Every Voice Matters:

developing learning through collaborative observation

within the collegial and dialogic culture of a learning organisation

in the primary school

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By

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Dedicated to Oscar, Edward and Mallory

the voices of the future
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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is all my own work.
Every Voice Matters: developing learning through collaborative observation within the collegial and dialogic culture of a learning organisation in the primary school

This thesis argues that the voices of both pupils and teachers must be heard to maximise classroom learning, and that including pupils in lesson observations is a useful mechanism to support listening to all voices and promote learning when it is part of a learning organisation culture. The research reported here contributes to a wider understanding of listening to pupil voice through its exploration of the experiences of both pupils and teachers in a primary school where pupils are involved in collaborative lesson observations alongside teachers. The research also questions how involving pupils in such lesson observations contributes to classroom learning. Data were collected in one case study primary school through individual interviews with teachers, focus group interviews with pupils, a lesson observation and documentary analysis. Drawing on evidence generated from the research and theoretical assumptions from the literature review, the research concludes that a developmental, coaching style lesson observation in which a pupil is involved is a mechanism that has the potential to develop learning as a shared responsibility. This is because it places pupil and teacher voice in the same arena, one that has traditionally been the province of teacher voice, and also because the classroom is an arena that is focused on learning: pupils’ academic learning and teachers’ pedagogical learning. The collegial learning organisation culture, with its emphasis on supportive, non-judgemental practice, enables all voices to be heard through dialogue and this leads to mutual understanding. Collaborative observation within this culture develops pedagogy and pupils’ engagement with learning at both individual and organisational level, enabling participants to experience both risk and stability at the same time so that learning becomes a shared responsibility.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues that including pupils in lesson observations alongside teachers contributes to classroom learning when the process is part of a learning organisation culture. It raises the question of how this happens in a domain where teachers have traditionally had the responsibility for children’s learning. How, therefore, does including pupils in lesson observations contribute to a shared responsibility for learning?

Inspiration for the thesis developed from an exciting visit to a primary school of about a hundred and fifty children in a deprived area in the north west of England where around sixty percent of children are eligible for free school meals. I was inspired not only because the judgement from Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) of ‘outstanding’ really did describe the school, but also because I was intrigued by the practice of ‘peer coaching’, as it is known at the school. A pupil from years four, five or six takes part in a weekly lesson observation alongside two adults, both of whom may be teachers or one may be a teaching assistant. It appeared to me, from the headteacher’s description, that pupils and teachers were sharing the responsibility for learning and that pupils were assessing a lesson alongside teachers, but exactly how was this happening?

The nature of assessment of learning in schools has gradually changed over the past two decades. Prior to this, assessment was summative and used, for example, to produce reports for parents, to inform the next teacher, for selection purposes or for individual accreditation (Harlen, 2007). Such assessment still plays a part in current school practice, but a milestone towards using formative assessment, ‘to inform on decisions about learning experiences’ (Harlen, 2007, p. 15), emerged in 1989: a voluntary task group of the British Educational Research Association, known as the Assessment Reform Group (ARG), was formed with the aim of bringing research to bear on assessment policy and practice (ibid.). A significant outcome was the publication of
Inside the Black Box (Black and Wiliam, 1998). This booklet recognised the need for summative assessment, but argued that if standards were to rise:

... teaching and learning have to be interactive. Teachers need to know about their pupils’ progress and difficulties with learning so that they can adapt their work to meet their needs (Black and Wiliam, 2007, p. 2).

As a result, a range of teaching techniques that incorporate formative assessment into their practice has developed and these are now known as assessment for learning (Harlen, 2007). Moreover, Black and Wiliam (1998) claim that the classroom focus needs to be on ‘the quality of teacher-pupil interactions’ and help for pupils to take ‘active responsibility’ for their own learning (p. 15). Such comments on assessment resonate with the idea of pupils as observers of lessons alongside teachers, a process for which this thesis has coined the phrase, ‘collaborative observation’.

The idea of including pupils in classroom observation stems from listening to pupil voice, a concept that has gained momentum in England since 1992 with the introduction of Ofsted inspections in schools whereby inspectors were encouraged to talk to pupils on an informal basis. Although Ofsted has since formalised the consulting of pupils, as confirmed in its latest framework (2012), few schools listen directly to what pupils have to say about learning in relation to teaching and tend to limit pupil voice to pastoral issues (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). Hence there is a limited amount of research on the subject of pupil voice linked to classroom learning. The intention of this thesis, therefore, is to contribute to this limited body of research knowledge.

Having been a headteacher in two primary schools, worked as an educational adviser in two different Local Authorities, and now working as a School Improvement Partner (SIP) in a third authority, my experience suggests that whilst most teachers are happy to listen to pupils in relation to welfare issues, few would be completely comfortable with the thought of a pupil observing a lesson. Indeed the debate continues in the wider educational world on how often observations of any sort should take place. Only recently, a guidance document from the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT, 2011) focused on classroom observation as it sought to clarify the confusion
surrounding the subject. The union recommends that a lesson observation should be ‘evaluated against Ofsted criteria as a common benchmark, and graded accordingly’ (NAHT, 2011, p.1) so that there would be less need for lesson observations and other classroom visits as one observation could cover all contingencies if it were graded in line with Ofsted criteria.

Alongside this, the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document (DFE, 2010) makes it clear that the headteacher has a responsibility to evaluate practices within the school. Moreover, the core standards for all teachers clarify that teachers ‘have a commitment to collaborative and co-operative working’ and should have ‘a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation’ and be ‘open to coaching and mentoring’ (DFE, 2010, p.113), drawing on the expertise of colleagues and working as a team member to share effective practice. One way of interpreting these requirements is through the concept of collaborative observation, the focus of this thesis.

Although it seems that the spirit of the Pay and Conditions document is not totally supported in the NAHT document, it is appreciated that unions need to protect teachers from unfair demands being made by school leadership and sometimes by government initiatives, as will be seen in the literature. Reference is made to these documents, however, as an indication of the debate surrounding classroom observation in the current climate, so providing a national context for the research. Against this background, this research was undertaken in the spirit of trying to understand how, and why, collaborative observation appeared to be working successfully at Riverbank Primary1.

Because there is still a perception in the teaching profession that lesson observation is judgemental (NAHT, 2011), there has to be something special about a school that not only embraces peer coaching, but is also willing to include a pupil in its observations, particularly when the literature acknowledges various reasons why many teachers would find consulting pupils on learning difficult to accept (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). This thesis argues that it is those aspects of a learning organisation culture which

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1 Not the school’s real name
promote a sense of collegiality and support dialogic encounters that enable pupils’ voices in relation to teaching and learning to be heard. Although Fielding (1999) does make a claim for a ‘radical collegiality’ whereby dialogue and collegiality are linked, this thesis takes this claim a stage further and argues that dialogue and collegiality enable learning to be developed as a shared responsibility. Such a claim has so far been missing from the literature. This thesis, therefore, explores the link between listening to pupil voice and the collegial and dialogic aspects of the learning organisation, investigating how collaborative observation makes a positive contribution to learning and teaching through the following research questions:

**The Research Questions**

The main research question is:

- How does including pupils in lesson observations contribute to a shared responsibility for classroom learning?

The answer to this question has benefited from the generation of three supporting research questions:

- What is the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation and is there provision for listening to all voices?
- How is collegiality manifested and how does this promote a commitment to the process of collaborative observation?
- How willing are the participants to engage in dialogue and what opportunities are there for dialogic encounters to occur?

**An outline of the thesis chapters**

The thesis is written in eleven major chapters including a brief reflection:

Following this introduction, chapters two, three and four comprise the literature review. Chapter two explores why teachers should listen to pupils and describes the benefits and challenges of listening to pupils from the perspective of both pupil and teacher, leading to the possibility of hearing pupil voice through collaborative observation. In chapter three, the focus is on the learning organisation and the sense of collegiality this promotes, with a particular emphasis on dialogue. Chapters two and three are then
synthesised in chapter four which defends the thesis’ position on maintaining that collaborative observation has the potential to enable all voices to be heard when it is part of a learning organisation culture and that it can lead to a shared responsibility for learning.

Chapter five explains why a qualitative approach was chosen for the research and justifies the choice of a case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with all teaching staff, including a HLTA, with three focus groups of pupils, an examination of school documents and, finally, through a half-day classroom observation that also provided an opportunity for informal conversations with participants.

Chapters six to nine are devoted to analysing the data. Chapters six, seven and eight each take a supporting research question in turn with chapter six recording the experience of the participants in collaborative observation. Chapter seven argues that the sense of collegiality provided by the learning organisation culture develops the supportive, non-judgemental culture needed for participants to accept that lesson observations that include pupils are a helpful way of improving learning and teaching. Chapter eight discusses how the dialogic culture of the learning organisation enables all voices to be heard. Chapter nine draws out the empirical conclusions from the previous three chapters in answer to the supporting research questions.

Chapter ten addresses the main research question: how does collaborative observation lead to a shared responsibility for learning? As this question is addressed, a model based on the significant conclusions from the research is presented for generating further thoughts on developing collaborative observation in schools. The overall conclusion is that collaborative observation can develop a shared responsibility for learning when both pupil and teacher voice is heard within a collegial, dialogic learning organisation culture.

Chapter eleven provides an opportunity for thoughts on the research – its limitations and constraints, and its wider contribution both personally and professionally.

A review of the literature now begins with an overview of pupil voice followed by the perceived benefits and tensions involved when listening to pupils.
CHAPTER 2

WHY LISTEN TO PUPILS?

The next three chapters review the literature in terms of the substantive focus of the thesis. Chapter two starts the review by defining pupil voice, providing a brief overview of listening to pupils, followed by an exploration of the perceived benefits and challenges involved. Chapter three establishes a working definition of a learning organisation and illustrates that it is helpful to explore those aspects of collegiality and dialogue that underpin the culture of a learning organisation, suggesting that a collegial community of learners can be strengthened through dialogue as it enables all voices to be heard. Chapter four moves the focus from listening to pupil voice generally and focuses more specifically on the learning organisation culture in relation to collaborative observation, concluding that collegiality, through dialogue, leads to mutual understanding and thereby contributes to improved learning at individual and organisational level as all voices are heard.

This chapter starts the review of the literature by defining pupil voice and then provides a brief overview of listening to pupils. This is followed by an exploration of the perceived benefits, as described by the literature, starting with listening to pupil voice in the wider school context and then focusing on pupil voice in classroom learning. It is established that the benefits related to pupils centre on improving pupils’ engagement with learning, through involvement, empowerment, sense of self-worth and respect for teachers. Similarly, teachers develop respect for pupils and also improve their practice in the classroom as they view their teaching from a new perspective. After considering the benefits of listening to pupils, the chapter examines the challenges involved. These challenges in relation to pupils concern the question of possible tokenism, teachers’ control over pupils, the need to develop a language for pupils and teachers to talk about learning, the issue of pupil feedback and which pupils to choose for consultation. Finally, the chapter views the challenges from the teacher’s point of view, suggesting that there are three main issues at stake.
A definition and overview of listening to pupil voice

After defining pupil voice in the context of this thesis, a brief overview leads to a more recent focus on listening to pupils in relation to classroom learning. It is acknowledged that students as observers in the classroom is an area that only a very few schools are trialling, particularly at primary level.

As long ago as 1916, Dewey (2004) referred to the need to engage pupils in their educational experiences. The real turning point came in 1989, however, with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) to which the UK was quick to respond with the Children Act (1989) in terms of welfare (Kirby, 2001) and Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007), but not in the field of education for all children.

At around the same time, the Education Reform Act (1988) ‘led to a decade of unremitting change’ (Pollard and Triggs, 2000, p.4), as this led to the establishment of the National Curriculum, Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and the original Ofsted framework in 1992 in which inspectors were required to consult with pupils informally (Rudduck et al., 1996).

Alongside this school improvement focus, and perhaps because of it (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004), there has been a shift in mindset that shows a respect for children’s competency to take part in decision making (Kirby, 2001). However, Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) feel from all their research over many years, and more recently through the Teaching, Learning and Research Council (TLRP) research, that there is still more interest in pupil participation in a wider sense rather than pupil voice and learning in the classroom and that pupil consultation has so far been pursued in a limited number of schools only regarding teaching and learning. They feel pupil consultation is in danger of being sidetracked before its potential has been realised, confirming Fielding’s earlier view (2001a) that teaching and learning are mostly forbidden areas. Ironically, the standards agenda, which seems to promote pupil voice, seems also to prevent time for any focus beyond examination results, as Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) argue.
In order to arrive at a working definition of pupil voice for the thesis, it is recognised that various terms are used when describing *pupil voice*. For example, the term *pupil participation* is described as an all-embracing term whereby ‘pupils should be given an active and direct involvement in school matters, at some level’, suggesting ‘inclusion, or membership of a community, in which pupils are valued and respected contributors’ (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, p. 5). Within this broad principle of participation, there is the more focused idea of *pupil consultation* that ‘rests on the principle that pupils can bring something worthwhile to discussions about schooling’ (p.5).

More specifically, Rudduck and Flutter (2004) describe what giving pupils a voice in relation to learning means: taking seriously what pupils say about being a learner and what helps or gets in the way of learning; finding ways of involving pupils in decisions that affect their lives in schools. These definitions have led to a working definition for the thesis that focuses on the classroom:

> Pupil voice in the classroom is about gathering information to help illuminate how pupils learn best, and what helps or gets in the way of learning.

Despite the limited, or narrow, commitment, there is, nonetheless, a greater awareness that pupil voice could influence the learning process. Fielding (2006) claims there is a new wave of student voice which ranges over a ‘huge vista’ of activities leading to a ‘burgeoning range of ways in which professional perceptions about the suitability and performance of staff are significantly informed by student perspectives and judgments’ (p. 299). One of the ‘burgeoning ways’ is students as observers of lessons. In order to describe this practice of a student observing a lesson alongside a teacher, the thesis has coined the phrase *collaborative observation*. Indeed, research commissioned by the General Teaching Council (GTC), led by MacBeath et al. (2009), describes ‘portraits of practice’ as to how pupils might participate to influence learning and one of these is ‘pupils as evaluators of teaching’. Moreover, pupil consultation by inspectors has long since been formalised and, with the arrival of the 2012 inspection framework (Ofsted, 2012), it has been announced that ‘inspectors will give greater consideration to the views of parents, pupils and staff as important evidence’ (p. 5).
Because of the limited use of pupil voice in relation to learning in the classroom, however, the research literature overall focuses mainly on pupil voice generally and not specifically on pupils as observers. Literature that mentions pupils as observers tends to be a recommendation rather than based on examples of actual practice. In spite of this, there is a feeling that listening to pupils in relation to classroom learning is becoming recognised as a positive experience with potential to develop learning, but an experience that has not yet gained momentum. The thesis argues that what is missing is a supportive, collegial and dialogic culture that will promote and support collaborative observation as a learning activity.

Indeed, there is a will developing for pupils to be heard in relation to learning and Alexander (2009), in *The Cambridge Primary Review*, states that listening to children’s voice is not a fad, but a trend that needs to become the way of school life. Consequently, he makes the need to engage pupils directly in decisions that affect their learning a key point of his report. It is with this optimistic thought in mind, therefore, that the perceived benefits of listening to pupil voice in relation to classroom learning are explored in the next section.

**Benefits of listening to pupils**

The perceived benefits of listening to pupil voice fall into three main areas (McIntyre et al., 2005): preparing pupils for citizenship in a democratic society (supported by Kirby, 2001; MacBeath et al., 2001), enabling young people to learn to think for themselves, and improving teaching and learning (both supported by Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). It is the third area on which this thesis focuses: how listening to pupil voice can improve classroom learning.

The benefits related to improving classroom learning also seem to fall into three main categories. Firstly, some benefits might be described as supporting dispositions that could be expected to have a positive impact on what happens in the classroom. For example, MacBeath et al. (2009) refer to a positive impact on attendance and behaviour.
Secondly, there are benefits that have a direct link to pupil learning, such as enhancing pupils’ commitment and capacity to learn (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). Thirdly, there are benefits cited which relate to improving teachers’ practice (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007), and it is the last two, through collaborative observation, on which the research is focused.

Benefits related to pupils

Research is hesitant to suggest a direct link between listening to pupil voice and raising standards in academic achievement (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007), saying that there is, as yet, insufficient evidence. Nevertheless, such writers are prepared to suggest that improved pupils' engagement with learning has the potential to improve standards. Although the link between pupil voice and improved standards is not proven, students are the producers of school outcomes and so their involvement is necessary because pupils’ ‘buy-in’ to learning, or engagement, is needed as well as that of teachers if learning is to improve (Levin, 2000). Moreover, according to Levin (ibid.), ‘buy-in’ is brought about by tackling the problem of students as ‘passive recipients’ of knowledge, engaging them as ‘active constructors’.

This active involvement of pupils is beneficial according to Goldman and Newman (1998), because it empowers them. This is often referred to as giving pupils a sense of ‘agency’ in more recent literature (for example, MacBeath et al., 2009). Empowerment through involvement is a fundamental need of all pupils (Goldman and Newman, 1998). Moreover, empowerment through involving children in their learning, and allowing them to talk about their concerns, can impact on their engagement with learning (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Empowerment can lead to a better self-image and a greater sense of control and this seems to enhance motivation and engagement, they argue. The resulting commitment is important because the routine problems of teaching and learning, such as boredom because work is not as interesting as pupils’ social lives, have to be addressed or pupils may come to accept them as ‘part of the wearisome routinization of schooling’ (p. 74) and then have difficulty sustaining a commitment to learning.
Listening to pupil voice is also about giving pupils a sense of self-worth through mutual respect, as acknowledged by Goldman and Newman (1998): ‘Respect for everyone and everything is crucial to feeling good about oneself’ (p. 46). Self esteem only exists in terms of relationships and so respect for one another and for divergent thinking is crucial (ibid). Respect is fostered through talking and listening to others, which is especially important for groups on the margins who can be helped to move from invisibility (SooHoo, 1993; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) and by helping pupils develop a sense of ownership in their schools (Mitra, 2003), the benefits of which will be explored in the findings. Although teachers pay attention to pupils’ concerns as a routine part of their job, this is not sufficient on its own for pupils to feel that teachers know enough about their concerns and so listening to pupil voice in relation to classroom learning provides that extra opportunity (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007).

**Benefits related to teachers**

Pupils are not the only ones to benefit from having a voice. Teachers can also benefit and can develop respect for pupils. Crane (2001), who was a pupil researcher at a sixth form, remarked that staff came to respect students in the research group for the very quality that would have caused contention in the classroom, the desire to speak out. She suggests that, if all parties keep the common aim of improving learning in mind, then very different people can work together to achieve it as staff come to realise that students can help develop their teaching.

One way to develop teaching is to view it from a different perspective. When considering why teachers should listen to pupils, SooHoo (1993) sums this up so well:

> We listen to outside experts to inform us, and consequently, we overlook the treasure in our very own backyards; our students. Student perceptions are valuable to our practice because they are authentic sources; they personally experience our classrooms firsthand (p. 309).

Teachers need to see the pupils’ perspectives because their ‘everyday eyes’ have two weaknesses (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004): habit and routine dominate and so teachers are selective in their awareness of what is happening in the classroom, and, moreover, teachers are so busy that they may only tackle surface realities. As teachers become
more aware of pupils’ capabilities, they see the familiar from a different angle and then develop a readiness to change their own practice as they develop a renewed excitement in their teaching (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Levin (2000) extends this thought by explaining that, in his own research, information gleaned from students in their own schools was much more compelling for teachers than external research or experience from other schools. In line with this thought, the practice of collaborative observation provides the opportunity to research in-school professional development.

The perceived benefits of listening to pupil voice in the classroom, therefore, centre on improving pupils’ engagement with learning, through involvement, empowerment and mutual respect that develops self-worth. At the same time, teachers’ practice in the classroom is improved as they develop respect for pupils which enables them to view their teaching from a new perspective. Listening to pupil voice is not without its challenges, however.

**Challenges of listening to pupils**

When embarking on any new idea, it can be easy to be enthused by the sales-pitch, particularly if there is an expectation that Ofsted will be considering the extent that the school seeks the opinions of pupils. The literature, however, indicates that there are challenges when listening to pupil voice and schools may not be aware of these. The phrase ‘points of tension’ is used by Flutter and Rudduck (2004) and this has been borrowed for this thesis as it suggests thought-provoking ideas and principles beyond the physical challenge of the what, where and how pupil voice should be heard. It encourages an examination of these principles in relation to both pupils and teachers. Such tensions, this thesis suggests, explain why listening to pupil voice in terms of classroom learning is not always successful. However, as the empirical research will explore, this thesis claims that the attributes of collegiality and dialogue within a learning organisation culture can provide a foundation that enables the tensions to be overcome successfully, allowing pupil voice in the classroom to flourish.
Motives behind listening to pupils are not always genuine, but may be tokenistic. Many practitioners may value the perceived benefits of listening to pupil voice for pupils and teachers, but there is also a sense that some schools may have ‘jumped on the bandwagon’ (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) of a fashion filled with much ‘well-intentioned advocacy’ (Fielding, 2001a). In addition, there is also a strong sense that listening to pupils is motivated by fear and accountability (Fielding, 2001a). Schools may feel they need to demonstrate to Ofsted that they are listening to pupils as a way of responding to successive UK governments’ needs to control the education system (Pollard and Triggs, 2000).

