pupil suggests a new way for the teacher to get the class' attention.

- When there is a problem with behaviour, curriculum, equipment or time, the class discusses it, firstly to see if the class and teacher share the concern, and to agree a solution. This can be initiated either by the teacher or by pupils.

- The teacher *invites pupils to offer suggestions* about how things can be organised in the classroom.

- Pupils independently offer suggestions of this type to the teacher.

No participant was consistently using SDM for any particular situation. They might involve pupils in decisions about how to tackle a topic in a maths lesson, and not be able to recall doing this at any other time, for example. There was little SDM around curriculum planning and none around the organisation of the classroom, materials or displays. This may not be surprising in the absence of any training or staff discussion regarding SDM.

By following participants over a number of months, I identified a developmental cycle, characterised by fluctuations in the participants' confidence in SDM. This related to pupils' responsiveness to SDM and the perceived effectiveness of SDM as a means to reach objectives such as 'community cohesion' and 'improved pupil engagement'. Participants had difficulty making sense of this cycle and although they 'soldiered on', their faith in SDM was frequently challenged.

6.2 The meaning that shared decision-making holds for teachers

The three participants approached SDM in very different ways, reflecting their respective beliefs in what democracy is. The range is not surprising, given the general lack of consensus on this issue (Coppedge et al., 2011). Despite these differences none of them saw SDM as part of a teacher's role but as something 'of themselves' that they brought into their practice. The phenomenological approach and semi-structured nature of the interviews and go-alongs allowed me to explore the emotional side of SDM. This aspect of SDM has not been explored before, and helps to explain why participants continue to use SDM in spite of the difficulties they encounter. Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998a) explains that individuals choose particular behaviours (SDM in this case) because they perceive that they help us to meet one or more of our personal needs (belonging, fun, freedom and self-worth) and SDM appears to satisfy both participants' *and* pupils' needs. Through SDM participants start to see levels of pupil talent and motivation, as well as inequalities in ability to participate, previously hidden from view.

None of the participants talked about setting out to have a participatory classroom, and comparisons were rarely if ever volunteered between their own

biographies and their use of SDM. Nevertheless, there are clues in the way they tell their own stories that there were role models and personal experiences that contributed to participants' valuing of SDM. These include an acceptance of, or even celebration of the 'untraditional': Philip's unorthodox primary school head; Carl's highly valued, but non-academic, football friends; Michael's wish to have hobbies that are a bit different and his resistance to tie-wearing. Each participant had his own tale to tell of teachers who had made an impression on him, and these usually included teachers who treated students as fellow human beings, gave reasons for doing things, and generally spent time getting to know pupils as people. I also felt that all three participants, despite their frequent frustrations with pupils, held the same 'celebratory perspective of youth' identified by Wilson (2002).

The decision to use SDM, irrespective of how it came about, reflects aspects of participants' own psychological needs, as identified in the way they described their own education and career paths. There is something about SDM that aligns with the kind of teacher they want to be and that speaks to something deep within them: Michael's inner turmoil (when he felt he could not let the pupil express their learning through a role-play) bears repetition:

> Everything *in* me wanted him to do that [...] if I could have done that, I would have done it in a heartbeat (M2.18);

Carl's reflection on why he carries on with SDM even though it exhausts him:

> I can't help it.....Well that's it. Without that [SDM] … just, I wouldn't be who I am (C4.63);

the language used by Philip to describe the open and honest discussion about what is going on in class:

> We had a real *heart-to-heart* as a class (P2.15);

and by Michael when he describes his experience of using SDM with his Year 5 staff team as being 'how I *want* to feel' (M4.37).

All participants indicated how important freedom in the classroom was to them, Philip with his doors open to the outside, and resistance to making a career commitment; Carl with his difficulty telling people what to do, and Michael wanting the freedom to dress how he wished. All participants want their classrooms to be free of fear (fear of speaking out, of failure, of fearing aspects of the curriculum) and there is a sense that SDM is a manifestation of this freedom.

SDM is seen as instrumental in meeting other objectives, such as Carl's wish to build a sense of communal trust and support between his pupils; Michael's to maintain a safe, low-risk, environment whilst having fun; and Philip's to have a good relationship with his pupils and an orderly classroom. There is a sense of SDM as being a child's right and entitlement: 'It's their time' (C1.42); 'It's their school' (P1.30).