**Challenges related to pupils**

Pupils may find themselves in a school where they are listened to, but in a tokenistic manner. Hart (1997), supported by Wyse (2001), is concerned about tokenism as this is often difficult to recognise and can be present even when adults are genuinely concerned to give pupils a voice. Tokenism may be suspected if adults are not sufficiently self-critical in the process. For example, they may give pupils little choice about the subject of communication, or no time to form opinions and so practitioners need to be self-critical to become aware of such potential limitations. Hart (1997) maintains that children themselves will sense that the consultation is not genuine and so it is important that adults ask them their views on the process as well as on the subject matter. The need for teachers to be self-critical, therefore, is an important part of listening to pupil voice successfully.

In order to be self-critical, however, teachers need an awareness of what the possible challenges or tensions might be. One of these tensions is recognised by Fielding (2004) who cautions teachers against a desire to control rather than empower as concerns for results can override the concern for people:

> Even when staff are supportive of student voice work there remains the danger of a specifically adult, situated perspective getting in the way of deeper understanding’ (Fielding, 2004, p. 303).
As a result, control can also be exercised when pupils’ comments about classroom practice get translated into adult words (Fielding, 2001a) so that, even if teachers check the meaning with them, pupils may be inclined to agree because of the power relations that exist rather than question and correct the adult (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). The result is that challenging ideas offered by pupils can be modified to conform to existing orthodoxy, or pupil data may even be manipulated and used out of context (Hart, 1997). Adults may also control who and what they listen to because the way certain pupils express themselves makes adults feel uncomfortable or threatened (Crualdas, 2001) or simply by adult selection of the topics permitted for discussion regardless of whether the pupils see these as significant (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004).

An interesting aspect of control may be seen in what Fielding (2006) categorises as high performing schools in a situation where it might be least expected. Such schools, he claims, do not care about their students as persons, but as ‘bearers of results and measurable outcomes’ (p. 302). This is particularly significant for this research as it relates to high performing schools, such as Riverbank, who use pupil voice in new ways to improve learning (Fielding, 2006), such as using students as observers. However, although all high performing schools may appear to be using pupil voice in a similar way, and share a commitment to achievement, Fielding’s observations indicate that, on the one hand, a school may be using relationships to improve performance and, on the other hand, in a more holistic model, the high level of performance is for the sake of people and their relationships. In the first type of school, as Fielding notes, the school may be using pupil voice for compliance and control, where ‘student voice is not an option for either teachers or students: its managerial desirability slides smilingly into compulsion’ (p. 306). Disturbingly, Fielding claims, it is difficult to tell the schools apart, but the secret is that the more holistic schools, that put people first, are dialogic schools whereby those in leadership positions ‘take seriously the making of meaning together’ (p. 308). Fielding asserts that the process of listening to pupils in such schools is ongoing and such schools appear to have systems where dialogue is central (Fielding, 2001a). This becomes a key message to be explored throughout the findings.

For successful dialogue to take place, a shared language with which to talk about learning is needed. However, concern is expressed by McIntyre et al. (2005) about the
language barriers that some pupils experience when trying to talk about their learning. Their evidence over many years of working within, and prior to, their TLRP research shows that pupils differ in ‘confidence and articulateness with which they can express their ideas’ (p. 155), differences which often reflect social class distinctions. Similarly, Pollard and Triggs (2000) found that pupils had ‘little access to metacognitive language with which to talk or think about themselves as learners, or by means of which they could penetrate teachers’ intentions for them’ (p.153). To counteract this, MacBeath et al. (2001), backed by Rudduck and Flutter (2000), stress the importance of training children and teachers in the language of learning to aid their thinking as well as their communication. They describe it as the need for a conceptual vocabulary, ‘not only to articulate their views but to be able to recognise them’ (p. 81). They contend, therefore, that teachers must also have that vocabulary and must be able to make it accessible to pupils. This will give pupils a sense of agency (MacBeath et al., 2009) rather than a feeling of suspicion or anxiety (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).

A shared language also means that successful feedback is more likely. Rudduck and Flutter (2004) stress the importance of feedback to the students whose voices have been canvassed and time to discuss what actions can be pursued from those suggested otherwise pupils become disillusioned with the process and adults are confirming that pupils, in fact, have no power (MacBeath et al., 2009). Moreover, pupils may feel disappointed (Fielding, 2001a) and, even worse, Hart (1997) suggests that pre-adolescents need feedback or they can develop a sense of inferiority for their efforts and feel they have failed.

Even when efforts have been made to develop a shared language, there is a further contentious limitation to listening to pupils which centres on the question of which pupils should be involved. Fielding (2004) refers to an ‘unwitting disempowerment’ (p. 304) and MacBeath et al. (2009) claim that consultation can be potentially divisive. Listening only to certain voices does not give the whole picture (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; supported by Fielding, 2001a) because the ‘less effective learners ... are the voices least likely to be heard and yet most important to be heard’ (Rudduck et al., 1996, p.177). In the very initiative designed to empower them, therefore, some groups can be left disenfranchised (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) because, as Fielding (2004)
claims, there are some voices that teachers would prefer not to hear, but if they do not listen to these voices they may miss something far more serious than they realise.

Ironically, it is not just the marginalised groups that are a concern. Listening only to certain voices can reinforce existing practice and not challenge it, as Rudduck and Flutter (2004) are aware:

The problem is that these pioneering groups of students can become an elite, creating new hierarchies within the body of students itself – and their status is often rooted in competence and talk which may, in turn, be linked to social class (p. 156).

The authors, supported by Silva (2001), suggest that this elite body, often representative of the majority, may hold conservative views and so undermine attempted reform. The result could be that professed efforts at student inclusion might simply be supporting the already well-supported students, those that fit into the academic aspirations of the school, and be acting as yet another ‘dividing practice’ (McIntyre et al., 2005). Similarly, Bragg (2001) comments that teachers often listen to those voices that ‘make immediate sense’ because of pressures of needing rapid results, but teachers may actually learn the most from those who ‘disrupt our assumptions and habitual ways of working’ (p. 73). Consequently, the findings will be exploring whose voices are heard.

**Challenges related to teachers**

Challenges to listening to pupil voice in the classroom not only relate to pupils, but also relate to teachers. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) explain that there needs to be a balance between consulting pupils and the implications for teachers. Three issues emerge as being at stake here. Firstly, for pupil consultation to be useful, teachers must have confidence that pupils do have something to offer (McIntyre et al., 2005). Secondly, there is a concern that involving students can cause adults to feel they risk losing control (Goldman and Newman, 1998) and this may include concerns about confidentiality. Thirdly, staff may feel that pupil voice is being privileged over theirs (MacBeath et al., 2009). Again, this thesis claims that the negativity surrounding these
concerns could be offset through a successful learning organisation culture so that teachers view listening to pupils as a positive force to improve their practice.

Referring to the first issue, whether students have something to offer, Goldman and Newman (1998) feel that certain students may want to make changes that will not be in the best interests of students overall. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) think there is a feeling in schools that children are not wise enough and that there is an ideology in the UK that teachers know best. More specifically, MacBeath et al. (2009) assert that including pupils in lesson observations would be a step too far for many teachers as they would feel that pupils would be unaware of pedagogy such as the developmental sequence of a lesson and not appreciate teacher expertise and time put into the lesson.

In relation to the second issue, teachers’ feeling loss of control, there is a perception that teachers could feel professionally undermined by the experience of a pupil commenting on learning and teaching, as explained by Rudduck et al., (1996):

If teachers have a view of students as young people to be managed as ‘adversaries’, then it is unlikely that they can unravel the power relationships and convince students that they genuinely want to enter into dialogue with them about learning (p. 2).

Teachers who have problems in legitimising pupil voice fear what pupils might say (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007) and may also be concerned about issues of confidentiality (MacBeath et al., 2009). Teachers may also fear that issues will come to light that are not straightforward to address with potential to deepen or even create tension between staff members or between teacher and pupil (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). The issue of feedback from pupils is, therefore, potentially problematic for teachers. Reassuringly, however, Nieto’s study (1994) showed that although students criticised, they also praised pedagogy and teachers found that pupils’ ideas could be thoughtful and potentially helpful with pupils not only avoiding personal comments, but also offering practical suggestions on how to modify practice with constructive ideas (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007), an aspect to be explored in the empirical research.
Even in situations where teachers recognise that pupils may have useful comments to make on lessons, or when teachers are not fearful of pupils’ comments, there is still the third potential tension to consider as there is the possibility of privileging pupil voice over that of staff. Because the classroom has traditionally been the arena of teacher voice (Fielding 2004), staff may feel that it is indulging pupils to use them in lesson observations (MacBeath et al., 2009). Teachers may feel their voices are not being sufficiently taken into account, especially if they are feeling pressured by many other school improvement initiatives (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). This view links with that of Fielding (2001a) who feels that the ‘frameworks of performativity provide both the motive and the means of a carefully constrained consultation’ (p. 103). In other words, he pictures teachers as demonstrating compliance for personal survival as they see the government’s obsession with targets as providing little time for freedom beyond the specified curriculum. Fielding’s concern is echoed by Rudduck and Flutter (2004) whose research confirms that teachers worry about meeting government imposed targets and so may feel that listening to pupils should not be a priority.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, McIntyre et al. (2005) reported from their research that teachers would only take note of pupils’ views if they felt they were practical within the National Curriculum assessment arrangements, and if resources were available. Consequently, there is a belief that ‘constrained consultation’ is associated with ‘strong central government control’ which ‘hinders students from making choices around their own learning’ (Cruddas, 2001, p. 62) and this can lead to a ‘carping antagonistic relationship between students and teachers’ (Fielding, 2004, p. 308). In contrast, however, Harris (2002) suggests that initiatives can impact positively on standards if they are focused on teaching and learning at classroom level in a situation where ‘teachers and students develop and learn together’ (p. 5) and so collaborative observation within the context of a learning organisation culture provides a promising area for exploration, one that offers the opportunity to view learning as a shared responsibility.
Summary

Why listen to pupils? This chapter has explained the perceived benefits of listening to pupils, noting that these centre on improving pupils’ engagement with learning through their involvement, empowerment and mutual sense of respect which develops self-worth. Teachers, in addition, develop respect for pupils and improve their own practice as a result of viewing their teaching from a new perspective.

However, listening to pupils is not without its challenges. Teachers may consult for a variety of motives and so there is the possibility that pupil consultation could be tokenistic. Teachers may exert control over pupils. Moreover, there is also a need to develop a language for pupils and teachers to talk about learning together and facilitate quality feedback. Consideration also needs to be given to which pupils to choose for consultation.

Tensions when listening to pupil voice also impact on teachers, often resulting in their feeling unable to accept pupil consultation. Teachers may, therefore, perceive that pupils lack knowledge of pedagogy and so have nothing to offer the teacher. It may be that teachers fear losing control in the classroom in what has been, traditionally, their domain, or they may feel that pupil voice is being privileged over theirs, especially as they are trying to meet government targets and feel they have no time for initiatives outside of the specified curriculum.

Despite the perception that this may result in consultation taking place in a constrained manner, there is an alternative view that consultation that focuses on teaching and learning at classroom level can make a positive contribution to learning and can overcome the challenges. A way of examining how these tensions can be counteracted so that listening to pupils in the classroom can become a desirable experience is to explore how classroom observation links to a positive learning organisation culture. This is the focus of the thesis and will be discussed through the findings in chapters seven and eight.
This leads to the next chapter which examines learning within a learning organisation culture, and places a particular emphasis on collegiality and dialogue, both recommended by Fielding (1999), as essential for listening to both pupil and teacher voice in the classroom.
In the previous chapter, an outline of listening to pupil voice was provided. The potential benefits and the challenges of listening to pupil voice were also addressed. These were examined from the perspective of both the pupil and the teacher. Although the thesis is not claiming that a school has to be a learning organisation in order to listen to pupils successfully, it seems appropriate to draw on the well-established ideas of collegiality and dialogue within a learning organisation culture to support the argument that the culture helps address challenges and enables participants to view collaborative observation as a worthwhile experience: an experience that enables their views to be heard and that will benefit learning rather than as a negative experience that stifles teachers’ willingness to accept pupil voice in the classroom as worthwhile.

In this chapter, various definitions of the learning organisation are reviewed and a working definition is developed for the thesis. The difference in understandings between organisational learning and the learning organisation is explored to provide the context for learning within the learning organisation and to explain the choice of literature. The intention of the chapter is to illustrate that the ideas associated with the learning organisation provide a conceptualisation to explain an appropriate collegial and dialogic culture in which collaborative observation involving pupils could flourish and, by examining the literature on collegiality and dialogue within learning organisations, a sense of what a supportive, enabling culture could look like emerges. This leads to a focus on listening to both teacher and pupil voice and suggests how a collegial community of learners is strengthened through dialogue, which helps counteract anti-learning values and develops members’ skills of interpretation.

The Learning Organisation

The learning organisation is just one of many theories of change and organisational design (Morgan, 2006). A complexity of factors that both encourage and restrict learning have been portrayed in different ways in the learning organisation literature
(Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Dodgson, 1993). However, not all aspects of the learning organisation are within the scope of this thesis and so the main focus is on collegiality and dialogue within the learning organisation as these are felt to be the significant aspects inherent in the culture that will enable collaborative observation with pupils to flourish.

The learning organisation is, basically, a metaphor to describe organisations that respond to change successfully. Although organisations themselves cannot learn in reality, the metaphor provides a means of understanding that learning can take place beyond a collection of individuals who learn. For example, it allows, through the image, a better understanding when the reader is presented with ideas such as Senge’s (2006) positioning of the learning organisation as being the opposite of the controlling organisation and his claim that members of the learning organisation are able to have a ‘shift of mind’ so that they see themselves connected to the world and not separate from it, so placing relationships and communication at the heart of the learning organisation.

To understand how organisations learn, Senge (2006) uses the notion that teams are the basic learning unit in modern organisations, rather than the individual. Through a pooling of minds, the establishment of trust, and the distribution of knowledge from one team to another, it is seen that the team offers a dimension of learning for the organisation that an individual as learner could not achieve (ibid.). Senge (2006) also claims that team learning starts with dialogue and the development of a shared language that improves with use. This enables conflict to be used as a positive force and this will be explored in the findings. Furthermore, the benefits of a shared language were referred to in the previous chapter by Pollard and Triggs (2000) and MacBeath et al. (2001). It seems feasible, therefore, that this language could be developed through dialogic practices.

What is it about the learning organisation with its emphasis on teams and dialogue that suggests it could provide a culture that will support listening to pupil voice in the classroom? It is helpful to start by exploring some definitions. Finger and Brand (1999) define a learning organisation as ‘an organization which has a strong learning
capacity and is improving it constantly’ (p. 148). This definition acknowledges the view that the learning organisation is a process and a state to work towards as an aspiration rather than a final destination (Garvin, 1993; Pedler et al., 1997; Senge, 2006). It can be thought of as a direction of travel (Jones and Hendry, 1994) which can, in reality, be a ‘long and winding road’ (Elkjaer, 2001, p. 450). This idea of the learning organisation as a process rather than an end accomplishment ties in with collaborative observation as an initiative that facilitates ongoing development in pupils’ engagement with learning and teachers’ pedagogy.

In addition to developing over time, the learning organisation involves a cooperative commitment of members to solve problems together (Pedler et al., 1997), encouraging ‘multiple viewpoints and debate’ (Fiol and Lyles, 1985, p. 811). Learning in a learning organisation can lead to improvement (Plowright, 2007) and the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ is developed when engaging in the process in situ (Elkjaer, 1999), supporting the notion of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), or learning ‘on-the-job’, whereby expert members support the learning of less experienced members, such as fellow teachers or pupils in collaborative observation. Moreover, the learning organisation language of ‘cooperative commitment’, ‘multiple viewpoints’ and ‘in situ’ has relevance as it describes a positive picture of collaborative observation in the classroom in which pupils are involved.

Reflection and dialogue appear at the higher end of Pedler et al.’s (1997) list of characteristics of being a learning company or organisation. Dialogue facilitates a getting together for conversations where no decisions are made, where a multiplicity of points of view are shared and aired and time is given for reflection (Fiol and Lyles, 1985), but, importantly, there is no need for members to agree. Reflective dialogue in a social situation emerges from empirical studies as enhancing the interpretive skills of the members (Cousins, 1998), who may explore the vision so that they know exactly why they are being asked to change, can voice concerns and contribute to suggestions for the way forward (Jones and Hendry, 1994; Pedler et al., 1997; Mitchell and Sackney, 1998). In line with this thinking, as long ago as the 1970s, Argyris and Schon (1978) were arguing for double loop learning which is beyond monitoring and feedback.
on existing policy, but involves questioning existing policy, through talk, so that change can occur.

For this thesis, the above definitions of a learning organisation have been combined and placed in the context of a school, being mindful of the cooperative element of the culture and the focus on dialogue outlined in the previous paragraph. A working definition of the learning organisation that includes both pupil and teacher learning is:

A school that is a learning organisation has a strong learning capacity and is improving it constantly by seeking the viewpoints of both pupils and teachers through reflective dialogue in its cooperative commitment to improving learning.

Such a definition promotes the view of learning as a shared responsibility.

**Organisational learning and the learning organisation**

There has been much discussion in the literature on the difference between organisational learning and the learning organisation. This is now explored briefly to provide the context for learning within the learning organisation and to explain the choice of literature. Some writers suggest that organisational learning is part of the larger concept of a learning organisation and that the two disciplines go hand-in-hand. Jones and Hendry (1994), for example, argue that organisational learning, which has its roots in action learning, is an aspect of the learning organisation used to explain and quantify activities. Dodgson (1993) claims that “firms that purposefully construct structures and strategies so as to enhance and maximise organizational learning have been designated “learning organizations”” (p. 377). Louis and Leithwood (1998) refer to organisational learning, in learning schools, as being points on the pathway to becoming learning organisations, and feel that organisational learning and professional communities emerge under the same set of organisational conditions.

However, some writers focus on organisational learning and the learning organisation as two separate disciplines, acknowledging that the organisational learning literature,
which has a longer history than that of the learning organisation, reflects the works of academic researchers who focus on the nature and processes of learning within the organisation, and that the learning organisation literature reflects the prescriptive writers with practical experience who focus on models for creating change to improve learning processes (Tsang, 1997; Ayas, 1999; Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 1999). Prescriptive writers may be accused of lacking ‘a solid empirical foundation’ (Tsang, 1997). However, Tsang, at the time of writing, was already looking at ways of reducing the dichotomy by calling on prescriptive writers to draw on the works and methods of more descriptive writers and test out ideas that are grounded in research and theory. Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999), just two years later, suggest this was already starting to happen and they remark that the distinction between the two philosophies is not always clear cut. Supported by Thomsen and Hoest (2001), therefore, who make an assumption that the learning organisation and organisational learning are two sides of the same coin, and Elkjaer (1999) who chooses to ‘use both terms at random’ for her project on developing a social learning theory, this thesis draws on both sets of literature as appropriate and the assumption is made that organisational learning takes place within the learning organisation. This assumption sits well with a thesis that is both practically and theoretically driven as the research is an interpretative study based on practical classroom experience whilst, at the same time, theoretical conclusions arise from the literature on pupil voice and collegiality, dialogue and the concept of the learning organisation.

**Collegiality and the learning organisation**

This section explains that collegiality is needed to grow commitment. Aspects of collegiality such as a sense of belonging, the ability to share, and feelings of security that enable a participant to deal with tensions all contribute to commitment. The commitment then strengthens collegiality as a two-way, ongoing, cyclical process. Moreover, commitment leads to learning which is seen, in chapter four, to be strengthened when linked with dialogic practices, so strengthening the rationale for embedding listening to pupils in a learning organisation culture.
Collegiality can be simply described as ‘teachers conferring and collaborating with other teachers’ (Smyth, 1991, p.323). ‘Collaboration’ and ‘collegiality’ are often used as interchangeable terms by academics (Fielding, 1999), but collegiality suggests collaboration specifically related to professional development and this is supported by Little (1982) and Smyth (1991) who explains that collegiality has sometimes been thought of as ‘on-the-job’ professional development. Consequently, notions of collegiality seem particularly appropriate for a study on collaborative observation that takes place in the classroom, the working domain of teachers and pupils.

Ayo and Fraser (2008) define what they see as collegial relationships:

The professional interactions which arise from an on-going communication between two or more individuals who share the same workplace, or work interests (p.58).