6.3 Barriers and challenges to shared decision-making

Participants gain personal and professional satisfaction from SDM. However, they find that it can be at odds with the need to 'fit in' with institutional expectations, and that both pupils and participants are subject to an institutionalisation process that promotes the adoption of a 'classroom persona'.

Although no participant said he felt threatened by the children themselves, or that his power was undermined by SDM, participants had a tendency to view SDM less positively when they were in the midst of it and more positively 'on reflection'. This suggests that reflection time may be an important part of maintaining a democratic classroom culture.

Whilst admitting that they were unaware of what other teachers in their own school were doing, participants were conscious that they are part of a system where SDM is not the norm. When Carl and Michael asked colleagues for ideas about classroom discipline, they were more likely to be offered an authoritarian solution (sanctions being the most frequent suggestions) than encouragement to discuss further with pupils. There was a general feeling from all participants that SDM is 'a good thing' to be doing, but they also questioned whether the

benefits for children are worth the toll it takes on them as teachers. They worried how they or their pupils might be viewed by colleagues and reported a sense of separation from these same colleagues. This isolation increased their concern about the riskiness of their approach.

Participants recognised that some children were less able than others to participate in decision-making and attributed this variously to home background, previous school experience, hormones and 'immaturity'. Where other forms of teaching felt under the participants' control, SDM exposed areas which were not in their control: pupils' past experience with less participatory teachers; parenting styles; low self-worth; and experiences of previous social exclusion. SDM exposes the gap between children from different backgrounds and uncovers the difficulty boys in particular may have with satisfying their need for power in a non-authoritarian classroom. Participants expressed concern about the difficulty some boys in particular have responding to SDM opportunities, with the girls generally being perceived as more receptive. Philip, despite having taught for 16 years, was nevertheless distressed when boys in his class resisted his attempts to build a partnership with them. Only Carl commented directly on the relationship between deprivation and the ability to respond to SDM; how some pupils are better prepared for SDM than others.

Time is an issue. With the constant pressure to cover curriculum, participants felt unable to 'take their time' to fully develop pupils' abilities to contribute to decisions about the curriculum and the running of the classroom. When the participants are as engrossed in the project as the children, time ceases to matter; their fear of not completing the curriculum seems to evaporate; they feel that they and their pupils are working at a new level of creativity and cooperation; and uniformity can be abandoned as imagination is released and exercised. Michael admitted that he was most open to SDM when the outcome 'doesn't matter' because either it was a one-off lesson, or there was a reason why he did not have to report back to his manager on the outcome of the lesson for each individual pupil.

The input required of the participants in order for SDM to happen required patience and skill. Given the lack of SDM models available to these teachers, they were often experimenting and improvising. Carl, in particular was aware that there is a well-trodden road for the authoritarian teacher but none for the more democratically-minded professional. Planning and measuring the effectiveness of approaches is difficult with SDM, as there is no recognised developmental pathway for the skills and attitudes involved. Carl and Michael are coming to different conclusions about what the trajectory might look like. Michael sees it quite logically: first teach the skills for individual decision-making and then generalise to groups and whole class decisions. Carl believes that the trajectory is not so controllable: it can be turbulent, chaotic, and messy; the process is ecological and needs opportunities for children to learn through experience and reflection. Michael treats SDM in a similar way to other skills: because he is teaching each step, teaching the skills and letting go gradually, there was a sense of safety and security which is one big theme for him. Carl, on the other hand, is a risk-taker who is patient while his class sorts things out for themselves. It is almost like Carl is saying, 'If we are going to fail, let's do our failing together unashamedly, and learn from it', whereas Michael says, 'If I can prevent any failure by good planning, I will'.

In trying to figure out the process by which a class develops into a decision-making community, participants encounter a difficulty: they have no theory to fall back on, and no models or exemplars to refer to. They are uncertain about whether they are doing the right thing and feel a sense of isolation in the absence of a community of practitioners (Wenger, 1998) with whom to share ideas. Participants want to understand how SDM might be beneficial for children, how progress in SDM might be measured (individually and as a class) and how to explain SDM to parents and colleagues.

6.4 What supports shared decision-making

Participants have positive connections with one or two colleagues who they identify as holding similar views and with whom they can compare notes. Michael, in particular, is able to proselytise his ideas around SDM to colleagues in his new role as Head of Year, and finds these are received favourably. All

participants had head teachers who encouraged them and acted as allies, suggesting that SDM satisfied some need in them also. Participants reported that their participatory practices had stood them in good stead with their managers: Philip was selected to attend expensive training courses due to the confidence he had shown in allowing children to talk freely and openly about issues without feeling threatened; Carl had been singled out for his courage and nurturing to take a disordered class that had previously suffered from a year where they had a series of temporary teachers; Michael has been promoted to Head of Year for his innovative approaches and has been given the go-ahead by his head teacher to make Participation a priority across the year.