Such interactions, they argue, lead to ‘a new way of knowing rather than merely the acquisition of new knowledge’ (Ayo and Fraser, 2008, p. 58) and this suggests a deeper understanding between participants rather than a sharing of surface knowledge. Mutual understanding is related to a sense of belonging and to mutual commitment for successful participation in a community of practice (Handley et al., 2006). Moreover, a sense of belonging promotes commitment (Goldman and Newman, 1998).

As well as a sense of belonging, an ability to share is also a characteristic associated with commitment and collegiality. In the learning organisation, participants must be willing to involve others and have the ability to involve others (Schein, 2004). Similarly, for the successful transfer of organisational practices, Lucas (2010) maintains that participants must be willing to share what they know with colleagues and must, at the same time, appreciate that their own knowledge will be increased through sharing. This two-way process of sharing knowledge and practices will only happen if the working environment is conducive to the process and this reinforces the need for a culture that supports cooperation and collaboration (ibid.). Based on Lucas’s research, therefore, a sharing, cooperative, collegial culture is needed for successful learning in an organisation. This links with the notion of a community of practice, as described by Pemberton et al. (2007), where sharing and commitment are linked together and Senge
(2006) asserts that the sharing culture of collegiality promotes commitment rather than compliance.

Commitment is also formed as participants engage with tensions or challenges within the collegial culture and this is, again, illustrated in the community of practice literature whereby Pemberton et al. (2007) describe how participants bring their own views to the group and so there will always be tensions as members try to adapt. The collegial culture provides the support to deal with these tensions. Consequently, real collegiality, or ‘tough collegiality’ (Humes, 2007) is built when colleagues are prepared to challenge one another. There is potential for such challenge when participating in collaborative observation whereby participants have to expose their practice to others. A collaborative culture, however, ‘permits vulnerabilities’ and encourages risk-taking, according to Harris (2002). Such practice, moreover, leads to a deeper understanding through commitment which arises from feeling sufficiently secure to deal with associated challenges (ibid.) such as teachers receiving feedback from one another and from pupils.

So far, it has been observed that a sense of belonging, a capacity to share and the ability to deal with tensions as manifestations of a cooperative, collegial culture lead to commitment. As commitment also leads to collegiality (Humes, 2007), it is seen that they are two-way processes. Collegiality, as a shared commitment, gives credence to the perception that the collegial culture of a learning organisation could support and strengthen collaborative observation because it provides a foundation for cooperation and sharing that seems to be missing in the practical classroom situation for many teachers when they think of pupils commenting on classroom learning.

In addition, it is claimed that an environment conducive to learning can be fostered by giving time for reflection and analysis, by freeing up employees to have the time to stimulate an exchange of ideas across boundaries (Garvin, 1993). The act of collaborative observation creates a set time for reflection and analysis so that the collegial community of learners is able to engage in another aspect of the learning organisation culture, dialogue.
Dialogue and the learning organisation

The concept of dialogue is important for a learning organisation because it helps overcome barriers to learning and strengthens unity whilst developing members’ skills of interpretation.

The concept of dialogue was developed at the MIT Center for Organization Learning to improve the quality of communication between people (Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 1999). Examining the learning organisation from a social perspective, as opposed to a technical perspective that includes the measuring of data, the learning organisation provides the opportunity for individuals to learn from their experiences and to learn from and with one another in a work setting, Easterby-Smith and Araujo argue. In the case study school, this is done through the process of collaborative observation. Learning in the learning organisation, however, is not only about individuals learning within the organisation, but also about collective learning and team learning (Senge, 2006). Cousins (1998) refers to the ‘shared interpretations of ambiguous phenomena’ (p. 128) that are arrived at through dialogue, claiming that the key to most conceptions of organisational learning is the concept of social interaction.

What is it about dialogue that elevates it above the idea of discussion? It is described by Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) as a structured method for intervention in workgroups that allows the ‘space for each other to speak’ (p. 9). At the same time, participants must avoid evaluating one another’s comments and also be willing to speak out their own views. Senge (2006) calls on participants to ‘suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine “thinking together”’ (p. 10). He also explains that the Greek term, ‘dia-logos’ means a free-flowing of meaning through a group, allowing the group to discover insights not attainable individually. Through sharing meaning in order to understand the whole and discover one’s assumptions, dialogue is different from discussion which seeks to persuade, convince and defend one’s assumptions (Preskill and Torres, 1999). The principle of sharing meaning to acquire understanding, therefore, sits well with the possibility of learning developing as a shared responsibility if dialogic practices are sufficiently embedded in collaborative observation.
Not only does dialogue provide the opportunity to listen to all voices, it is also essential in trying to overcome the barriers to achieving a learning organisation as there are structures such as hierarchy (Morgan, 2006), or group politics, whereby a group may fight to preserve its own status within the organisation, and these may encourage anti-learning values (Salaman, 2001). Moreover, there are further examples of anti-learning values that create a culture that may not support learning, such as when data selected for analysis create a biased picture (ibid.), or when espoused theories are not the actual theories in use (Argyris and Schon, 1978), or the use of defensive routines (Senge, 2006). However, listening to all voices through dialogue can help counteract anti-learning values and lead to less hierarchical systems as it means including the voices of ‘employees, middle management and other organizational members in decisions about where the organization wants to go, why and how’ (Elkjaer, 1999, p. 87), through a sharing of knowledge that would have been held by only a few members in previous times (Louis and Kruse, 1998). Consequently, including teaching assistants and pupils in collaborative observation at Riverbank is a departure from a traditional classroom structure to a less hierarchical structure whereby approximately thirty pupils over a school year act as lesson observers, and is one that has the potential to counteract the anti-learning values such as the tensions related to pupil voice described in the previous chapter.

Dialogue gives the organisation the opportunity to have unity in diversity with the many voices in the world today (Pedler et al., 1997):

> From the dialogical perspective ... we would be better off getting on and doing things together rather than becoming preoccupied by our differences (p. 217).

The authors, nevertheless, explain that this does not mean ignoring our differences. This is because diversity is important as it is the different viewpoints that are needed as a key part of the process (Senge, 2006). Collaborative observation provides an ideal mechanism to examine different viewpoints because these different viewpoints can lead to deep questioning which is essential to the transformation process, as Pedler et al. (1997) explain:
An organization that structures out conflict will also cut out challenge, risk, creativity and learning (p. 85).

Through dialogue, problems are seen differently and participants recognise that each person has a different opinion (Elkjaer, 1999) and that the opinion can be valued even if members do not agree (Mitchell and Sackney, 1998). At the same time, shared basic assumptions can be acknowledged (Schein, 2004). Members are pushed to question existing premises and reconceptualise their assumptions, Elkjaer (1999) argues, and this contributes to the building of a learning organisation (Preskill and Torres, 1999). By making distortions of views public and explicit, a group can correct errors caused by personalisation, which is relating events to oneself, overgeneralisation, which is making conclusions from an individual piece of information, and polarisation, the tendency to see everything as black and white (Preskill and Torres, 1999).

Importantly, Snell (2001) argues for moral foundations of the learning organisation which reflect everyone being valued and everyone having a voice through dialogue. These moral foundations enable participants to speak their minds without fear of retribution or disfavour. In the process of participants speaking out without fear, and being able to explore differences of opinion, real commitment develops (Kofman and Senge, 1993) and so this ability to speak out without fear will be a focus for examination in the empirical research. Furthermore, if participants have the opportunity to express themselves without fear in the process of developing commitment, it suggests that dialogue provides the needed culture to enable teachers to welcome pupil voice in the classroom as a positive experience.

Commitment to the process, in this case collaborative observation, is tied to a focus on professional development. When such classroom-related issues are discussed, it develops the capacity for change and improvement (Louis and Kruse, 1998) and the ‘capacity to take effective action’ (Kim, 1993, p. 43). This idea is developed by Senge (2006) who claims that to learn it is necessary to acquire new understanding and new behaviours, the ‘thinking’ and the ‘doing’, the principles and the practice, so much so that the changed thinking and doing become second nature, even under stress. The process of reflection and professional conversations can contribute to ‘sustainable group
processes in pursuit of greater effectiveness with colleagues and with students’ (Mitchell and Sackney, 1998, p. 183) and thereby improve understanding and lead to new behaviours. Dialogue can also aid in self-evaluation: participants can evaluate both themselves and the organisation in which they work (Louis and Leithwood, 1998) as, through dialogue, their interpretative skills, and hence the capacity to learn, will be strengthened (Cousins, 1998). Through the processes that involve dialogue described above, a dialogic culture may emerge in line with Schein’s (2004, p. 20) explanation that occupations involving an ‘intense period of education and apprenticeship’ lead to ‘a shared learning of attitudes, norms and values’ so that engaging in dialogue becomes second nature.

**Summary**

In this chapter, a working definition of the learning organisation was developed for the thesis, supporting the learning organisation school as one with a strong learning capacity that it constantly improves through seeking and developing the views of pupils and teachers as it engages cooperatively in reflective dialogue. The difference in understandings between organisational learning and the learning organisation was explored to provide the context for learning of collegiality and dialogue within the learning organisation culture and to justify why the thesis draws on both sets of literature as appropriate.

A collegial culture provides a sense of belonging and the ability to share. Moreover, it enables participants to deal with challenges. Such a supportive, sharing culture is linked with commitment. Alongside this, the dialogic culture has the potential to provide the opportunity to listen to both teacher and pupil voice, counteracting anti-learning values such as hierarchy, and tensions so that the individual’s and the organisation’s capacities to learn are strengthened. This dialogic culture also leads to commitment. The collegial and dialogic cultures and their link with commitment are two-way, cyclical processes so that culture strengthens commitment and vice versa. The process of collaborative observation, therefore, has the potential to strengthen collegiality and dialogue within a community of learners.
The literature on learning organisations supports the view that all members of the learning organisation need to be involved in dialogic practices, not just pupils or teachers separately. It suggests that collaborative observation, if part of a learning organisation culture, not only has the potential to enable all voices to be heard through collegiality and dialogue, but also has the promise of promoting individual and organisational learning to a high level. How this might occur is explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4
EVERY VOICE MATTERS

The previous chapter on collegiality and dialogue explained how these features are needed to build the learning organisation culture. At the same time, the learning organisation culture develops these features so that the cycle of learning is continually strengthened. Engaging in collegiality and dialogue were seen to lead to a sense of commitment. Collegiality and dialogue were explored in relation to pupil voice but this chapter now examines the culture in relation to collaborative observation more specifically, summarising and developing the ideas presented in the previous two chapters. In the process, the chapter explores how commitment shapes the collegial and the dialogic culture and how these cultures combine and are strengthened to promote individual and organisational learning. The conclusion is that collegiality, through dialogue, leads to mutual understanding and that linking the two aspects of the learning organisation culture together contributes to improved learning at both individual and organisational levels.

Why collaborative observation?

Chapter two examined the benefits and challenges of including pupils in classroom learning, but this section examines the process of collaborative observation more specifically. Without a focus on the process of how pupil participation will be facilitated, Wyse (2001) feels schools will be unable to fulfil the United Nations Convention on children’s rights to participation and that, although it is a sensitive issue, if children are to participate fully in their education, it is necessary to seek their opinions on the effectiveness of their teachers. Further support for a more structured and cohesive approach to student involvement is supplied by Raymond (2001) who feels that educators will be missing out on rich and important data to support teachers’ professional learning without a focus on the process, or, as Fielding (2004) claims, finding spaces where teachers and pupils can meet to make sense of their work together. Furthermore, Levin (2000) claims that teachers learn more from students in their own schools than from external sources.
As regards peer-coaching, or teachers observing one another without a pupil’s involvement, there is considerable evidence that this is helpful for teachers’ professional development (Joyce and Showers, 1996; GTC, 2006). A further advantage of peer coaching is that it is a process that can be engaged in by all teachers across the school (Creasy and Paterson, 2005). This view supports that of Rudduck and Flutter (2004) who claim:

Too often in the history of innovation and change in school the initiative has remained the province of one teacher or one department where it has functioned as a cultural island, set apart from and having no interaction with mainstream values and practices in the school (p. 152).

Commitment beyond one teacher or one department can, according to Rudduck and Flutter (2004), be obtained by:

- fine-tuning challenge in the classroom
- providing school-wide frameworks of encouragement, respect and support
- fostering potent pro-work peer groups
- developing the professional skill of the teacher

It would appear that peer-coaching and, stemming from that, collaborative observation in which a pupil is involved, could support all four of these premises that the authors suggest would lead to whole school commitment: collaborative observation is a process that has potential to provide powerful pro-work groups, challenge teachers, develop pedagogy and be a supportive process for all. It is the need for a supportive process when listening to pupils’ views on classroom learning, however, that is missing in practice. Hence, this thesis proposes that the learning organisation culture can provide this support.

One way of providing the support within the learning organisation dialogic culture is through the development of a shared language to talk about learning. Developmental lesson observations, which can be likened to collaborative observations, provide the opportunity for teachers to work together on change and improvement claims Harris (2002) and so developmental observations contrast with those which are judgemental or
non-collaborative. Developmental observations (ibid.) provide collaborative enquiry for groups that encourage a language for talking about teaching and learning. The focus on learning is enabled through the development of a shared language of learning (MacBeath et al., 2001) which links the roles of pupil and teacher and enables both sets of voices to be heard. Moreover, this provides a chance to learn about the learning process through an emphasis on professional development not professional evaluation (ibid.), and this view is supported by Leithwood et al. (1998), Louis and Leithwood (1998) and Stoll et al. (2003).

Pupil participation, teachers’ learning and pupils’ learning are ‘inextricably linked’ (MacGilchrist et al., 1997) and so they need to be developed together. Fielding (2001a) urges schools to ask whether systems for pupil voice and teacher voice exist separately or whether they ‘inform and sustain’ each other (p. 105). Moreover, he claims that listening to pupil voice should be an integral part of school life, and part of ‘the daily rhythms of work’ (Fielding, 2006, p. 310). By working alongside teachers and being empowered with the guidance and support of adult champions so that pupils are free to talk within the process (Goldman and Newman, 1998), pupils will be offered a ‘rich diversity of direct experiences’ (Hart, 1997, p. 19) and the opportunity of belonging to a community where all are practising skills in real projects. In such situations, MacBeath et al. (2001) have found that children are ‘generous commentators and insightful critics’ (p.78) who start thinking about their own learning and engaging in it more productively rather than reacting negatively in the way some staff fear (Raymond, 2001). Collaborative observation would appear to fit these requirements and the opportunity to examine and discuss such claims from both the pupil and teacher perspective is presented by the empirical research.

Because the cultural roles of pupils and teachers have traditionally placed them in different arenas, MacBeath et al. (2009) note that the boundary of what is defining the responsibility of the teacher becomes blurred when pupils have a voice on classroom learning; classroom roles are redefined and the responsibility for learning can be shared. For teachers to respond to pupils’ suggestions, however, there needs to be ‘some change in the balance of classroom power’ (McIntyre et al., 2005, p. 167). Rudduck et al. (1996) help explain this by referring to relationships:
What makes the difference... is the extent to which a working relationship can be established that casts pupils as partners in a significant and continuing activity rather than as waspish critics, seizing the chance to work out their own personal vendettas (p.9).

It is recommended that ‘a new culture of learning’ (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) is needed and that by listening to and collaborating with pupils it could help teachers to develop the ‘capacity as a staff to look analytically and constructively at school practices and structures’ (p. 147) whereby teachers can learn from pupils through collaborative work and an acceptance of the fact that pupils could sometimes be teachers (Fielding, 2006).

However, a note of caution that has to be recognised from the outset is that all teachers may not be happy with the thought of pupils acting as observers. Harris (2002) explains that it will not be possible to include pupils successfully in observations if teachers themselves are not happy with the process. Mitra (2003), supported by MacBeath et al. (2009), suggests listening to pupils and initiating change in less threatening situations than classroom teaching to start with. In fact, the first step is to cultivate a positive and receptive attitude on the part of teachers: before listening to pupil voice, some basic elements have to be in place – teachers must be willing to hear and honour the voices (Lincoln, 1995) because ‘... this issue of empowering students involves nothing less than a major paradigm shift in the way we teach teachers and create classroom climate’ (p. 90). Nieto (1994) suggests that it needs a change in teachers’ attitudes and behaviours, but being prepared to listen to pupils alone is not sufficient – it has to be accompanied by change in teachers’ expectations and this is where the collegial dialogic culture of the learning organisation is important as the thesis maintains it is what is needed to re-shape teachers’ perspectives from the negative to the positive and create a belief that pupils can help shape pedagogy in a non-threatening way.

Collaborative Observation and Collegiality

Collegiality is often thought of in relation to teachers, but MacBeath et al. (2009) feel it should, in some sense, include pupils and so collaborative observation could facilitate collegiality and thereby help develop commitment. Collegiality has ‘embedded
overtones of democratic decision-making’, according to Brundrett and Burton (2003, p. 157) and so fits well with the concept of collaborative observation.

What could collegiality look like, therefore, in a collaborative observation situation that sits within a learning organisation culture? Rudduck and Flutter (2000) feel collegiality is about improving the quality of lives through mutual experiences, and a creation of a climate whereby ‘both teachers and pupils feel comfortable working together on... aspects of teaching, learning and schooling’ (p. 83). Collegiality is associated with feelings of ownership and belonging (MacBeath et al., 2009). It promotes the ability to share (Senge, 2006) and the security to deal with tensions (Harris, 2002), such as accepting feedback. These characteristics will be explored in the empirical research because it would appear that such characteristics are needed to counteract the potentially threatening situation of a pupil observing a teacher.

Dialogue, the other important feature of the learning organisation culture, is particularly important as the whole process of collaborative observation is dependent on communication through dialogue during the lesson itself, at feedback time after the lesson, and then again in the wider dissemination of lessons learned in the classroom. Moreover, Fielding (2006) recognises that systems that appear to be positive examples of pupil voice seem to be those where dialogue is central.

**Collaborative observation and dialogue**

Start by picturing a primary classroom with two adults and a pupil observing a lesson. How is collaborative observation going to maximise the anticipated pupil benefits described in an earlier chapter: improved engagement with learning through involvement, empowerment, respect and a sense of self worth? How is involving pupils going to impact on teacher pedagogy, enabling them to develop respect for pupils and see their teaching from a new perspective? It would be expected that dialogue would take place at the end of an observation and that the focus would be children’s learning. It is assumed for this chapter of the literature review that the pupil feels empowered, but the reality of this will be investigated in the research, as will the perceptions of teachers.
Fielding (2001b) anticipates a shared destiny and shared responsibility on account of changing power relationships between teacher and pupil as a result of the interdependence based on dialogue. MacBeath et al. (2009) expand this idea by explaining that it should not be expected, therefore, that change would happen quickly, confirming the learning organisation as a journey in which pupils influence the learning process and through which teachers gain confidence that they, too, are beneficiaries of the process. Moreover, MacBeath et al. (2009) feel this confirms that the change in culture should involve dialogue.

If the dialogic practices were not present, lesson observations, even with pupils, could still take place, but would a common language of learning be fostered so that the perceived benefits of pupil voice in relation to learning could be developed? Moreover, could consideration be given to the possible challenges and points of tension: Whose voice would be heard? Would pupils be given feedback? Would pupils feel they had something to offer? Would it be known how teachers actually felt about the process? Would it be known if they feared losing control, or if they had concerns about confidentiality, or felt that pupils were being indulged? How would it be established whether pupils and teachers felt they were part of a genuine consultation? These are the sorts of questions that a dialogic culture could address and are relevant to the case study school’s context and relevant to the stage in the school’s journey. Answers to these questions will be explored in the empirical research and subsequent data analysis.

Teachers can feel, through the power of a dialogic culture, that they have the needed support to ensure their authority is not threatened (MacBeath et al., 2009) as they have to see themselves as shapers of policy and practice in order to recognise the need for pupil participation. Once recognising the need, they may feel that pupils can help support teaching and learning. This is because students can be agents in their own learning when they are included in the dialogue on learning and so be enabled to reflect critically on school reform (Nieto, 1994). Moreover, Louis and Kruse (1998) specifically refer to peer coaching between adults as an example that stimulates
discussion and so it could be assumed that adding a pupil as observer would be even more beneficial, but, again, the reality will be explored.

An indicator of Rudduck’s and McIntyre’s (2007) search for authenticity when listening to pupils is that teachers must genuinely want to know what pupils have to say. They must believe in the pupil’s capability to conduct the consultation well and, moreover, have a commitment to developing the pupil’s capacity to do well. As a result, the pupil will know that the teacher is seriously engaged in the consultation process. When conditions are created for dialogue, they claim, this will happen (ibid.).

**Dialogue within a collegial culture**

The thesis claims that the capacity to learn, to change and to improve, both at individual and organisational level, becomes embedded in the organisation’s collegial culture through dialogue in the process of collaborative observation. It is helpful to start by examining the culture of an organisation as defined by Schein (2004):

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p.17).