Chapter 7 Discussion

In this chapter, I reflect on the new insights offered by this study and offer proposals for future research, thus addressing my second research question. Whilst discussing my findings and drawing conclusions from this research I am aware that, having adopted a phenomenological methodology with a small sample, all conclusions are specific to my particular group of participants and any generalisations need to be approached with caution, as advised by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

7.1 New insights into SDM

Through my interviews with the participants, it has become clear that teachers who encourage participation may not initially stand out from the crowd, and there are almost certain to be contradictions and inconsistencies in their practice due to the pressures they face to behave otherwise. Participants expressed puzzlement at one time or another as to why I was interested in them and the way they ran their classrooms, not thinking that they were doing 'anything special'. In hindsight, one reason for the lack of response to my recruitment fliers may be that teachers were either not aware that what they are doing is special or that they did not make a connection between my descriptions of shared decision-making and their own teaching practices. On the surface, there may be little at first glance that differentiates the teacher who uses SDM from their colleagues, as all teachers may to some extent carry out traditional forms of control such as lining up and delivering teacher-led instructions, rules and explanations, unless they are in a school where a more democratic culture exists at an organisational level.

7.1.1 Building on existing literatures

My findings confirm, build on and challenge existing literatures. One of the most satisfying aspects of my research has been hearing and reading about the emotions experienced by teachers: the joy in discovering how their pupils express love for each other and their teacher; their resilience, humour and

creativity (similar to experiences described by Hannam, 2018, and Herzog, 1995, for example); as well as isolation, frustration and doubt along the way, reflecting emotional responses previously described by others (e.g. Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016, and Felten, 2017). What this thesis adds to previous accounts is the idea that SDM meets the psychological needs of teachers as well as pupils, particularly the needs for belonging, fun, freedom and self-worth (Glasser, 1998a); and that although participants are motivated to use SDM, they do this because they are bringing something of *themselves* into the classroom, rather than seeing it as 'the teacher's role'.

This study connects strongly with the work of Friedman et al. (2009) regarding the cultures that develop when teachers are not given a say in how their own schools are run. Whilst Philip might be viewed as operating in a culture of 'compliance' (following his head teacher's instructions), Carl appears to have adopted Friedman's 'subculture of subversion', using SDM in his own classroom but not challenging non-democratic school practices. Michael, whilst initially appearing to be less radical than Carl in his use of SDM, had clearly chosen the 'subculture of democratic inquiry of practice' by the time of our final interview, collaborating with colleagues and his head teacher to model democracy to the wider community.

This study complements existing literatures by offering a more detailed and updated picture of the way in which SDM is perceived as an enjoyable activity. Being with children is a joyful experience for participants and the chance to have fun together was welcomed. This does not mean that participants were 'entertained' by the experience of SDM, but that they enjoyed a deep sense of satisfaction when pupils responded to SDM and started to take the initiative to develop new ways of engaging with each other in the classroom. Some previously-accepted practices were adapted and changed once pupils started contributing to decisions about how things were done. When participants opened up classroom decision-making to pupils, responses were often unexpected and participants found this inspiring, amusing and exciting on the one hand and frustrating, disturbing and exhausting on the other.

Participants were continually learning about their pupils' abilities to make civic decisions and deal with the freedom to negotiate with their teacher and each other. At times, participants' trust in children's abilities felt misplaced and at other times they questioned whether they are drastically underestimating the potential of their pupils. There is also a sense in which SDM was a pragmatic choice for participants: it can save time; it builds community; pupils do their best work when they have negotiated the lesson; and pupils can have some excellent ideas.

Participants highlighted ways in which SDM enabled them to learn more about their pupils' capabilities, and permitted pupils to bring their skills and knowledge from their life outside school into the classroom. Even when participants doubted the ability of their pupils to come up with solutions, they were frequently surprised at how well decisions made by and with pupils work out. Conversely, there was consternation when pupils failed to respond positively to SDM and participants searched for explanations for this in children's home background, prior school experience, lack of maturity and their own teaching skills.

7.1.2 Socio-cultural applications

This research has a number of implications for the educational context. For example, the current focus on the government's recent Green Paper regarding the mental health of children and young people: participants describe how SDM can contribute to wellbeing through community-building and social inclusion, and they recognise that some pupils need greater guidance and opportunity to practice the skills required to take part in such communal decision-making processes. This study supports the notion that involving pupils in decision-making is not only good for children, it is good for teachers. All three participants saw SDM as enabling both them and their pupils to be their 'authentic selves' in the classroom, and Carl even suggested that if SDM was to become a common practice in our schools, and that teachers themselves felt they had more of a 'voice' in schools, that teacher recruitment and retention would be greatly facilitated.

With rising concerns over adult exploitation of children and young people, training courses on child protection, radicalisation and CSE (child sexual exploitation) are mandatory for professionals, such as EPs, working in the public sector. These courses place an emphasis on how to understand these behaviours, and how to identify and support children who may already subject to abuse. Very little is said on courses I have attended about what it is about society that enables a culture of abuse to exist in our communities. This research shows that it is possible to develop a classroom culture where pupils are not expected to accept without question the opinions, wishes and instructions of adults. Participants' accounts support the idea that when children feel that their opinions and ideas are not only taken seriously, but that they can have an impact on what goes on in their own classrooms, this is likely to contribute to personal resilience and a sense of personal agency. It is likely that these characteristics could be a protective factor against exploitation and radicalisation.

7.2 Future research

There are three major findings that would benefit from further research and exploration:

1. There is a general lack of awareness about democratic classroom practices such as SDM.

1. Participants lacked a theory of SDM and models of practice.

2. Participants did not feel entirely free to choose SDM in their own classrooms.

7.2.1 Lack of awareness

During the recruitment phase I became aware of the general lack of awareness of SDM amongst teachers and head teachers who at the same time showed a real interest in the ideas behind this approach. This gives me hope that there are educators out there who with a little information and encouragement are

ready to 'give SDM a go'. Although I did not interview head teachers, participants' responses suggested that head teachers and other colleagues had no greater awareness or expertise in SDM than they did. Apart from some isolated suggestions from Michael's and Philip's head teachers, there does not appear to be a culture of SDM in participants' schools. In fact, the opposite is more the case; when seeking advice from colleagues and managers, participants are likely to be advised to turn to more authoritarian approaches than encouraged to seek further input from pupils. So the main motivation for SDM has come from the participants themselves, maintained by positive pupil responses. From talking to other EPs about my thesis, I have concluded that there is a need to promote awareness of SDM even within the EP profession. EPs and those involved in teacher education need access to information and experiences to help them understand the importance of SDM for children's wellbeing. Crucial to that understanding is a theoretical framework.

7.2.2 Need for a theory and models of practice

Perhaps the most important finding of this study is that it has identified the need for a theoretical framework for SDM. When participants struggle to make sense of the range of pupil responses to SDM, and try to work out whether their attempts are successful or not, they have no theory or models of practice to call upon. This leads to isolation as participants attempt to communicate their practice and reasoning to colleagues and confusion as they seek their own evidence that SDM is offering something positive to pupils. Participants inherited a group of pupils who had no prior experience of SDM, spent nearly a year to 'train them up' and then passed them on to teachers who they could not rely upon to nurture these pupils' newly-acquired 'democratic aptitudes'. Clearly a whole-school approach embedding SDM right from the start would help this. There is scope for further exploration as to how a whole-school approach might be developed.

Teachers need help to choose the best approach to suit their particular circumstances. A theory of SDM would help them to assess progress at both an individual and community level. Although all three participants have different perceptions of SDM they would all have been helped when things were tough if

they could recognise 'milestones' of progress. They all commented on the contribution the research interviews made to their understanding of SDM. In the absence of a theoretical framework they have to invent their own, and 'reflection' is the only tool available to them. The interviews helped them to see that there *was* progress and encouraged them to persist with SDM. It was as if classroom practice was down to the teacher's 'personal preference' rather than being 'evidence-informed'. There is a potential role for Educational Psychologists to act as mentoring partners for teachers and head teachers.

There are plenty of exemplars of *authoritarian* practice; books explaining how to use rewards and sanctions and how to make it clear to pupils that 'the teacher is in charge'. Complementary advice is needed for the democratic teacher. With an authoritarian model, teachers need not worry about the developmental cycle as being an authoritarian teacher is much the same in a Year 2 or a Year 12 classroom. However, democratic teachers need to take into account the developmental levels of the pupils and the annual cycle of developing a classroom culture, building trust and devising class protocols and traditions. Being a democratic teacher in Year 11 is likely to be very different in Year 1, for example. The literatures on pupil participation offer consistent signs of positivity, but *how* and *why* it is positive and how approaches such as SDM naturally evolve is still not securely understood. However, this study begins to shed light on how SDM naturally evolves and what some of the developmental issues are.