This definition does not imply any particular type of organisational culture, but from the definition, however, it can be seen that basic assumptions can be shared when all teachers take part in collaborative observation alongside representative pupils as they adapt to the observation situation. New members may be new teachers to the school or existing pupils joining in the process for the first time. Within and through the notion of communities of practice, it is seen how existing members support new members. In a collegial and dialogic culture, there becomes an expectation, therefore, of how collaborative observation will work and how participants will approach the initiative. From this assumption, dialogic relationships are likely to exist within collegial cultures which are more likely to support the processes of collaborative observation than other types of organisation culture. Research claims that, as knowledge is shared and mutual understanding develops, collegiality, through dialogue, leads to mutual understanding, (MacBeath et al., 2009). As a result, individuals and the organisation learn.
The contributory factors in this process are now explored. Collegiality is needed for successful dialogue to occur as Senge (2006) claims that a group has to see one another as colleagues in a quest for deeper insight in order to promote dialogue. His rationale is that thinking of one another as colleagues, or friends, contributes towards acting as colleagues and this helps offset the vulnerability that can come from dialogic encounters by recognising the risk and establishing a sense of safety. Dialogue gives the organisation the opportunity to have unity in diversity as conflict resolution leads to deep questioning (Pedler et al., 1997) in the exploration of solutions. Senge (2006) refers to such action as ‘collegueship’ (p. 228) and he maintains that its real power is when there are different views and participants can let go of rank. This idea links with Fielding’s (1999; 2001a) references to ‘radical collegiality’ whereby teachers learn with and from students as well as from fellow teachers. In the process, ‘creative tension’ (Senge, 2006) is developed, enabling participants to feel a degree of stress that enables them to move forward without feeling over-anxious because they are secure in being supported within the dialogic culture.

Successful dialogic practice, however, is dependent on collegiality because busy teachers have to see that a change initiative is relevant to their classrooms (Stoll et al., 2003) in order to talk about it with colleagues. Schein (2004) explains this by claiming that humans cannot tolerate too much overload and so will filter out what seems unimportant, or teachers will ignore an initiative. Reflective dialogue, however, can counteract this by providing the opportunity to assimilate the initiative (Stoll et al., 2003) at classroom level in a process such as collaborative observation and also when the resultant actions stemming from dialogue are evaluated at a later date (Garvin, 1993), as when the outcomes of a collaborative observation session are evaluated at a staff meeting.

Professional development is strengthened when collegial and dialogic cultures combine. Leithwood et al. (1998) suggest that school cultures that are collaborative and collegial foster learning ‘especially when continuous professional growth was a widely shared (emphasis added) norm among staff’ (p. 74) and school structures that support professional learning are those that allow participation and decision making. Brundrett
and Burton (2003) also link collegiality with democratic decision making, a claim that supports dialogue in the practice of collaborative observation. Through the process of sharing perceptions, a shared language to talk about learning is developed. Joint professional development, as a teacher or learner, within a dialogic culture, leads to increased capacity to develop (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Furthermore, positive energy is brought to joint development and this gives a sense of group responsibility for recognising current reality and how to change it to an envisioned reality (Senge, 2006). Through collective self-evaluation, individuals learn and organisational learning takes place. The innovation moves from the province of one or two teachers to community commitment at whole school level in order to have transformative, or culture-changing, potential (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004).

Commitment to learning is reinforced because both the collegial culture and the dialogic culture strengthen commitment. It has been seen that sharing leads to commitment and belonging leads to commitment to learning for pupils and teachers as part of a collaborative school culture (Goldman and Newman, 1998). This type of culture fosters learning (Leithwood et al., 1998). Motivation and engagement with learning lead to improved commitment (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Willingness to involve others and the development of a shared vision help foster commitment rather than compliance (Senge, 2006). Through collective commitment, new solutions are more likely to be adopted (Schein, 2004) because, when this is nurtured, it gives energy (Senge, 2006), a sense of responsibility (Goldman and Newman, 1998) and obligation (Segiovanni, 2001) to the organisation. A commitment to learning leads to success, therefore (Garvin, 1993). This strengthens the argument for including aspects of the learning organisation culture in listening to pupil voice.

In this scenario, commitment to collaborative observation is based on a collaborative school culture. Where pupils are observing teachers who have an authentic involvement, and where pupils see their inputs used in school outcomes, and where members of staff draw other members in and value their ideas, the situation will enable organisational learning to flourish (Mitchell and Sackney, 1998). This arises because the collective initiative, involving pupils, creates a situation where *children and adults combine power* (emphasis added) and create new forms of wisdom when they explore
learning together’ (Lincoln, 1995, p.89). The focus that started off as centred on the collaborative observation activity leads to an increased capacity to develop through self-evaluation at whole school level and this results in both individual and group learning (Cousins, 1998). Success develops from an acknowledged commitment to learning (Garvin, 1993) that involves unlearning (Fiol and Lyles, 1985) and relearning (Schein, 2004) as the learning organisation culture evolves.

In such a process, Dodgson (1993) claims that the organisation’s memory retains certain higher level learning behaviours over time, even if individuals come and go, so that the organisation learns, as well as the individual. In other words, certain practices become embedded in an organisation and may be retained as part of the culture, even when the original instigators of the practice have left the organisation. This links with Senge’s (2006) description of how teams contribute to organisational learning as described earlier, providing a dimension of learning for the organisation that an individual as learner could not achieve.

As part of the learning process, collaborative observation is repeated regularly, becoming a focus for dialogue at whole school level. Here, it aids self-evaluation of both the individual and the organisation (Louis and Leithwood, 1998). The potential for the transfer of this learning beyond the immediate classroom setting occurs because of the collegial learning organisation culture and continued use of dialogue at all levels. This results in a shared responsibility for pupil and teacher learning across the school as participants ‘are able to reveal and create – to struggle for – ever newer ways to mean’ (Cruddas, 2007, p. 486).

**Summary of the main issues for schools**

This section summarises the three chapters of the literature review by drawing together the main issues that apply to schools incorporating, or wanting to incorporate, collaborative observation into their methods of assessing teaching and learning.
By including pupils in lesson observations, schools could anticipate improved pedagogy and improved pupil engagement with learning. This is because collaborative observation provides the opportunity to view teaching from a new perspective. Furthermore, research evidence suggests that information gleaned from in-school professional experiences can be more compelling than external experiences.

However, there are challenges that can be a barrier to success. Teachers’ motives to listen to pupils may be tokenistic because they are motivated by fear and accountability, such as the desire to please Ofsted. Consequently, teachers may use pupil voice to control rather than empower by using pupils’ comments out of context or translating pupil voice into adult words. Because the standards agenda may prevent a focus beyond examination results, pupils may be given little choice of subject matter or time to form opinions. Furthermore, the question arises as to whose voice is heard because marginalised pupils may be deliberately left out. Listening only to certain voices, moreover, may simply reinforce existing practice.

Traditionally, in the UK, the classroom has been the arena of teacher voice and so research suggests that teachers should proceed carefully and initiate pupil involvement in less threatening situations than classroom teaching to start with. In order to accept pupils as observers, teachers need to feel that pupils have something to offer and have acquired an understanding of pedagogy. Teachers need to overcome their fear of losing control and of feeling that pupil voice is privileged over theirs.

These negative feelings may be counteracted by developing a culture related to collegiality and the use of dialogue. A sense of belonging, the ability to share and feelings of security are aspects of collegiality that are needed to grow commitment to collaborative observation because commitment, in addition to helping deal with the challenges, permits vulnerabilities and encourages risk-taking, such as the fear of receiving feedback. Commitment is also needed for teachers to develop each pupil’s capacity to engage with the process.
Research suggests that a collegial community of learners can be strengthened through dialogue which, if all members are involved, can lead to greater commitment. Teachers are busy and so opportunities for dialogue are needed to give time for reflection and analysis. Engaging in dialogue, moreover, can create opportunities for team and organisational learning as members examine different viewpoints, helping overcome anti-learning values.

Both teachers and pupils have to be trained in the language of learning so that a shared language to talk about learning can develop. Such a language will enable feedback to be given and received and will enable conflict to be used as a positive force during dialogic encounters. A shared language will also link the roles of pupils and teachers so that both sets of voices can be heard.

Three main perspectives of enquiry have emerged from the literature in relation to the study of collaborative observation and how it might lead to a shared responsibility for classroom learning. It is anticipated that these perspectives would be present in a collegial and dialogic school culture and these perspectives form the supporting research questions:

- What is the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation and is there provision for listening to all voices?
- How is collegiality manifested and how does this promote a commitment to the process of collaborative observation?
- How willing are the participants to engage in dialogue and what opportunities are there for dialogic encounters to occur?

Summary

The chapter started by exploring how collaborative observation provides an opportunity for pupils and teachers to learn together to develop pupils’ engagement with learning
and teachers’ pedagogy. Collaborative observation has the potential to be supportive and to provide a mechanism that leads to whole school commitment and learning.

Collegiality is associated with feelings of belonging, the ability to share and provides the security to deal with tensions such as accepting feedback. Dialogue provides the opportunity to explore questions relating to tensions, such as accepting feedback, and the opportunity for teachers to show that teacher consultation is genuine. The collegial and the dialogic cultures combine and the commitment that they develop strengthens learning. Culture and commitment develop as a cyclical, two-way process that fosters learning. Teachers and pupils combine power so that collegiality, through dialogue, develops understanding. Above all, the chapter demonstrates that when collegial and dialogic cultures are combined, they have the power to re-form the teacher’s perspective from one of possible negativity to a positive belief that pupils can shape pedagogy in a non-threatening manner, so developing learning at an individual and organisational level and enabling all voices to be heard and share in a responsibility for learning.

The chapter ended with a summary of the issues for schools wishing to incorporate collaborative observation into their practice and then reiterated the research questions.

The overall conclusion from the literature, therefore, is that the process of collaborative observation, if part of a learning organisation culture, could enable all voices to be heard through collegial and dialogic encounters. In such a context, collaborative observation has the potential to promote individual and organisational learning at a high level.

The next chapter on Research Design and Methodology considers how the research questions generated from the literature have been systematically researched.
CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research was conceived as a qualitative study of one school which aimed to gather evidence about the innovative practice of including pupils in lesson observations. This chapter considers how the study was researched, concluding that case study was the most appropriate tradition for this investigation.

Paradigm decisions and interpretivism

Creswell (1998) defines a paradigm as ‘a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide’ (p. 74) researchers’ enquiries. Researchers draw on these beliefs in order to make sense of research information and transform it into data (Morrison, 2002).

Positivism is a paradigm ‘still embraced by many scientists’ (Robson, 2002, p. 19) which looks for ‘the existence of a constant relationship between events’ (p. 21). Consequently, this paradigm is suited to the collection of quantitative data and there is no need for a social closeness between researcher and subject. It is, nevertheless, a paradigm used in social research by those who have a belief that there are patterns and regularities in the social world just as in the natural world (Denscombe, 2007). The positive philosophy, therefore, argues that there is one reality. However, such inflexible beliefs would not accommodate the different points of view that this thesis is seeking to capture.

The other main paradigm is anti-positivism and this is a rejection of positivism on the grounds that ‘it fails to take account of our unique ability to interpret our experiences’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 19). Furthermore, ‘anti-positivists would argue that individuals’ behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference’ (ibid., p. 19).
Two conventional, generic terms have been introduced by Cohen et al. (2007) to describe the positivist and anti-positivist paradigms with their ‘numerous branches and schools of thought’ (p. 32). These terms are normative and interpretative. The latter reveals an understanding that there are many truths and multiple realities with a focus on the person and the environment. Such concepts are congruent with the philosophy of this thesis and so the underpinning research paradigm can be described as interpretative, ‘exploring the “meanings” of events and phenomena from the subjects’ perspectives’ (Morrison, 2002, p.18), and also recognising that people’s thoughts and interpretations are influenced and shaped by their contexts (Mertens, 2003). In the process, ‘research participants are viewed as helping to construct the “reality” with the researchers’ (Robson, 2002, p.27, supported by Corbin and Strauss, 2008), recognising that the researcher has responsibilities beyond merely asking questions.

This thesis, therefore, was framed as a qualitative study using an interpretative paradigm, acknowledging that the participants helped the researcher construct their reality. The participants in this case were all six class teachers, the headteacher, a teaching assistant and seventeen of the pupils from this hundred and fifty pupil primary school that admits children from age four to eleven. Moreover, another teaching assistant and additional pupils were interviewed informally during and after a research lesson observation.

**Research traditions and case study**

Within the qualitative approach, there are a variety of research traditions. Not all texts use the word *traditions* (Creswell, 1998), but may use words such as *designs* (Robson, 2002), *styles* (Cohen et al., 2007) and *strategies* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), for example. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) refer to ‘blurred genres’ and Creswell (1998), likewise, acknowledges the ‘baffling number of choices of traditions’ (p.4), one of which is case study.

Although case study should not be confused with qualitative research, as data can be quantitative or mixed (Yin, 2003), Cohen et al. (2007) claim that there is often a
resonance between case studies and interpretative methodologies, supporting the choice of this tradition. Yin (2003) confirms that the case study tradition is appropriate when the researcher is investigating a contemporary issue in a real life context and the boundaries between the issue and the context are not clearly distinguishable, giving the opportunity to learn both about the individual case and the phenomenon being studied, as with collaborative observation at Riverbank.

There are further advantages in using the case study tradition that are applicable to this research. Case study not only allows, but also invites (Denscombe, 2007) the use of a variety of research tools having ‘no methods of data collection or of analysis that are unique to it’ (Bassey, 2002). Consequently, a wide variety of information can be gleaned from multiple sources providing an in-depth picture of complex social situations (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, in-depth analysis of the wide variety of information generated is expected and this gives credibility to the study (Mitchell, 1983; Yin, 2003; Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, insights may come to light that may not have done if looking at a large number of instances. Indeed, Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) actually suggest that to illuminate pupil voice experiences case study might be more appropriate than larger scale research. This is because a case can develop a deeper understanding (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 2000; Bryman, 2008). Moreover, if the researcher has a strong sense of existing knowledge from the literature, the case can fit into this body of knowledge and strengthen what is already known about the subject (Mitchell, 1983; Yin, 2003).

There have been criticisms of case study research, generating counter arguments as described by Flyvbjerg (2006) and Yin (2003). Criticisms mostly refer to the fact that it is not possible to generalise from case study, but that was not the intention of this small-scale research which was designed to allow readers to acquire an insight from which to draw their own conclusions, a view supported by Mitchell (1983). Criticism is also levelled at the fact that the very act of exposing participants to a study means that the findings will be biased towards what the researcher has planned to find out and so the study will lack validity. However, this study openly acknowledges that the participants and researcher jointly constructed the reality, as explained by Corbin and Strauss (2008). A further criticism is that case study is useful only for exploration and,
therefore, better suited to the early stages of research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, this research was deliberately conceived as an exploration of collaborative observation at Riverbank, the case study school. Furthermore, Stake (2000) supports choosing the case or school from which the research can learn the most.

To summarise the advantages for this research, a pupil involved in a lesson observation, usually the domain of adults, could be described as a complex social situation and a case study was deemed suitable for unpicking the context and exploring the participants’ experiences. The wide variety of research tools available established both an in-depth picture and research credibility. The case built on knowledge from the literature and strengthened the understanding of collaborative observation. Although guidance is given in many texts to ensure the reader is aware of the various stages involved, even Bassey (2002), who gives seven clear stages to work through, admits that every enquiry has its own character and so it is important that the case study research is authentic. This will be explored in the next section by examining validity, reliability and generalisability.

**Authenticity**

*Authenticity* is the term used by Bush (2002), who acknowledges that research methods should be determined by the aims and context of the research and, for this study, the context is a school that is deemed to be a learning organisation. It is also important that the researcher is able to justify the methods used (ibid.). Having made the choice to follow the case study tradition, this section begins with an explanation of the term *trustworthiness*, a relevant term when discussing the authenticity of a qualitative approach. The more traditional concepts of *validity* and *reliability* are also explored and then the section concludes with a consideration of *generalisability*. Overall, the aim is to assure the reader that this study is authentic.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness, a term introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and since well-supported by others (Bassey, 2002; Johnson and Turner, 2003), is used to counteract the
criticism that qualitative research lacks rigour, is too subjective, difficult to replicate, difficult to generalise and sometimes difficult to know how the researcher has reached conclusions (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007). Consequently, researchers committed to the qualitative traditions need to show that they can counteract the above criticisms by producing rigorous research, the whole process of which is explained in detail, not merely the analysis of the results. For the data to be trustworthy, this concept has to be considered at the planning stage, during data collection, during the analysis and at the reporting stage so that there is every indication that the researcher has acted in good faith to represent the views of the participants (Bryman, 2008).

Trustworthiness is an all-embracing term that is well suited to qualitative research because it helps to avoid the perception of there being only one reality (Bush, 2002; Robson, 2002) by avoiding language that has emerged from quantitative data. Conversely, as Bush (2002) explains, other researchers feel that terms such as validity and reliability, traditionally associated with quantitative research, are still appropriate because trustworthiness emerged from these traditional concepts. It is, therefore, through these traditional concepts that the trustworthiness of this study will be defended as Robson cautions that ‘pure intentions do not guarantee trustworthy findings’ (2002, p.100).

**Validity**

Validity in research is about credibility (Corbin, in Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and asks if the indicator devised to measure a concept really measures that concept (Bryman, 2008). Because validity in qualitative research can be difficult to measure, Robson (2002) explains a useful check whereby the concept can be more easily understood by examining threats to validity and checking if the research can withstand such threats, what Cohen et al. (2007) call ‘building out’ invalidity. Questions to test validity, Robson (2002) maintains, can ask if the data are accurate on which the research is based, if the route through to the interpretation of the participants’ meanings can be traced and whether the researcher considers alternative explanations of the phenomena being studied rather than staying fixed on a preconceived idea.
During the data collection, the headteacher was extremely supportive and covered all teachers’ classes so that interviews could take place in school time and a room was provided for the purpose. This helped give the study credibility and value, not only because of the headteacher’s positive attitude, but also because the conditions were conducive to collecting in-depth data. All participants gave permission for the interviews to be recorded. Additional notes and thoughts were recorded immediately after the interview, and then full interview texts were transcribed soon after and observations noted on the texts, cited as good practice by Denscombe (2007). This facilitated a more thorough analysis and provided opportunities to manipulate the data without it becoming decontextualised. Furthermore, the transcriptions were emailed to each teacher’s private address to clarify any comments or add additional points as ties in with Corbin’s and Strauss’s (2008) belief that validity is about the ongoing ‘checking out of interpretations with participants’ (p. 48).

A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use different sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). Moreover, case study actually needs multiple sources of data (ibid.) and so triangulation was an important consideration during the data collection process to give greater confidence to the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003) by giving a more holistic view (Cohen et al., 2007) and to reveal additional illumination that could be different and extend awareness (Stake, 2000; Bryman, 2008) or, if contradictory, highlight the need for further research. Producing a great deal of evidence means that a transparent chain of evidence is required to help lead to what Yin (2003) calls *construct validity*. From the start of the research, detailed records were kept at all stages to provide an audit trail, as recommended by Robson (2002). Additionally, details of coding, working notes and writing drafts were stored to facilitate transparency.

One of the ways the researcher can develop an open mind towards the research is by conducting a comprehensive literature review (Bryman, 2008), whether this is done prior to the research or as a grounded theory approach during the research (Corbin, in Corbin and Strauss, 2008). For this research, reading the initial literature before collecting the data led to the identification of perspectives that may not have emerged from practice alone and is recommended by Yin (2003) who feels that case study
benefits from ‘a prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis’ (p. 14). The reading of additional literature throughout the research contributed to the findings and linked with the collection of data from multiple sources so extending the range of ideas the researcher was exposed to.

**Reliability**

Although exploring issues related to validity was made manageable through Robson’s (2002) three checks for threats to validity, the issue of reliability is not as straightforward. The concept of reliability was, again, originally designed for the quantitative approach, but, even here, the texts show that there is no accepted definition of reliability. There is a general view, however, that ‘repeating a research procedure or method would produce identical or similar results’ (Bush, 2002, p.60). This concept gives confidence to the findings. In reality, however, in qualitative research, repeating interviews is likely to produce a slightly different result, even if interviewees are asked the same questions by the same person, partly because people’s lives would have moved on since the original interview and they now have different experiences to add to the interview, and also because they will have had time to reflect on the questions and may have thought of additional pointers or different aspects of their thinking to highlight. Even if a semi-structured interview were, theoretically, to be conducted by a different person, but at the same time, the researcher would bring his/her own personality to the setting and it is known that people respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the questions (Denscombe, 2007) because ‘an interview reflects what interviewers and participants bring to the interview, impressions during it, and the relationship constructed through it’ (Charmaz, 2006, p. 7).