Any model or theory of SDM needs to explicate the role for the teacher, head teacher, governors and leadership team. The future research agenda might address the trajectory of SDM through the whole school system; how practice in Year 1 is developed in Year 2 and so forth; the mechanisms by which SDM works and the developmental sequence; the role of adults at each stage of that trajectory; and exemplars identified for each stage. The pedagogical issues around SDM have much in common with those raised by studies into group work where a framework, based on social pedagogy, might include considerations around the classroom context; interactions between children (identifying and developing pupil skills); the teacher's role; and the curriculum (Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines, & Galton, 2003, p.9). In addition to these, the

leadership and management styles that support SDM also need to be included, and there are implications for the wider educational system, including school inspection and assessment of attainment.

Any framework needs to include a theory about the kind of *planning* needed for SDM. Carl put it well: 'I plan loosely so the pupils can shape the lesson'. At the same time, Michael was concerned that although pupils do their best quality work when they help to decide how it is done, the unpredictable nature of how they do this high quality work and the lack of predictable uniformity of outcome felt too risky for him as a teacher to use as a regular approach in the current data-driven climate. Perhaps groups of schools could elect to be 'research schools' for an ordained period in order to experiment confidently with democratic approaches. Educational Psychologists could join with head teachers to identify the kind of evidence they and their governors need in order to feel confident to experiment more boldly with SDM. There is also a role for EPs to help teachers and school leaders to come together to start building a theoretical framework for planning and monitoring the development of SDM in classrooms.

7.2.3 Teachers at the centre

Participants felt their decisions to use SDM were constrained by educational policies and processes that they have not themselves had any part in developing. This thesis opens up the idea that we need to look at both teachers' and pupils' needs and that their respective needs are 'two sides of the same coin' (Roffey, 2012). Despite their struggles, participants were clear that many of their own needs were met when they shared decision-making with pupils, but felt constrained by their own lack of power to devise or change school and national policies. As Chief Executive Officer of a large Indian corporation espouses: if your employees are well cared for, the customers will be also (Sturm, 2010). This 'Teacher voice' (or, more precisely, the lack of it) was a characteristic of participants' workplace cultures. Apart from Michael, who approaches his managers with his ideas for involving pupils in curriculum design, the other participants carried on using SDM but did not challenge the status quo of school culture. It may be that, like their pupils, participants have

come to accept without question the authority of their managers. More work is needed to find ways to develop a school culture where all teachers have an active role in SDM at a school level.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

A body of research has produced rather positive views of what SDM might do, but these studies have predominantly been conducted under relatively artificial conditions. This study is the first to capture the experiences of teachers who have developed SDM independently in their own classrooms and to systematically address naturally-occurring practice, *as it is developing*. Additionally, this research has been carried out with the individuals *who have evolved that practice,* and provides a privileged insight into the way that participants' make sense of their own SDM practices within the wider 'system'.

8.1 Limitations of the thesis

I set out on this study aware of a number of risks which may affect my success: I was studying a phenomenon, SDM, which I already understood was rarely encountered 'in the wild' so recruitment was going to be a problem; and I was limited to using relatively local schools, as I had to rely on annual leave for travel, interviews and go-alongs. If I were to carry out a similar study again, I would not spend time writing to schools, but would prime colleagues more comprehensively on the kind of participant I was seeking to attract and perhaps start with a teacher survey to identify current practice, and identify prospective participants.

I had no prior experience with phenomenology, so had to immerse myself in reading and thinking 'phenomenologically' before I could design the research. I believe that IPA was the right methodology for this research, but am aware that the challenge of keeping within the word-count I have limited the extent to which I have been able to describe my analysis of participants' experiences.

8.2 Contribution to professional practice

I set out to write a thesis that would explore the feasibility of SDM as a 'classroom practice of the future' from a teacher's standpoint. I have spoken about my study at the Cambridge Primary Review Conference (2017) and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Innovative Education Forum (2017) and at the time

of writing have set up a series of Applied Psychology seminars open to colleagues across the Local Authority, the first one being on 'The Psychology of 'Having a Say' in Decision-Making'.

Four teachers[3] and one retired head teacher who have read my thesis say that they have found something in my participants' accounts that speaks to their own practice and disposition, leaving them in a more confident and optimistic place from which to try out SDM themselves. All my EP colleagues have shown great interest in this research, and have joined me in promoting the involvement pupils in classroom decision-making, especially when teachers seek EP help for social, motivational or behavioural issues. Indeed, two colleagues, having held such conversations, have said that their schools would like me to come in and talk to staff about SDM.

This study demystifies the idea of 'democratic classrooms', and may encourage teachers and school leaders to look anew at their policies and practice. Freire warned against devising 'methods' that can be copied, but encouraged his teachers to use the practice of others to 'inspire' their own personalised practices (Freire, 2005) recognising that collegiality can be a great support. What has become clear through my thesis is the paucity of 'authentic' examples around for teachers who would like to see what 'classroom democracy' looks like in practice. This thesis has the potential to act as a catalyst to engage teachers and head teachers in new conversations about democratic practices in their own schools. I have plans to invite interested local head teachers to discuss this together. I hope that teachers will read my research and say, 'I never thought of it like that', 'That's what I do' or 'I feel that way too' and I look forward to hearing teachers and head teachers say, 'We can do something about this.'

8.3 Implications for the Educational Psychology profession

This research has implications for the future development of the EP profession. It suggests that SDM has the potential to make a substantial contribution to

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[3] not participants

pupil and teacher motivation, wellbeing and educational attainment. This being so, there needs to be an emphasis, both in EP training and service delivery, on a) understanding the psychology behind SDM; working with teachers to develop the theory and exemplars of SDM practice, and c) supporting teachers and head teachers to develop school and classroom cultures where SDM can thrive. EPs are in a good position to act as advocates for classroom practices that enhance learning and wellbeing, but currently the EP profession does not take a strong lead on the design of curriculum or school culture.

This thesis makes a strong case for the role of external professionals who can support and challenge classroom practices such as SDM. EPs are well-placed to take that role, and are also in a good position to be able to facilitate a community of practice to support such changes. However, with EP services operating on a 'buy-back' basis, school leaders (increasingly Heads of Academy Trusts) will need to be convinced of the value of SDM and of using EPs in this way. EP Services would need to take a systematic approach to scaling-up democratic classroom practices such as SDM across a Local Authority. This thesis suggests that EPs would need to work with senior school leaders initially, to gain their interest and engagement, and then facilitate teachers and pupils to develop 'demonstration' classrooms and schools such as those used in the scaling up of Escuela Nueva schools in Colombia (Colbert & Arboleda, 2016).

This research suggests that SDM has far-reaching benefits for all children, but particularly for those who may currently be the focus of 'individual' EP involvement under the labels of 'special educational needs' (SEN) or 'disadvantage'. Not only would it be more economical for EPs to help schools to develop practices that improved the wellbeing, social inclusion and motivation of whole classes of children, but it may have a better long-term impact on the individual pupil to be part of a class experiencing SDM than to have individual 'interventions' directed at him or her.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Letter to head teachers

Dear [head teacher],

Research study: Involving pupils in decision-making – a teacher's perspective.

I am writing to invite you to identify any teachers who would be interested in furthering their professional development whilst helping me with my research study.

I am an Educational Psychologist with over thirty years' experience in local authority schools. I am conducting a doctoral research project at UCL Institute of Education, which will run from June to October 2016. This study concerns the way in which teachers share decision-making with pupils in the classroom. My thesis concentrates specifically on the teachers' perspective. I hope that this will be an enjoyable study for the teachers involved and anticipate that there will be benefits for those taking part.

To participate in this study, a teacher will need to: have a strong interest in pupil voice and participation in the classroom; *be demonstrating this in their current practice; be available for 2-3 interview sessions (1-3 weeks apart, of around 60-90 minutes).*

I would also like to carry out two brief visits to the teacher's classroom, which would be arranged in negotiation with the teacher concerned and yourself.

Please would you be kind enough to display the attached flier in your staffroom or ask any teacher who is interested to contact me by phone or email to find out more about this study (see flier for details). I am looking for 3-4 teachers for this study, and will select them by availability and the extent to which they meet the criteria above, following an initial conversation. I enclose an Information Sheet for Teachers.

I hope that you will consider whether any of your teachers meet the criteria, and encourage them to contact me.