One way to overcome these dilemmas is to use a tightly structured interview schedule, more like a questionnaire, (Bush, 2002), but this may not be an appropriate tool, as will be discussed later. The fact has to be accepted that when using semi-structured interviews with probes and prompts, reliability could be compromised (Bush, 2002). Interestingly, it has been suggested that too much evidence on reliability in interviews could affect validity (Cohen et al., 2007). This is because it is the human element of the interview that the researcher is interested in, allowing participants to give what they
believe to be truthful responses and so these valid responses are more likely to be obtained through less structured interviews. Although this is an interesting thought, Yin (2003), with reference to case study, suggests that ‘the goal of reliability is to minimise the errors and biases in a study’ (p. 37) so that, if repeated, it would have a greater chance of producing the same result.

It is, therefore, useful to be aware of the issues surrounding reliability as this helps ensure that variations are minimised and procedures can be regarded as ‘reputable’ and ‘open for audit’ (Denscombe, 2007). Because the researcher goes into an interview without standards of conduct to guide (Kvale, 1996; Denscombe, 2007), an understanding of reliability can be helpful as it raises awareness of trying to be neutral when asking questions, or when introducing a little more dialogue to put people at ease or to give participants the confidence to start talking and empower them. It helps the researcher to consider how to phrase questions, how to order questions or how to summarise in the interview to check for accuracy of interpretation, how to be non-judgemental and how to be attentive and tolerate silences. Yin (2003) offers an extremely down-to-earth and practical guideline to help address issues of reliability in addition to documenting procedures – to conduct every step ‘as if someone were always looking over your shoulder’ (p. 38).

In summary, the concept of reliability does not fit well with the qualitative approach within the interpretative paradigm, but there is much to learn that can help the researcher develop a more rigorous approach to contribute to the trustworthiness of the data.

**Generalisability**

Generalisability is sometimes referred to as external validity (Yin, 2003; Cohen et al., 2007) or transferability (Bryman, 2008). What claims is the study making to the wider world? It is not possible to generalise from the one situation to all others if the sample is too small, as in this study, and this is often a criticism of case study (Cohen et al., 2007). The responsibility falls on the reader to see relevance in the case and so the
researcher must provide sufficient information about the case to enable the reader to do this. This is achieved through thick description (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) so that readers will have sufficient information and understanding to extract what is relevant for them and their situation. The detail will allow researchers to reach their own conclusions, enabling the research to resonate with the readers’ and participants’ life experiences (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The use of direct quotations in the findings will support this. Moreover, the documented audit trail, already mentioned, helps make the account transparent and this also facilitates transferability, again helping make the research trustworthy. To conclude this section, authenticity may be ‘an elusive target’ (Bush, 2002, p.71), but the researcher must try to reach an acceptable level of authenticity (Yin, 2003) and this has been attempted throughout this research.

Selecting participants for the research

In a non-probability, or purposive sample, the participants are handpicked for the research (Denscombe, 2007) and the researcher already knows something about the people and events and deliberately selects to produce the most valuable data, as in this study. Consequently, this type of sample cannot claim to represent a wider population (Cohen et al., 2007), as detailed in the previous section. The researcher must be transparent about the sample so that readers can form their own judgements on how transferable the research is to their own situation.

For this research, the non-class-based headteacher, plus all six classteachers, and also a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), were chosen for the adult sample as the group was small enough to facilitate this and it would give as accurate a picture as possible of the real situation and help to eliminate bias (Cohen et al., 2007; Bryman, 2008). The research uses the term *teacher* to refer to any adult who is taking part in collaborative observation. The interviewed HLTA taught support groups and also taught whole classes to release teachers for the collaborative observation process apart from those occasions when she was an observer herself.
One of the classteachers was the deputy headteacher who taught the class for four days a week. The research uses *deputy* to refer to the deputy headteacher (referenced as DHT/teacher A in the findings).

The pupils for the three focus groups, the HLTA interview and the actual lesson observation were chosen by the headteacher who knew which people had been involved. Consequently, it was not possible to know with certainty if those participants were chosen because the headteacher thought they would reflect favourably on the school. However, the indications were that the sample was chosen in good faith: the pupils chosen for the focus groups were, according to the classteachers, pupils who were available on the day, but who had taken part in collaborative observation. For example, on the day of the third focus group, it snowed very heavily and so the four pupils who were present formed the focus group rather than the larger group originally planned. Moreover, the research lesson observation was the next scheduled observation and the adults involved were the ones already scheduled to take part. As the observing pupil was from Year 4 and had not joined an observation before, it would seem unlikely that she was chosen as the best pupil to create a good impression. The HLTA was chosen by the headteacher because she had experienced the observer role in collaborative observation and had previously been observed herself and so had a good understanding of the process from both sides. Informal interviews also took place with the teachers participating in the research observation and another HLTA who was observing in addition to the pupil observer.

To summarise, there was every indication that the whole process of sampling was as transparent as possible and had not been staged. Moreover, having data from four different and very relevant sources provided the opportunity to triangulate with confidence. Having established, therefore, that the purposive sample was the most suited and varied for giving a broad and accurate picture of pupil and teacher voice within collaborative observation, this chapter now examines the process of data collection and analysis.
Collecting and analysing the data

The choices for data collection are wide and varied and it is important, for reasons already explored, to make the most suitable choices stemming from the epistemological stance made at the beginning of this chapter. Each tool contains its own set of assumptions about the nature of the world and the kind of data that can be produced to increase our knowledge of the world (Denscombe, 2007). Indeed, when different tools are used, say for triangulation purposes or to produce a more comprehensive understanding of a case, a large amount of data may be generated so that much of it cannot then be used in the actual findings (Denscombe, 2007). Some of the areas of the investigation may have to be sacrificed in order to arrive at the comprehensive picture the data originally set out to find (Charmaz, 2006).

The data were collected over a three month period in 2010 (see appendix A for a table of events). Questionnaires were considered but not used because the data generated would not be sufficiently rich (Drever, 2003). The data collection tools chosen were semi-structured interviews for adults, focus groups for pupils, a half-day lesson observation, and an examination of associated documents. Each of these tools will be discussed in turn.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were the natural choice to give flexibility and to give the focus on ‘the lived world of the subjects and their relation to it’ (Kvale, 1996) that the interpretative paradigm requires. To justify the choice of semi-structured interviews, the research drew on the work of Drever (2003). Fully structured interviews would not provide that individual insight, being too similar to a questionnaire and would be more like structured queries rather than guided conversations (Yin, 2003). On the other hand, unstructured interviews would give too much freedom to the participants and may not have generated material linked to the conceptual framework. Semi-structured interviews were chosen, therefore, a method whereby the interviewer sets up an overall structure of the main questions in advance of the interview, but then leaves the detailed structure to evolve during the interview itself (Drever, 2003). Such interviews are well suited to case study research, Drever claims, and provide ‘a flexible technique, suitable
for gathering information and opinions and exploring people’s thinking and motivations’ (p.8). Body language can be studied and this may help the researcher understand the interviewee’s meaning (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews still give the participant opportunities for personal thoughts, especially as the opportunity was given at the end of the interview to add any extra thoughts, and an additional opportunity was given by returning the transcripts and inviting comments.

Guidance given by Kvale (1996), Robson (2002) and Drever (2003) was used in designing the schedule and two pilot interviews were conducted with teacher colleagues from outside the school who had an interest in the topic and so were likely to have some knowledge to understand and answer the questions. These pilots were not part of the research, but were there to ensure that the actual interviews would capture the data needed, that the order of questions was suitable and to indicate if the participants were comfortable with the questions. As a result, a few additional prompts were added to facilitate the individual nature of each interview (Drever, 2003). The interview guide questions, generated from the research questions, can be seen in appendix B. After the first interview, a start was made in coding the data so that additional prompts, or even questions, could be added to future schedules or to the schedule for a particular member of staff, the Gifted and Talented coordinator, for example, as recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008) and supported by others. The overall schedule was, nevertheless, retained. The interviews with the headteacher, deputy and one class teacher, each lasted ninety minutes. Other interviews lasted forty-five minutes.

**Focus groups**

A focus group is a group interview in which there are several participants focusing on a defined topic. The interaction within the group facilitates the joint construction of meaning (Bryman, 2008). The more relaxed atmosphere of the group situation may help to reveal more spontaneous opinions (Kvale, 1996) and also gives the researcher opportunities to observe group dynamics (Denscombe, 2007). The focus group guide questions, generated from the research questions, can be seen in appendix C. There are potential disadvantages, such as the possibility of one person dominating but familiarity with the age group helped manage this. Also, it can be difficult to transcribe the
different voices (Kvale, 1996) and so supplementary brief field jottings were made during the conversations to indicate the pupil’s name and the first few words spoken. This meant that names could be inserted in the recorded transcriptions.

The pupils were interviewed in three separate focus groups of between four and six children and each group interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes. Two groups were interviewed at the start of the research process and one as the final research activity. The positioning of the focus groups was by design so that pupil data could feed into teacher data and vice-versa. The focus groups triangulated the data in two ways: by affording a different perspective and by providing a verification check (Bush, 2002).

**Lesson observation**

Observation can be a very useful research tool according to Moyles (2002) because it can give a direct insight to a complex social setting and be used to triangulate, again by enriching other data, not just verifying it. The researcher is able to see the participants’ actions within their environment and gain a sense of the tacit understandings within the group so that more valid knowledge may be obtained than from interviews (Kvale, 1996). Indeed, ‘it is not unusual for persons to say they are doing one thing but in reality they are doing something else’ (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 29). Alongside this, the researcher may observe and interpret an action incorrectly and so it is only through interviewing that this can be clarified (ibid.). Hence interviews and observations sit well alongside each other.

A full collaborative observation session that lasted for two and a half hours, with a mid-morning break, formed part of the research. Teacher feedback at the end of the session and informal conversations at various times with the observed teacher, the observing teacher, the observing HLTA – a different one from the one interviewed in the semi-structured interview – and the observing pupil contributed to the research. Field notes were made throughout and reviewed the same day to ensure they were clear and had captured reflections. A copy was given to teachers involved for comments.
In addition to its use for triangulation, the observation enabled the interviews and focus groups to be placed in a live context, invaluable for case study (Yin, 2003). It also generated further questions to ask the participants in a natural setting. Although the session was timetabled and not staged, all parties would have been aware of the researcher’s presence despite a relatively unobtrusive position at the back of a large classroom. This may have affected behaviour although it appeared not to as participants are used to having observers in the classroom.

**Documentary analysis**

Looking at documents can be a good way to triangulate. Access may be easy, the information supplied is in a different form from the spoken word, and documents give historical insight (Hodder, 2000). Bryman (2008), however, suggests asking four questions about documents: are they authentic? are they credible? are they representative? are they meaningful? The headteacher provided access to all documentation relating to collaborative observation: lesson observation records, pupil observation sheets, and QA sheets completed at the end of every session as a summary document. The school has devised its own *Quality Assurance* (QA) sheets (see appendix E) to contribute to self-evaluation. A sheet is completed at the end of any professional development, whether internal or external, and after teacher or pupil visits out of school, or visitors into school. A sheet is completed by a member of staff at the end of each collaborative observation session to summarise the outcomes when feedback has been shared. The QA sheet is presented at the next weekly staff meeting as a focus for whole staff dialogue.

The documents were original copies, supporting a positive response to Bryman’s (2008) four questions. Moreover, access was given to all available documentation although the headteacher did mark the most relevant pages for convenience with an invitation to examine any documents in the files. Additionally, the headteacher agreed that reference could be made to Ofsted reports and pupil data if needed. The documents referred to are listed in appendix D and can be viewed separately as appendices E, F and G. An
account of the lesson observation can be viewed in appendix H and the role of the documents used is explained in this account.

**Analysing the data**

When making choices, the important point that emerges from the texts is to consider during the data collection and analysis that the process is meaningful to the study. For example, the option to use a computer program to analyse data was rejected as it was felt that, with small amounts of varied data, continually re-reading the transcripts in context afforded the opportunity to be close to the data and gain familiarity with it. During the process of typing transcripts, the voices of the participants came alive, enabling a reliving of the data gathering experiences.

A significant consideration was whether to retain the themes that had emerged from the conceptual analysis of the literature, and on which the interview schedules had been based, or whether to use a grounded theory approach to analysing the data. Not all researchers favour the grounded theory approach. Bryman (2008), for example, highlights that the data are specific to one social situation and are, therefore, limited. However, Charmaz (2006), a supporter of grounded theory analysis, urges the researcher to consider the benefits of not forcing data into preconceived codes and categories while recognising the importance of coding as ‘the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data’ (p. 46).

Although grounded theory is based on the original ideas of Glaser and Strauss (1967), modern day interpretations and flexibility are encouraged by Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) who support the view that theories are constructed through interactions with people, yet research can still maintain a systematic approach to analysis through a constant comparative method which forces ‘the analyst to consider much diversity in the data’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 114). Many researchers are now adopting this partial approach to grounded theory by using it during the analysis and coding stage. In fact, Corbin (in Corbin and Strauss, 2008) gives reasons why it could be best to start research by forming a theoretical framework from the literature,
arguing that a closely aligned conceptual framework could complement, extend and verify the research; it could offer alternative explanations to the research findings; it can help the researcher determine the methodology.

Having determined the method of analysis, grounded theory supports the process of reflecting on data gathered, stage by stage, in order to inform the next data gathering session so that the new data become increasingly relevant and provide more accurate information as the research progresses (Denscombe, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Corbin and Strauss, 2008), enabling thoughts to be reconceptualised as the data emerge, encouraging an ongoing iteration with theoretical ideas and arguments from the literature (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Moreover, a commitment to trustworthiness was to answer positively Robson’s (2002) question on validity testing: does the researcher consider alternative explanations rather than staying fixed on a preconceived idea? According to Charmaz (2006), this is exactly one of the benefits of the grounded theory approach to analysis, as it complements rather than stands in opposition to other approaches and this was recognised as being appropriate for the interpretative paradigm underpinning this study.

Not all grounded theory practitioners operate within the same levels of coding (Bryman, 2008). This research was guided by Charmaz (2006) who uses initial coding, where as many ideas as possible are generated, and then selective or focused coding. Here the most common codes are selected or those that are revealing most about the data. Charmaz (2006) advises that during focused coding some of the original codes from the initial coding may have to be dropped. Furthermore, new codes may emerge by combining some of the initial codes. Finally, the data is re-explored and re-evaluated. Charmaz (2006) suggests much use of memo writing during and after the coding process to continually refine thoughts and make connections, also to note extra dimensions, such as the language used, emotions and expressions, and to bring extra depth to the analysis as suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008).
Four sets of data were analysed: semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, a lesson observation and the documents listed in appendix D. The three stages of coding for the analysis of the empirical research were:

- Initial coding
- Selective or focused coding
- Final re-exploration of the data

*Initial coding*

The data analysis for this research started after the first data-collecting session which was a focus group interview. The initial coding was started immediately with the data from each subsequent interview data-collection session contributing to the analysis on an ongoing basis (see appendix A for data collection timetable). As a result of this constant comparative method (cited above), new codes were generated or existing ones expanded. The analysis also informed future data-gathering sessions, such as generating an extra question for the Gifted and Talented coordinator.

The printed transcripts were read in detail, annotated in the margin with potential codes bearing in mind the codes identified by the researcher, but also being completely open to new and emerging codes from the interviewees’ own words. The codes were then loosely organised into categories and represented by cutting and pasting the transcripts onto large sheets of paper. Several re-readings of the large sheets led to the insertion of memos to record observations, ask questions and make possible links.

It was at this point of initial coding, when the interview data were initially pasted onto the large sheets, that the data from the observation and documentary analysis were mapped onto the codes generated by the interviews. The process also allowed for new codes to be generated if needed.
Selective or focused coding

During this process, similar codes or categories were merged, but checks were made by re-reading the original transcripts that the content of the codes was not distorted. At the same time, some codes or categories were deleted or some were re-titled.

Final re-exploration of the data

A final analysis of the codes and categories resulted in a drawing together of the key themes, checking for final relationships between codes and categories and that there was sufficient occurrence of information within a category or theme. Some codes appeared in more than one category and these were then designated to the most important category. From then on, direct quotations could be extracted from the themes, categories and codes.

Much memo writing took place throughout the three stages and this proved helpful in working with hunches, making links and especially for adding comments gleaned from the observation and documentary analysis. Throughout, the analysis was not completely linear, but moved backwards and forwards between stages. Examples of the coding system used, showing how themes emerged from the interview and focus group data, are given in appendix I.

Ethical issues

Written permission was sought from the university ethics committee and agreed procedures have been followed.

Much of the literature highlights important dilemmas for the world of research whereby researchers may be sponsored by industry or the media, for example. This research drew on Robson’s (2002, p.69) ten indicators of which the researcher should be aware to counteract questionable practice:

1. Involving people without their knowledge or consent.
2. Coercing them to participate.
3. Withholding information about the true nature of the research.
4. Otherwise deceiving the participant.
5. Inducing participants to commit acts diminishing their self esteem.
6. Violating rights of self-determination (e.g. studies seeking to promote individual change).
7. Exposing participants to physical or mental stress.
8. Invading privacy.
9. Withholding benefits from some participants (e.g. in comparison groups).
10. Not treating participants fairly, or with consideration, or with respect.

In line with the above, written permission was sought from the headteacher, who discussed the proposed research with all participants. All agreed to be interviewed and signed letters of consent, including the parents of identified pupils. The headteacher advised the letter to parents be distributed on school headed paper as the parents were likely to respond only to familiar-looking letters from the school. All letters were approved by the university ethics committee before they were distributed to the school and are included as appendices J - M. Participants were reassured that they would not be identified by name and that the school would not be identified. Confidentiality within school was also assured as recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Furthermore, all participants were reassured that the tapes and transcripts would be stored without names, only interview numbers. The corresponding names and numbers would be stored completely separately and all data would be carefully stored in a secure place.

Before each interview, the purpose of the research was explained to participants including pupils. Teachers and pupils are used to visitors to the school and are used to being asked questions by outsiders as the school has appeared in two Ofsted best practice publications and both pupils and adults were eager to participate.

Pupils were not interviewed individually both for ethical reasons and to encourage a more open response, anticipating that children would feel more comfortable and less
threatened in a group situation. Pupils were interviewed in an open situation so that the interviews could be seen by passing adults, but also in areas sufficiently quiet and free from distractions so that the children would respond well and their voices would register on the tape. The headteacher was able to provide two highly suitable rooms that fully met the requirements for all interviews.

The research was not seeking to promote individual change, or to provide benefits to any participants. The remaining points were addressed through sensitivity during the interview process itself and by reflecting on practice when conducting the interviews. By returning the transcripts to the participants for modification or further comment, the process became even more transparent (Bassey, 2002).

**The challenge of the insider-researcher**

Good relationships were already established at the school as the researcher worked at the school as a School Improvement Partner (SIP) and this entailed twenty hours a year on site. The benefits of established relationships can make for participants being willing to engage in the process and willing to talk (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, having access to various sources as an insider-researcher was a real advantage because a feature of modern research is to try to ‘live ever closer to the lives about which we write’ (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000, p.1058), as a means of showing understanding of the participants’ worlds.

Unfortunately, having this established rapport can also be a disadvantage to the trustworthiness of research as it means that teachers could be more inclined to say what they felt was expected (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, the researcher may force his/her own preconceived ideas onto the interpretation (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In reality, the researcher knew far more about the teachers and pupils than they knew about the researcher. This had two major implications for both data collection and analysis of the findings. Firstly, it was still necessary to establish a rapport with the participants when they were interviewed without this relationship influencing the data collection unduly. Secondly, and the main challenge, was that of the preconceived view of an
‘outstanding’ school that involved all members, including pupils, in the self-evaluation process in several different ways. How, therefore, was the research going to be sufficiently rigorous in its findings to make the research worthwhile as a case study?

Fortunately, the nature of the SIP role did require a great deal of objectivity. Furthermore, potential for reactivity can be partially counteracted by reflexivity, whereby the interviewer continually monitors his/her own reactions after each participant interview (Crotty, 1998). This reflexivity is why researchers and participants can be said to be ‘co-constructors’ of research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), an idea that sits well with the interpretative approach as it acknowledges the close relationship between researcher and participant. Reflexivity is not the only check however. Other means are by piloting interview schedules (Cohen et al., 2007), by structuring initial questions (Denscombe, 2007), by avoiding leading questions (Robson, 2002), and by following the qualities suggested by Kvale (1996) for an effective interviewer. These guidelines were conscientiously followed.

Summary

This chapter has explained case study as the chosen tradition within an interpretative paradigm. It has also explained why grounded theory was selected to analyse the data. The semi-structured interviews, pupil focus groups, lesson observations and documentary analysis provided a variety of tools and access to a range of participants as recommended for case study in order to provide an in-depth picture of a complex social situation. Every attempt was made to counteract the disadvantages of being an insider-researcher whilst appreciating the advantages.

The following chapters analyse the data and explore the themes that emerged from the grounded theory analysis.
CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS – THE EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATIVE OBSERVATION

The main research question of this thesis asks how including pupils in lesson observations contributes to a shared responsibility for classroom learning. In order to answer this question, three supporting research questions have been generated. This chapter explores the first of these: what is the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation and is there provision for listening to all voices? The literature reveals that any classroom observations can produce anxiety for teachers which is why union advice recommends ways of limiting teacher observation (NAHT, 2011) and so the idea of including not only teachers, but also pupils in observations can present additional challenges.

Because this chapter deals with the experience of collaborative observation, it acts as a foundational chapter to the more extensive data analysis that follows in chapters seven and eight. Hence, the findings in this chapter are often descriptive rather than analytical. However, in addition to setting the scene, this chapter makes an essential contribution to drawing together the empirical conclusions in chapter nine and to devising a model that helps develop an understanding of how collaborative observation leads to a shared responsibility for learning in chapter ten.

First of all, the initial feelings of the participants are described and it is seen how participants develop positive feelings towards collaborative observation through familiarity. This is followed by participants’ perspectives on the benefits and leads to the view that collaborative observation at Riverbank is a successful and supportive experience, paving the way for an exploration of how the learning organisation culture contributes to this.

**Working through feelings**

Collaborative observation presents a change in the traditional role of the pupil. The chosen pupil is expected to observe a lesson alongside teachers, fill out an evaluation form (appendix F), coach children during the working part of the lesson, some of whom
may be older than the pupil observer, and then contribute to teacher feedback at the end of the lesson. These are all tasks in which the observing teachers are engaged alongside the pupil observer. In other words, the pupil is experiencing many aspects of what it is to be a teacher in a situation that has, traditionally, been the teacher’s domain. Such an experience makes an impression on both teachers and pupils.

In the initial stages of including pupils in lesson observations, teachers were already engaged in peer coaching with fellow teachers and so were prepared to trial the pupil observation, but were not, at that point, convinced of its merits:

_We thought, at first, ‘Oh, we’ll just get somebody to watch and see how it goes’_ (teacher F).

Similarly, teacher B explained how teachers were not sure what to expect and how the process was ‘daunting’ at first:

_I think, from the first time - because we weren’t all quite so clear on pupil voice at the time and how it would be utilised within the school when children came into the classroom - I think the first time it was a little bit daunting_ (teacher B).

This sentiment of initially being ‘daunting’ was echoed by teacher E and was explained in more detail by teacher B:

_And in a way, it’s quite funny because you’d think the adults are quite daunting, but I did actually find it a little bit daunting when a child came in because, really, they are the experts! It was funny how it did make me feel at first, because I wouldn’t have expected it. But I was a little bit intimidated at first because they’re prepared to tell me, ‘No, I don’t want to learn like this,’ or ‘I want to learn this way and you could have done it like this’_ (teacher B).

However, teachers started to feel differently in time:

_And then, as time went on, I found it is worth it, to talk through with them [observing pupils] what I saw_ (teacher F).

Although teachers are now familiar with pupils taking part in collaborative observation in English and mathematics, when faced with a new subject, in which they feel less competent, the uncertainty creeps back in. The difference now is that teachers have
sufficient experience to feel it will be beneficial. A pupil is just about to be introduced into a PE observation and several teachers were apprehensive, as one remarked:

*It's more practical... it’s a subject that people feel more apprehensive about being watched. You don’t do it every day. But I think it will be good for us.... Even though I am a bit nervous about someone else coming in, I think it will be good. I just see it as a time to get some advice and talk about it. How would you deal with it? Would you do it differently? (teacher F).*

Feelings of apprehension are to be expected and are described by Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) and MacBeath et al. (2009). The deputy recalled:

*I think my biggest problem was that children wouldn’t agree – that some would say ‘I want to do this’ and others would say, ‘I want to do that.’ You’ve got to cater for all (DHT/teacher A).*

Beyond a concern that pupils might have different opinions, the literature suggests teachers fear pupils’ comments may be derogatory. In reality, however, in line with Nieto’s (1994) study, pupils’ comments at Riverbank have not been personal or derogatory, as the headteacher explained:

*A child has never written, ‘This was boring. I hated this. This teacher’s rubbish.’ I’ve never had that. I suppose there could be a problem if I had, but, again, I think that would be an issue with an individual child possibly, we’d been struggling with anyway because I wouldn’t think that they’d say that with the lessons that they get (headteacher).*

Suggestions at Riverbank have been recognised as being constructive for improving practice, very much as described by Rudduck and McIntryre (2007). The deputy cited an example from her own practice and also referred to pupils’ sensitivity:

*They’ve never come up with difficult things – they pick out things that would improve the lesson and they’ve been really interesting, actually.... So, for instance, someone was watching my lesson and the image that I put up, she didn’t think it lent itself to the text. So her input was, ‘I would have chosen a picture like this.’ And then you think, that would have really worked. The next lesson then, you impact on that. But I don’t think they’ve ever come up with anything I felt was unmanageable.... They do really watch the lesson. They are really thinking about the learning that’s taking place.... They are really sensible and sensitive, as well, about what they are being asked to do (DHT/teacher A).*
Consequently, the headteacher has not felt the need to be concerned by issues of confidentiality:

*I've not really bothered about what they'd say to anybody else. It's part of the whole school process (headteacher).*

Why collaborative observation enables pupils and other participants to make such a positive contribution to ‘the whole school process’ is explored in relation to the learning organisation culture in the following chapters. Meanwhile, the pupils’ feelings about the process are explored. The pupil comments emerged after the interviewer explained to the pupils that she had seen a collaborative session and had been wondering how the pupil observer might have been feeling. The pupils were quick to respond, drawing on their own experiences, as Kate revealed:

*A bit shy and a bit nervous (Kate).*

It can also be ‘scary’, as Gill pointed out, and the pupils may not feel comfortable at first:

*And the first time you feel a bit scared because, like, you’ve never done it before and like it’s loads and loads of teachers (Gill).*

The children, however, had no hesitation in describing how they grew in confidence and explained why they thought children were chosen:

*They’re quite good at answering questions and they’ll write what they think. They’ll tell teachers what they think and how they want to see the lesson changing (Nyan).*

In fact, Gill’s confidence grew from experience and this meant she could make a judgement on the children’s work as she remarked that in one class:

*The writing was actually pretty good (Gill).*

Schein (2004) makes reference to this need to feel comfortable within a group in order to have the confidence to function fully. Teachers are aware at Riverbank that pupils
may find it difficult to be critical of a lesson, explored further in chapter eight, and so they encourage pupils:

_They [pupils] feel they can tell us what they think and they don’t feel worried to say what they think because we say, ‘It doesn’t matter. We want to know’_ (teacher F).

However, do pupils say what they think? The following dialogue illuminates how they felt about expressing critical thoughts:

_If I don’t particularly like something, I put it down (Gill)._  
_Sometimes I would get scared to put it down (Erin)._  
_Sometimes I put what I don’t enjoy (Nyan)._  
_You’re not afraid to put that? (interviewer)._  
_Sometimes - I feel like I would be getting the teacher in trouble (Nyan)._  
_What about getting yourself into trouble? (interviewer)._  
_Yes (Kate)._  

_But sometimes you realise that you’re not going to get in trouble for saying what you don’t like so you can say it (Gill)._  

Pupils are, therefore, becoming increasingly comfortable in saying what they think, so much so that some have even made remarks that suggest they could carry their newfound skills into the future:

_One or two children have said about peer coaching, when they’ve been in and observed, that it makes them feel they can go on to do this sort of work in the future, because it’s like they’ve been trained in a way (teacher B)._  

Teachers felt pupils would be confident to speak out in collaborative observation because of the responsibility they have been given:

_Mmm, I feel they could [speak out] – there’s no doubt about it…. They’ve been given that responsibility…. They love it. The responsibility of it! It’s really bringing them on (teacher E)._  

Similarly, the sense of responsibility was confirmed by a pupil:
It [collaborative observation] makes me feel I'm responsible (Nyan).

As well as feeling responsible, pupils felt valued because they had been chosen to take part in collaborative observation, a dimension that reflects positively on pupils’ commitment to learning (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004) which is referred to in more detail in chapter seven. They described how they felt:

*Happy (Kate).*

Yes, it makes you feel nice because they've chosen you (Gill).

*It makes you feel like you're good at that, that you're the good people in the school (Erin).*

You feel, it’s hard to explain the feeling that you feel because they’ve chose you as special (Gill).

Yes, special and important (Kate).

Adults recognised that pupils feel valued:

*I think they feel valued because we’ve taken their comments on board and they’ve been chosen to watch and we really want to hear what they’ve got to say (teacher F).*

In addition to feeling valued, it is felt that by being included in the observation process pupils develop respect for teachers, a further dimension that reflects positively on commitment to learning (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). One of the teachers remarked:

...they get to come in and see that we want their opinion, and other teachers’ opinions, that we are always trying to make ourselves better for their benefit really. And I think it gives them a feeling of respect – respect for us that they can do that (teacher B).

Teachers, likewise, respect the children:

*I think in this school it’s a general respect and an understanding that the children know how they learn best (teacher B).*
Feeling responsible, valued and respected are positive feelings that are associated with a learning organisation culture for the chosen pupils, but what about those pupils not chosen? Although this research has not focused on non-chosen pupils, they should be mentioned in any work on pupil voice because the literature is clear (SooHoo, 1993; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004, supported by others) that listening only to certain pupils could be a divisive practice in the very initiative designed to include them. On the other hand, Riverbank already listens to pupils in many different ways outside the scope of this study and, as more subjects become the focus for collaborative observation such as PE, a wider variety of pupil skill sets will be included.

Aside from this highlighted concern, a range of pupils are chosen for collaborative observation and it takes place regularly and so how do pupils and teachers feel they benefit from the experience? Do teachers feel it develops their pedagogy?

**Benefits**

The benefits to teachers and pupils at Riverbank are seen to be tightly focused on classroom learning.

**Professional development**

The process of collaborative observation was recognised as improving practice through what might be termed ‘on-the-job’ professional development. The deputy remarked that the observers have the benefit of ‘thinking time’ which the classteacher does not have. Stemming from this, the impact on teaching was seen in at least three ways: teachers appreciate a different perspective, they learn directly from pupil feedback and the process impacts on the quality of teaching practice across the school.

Looking at teachers’ appreciation of a different perspective, teacher D explained:

> It’s well worth having the pupil – a different perspective from the adult. They always write something that makes you stop and think. The Year 4 girl today asked if the children were enjoying the lesson (teacher D).

Teacher F felt that the ‘different pair of eyes’ spurred the teacher to work on suggested areas for improvement and was further indication that teachers view the pupils as providing a positive contribution to their learning:
But we do want them in there as another pair of eyes watching. That different pair of eyes are watching all the children all the time. It does make you think. You always want to work on the objectives that you’re given and set for yourself so I think it does improve you (teacher F).

This fresh perspective is needed because, as Rudduck and Flutter (2004) observe, our ‘everyday eyes’ have the weakness of being dimmed by both habit and busyness so that the classteacher sees only surface realities. Moreover, two teachers mentioned that the pupil perspective was different from that of the teacher because pupils did not focus on learning objectives:

We are so focused on the learning objectives, but they just bring a totally different angle to it (teacher E).

Another teacher explained how the child’s point of view, which is different from the focus on learning objectives, highlights areas where pupils are failing to understand:

I think, sometimes, as a teacher, we sometimes concentrate just on, ‘We’re teaching this. This is the objective. They’ve hit this and they’ve hit that.’ They [pupils] see the lesson from the children’s point of view rather than three teachers watching from a teacher’s point of view. And I think some of the comments show they didn’t quite get that. It gives you that children’s point of view and you then sit back and think, ‘I missed that.’ I think teachers can sometimes think, ‘Right, we’ve got objectives’... (teacher F).

It is not only pupils who bring a new perspective to teachers, but also teachers who bring a new perspective to pupils:

I think the children who come in to watch benefit because they don’t really think beforehand why we do this, and why we do that like this, and why that helps. It makes them look at the teacher from the other side (teacher B).

In addition to seeing a new perspective, teachers felt their pedagogy improved directly from specific comments made by the observing pupil during feedback as seen in the research observation where the Year 4 pupil felt the punctuation examples were not sufficiently challenging for some children. The classteacher agreed:

I think that’s right. The examples weren’t really challenging for A and P. They could have been given some more challenging ones – and not just do extra examples. Yes, yes, you’re right. A good idea! (teacher D).
Sometimes, pupil comments can be useful to reinforce existing good practice:

*Some of the comments that they come up with actually bring up the good points in your teaching that you’ve not realised have been so useful to children... it’s reinforcing good practice (teacher C).*

There was a strong feeling from all interviewed that collaborative observation has a positive impact on practice. In the process, pupils felt that teachers listened to them:

*I know that they listen because, after we’ve done the peer coaching, it’s like the teacher that’s done the lesson and the teachers that are sitting with you, they all come and read our writing that we’ve writ (Gill).*

A further contribution to teachers’ practice was recognition that lessons learned may impact positively on the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, the headteacher felt that collaborative observation was the best possible professional development and that it had a positive impact on teaching:

*I still feel it’s the best professional development by far. I know a lot of schools don’t do any of this, and I don’t know how they can know what’s going on then. ... Everybody’s always perfecting teaching all the time across different subjects and I think if we didn’t do the peer coaching, I think you would notice a difference (headteacher).*

One teacher summarised the impact collaborative observation has made on her teaching and this view echoed the voices of all teachers at the school:

*I have massively changed the way I teach since I’ve been in this school – totally, massively changed.... I would never know how to teach differently had I not had the opportunity to go and watch other teachers... because if you’re tired of what you’re doing, the children are (teacher E).*

The deputy explained how such improvement in pedagogy occurs and also gives confidence because collaborative observation opens up the components of a good lesson and makes this knowledge available to all teachers:

*For me it is quite a confidence boost that excellence and good practice are not mythical lessons, but easily achievable in every lesson taught. I think the whole process opens up clearly the components of an outstanding/good lesson and that breeds confidence in others (DHT/teacher A).*
**Pupil engagement with learning**

In addition to impacting on pedagogy, it was felt that collaborative observation improved pupils’ engagement with learning. The headteacher had noticed pupils’ improved engagement when he conducted lesson observations and felt this was a direct result of teachers acting on pupils’ suggestions:

“They’re more engaged now. I think they’re more engaged. In the lesson I’ve just observed... it was my view that they were very engaged in that lesson (headteacher).

Another teacher commented on increased interest and enthusiasm when pupils’ suggestions had impacted on practice:

“They’ve noticed when I’ve done something that they’ve suggested. So when they say, ‘Oh, I talked about doing this,’ then their interest and enthusiasm to do it seems to have built from that (teacher B).

Children’s enthusiasm did not happen by chance, however. Teachers play a part by being genuinely interested in pupils and listening to them:

*I think it’s important that the children feel they can have their own opinions and express them and have a say in their learning... I think, if you give them the pupil voice and say how important it is and show, ‘I’m interested in what you want,’ I think it helps their enthusiasm (DHT/teacher A).

Teachers perceived that children’s understanding of their learning improved as a result of collaborative observation:

*Now we’re doing peer coaching in class they [pupils] can see the learning is so much better. The children are more interested if they help to plan it (teacher F).*

As a result, pupils are able to think about their learning:

*They are really thinking about the learning that’s taking place (DHT/teacher A).*

In addition, one of the pupils explained that observing other pupils motivated her to improve:
When you see the little children learning, well, you want to be as good as you can be in your lessons (Milly).

A successful experience

Increased engagement with learning and improved pedagogy are both positive attributes to have emerged from collaborative observation and both are directly focused on classroom learning. This thesis argues, moreover, that it is Riverbank’s learning organisation culture, particularly those aspects that relate to collegiality and dialogue, that enable collaborative observation to operate successfully and this view will be explored and evidenced from the findings in the following chapters. In this chapter, however, the findings specifically identify three attributes to emerge from participants’ experiences that contribute to the initiative’s success. Firstly, teachers feel that they benefit from the experience because they genuinely want to listen to pupil voice in the process. Secondly, the process of collaborative observation is built systematically over time, and this still applies even when a new subject is introduced and even though participants are familiar with the process. Thirdly, the process is not one of judgemental observations, but is supportive.

Firstly, returning to the fact that teachers feel that they benefit from the experience because they genuinely want to listen to pupil voice, a teacher expressed the view that all teachers valued listening to pupils:

I think everyone, as a teaching staff, has realised the importance of listening to pupil ideas (teacher F).

There is a genuine belief that the observing pupil will make useful comments when observed pupils have not accessed the learning and such a willingness to be self-critical was recognised in the literature as being important when listening to pupils:

I find it, when I’ve been coached myself, incredibly useful. Because what they [pupils] say is from the heart. What they say is from the child’s level. And if they make a suggestion that I need to change something then it genuinely is because they think the children haven’t accessed it for these reasons (teacher E).

Belief in the whole process is provided by a teacher’s succinct summary:
We feel they [pupils] can give us the best information.... I think involving the children in peer coaching sessions allows us to gain an insight into children’s understanding on how they learn best, and from a teaching point of view how they think and how we can teach them best – which strategies they think are useful for them, and which ones aren’t so useful for them (teacher B).

The second factor that seems to be present in the initiative’s success is the systematic process over time, whatever the subject, with which collaborative observation is introduced and this process is indicative of the learning organisation as a journey or an aspiration (Pedler at al., 1997). The first stage is an introduction or external training on good practice. In PE for example, a subject that is currently at the stage of introducing a pupil, a teacher explained how the process started:

We have had training on it. Last year we had the PE adviser to give some training and so I think that increased everyone’s confidence really – introduced different ideas (teacher F).

The second stage is to introduce paired teaching between two adults, as described by the science subject leader:

Because it was new to science, it was more of a team teach situation.... We planned the lesson together. We allocated it as to how each of the adults were going to be used and then did the teaching (teacher E).

The plan for the current year, as the third stage, is to introduce peer coaching in science with two teachers observing in the summer term:

When we take it on this year, it will be with a couple of teachers watching (teacher E).

The final, or fourth, stage is to introduce a pupil. It is the fact that all teachers feel, when a pupil is included, that the process is supportive rather than judgemental that becomes the third attribute to emerge in the success of the initiative. One aspect of this support is seen as friendliness:
I think when you get advice off the other staff and pupils, it’s friendly advice, but it makes you evaluate your own teaching more.... It does improve you (teacher F).

This sentiment was echoed by teacher D:

It’s friendly advice. The pupils want to support you. We all want to get better (teacher D).

Gill, one of the pupils, made a comment that seemed to recognise this view:

Without the children’s ideas, the school wouldn’t be what it is now (Gill).

The teachers play a large part in guiding the process so that it is supportive of one another and this resonates with the support members give one another in ‘on-the-job’ training in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Teacher C gave a useful example to explain the view that collaborative observation was treated ‘softly’:

It’s the staff who don’t make it daunting. I think every one’s fairly close knit. Everyone gets on with everyone else. And so we don’t mind other people watching. And at the end, if I read a comment and I’d read that wrong, as opposed to what it actually meant, then talking about it afterwards is really important because that person could say, ‘I didn’t mean that. I meant this.’ So it’s a bit of softly, softly peer coaching ((teacher C).

This feeling of support, but still based on ‘constructive criticism’, was summarised when teacher B revealed that the process of collaborative observation could actually be an enjoyable experience. This comment is significant because it indicates just how far teachers have travelled on their journey of including pupils in their observations and is further indication of a learning organisation culture. Moreover, it is very different from the perceptions of many teachers described in the literature:

Obviously, it’s all for improvement, but, now that we’ve been doing that for a while, I quite enjoy having the children in because they can provide that constructive criticism (teacher B).
Summary

This chapter has provided a fundamental analysis of the collaborative observation experience and has provided an insight into the provision for listening to both teacher and pupil voice, so addressing the first supporting research question: what is the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation and is there provision for listening to all voices? The chapter also provides a foundation for the following chapters.

The main themes to emerge were related to how the participants worked through their feelings when taking part in collaborative observation, the perceived benefits of the process and, finally, the recognition of the process as a successful experience.

The chapter demonstrated the tentative initial feelings of the participants and how these feelings developed positively as participants became familiar with collaborative observation. Nevertheless, teachers can still feel apprehensive when a new subject for observation is introduced and pupils recognised that they, too, were apprehensive at first, but grew in confidence so that their voices could be heard. As a result, teachers expressed how they valued a different perspective on learning and teaching, acknowledging that this perspective improved pedagogy and pupil engagement with learning.

Three attributes were identified that contribute to the initiative’s success at Riverbank: listening to pupils as part of a genuine consultation, giving time to develop the process systematically, and feeling supported by colleagues.