Yours faithfully,
Geraldine Rowe
HCPC Registered Educational Psychologist
Email: XXXXXXX   Mobile: XXXXXXXX

Appendix II: Recruitment flier

Involving Pupils in Decision-Making: A teacher's perspective.

Who is conducting the research?

My name is Geraldine Rowe and I am an Educational Psychologist with over thirty years' experience working with teachers across 5 local authorities. I am undertaking this research study as part of a Doctor in Education qualification at the UCL Institute of Education.

This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to ask me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Why am I doing this research?
The promotion of Pupil Voice and Participation research needs to include the teachers' perspective. I want to find out how teachers discuss and share decision-making with their pupils.

Why are you being invited to take part?
You have been identified or have identified yourself as a teacher who is already sharing some decision-making with your pupils. Research would suggest that this practice is not widespread in UK primary classrooms and so your contribution is important.

I am looking for 3-4 teachers who are happy to share personal information about themselves and their practice. Following an initial conversation I will make my selection based on availability and the extent to which potential participants meet the following criteria: have a strong interest in pupil voice and participation in the classroom; be demonstrating this in current practice; available for interviews and visits.

What will happen if you choose to take part?
Each teacher participating will take part in two to four in-depth interviews and host two classroom visits to help me appreciate some of the factors that you may identify as either helping or hindering your own partnership with pupils.

If it is not possible to find a room in the school for interviews, or if you prefer to meet elsewhere, we can agree an alternative venue.

The research interviews will be in-depth, which means that I would like you to talk about yourself, your personal experiences in education, how you became a teacher and what influenced you to become the kind of teacher you are. My thesis will describe in detail the teachers' experiences and perceptions, using their own words where possible.

Will anyone know you have been involved?

I will not disclose the names of the participants or their schools unless participants personally ask me to do so (if, for example, at a later date, you wish to have it acknowledged that you took part in this research). I will ask you to create

pseudonyms for yourself and your school and use these to identify data during analysis and dissemination.

If you wish to request 'cover' to participate, your own head teacher will be aware that you have taken part in this study. Given the small number of participants, you will be identifiable by your head teacher or anyone else you or they have informed about your participation in this study. For example, if I write about the practices and experiences of a 'female teacher in her 4th year of teaching' then this participant and others who she has told about her participation, will probably be able to identify her if they read
the research report. With detailed analysis of data from a small sample, it may be possible to identify the participants from personal details, so I will ensure that any possibly identifying quotes or data I plan to use are cleared by participants first.

The only situation in which I should be obliged to disclose information would be one where, for example, I had concerns about your welfare or that of other persons, including your pupils, as a result of information you give me.

Could there be any problems for participants?

There are no identified risks in taking part in this research. However, if you feel uncomfortable you are entitled to stop at any point. I am interested in teachers' personal beliefs, perceptions and practices and I do not want you to be taken unawares by the personal and in-depth nature of the interviews. If you feel that you wish to retract anything you have said in the interviews, you are free to make this request up to 2 months following the interview

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will be written up as a doctoral thesis which will be publicly available electronically through various thesis and university library catalogues. It is possible that I will also include details of this research, including quotes from participants, in future articles and presentations. At no time will I disclose the names of participants or their schools. I will store all field notes, recordings and transcripts on my personal home computer and will destroy these within twelve months of the acceptance of my thesis.

It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. I hope that if you do decide to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you think you might like to be involved, or if you have any questions, please contact me at geraldine@rowefamily.me.uk or call me on 07831770346

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee
The Research Ethics and Governance Administrator (researchethics@ioe.ac.uk) should be informed of any complaint.

Appendix IV: Consent form

Involving Pupils in Decision-Making: A teacher's perspective.

I have read and understood the leaflet *Information for Teachers*. ☐

I agree to be interviewed over between two and four sessions and for the researcher to make two visits to my classroom (30-60 minutes or as negotiated). ☐

I am happy for my interview to be audio recorded. ☐

I understand that if any of my words are used in researcher's thesis, reports, articles or presentations they will not be attributed to me and I release any claim to ownership of the recording or transcript. ☐

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used. ☐

I understand that I can contact Geraldine Rowe at any time on 07831 770346 or geraldine@rowefamily.me.uk. ☐

I understand that the results will be shared with the researcher's university supervisors and thesis examiners. ☐

(If applicable) I have discussed the information sheet with my head teacher, who has agreed for me to be released for two interview sessions and will provide a suitable room for interviews. ☐

Name _____

Signed _____   Date _____

Researcher's name: Geraldine Rowe   Signed _____

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Copies to be kept by researcher and participant.