These factors do not happen by chance and are not merely an expression of the collaborative observation experience. This thesis claims they stem from a deep-seated learning organisation culture that promotes collegiality and the extensive use of dialogue. The following two chapters explore in more detail the different issues associated with collaborative observation and collegiality and dialogue within the culture, starting with the findings on collegiality.
CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS – COLLEGIALITY THROUGH COMMITMENT

In the previous chapter, the experiences of collaborative observation for participants were explored. It was seen that participants, both teachers and pupils, were apprehensive at first, but grew in confidence and started to view the experience as a positive opportunity. Teachers recognised the impact collaborative observation had made in improving their pedagogy and children’s engagement with learning. Particularly important was the participants’ recognition of the process as supportive as this is contrary to many teachers’ perceptions of classroom observation as portrayed in the literature (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007; NAHT, 2011).

This chapter, therefore, is the first of two chapters that explore if collaborative observation at Riverbank is a successful and supportive activity. The chapter is centred on collegiality and commitment. It addresses the second of the three supporting research questions: how is collegiality manifested and how does this promote a commitment to the process of collaborative observation?

As described in chapter three, collegiality can be viewed as collaboration in a professional context with Ayo and Fraser (2008) implying that there has to be something more than this, ‘a new way of knowing’ (p. 58), which implies a developed understanding between participants. This understanding can be seen as a shared commitment and Humes (2007) claims that such a commitment leads to collegiality. Moreover, three characteristics were identified in the literature that lead to commitment and are also associated with collegiality. These were:

- a sense of belonging
- a willingness to share
- feelings of security that allow participants to deal with associated tensions, such as accepting feedback

These characteristics, as manifestations of shared commitment and, therefore, collegiality, were acknowledged in the literature (page 25) as two-way cyclical
processes which strengthen one another and, in the process, contribute to improved learning. The presence of these three characteristics at Riverbank is now explored, starting with the first one, a sense of belonging.

**A sense of belonging**

In addition to its association with commitment and collegiality, a sense of belonging is important in an organisation or school as notions of inclusion and acceptance form part of the early stages of cultural development that will lead to successful group or team work (Schein, 2004) and team work is recognised by Senge (2006) as the basic learning unit in modern learning organisations, offering a dimension of learning that an individual could not achieve. Sergiovanni (1994) recognises both affiliation and commitment to an organisation as basic human needs and so the implication is that a sense of belonging and commitment will need to be in place for the successful development of any organisational initiative. Goldman and Newman (1998) confirm the link between a sense of belonging and commitment. Furthermore, Handley et al. (2006) assert that mutual understanding, which will be referred to later, is also related to a sense of belonging and mutual commitment in a community of practice. Belonging, therefore, is strongly related to commitment and, hence, collegiality and is demonstrated in the findings through expressions of membership and ownership.

All teachers interviewed believed that children would consciously feel they belonged to Riverbank. The pupils in the final group interview all chorused a resounding ‘yes’, without hesitation, when asked if they felt they were members of the school, but how was this sense of membership manifested? One way was through care for the environment, as teacher C explained:

*They’re quite proud of it, actually. I think all the work that they do is valued and all the displays and everything else. I’ve never seen anything that’s been put up around the school that’s been damaged by anyone, which says, straight away, that they’re proud that they’ve been doing it.... I think they know they belong to it [the school] (teacher C).*

Appreciation of the environment or feelings of belonging do not happen by chance, however, but through conversations the teaching staff have with pupils. The deputy felt the way staff behave towards pupils and the way they talk to pupils actually promoted pupils’ feelings of membership of the school:
The way that staff are and the way that staff talk to them (pupils) I think they definitely feel like members. I mean, every time I talk to the children, I talk about the school being our school (DHT/teacher A).

The outcome of such talk and behaviour was seen by the headteacher to instil feelings of belonging through the notion of family:

*I think we’re a family. We’re here for the children really. We’re probably a more secure environment than many of them have at home. They come here and they have structure. They have people speaking to them nicely all day long, treating them with respect (headteacher).*

Another teacher reinforced the sense of family and also referred to the fact that pupils felt part of the school as a community:

*Also, it is a community and the children feel that aspect…. It is a family (teacher D).*

More specifically, one of the teachers extended the concept of family by explaining that pupils’ sense of belonging stemmed from feeling valued:

*There’s a great sense of belonging, yes. They matter. They are made to feel like they matter (teacher E).*

Moreover, it is thought that pupils’ feelings of value that reflect membership stem from knowing that their voices are heard:

*I would say they do feel a sense of membership. … I think they do see a lot of pupil voice. I’m sure they must feel that we do listen to them (teacher B).*

When asked if pupils felt they were listened to, one of the pupils confirmed:

*Yes because… we get our ideas together and then tell the teachers, and then they tell the headteacher and he does most of the things that we’ve said (Nyan).*
Teachers, without exception, also felt a sense of belonging to the school. A teacher who joined the school as a newly qualified teacher, now in her third year at Riverbank, explained how she felt herself to be a member of her class and a staff member. She used words associated with a learning organisation culture like ‘support’ and ‘trust’:

Very settled, and I know I can take my classroom on and I’m supported in that. And I’m trusted to do that and I’m very much a member of the class, staff and the teachers (teacher F).

Moreover, the process of collaborative observation itself was linked with giving teachers a sense of membership:

And with the peer coaching because observing each other and looking at your good points as well as your other points of how you do well in your classroom gives you membership of the school, and how much we do together as a staff to discuss and share experience and help progress (teacher B).

Feelings of ownership are related to a sense of belonging and commitment (Lucas, 2010). Furthermore, MacBeath et al. (2009) claim that both ownership and belonging are associated with collegiality. At Riverbank, ownership was not mentioned by the interviewer, but several teachers referred to it. For instance, it was associated with pupils being given an active involvement in learning:

They need to feel that this is their school and they have an active role in it (teacher F).

Ownership was created by doing many ‘little things’ and giving explanations:

... something that gives them ownership of the school ... the little things that you keep doing all the time.... It’s how you explain why (DHT/teacher A).

Teacher B recognised that the feeling of ownership, generated by including pupils, was present throughout the school:

We do include the children as members and pupils who have ownership of the school and I think the feeling of that runs throughout the school (teacher B).
Moreover, the HLTA related the sense of ownership specifically to the collaborative observation process with its opportunity for pupils to express their opinions:

_It [collaborative observation] gives them a sense of ownership... they value the school a lot better, especially if they think, ‘Our opinions matter’ (HLTA)._ 

In the case of adults, ownership and membership are fostered through leadership opportunities:

_Everybody has an area that they lead and it’s very much down to you to lead it. I’m not certain what it’s like in other schools, but I feel that with my subjects I have very much ownership over those and I feel that brings a sense of membership – this is my role in this school (teacher B)._ 

Feelings of belonging, expressed as feelings of membership and ownership, contribute to the culture that leads to successful group work (Schein, 2004). At Riverbank, a sharing culture also contributes to successful group work and it is through the willingness to share that commitment and collegiality are promoted.

**A willingness to share**

According to Pemberton et al. (2007), a willingness to share promotes commitment. The headteacher confirmed that there was an expectation that newcomers would be open to sharing with others:

_When I appoint new staff, I insist that this is the approach and they must be open to share with others (headteacher)._ 

The value of sharing as a way of transferring new ideas to the teacher’s own setting was referred to by teacher E:

_Peer coaching is a great opportunity to gather new ideas from colleagues that can be transferred to my own setting (teacher E)._ 

As a result, the sharing of experiences, at Riverbank, through collaborative observation has become a way of life:
We are so used to sharing ideas; it’s just become a natural part of school life (teacher D).

Such a commitment to sharing reflects Pedler et al.’s (1997) view of the learning company. Teacher D elaborated on the fact that sharing had become part of the school culture by explaining the different occasions when practice was shared and by saying that she felt that it was the more informal sharing that often yielded the best results:

We ask others’ opinions on lessons we want to teach. We share effective lessons we have taught or pupils’ responses. This can happen in staff meetings or after observing a session, but also occurs as a natural part of staffroom conversation. Often it is these informal chats that are the most productive (teacher D).

One teacher described how receiving positive feedback in the collaborative observation process empowered her and so promoted a willingness to share:

When positives are identified in my own teaching, it feels quite empowering and encourages me to share further (teacher B).

Collaborative observation was recognised as a contributory factor in forming a shared vision related to teaching and learning:

To make sure children are learning - all the delivery and the peer coaching and watching that the delivery’s meaningful – it’s making sure we’ve all got shared vision (DHT/teacher A).

Shared vision is important as, according to Senge (2006), genuine commitment, as opposed to compliance, is reinforced in a learning organisation as a result of sharing the vision. Consequently, through collaborative observation, ideas to improve teaching are shared right across the school from Reception to Year 6:

We just feel that even the Year 6 teachers can learn something from my class and I can learn from their class – very much so. We feel that they [pupils] start at a place and end up at a place and we’ve got to know how to get them there and we’ve got to use the same sort of strategies (teacher F).
Little (1982), in fact, identified successful schools as those that participated in ‘norms of collegiality’ linked to ‘on-the-job’ learning, whereby teachers were prepared to share ideas and ‘experiment with the business of teaching’ (p. 338) on a regular basis. This sharing was particularly linked to teacher peer observation. Moreover, the sharing culture is seen as a commitment to professional equality (ibid.) and this was seen at Riverbank through including all teachers, HLTAs and pupils. Such intentional, less-hierarchical-sharing is, according to Fielding (1999), central to most accounts of collegiality. As a result, it is felt that pupils at Riverbank have a good appreciation of how teachers share ideas in collaborative observation:

*Our children observe this process regularly and understand that, as a staff, we are sharing and learning from each other (teacher B).*

The HLTA, moreover, felt that pupils were confident to share their own ideas with the teachers in collaborative observation because teachers act as role models for the process:

*I feel the children at our school also adopt the same confidence when sharing ideas because it’s modelled to them frequently (HLTA).*

Additionally, the deputy referred to the inclusivity of culture across staff at all levels:

*I think the teachers and pupils are so willing to share ideas and be so honest because of the culture that is fostered in successful peer coaching and that culture needs to be wholly inclusive from the headteacher down (DHT/teacher A).*

At Riverbank, the idea of a sharing culture was further reflected in the references to team work. In this sense, Smyth (1991) suggests teachers display collegiality when they are able to work successfully as part of a team. This is further developed by Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett (2008) who suggest teams in a collegial culture are able to ‘adapt and reform’ which is what happens in collaborative observation as the composition of members in each observation session is different. Teachers at Riverbank work in teams regularly and this is felt to be part of the school ethos:

*And we work in teams. Everything’s teams! It’s not just one person on their own. That’s the kind of ethos we’ve got here (DHT/teacher A).*
It was also acknowledged that pupils work in teams to support one another:

*They’re very much a team - all pull together, support each other, care for each other (teacher E).*

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, successful teams develop from those early stages of feeling a sense of belonging to the organisation. Furthermore, teamwork is acknowledged as an essential part of a learning organisation culture (Senge, 2006) because the team offers a dimension of learning that the individual alone could not achieve. It is also thought that the team’s capacity is increased when there is a common interest across different skill sets (Lucas, 2010) as when including pupils in addition to teachers in collaborative observation. This view is strengthened by Hammersley-Fletcher’s and Brundrett’s (2008) views on using and valuing individual expertise in a collaborative, educational context. Similarly, Humes (2007) describes a collegial approach as one that reflects more flexible ways of working that involve teamwork and the use of members other than teachers, such as support staff. Riverbank takes this further by not only including support staff in the form of HLTAs, but by also including pupils.

**Feelings of security**

Humes (2007) also believes that collegiality is built when members are prepared to challenge one another and this is confirmed by Harris (2002) who feels that a collegial culture encourages risk-taking. Again, it is seen, as in other areas of culture, that collegiality and risk-taking develop each other as a two-way cyclical process. Edmondson (1999) provides a useful phrase to describe this process when she refers to ‘psychological safety’. This she describes as ‘a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking’ (p. 350). Psychological safety, she claims, enables people to take critical feedback and so learn as well as freeing people to think of new ideas.

What evidence is there that participants at Riverbank feel secure and psychologically safe and what causes them to feel it? The HLTA has been at the school longer than
most of the teachers and so she is well-placed to recognise how confidence in collaborative observation has developed.

*Initially the observation process was deemed as a very daunting one but after realising that this procedure wasn’t put in place to intimidate, staff began to relax and soon realised it was an opportunity to see what worked well in our school (HLTA).*

Teacher D also referred to how the system has developed over time and how it is not associated with more formal types of observation, such as Ofsted inspections:

*I think this [feeling secure] is to do with the way peer coaching sessions have been developed over the years. They are markedly different from performance management for example or an Ofsted observation (teacher D).*

The headteacher confirmed that observations were not graded. Nevertheless, teacher B *did* associate the process with the monitoring of standards and teaching. At the same time, the perception of the observations is also one of friendliness:

*Peer coaching is a way of friendly faces monitoring the standards and teaching across the school to make sure this is happening... a friendly system of highlighting and agreeing areas to be addressed and following up on this in future sessions (teacher B).*

A reason given for the more friendly approach that also demonstrated how collaborative observation contributes to learning was ‘chatting informally’ during the process:

*[Collaborative observation] is not carried out in a way that intimidates teachers. Often, when observing, teachers will appear to be chatting informally in the classroom. We often find that a lot of incidental learning takes place for teaching staff through this informal chat which adds to our practice (teacher B).*

Moreover, the deputy explained that the emphasis is on learning and not judging the teacher:

*It is about informing practice not judging the teacher... understanding that it is learning and not teaching that is being observed (DHT/teacher A).*

The process may seem friendly and non-judgemental, but the impact is one of empowerment:
The peer coaching process tends to empower the staff. Often staff who have been observed feel a sense of achievement after their lesson (teacher B).

Such positive feelings are partly promoted by receiving praise:

*The teacher being observed always receives a lot of praise during the experience and I think this helps... and teachers are not graded by others (headteacher).*

As well as praise, the teachers know they will receive one area for development no matter how successful the lesson and, because of the regularity of the process, they are at ease with this type of feedback:

*Because teachers have the opportunity to observe others regularly, we become at ease with the fact that one area is always identified for development because the purpose is always to drive improvement (teacher B).*

Furthermore, all teachers are involved with the same degree of regularity:

*Everyone is involved in the cycles at some point and so no one feels victimised by it (headteacher).*

This is helped by the assessment and feedback sheet that teachers have developed jointly over the years as it shapes the feedback and, teacher D believes, ensures that feedback is given sensitively:

*The way the feedback sheet is structured – using the pointers on the sheet – makes sure areas for improvement are broached sensitively and there is lots of time to discuss the positives also (teacher D).*

Like the feedback sheet, the whole system of collaborative observation has evolved gradually over time and this is in line with learning organisation expectations of improvement as a process (Garvin, 1993). It is acknowledged that participants still feel pressure, but this is channelled into viewing collaborative observation as a positive and helpful experience:

*It’s a system we have used over a number of years so the school staff is used to it and comfortable with it. All do feel the extra pressure when being watched, but

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2 HLTAs join in with the observations regularly, but are not observed regularly themselves because they are needed to act in a supply teacher capacity to free classteachers during the observation process.
Collective commitment and collegiality

So far, the chapter has demonstrated how a sense of belonging, willingness to share and psychological safety are all linked with commitment and collegiality. A sense of belonging is associated with successful group or team work. Willingness to share develops the team’s capacity and this is strengthened when team members reflect less hierarchical structures and different skill sets, as with the inclusion of teachers, HLTAs and pupils. Psychological safety, or feeling secure, means that teachers accept the pressure of observation and feedback because the process is relaxed and friendly even though the focus is on standards and teaching. This is because the process has developed over time, becoming part of the collegial learning organisation culture.

The collegial culture, through commitment, strengthens an individual’s and an organisation’s capacity to learn. Dovey (2009) maintains that sharing values in less hierarchical structures leads to commitment. Collective commitment, recognised by Plowright (2007) as an aspect of the learning organisation, involves members in the learning process. Shared commitment means that new solutions are more likely to be adopted (Schein, 2004). Collective commitment is strongly associated with collegiality (Humes, 2007) and, therefore, commitment and collegiality strengthen the organisation’s capacity for learning.

According to Garvin (1993), a commitment to learning leads to success and, in line with this, Riverbank is described as a successful school as shown by its inclusion in two Ofsted best practice guides. Similarly, Senge (2006) affirms that organisations that excel will be those that ‘discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in the organisation’ (p. 4). This is seen at Riverbank where teachers are committed to listening to pupils because, as a teacher explained, teachers want to develop their own practice through listening to pupils because they know that this improves children’s learning:

*We are always trying to make ourselves better for their benefit really... I think in this school it’s an understanding that the children know how they learn best.... We can all see the benefits of pupil voice... we know how much it’s helped us to progress since we’ve been doing that. And how much involvement it’s given the*
children and how much enthusiasm it’s brought to them towards their learning (teacher B).

This sentiment was reinforced by other teachers as when teacher F referred to a ‘strong’ commitment to listening to pupil voice:

Definitely the commitment is strong to include the children’s interests and getting their voice across.... It gives us the opportunity to plan their learning round their needs more, and their interests ... and that they have a say in that (teacher F).

As a result of being committed to the children’s learning, teachers are prepared to work hard:

We work really hard, because we know that that’s something that makes the children happy.... That’s the whole purpose for being here, isn’t it? Everything that we do and everything that we drive at is to make sure the children are learning (DHT/teacher A).

This view is supported by Little (1982) who claims that, in successful schools, collegial experimentation becomes a way of life that pervades the school. At Riverbank, this way of life is seen as a commitment to improving learning and raising standards through listening to pupils:

There is a commitment to raising standards. Over the years we really have developed... a shared approach – all working together to raise standards (teacher D).

This becomes a commitment to the process of collaborative observation, which was recognised by teachers as a way of improving teaching. The resulting commitment to the process was recognised through involvement:

I would say we are [committed]. Yes, because we’re all so actively involved in peer coaching. We’re part of it.... We should constantly be driving ourselves to be better, constantly pushing ourselves to improve and I think peer coaching really helps us to do that (teacher E).
Such learning across an organisation becomes embedded in a learning organisation culture: a collaborative school culture with the authentic involvement of teachers allows organisational learning to flourish (Mitchell and Sackney, 1998). Moreover, involvement is cited as a characteristic deemed necessary in a learning organisation (Jones and Hendry, 1994). Such authentic involvement and commitment were reinforced by the deputy who explained that teachers felt collaborative observation impacted on both teaching and learning:

*That’s the way it is. We’re open to peer coaching.... We know it impacts on our teaching, and also on the learning (DHT/teacher A).*

Shared commitment through greater involvement of staff, a beneficial aspect of collegiality, has also been linked to an improved chance of achieving sustainable success (Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett, 2008), which is important for organisational learning. This suggestion resonates with the idea that commitment, through pro-work peer groups, develops the professional skills of the teacher, offsetting the fact that initiatives have often remained the province of one teacher as a ‘cultural island’ (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Kofman and Senge (1993), in fact, argue that communities of commitment are at the heart of learning organisations and provide the opportunity for all members to engage in decision making, which Humes (2007) associates with collegiality. This, therefore, contributes to learning as a shared responsibility.

One of the tests of real commitment is demonstrated when the school provides the time and financial resources to support an initiative. This was recognised by the deputy:

*It has always been timetabled... and at Riverbank the staffing structure has been tweaked to facilitate peer coaching (DHT/teacher A).*

Consequently, shared commitment in collaborative observation, with its less hierarchical structure and different skill sets, leads to participants’ being prepared to be involved and to work hard and so leads to individual learning and develops the organisation’s capacity to learn.
To conclude, Riverbank’s practice of collaborative observation that involves both pupils and teachers, reflects Fielding’s (1999) view that collegiality in education is ‘primarily about the possibility of reciprocal learning within the context of shared ideas’ (p. 29). This leads to mutual understanding and takes collegiality beyond a mere expectation that teachers should collaborate. This process of reciprocal learning in the form of collaborative observation at Riverbank demonstrates true commitment. This is because it is viewed as an initiative with a long-term future and not just as a short-term ‘fad’.

The emerging concept of transferability is important for collegiality as Fielding (1999) suggests that the ‘binding force’ of true collegiality will transcend a specific school and relate to wider ideals of professionalism. The headteacher, in fact, felt that teachers would take the process with them if they left the school:

*I think those staff who’ve been engaged in this will take that with them wherever they go because I think they can see the benefits of consulting with children... it won’t be something that’s discarded. It’s one of those things that naturally you do (headteacher).*

**Summary**

This chapter has focused on collegiality in the learning organisation. Collegiality and commitment are strongly related. This was demonstrated through commitment and its associated characteristics of belonging, willingness to share and feeling secure in a practice in which teachers do not usually feel secure.