UCL Institute of Education

20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Appendix V: Interview guide

RQs	Key Concepts	Interview	Guide questions
What are teachers' experiences of SDM? *How SDM developed?*	*Past experiences of SDM (family and school);* *Interests and values;* *Personal and professional identity.*	1	• *How did you get into teaching?* • *Tell me about your own schooldays.*
What does SDM look like in their classrooms?	*Examples of SDM in their classroom; current relationship with pupils.*	2-5	• *Can you tell me something about how you involve your pupils in decision-making in your classroom?* • *Can you tell me about a time when you invited your pupils to help you to make a decision in class… when they made suggestions about how things might be done differently, for example?* • *Ask about go-along experiences and SDM.* • *How would you describe the partnership you have with your pupils?* • *Is there ever a time when the pupils influence the curriculum: what is discussed or taught; what topic you actually take on?*

What meaning does SDM hold for participants?	*Why they use SDM. How important is it to them?*		*What do you believe are the advantages/disadvantages of sharing decision-making with your students on a daily basis in the classroom?* *How strongly do you feel about this?* *Are there times when you feel you need to make all the decisions yourself?* *What have your pupils taught you?* *ow has your experience of SDM with these pupils this year affected you?* *What do you get out of teaching like this?* *Do you employ another side of yourself in the classroom than when at home or with friends?*
What is supporting or hindering SDM?	*What SDM requires from self and others*	2-5	*What does it take from other adults: parents and colleagues to share decision-making in a wider fashion?* *What aspects of children or attributes of children or skills or competencies have you discovered through taking this approach? Have you had any surprises?* *What is stopping you from sharing more decisions with pupils?*
	Perceived responses of children		*Do all the children respond equally well to SDM?*
	Perceived norms *Relationships with Head, students, children, and*		*Would you say there are any other people who think like you regard SDM?* *How do other adults respond to your approach?*

	colleagues.		• *Are there any individuals or groups who would approve/disapprove of your sharing decision-making with your students on a daily basis in the classroom?* • *How much does it matter to you what they think?*
	Perceived control	2-5	• *What factors help or make it difficult for you to share decision-making with your students on a daily basis in the classroom? Are these within your control?* • *How do your school policies impact on your ability to SDM with your students?* • *What say do you have in how things are done in this school? How much of a voice do you have as a teacher?*
Implications for the future of SDM?	*How SDM features in future plans.* *Debrief.*	Final	• *How do you see SDM in the future?* • *If you were completely free to run your classroom as you wish, what might it look like?* • *What would encourage you to do this? What might prevent you?* • *How strong are your intentions to continue or increase these practices in future?* • *What has this research experience been like for you?*

Emergent Themes	Interview transcription (Carl Int 2)	Exploratory Comments
9. Risk-taking Allowing children to experience consequences of choices Teacher as information - giver	G: and has that boy started the sweepstake yet? (Laughter) yeah we did it. But bless them, I felt really mean. They said can we pick first and I said, well… Normally the person who arranges things kind of goes last, it's just … polite letting everyone else have their turn… And then slowly all the good teams went out and they got really sad… But I think in the end Cody, whose idea it was originally got a good team, and the other boy who he chose to help him staying at lunchtime to help write the teams he was a little bit upset. It wasn't his idea so it's okay.	Sweepstake We did it Tells children what normally happens but suggests that they might decide to do it in another way. He gives information but lets the decision rests with them and allow them to do it badly. Carl didn't stop the boy being sad (other examples in the text e.g. boy going down a book and giving boy five minutes to settle down, except when its the teacher's fault.) Being able to put up with children struggling and being sad seems to be an important characteristic of a teacher who lets children learn from experience.
10. Teacher role- skills for SDM Paradox: teacher keeps the data. Trust?	But yeah, they've done it. The sweepstake's done, I've got all the names and the teams saved ready to see who wins it and I've got to get a prize of course. Cody said, can we get a football for a prize and I said	Interestingly Carl didn't suggest an alternative prize but got Cody to try to think of it himself. Carl intervened on behalf of the girls-does this form part of the teacher role? Is part of decision-

| | well, now there are girls in it they might not want to play with a football. So he's trying to think of another prize. | making training that he helps them to look at decisions from other people's point of view?

Carl gives feedback about the decisions but it is still their decision. Carl still kept the data-what does this say about his role as the adult and his trust of the children? |