The empirical research revealed that a sense of belonging led to commitment to learning and to the practice of collaborative observation. The resulting shared commitment, or collegiality, was seen in shared practices and team work. Teachers recognised that collaborative observation improved their own teaching and improved children’s learning, claiming that the focus on children’s learning underpinned all that they did in school. Collegiality, seen in teachers’ cooperative commitment to learning through listening to pupils and to the collaborative observation process, has developed over time and underpins Riverbank’s learning organisation culture, so strengthening the school’s capacity to learn.
At Riverbank, collegiality is not what Humes (2007) describes as ‘soft’ collegiality whereby ‘bland consensus’ lacks ‘professional rigour’, but rather a ‘tough’ collegiality through collaborative observation whereby colleagues are prepared to challenge one another. The next chapter explains how this happens as it focuses on the other key aspect of the learning organisation, a dialogic culture.
CHAPTER 8

DATA ANALYSIS – A DIALOGIC CULTURE

In the previous chapter, it was seen that a sense of belonging, a willingness to share and psychological safety contribute to shared commitment which is closely associated with a learning organisation culture of collegiality. Alongside this, it is now suggested that the dialogic culture of the learning organisation enables collaborative observation to be engaged in as a cooperative experience. This is in line with the thesis definition of the learning organisation which claims that the shared commitment to improving learning described in the previous chapter is enhanced by seeking both pupil and teacher views through reflective dialogue, so strengthening a capacity for learning.

This chapter on the dialogic culture at Riverbank considers the third supporting research question: how willing are the participants to engage in dialogue and what opportunities are there for dialogic encounters to occur? In order to answer this question, the focus is on dialogue during three stages of collaborative observation: during the lesson itself, giving feedback at the end and during dissemination afterwards. The chapter starts by revealing how an understanding of learning is developed through dialogue, including the development of a common language to talk and think about learning. The feedback process shows how an understanding of learning, linked with a dialogic culture, enables constructive feedback to be given and accepted. However, even in such a culture, issues will emerge that demand further consideration. Dialogue enables tensions to be shared in a supportive manner during the process of disseminating learning from collaborative observation across the school.

Developing an understanding about learning

Engaging in dialogic practices was seen, in the literature, to be an important aspect of learning organisations. In the research observation, the multiple pathways through which dialogue was being used were clearly visible across observers, teachers and pupils, and between pupils. Consequently, children’s understanding about learning was being developed by frequent opportunities for dialogue for all pupils. During the
lesson, children were encouraged to problem solve with talking partners or in groups to explore meaning, generate solutions or improve work.

All observers, including the pupil observer, coached the children at times when the children were working and not listening to the teacher. This means that four ‘teachers’ were engaging in dialogue to encourage, reinforce teaching points, explain misconceptions and offer suggestions for improvement. Because each class is observed just once, and at most twice, a term, it is not possible in this study to determine if this aspect of ‘teaching’ impacts on learning. However, the process does enable observers to develop an understanding as to how observation can help learning and, during the process, the observing pupil is encouraged and supported through teacher talk:

*Yes, we talk to them all the way through to encourage them (teacher D).*

In addition to participating in the observation and completing a lesson commentary sheet (see appendix F), the observing pupil is expected to join in the feedback to the teacher at the end of the observation:

*They join in with the talk at the end. At the end of every peer-coaching session, the teacher and the observers have a conversation about the lesson with the pupil (headteacher).*

Throughout the lesson, it was evident from the research observation that pupils had a good understanding of their learning and, during the final feedback, the Year 4 pupil-observer was able to discuss what she had seen and which children had found it difficult to access the teaching:

*The teacher was showing respect to the children – talking and explaining the work nicely.... X and Y were struggling – you could tell by their faces (observing pupil).*

This understanding by the Year 4 pupil is reinforced by the headteacher who felt that observing pupils have been able to verbalise their views accurately:

*They have a good view of how the teacher’s working with the pupils and how they reward them and how they are being spoken to. Mostly the pupils that we pick have been able to verbalise that really and quite accurate, I would say (headteacher).*
Furthermore, observing pupils are able to make comments on their lesson commentary sheet without help:

_I haven’t even had to explain any of the sheets to the children who’ve been chosen. They’ve just got the sheets and have put down everything they need to... And they just come up with their own ideas. It is quite amazing what they see_ (HLTA).

This was very different from the findings of Pollard and Triggs (2000) who found that pupils in the Primary Assessment and Experience Project (PACE) had ‘little access to metacognitive language with which to talk or think about themselves as learners, or by means of which they could penetrate teachers’ intentions for them’ (p.153). Having an enabling language, therefore, is an indication that pupils at Riverbank were well-prepared for taking part in learning as a shared responsibility and could take part alongside teachers as Cousins (1998) remarks that reflective dialogue, in a learning organisation, enhances the interpretive skills of the members.

However, pupils were not trained as observers and this was confirmed by the headteacher:

_If they’ve not done it before, we just say, like, ‘You’re coming into this lesson. You’re not going to do the lesson. We’ve got this sheet for you to try and fill in with some guidance.’ We go through each of the statements on the sheet, but that’s about as far as it goes....One of the questions on the sheet is, ‘How were they helped to learn?’ And that’s quite open so you don’t want to coach them_ (headteacher).

How, therefore, was the ability to understand about learning and consequently to talk about learning, developed? Other pupil voice initiatives at Riverbank have provided opportunities to talk about learning and one such initiative was using pupils as researchers to find out factors that aid learning or impede it:

_We had a Year 5/6 class looking at barriers to learning and that was really good because it looked at all the different approaches that we use and what approaches they liked and the one or two things that they felt held them back_ (headteacher).
In addition, pupils in the research lesson were using technical vocabulary naturally and this was contributing to their learning. This is part of planned action for consistency across the school, starting with the very youngest children, that has arisen from collaborative observation as noted by the Reception class teacher:

*I feel if I were to go and watch an English lesson, a literacy lesson, or even a maths lesson, I feel if they’re using a certain language, I want to use that language and start them off on that. So we have that common ground going through... that’s what keeps us going and producing the high standards* (teacher F).

Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) claim that pupils need to develop an understanding of the reality of teaching if teachers are to listen to pupils successfully. An example of such an understanding was demonstrated by the Gifted and Talented co-ordinator’s example:

*There was one girl... and she actually completed a whole book of her own lesson planning for the children and she planned her own writing lessons and what the marking criteria would be and everything. The Year 6 teacher taught one of her lessons from her journal that she’d planned* (teacher B).

Such an example reflects how the school has developed pupils’ language to talk, understand and think about learning over time and through different opportunities to use pupil voice, as recommended by MacBeath et al. (2009), so that pupils’ capacity for learning is strengthened. This is particularly important in a school that has around sixty percent of children eligible for free school meals as McIntyre et al. (2005) recognise that language barriers often reflect social class distinctions.

Riverbank, despite being in a deprived area, is a high-performing school in national testing and Fielding (2006) explains that high-performing schools can often have a tokenistic approach to listening to pupils in order to preserve existing systems. It was seen, however, in chapter six that this was not the case at Riverbank because teachers view listening to pupils as a genuine consultation. Moreover, according to Fielding (ibid.), high performing schools that are ‘holistic’ and genuinely value relationships, like Riverbank, can be described as ‘dialogic schools’ where dialogue is central and listening to pupils is ongoing. This culture at Riverbank is further illustrated through the process of giving and receiving feedback.
Dialogue and feedback

The Greek word, ‘dia-logos’, Senge (2006) explains, refers to the free flowing of meaning through a group. In recognition of dialogue as a strong element of a learning organisation, Senge, therefore, calls on participants to enter into thinking-together whereby assumptions are suspended. The feedback process at the end of the research observation at Riverbank did exactly that. The feedback was not judgemental, but reflective and exploratory. This was because the focus was on the children – an individual, a group or the whole class – and what could be done to improve their learning rather than the teacher’s teaching. The teacher who had taught the class and the pupil-observer were equal contributors to the feedback dialogue. The Year 4 observer, who was observing for the first time, remarked that she could tell a group of children was not understanding by the expressions on their faces when they were listening to the teacher and by the fact that they were working very slowly. The ensuing dialogue was focused on what to do to help this group of children and solutions were suggested. Importantly, participants in the feedback were not trying to persuade, convince or defend their assumptions, as would be the case in discussion, in line with the views of Preskill and Torres (1999).

An understanding about learning is, therefore, needed if feedback is to be dialogic as giving feedback to teachers at the end of an observation has potential to be a challenge for both teachers and pupils, as acknowledged by MacBeath et al. (2009). However, at Riverbank, there is an understanding that the feedback is based on pupils’ learning because it is based on the characteristics of effective learning that all staff have jointly devised through dialogue at staff development meetings spanning several years (see appendix G). The pupil, similarly, makes notes on a guidance sheet that focuses on pupil learning. Pupils are invited to make their own notes without guidance on the back of the sheet. Although pupils may choose to comment on teaching, the dialogue at the end is always focused on learning and what can be done to improve it, as the headteacher remarked:

_We focus on the learning and everybody knows that and if we can make it better, that’s what we’re trying to do (headteacher)._
In the process, teachers feel secure in discussing feedback because of the clarity of explanations. This is helped because teachers are given concrete suggestions for alternative approaches whilst recognising that these approaches are alternative ideas and not necessarily the best ones. This contributes to useful, yet open, dialogue:

I think people feel secure about discussing development areas when there is a clear explanation and examples of how to tackle the improvement. It is never a case of ‘this wasn’t good’ or ‘that didn’t work’... explaining an alternative approach is more acceptable... explaining that the alternative may not be right, but it is about fostering those alternative ideas (DHT/teacher A).

Because pupils have developed an understanding of teaching and learning, their feedback comments have also been constructive and, contrary to some teachers’ fears as described in the literature by Rudduck et al. (2006), staff at Riverbank have found pupil ideas acceptable:

The pupil comments have never been derogatory at all. You know, there have been suggestions about ways things could have been done differently, but, again, they’ve been considered (headteacher).

Furthermore, teachers value the feedback from collaborative observation and respond well to suggestions, so strengthening their capacity for learning:

Every time I’m given feedback, I try my best to act on what’s been suggested in the past (teacher B).

Although not trained beforehand, pupils are, in fact, coached and encouraged to contribute to feedback. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) claim that, when teachers help develop pupils’ capacity to do well when sharing their voices, it is an indication that teachers are serious about pupils’ inclusion and that such behaviour emerges from a dialogic culture. In line with this, the deputy expressed the views of other colleagues when she explained how she encourages pupils to engage in dialogue when giving feedback at the end of a collaborative observation session:

I also try to encourage them with, ‘Is there anything you could do to make this lesson better? Is there anything you don’t understand?’ Or ‘I’m not offended because that’s how we learn and I’m quite open.’ So I try and coax them in case they’re thinking, ‘I can’t say that.’ (DHT/teacher A).
Pupils are, therefore, encouraged, through talk, to use their understanding of learning when giving feedback. Their comments are valued and their written feedback is retained and filed with the accompanying QA sheet. There is no attempt to exert adult control by putting pupil comments into adult words which Fielding (2004) suggests is often the case. This was verified by the research documentary analysis and by the deputy:

_We keep what they write_ (DHT/teacher A).

However, there is a recognition among some teachers that not all pupils in the school have the ability in written language to contribute unaided to collaborative observation. One of the teachers explained how she felt about this:

_There are children in my class who don’t find the subject so easy and struggle with certain areas of that subject for various reasons.... I think it would be really interesting to have them in with somebody who could scribe for them or some way of maybe allowing them to record their responses. Then they can help us further on how to develop. We already know how to teach well to the children who learn well in that way, but what about the children who find it a bit difficult, for them as well? They could provide excellent feedback, I think, on how to help them as learners because they all learn differently_ (teacher B).

There is a tension, therefore, on how to enable all children to engage in a dialogue during feedback even if they do not have all the literary skills. Moreover, for those children participating in the process, there was not a consistent policy on the way feedback is handled at the end of an observation session. All teachers agreed that the pupil sheet was read through first and that pupils were encouraged to comment, reinforcing practice seen in the research observation and described by teacher E:

_I always tend to read through their sheet with them. I’ll give them a, ‘Well done. You’ve made some nice comments. You’ve drawn some good things out’_ (teacher E).

In the research observation, after discussing the pupil’s sheet, the pupil was sent back to class whilst the adults continued to engage in dialogue and this procedure was verified by one of the teachers:
At the end of the lesson, you do the share bit with the teachers and the children sit in on that and you do the child bit first so they don’t have to sit through all the teacher talk (teacher D).

However, this system was not always used:

I have seen it done that way where the child stays in, which I suppose is quite important because they’ve been involved in it so I suppose they shouldn’t be asked to leave while we all discuss (teacher B).

The headteacher assumed that the pupil remained for the whole of the feedback session:

They join in with the talk at the end. At the end of every peer coaching session, the teacher and the observers have a conversation about the lesson with the pupil... They get to hear what the teachers are saying about each other (headteacher).

There is a slight inconsistency of practice, therefore, in that the pupil observer may stay for the whole of the feedback session, or may be asked to leave after the pupil feedback sheet has been discussed. Furthermore, an additional pointer relating to feedback was suggested by a teacher who speculated whether all children in the class that was observed should receive the observing pupil’s feedback:

I suppose all the children in the class should get the pupil’s feedback because there should be feedback to the children on what was suggested (teacher B).

Such feedback to the whole class would support Rudduck’s and McIntyre’s (2007) search for authenticity when listening to pupils as they claim that pupils will feel a greater partnership if all know what is happening to the data and it is possible for this partnership to be achieved when there is a dialogic culture.

As noted earlier, feedback during a collaborative observation session does not only take place at the end, but also becomes integral to the lesson itself as seen in the research observation where the class of children was being coached by all observers as well as the class teacher during the working parts of the lesson. The observers, therefore, need to understand the lesson’s learning intentions and understand about learning if they are to support other children. Four ‘teachers’ means that children have increased opportunities to engage in dialogue about their work. A teacher commented:
We always go round to the children to see how they’re getting on, and so we’re giving some feedback then, at an individual, or group level or table level. So I’d go round and say, ‘That’s really good,’ or, ‘That’s great. Thanks,’ or ‘You’ve really built on that since last time’ (teacher F).

Although the chosen pupils have developed an understanding about learning, they found it difficult to have the confidence to give feedback to other pupils at first:

The first time I done the peer coaching, because all the children were older than me, I just sat down and writ. I didn’t want to check the work because they were all older than me... But once you’ve done it a few times you get used to it and you’re not scared to stand up and look at the children’s work (Gill).

Through familiarity, therefore, the pupils gain the confidence and skills to participate and talk productively to other children:

And when you get used to it you can just walk round the classroom and look at the children’s work and give them some help (Nyan).

It has been seen that not all pupils are chosen to participate as observers at Riverbank, nor is there a definite policy on whether the observing pupil remains for the whole of the feedback session or leaves after the discussion of the pupil’s feedback sheet. However, the dialogic culture does provide the important understanding and language for teachers and pupils to be able to talk about learning together and the collaborative observation process provides opportunities for dialogic encounters in the classroom. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for dialogue beyond the observation when teachers and HLTAs meet to discuss the outcomes of feedback through the QA sheets.

**Dialogue beyond the observation**

Collaborative observation has led to greater consistency and improvement in teaching through the formal procedure of recording potential developmental areas on the QA sheets at the end of a session for whole staff discussion:

Doing the peer coaching, it leads to consistency of approach and practice across the school, I think. We share what we do and things that pupils write through the QA sheets. And then when you share what the pupils say and talk about it, you develop as a teacher (teacher D).
As a result of dialogue, decisions are taken about changing practice or generating new practice:

*We’ve listened to what the pupils have thought.... We talked about behaviour, we talked about disruptive behaviour in classrooms – children who just weren’t on task and it affected their learning, and they [pupils] talked very positively about some of our approaches and particularly our extended writing and the short activities and things that we do... and the rub off from that has been us trying to do that in more particular areas really - games, a lot of fast thinking games (headteacher).*

The opportunities for dialogue after collaborative observation occur regularly:

*Yes, at staff meetings it will be noted. Most definitely shared at staff meetings. Every week, yes (HLTA).*

In addition to having regular opportunities to speak, teachers feel their voices are heard:

*I think we all feel that we’re open and we have a good forum that we can discuss ideas at staff meetings, especially, and we seek feedback and we seek opinions off other people. ... So, yes, I do think our opinions are taken onboard. If we really thought something wasn’t going to work, we could say it. Or if we really did think it was a good thing, we’d be listened to (teacher F).*

There may be disagreements, but the dialogic culture of ‘give and take’ resolves these:

*Everyone talks. ‘What do you think of this?’ And if you have a difference of opinion – I’m thinking of our HLTA, she’ll say, ‘I don’t agree.’ And she’ll be quite forceful. And you don’t think, ‘Oh, stupid woman.’ There’s none of that. We’re really professional. The disagreements, if we have any, you’d give your opinion and she’d say, ‘I can see that, but I think this.’ And you end up taking a bit of each other’s arguments. It just works (DHT/teacher A).*

At Riverbank, therefore, there is the opportunity, through dialogue, to achieve unity in diversity, as recommended by Pedler et al. (1997) as a feature of learning companies, and to value different viewpoints even when not in agreement (Mitchell and Sackney, 1998). Furthermore, dialogue facilitates the recognising of complexities and the smoothing out of difficulties and, according to Kofman and Senge (1993), it is when dealing with complexities through dialogue rather than stability that real commitment to the school and the collaborative observation process will develop.
Interestingly, one of the pupil’s suggestions that arose from a collaborative observation session is now used across the school and has contributed to the use of more dialogic practice in lessons:

> And there was a point that one of them made about when you ‘put them on the spot’ and ask them a question – some of them didn’t like that. Some of them would prefer if you were to say, ‘Have a little discussion with your partner, or a group, and then come up with the answer.’ They didn’t really like being ‘put on the spot’ and I can totally agree with that (HLTA).

This dialogic practice was evidenced in the research observation and confirmed, informally, as having been adopted as a whole school recommendation.

**Summary**

This chapter has revealed how an understanding of learning is developed through a willingness to engage in dialogue, including the development of a common language to talk and think about learning. It has led to pupils having a good view of classroom reality and to teachers feeling that pupils express genuine opinions. The shared understanding enables pupils and staff to engage in dialogue about learning so that, during collaborative observation, they can coach and be coached which increases their capacity to learn, so equipping them to share the responsibility for learning.

Opportunities for dialogic encounters occur not only in the lesson itself, but also in the process of feedback and in the follow-up staff meeting. Because the participants have developed an understanding of learning through the collegial and dialogic culture, they are able to give and receive constructive feedback. Teachers value what pupils write and are conscious that they do not want to control or influence what pupils write or say. Dialogue, based on QA sheets filled in at the end of feedback, enables points of tension to be shared in a supportive manner during the process of disseminating learning from collaborative observation across the school. As a result of the shared learning, pupil recommendations have influenced both the curriculum and pedagogy.

Dialogue is strongly associated with a learning organisation culture and this will be linked with collegiality, also strongly associated with the learning organisation culture, in the next chapter. It will be seen how dialogue and collegiality support Riverbank’s experiences of collaborative observation as the next chapter draws together the
empirical conclusions from chapters six, seven and eight in order to provide an overall insight into how including pupils in lesson observations contributes to classroom learning.
CHAPTER 9

EMPIRICAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

The previous three chapters reported the findings from the research and each explored one of the supporting research questions. This chapter draws together these findings and concludes that both teacher and pupil voice must be heard within a supportive, developmental culture in which dialogue facilitates the sharing of all voices. The collegial and dialogic learning organisation culture enables teachers to recognise the contribution collaborative observation makes to teaching and learning and develops the individual’s and the organisation’s capacity to learn. In the process of synthesising the data analysis chapters, three significant conclusions have emerged and these will be presented in this chapter as each supporting research question is examined in turn.

The first supporting research question, which explores the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation, is being reported as the third question in this synthesis. At the start of reporting the empirical research, it was felt important to establish the collaborative observation experience first as a foundation from which to interpret the collegial and dialogic cultures. However, as an outcome from the findings, the thesis argues that the collegial and dialogic cultures must be in place first if collaborative observation is to develop successfully. In this synthesis, therefore, it seems appropriate to examine culture first, followed by the experience in the light of the culture.

**Research question: how is collegiality manifested and how does this promote a commitment to the process of collaborative observation?**

Collegiality and commitment are closely linked aspects of a learning organisation culture. They both lead to a supportive, developmental culture and this collegial culture enables teachers to recognise and embrace the contribution collaborative observation makes to improving teaching and learning.
The literature has described the link between collegiality and commitment and has shown that they both develop and strengthen each other in a cyclical process. Less hierarchical sharing, which is central to collegiality (Fielding, 1999), develops commitment (Pemberton et al., 2007) as do involvement, a sense of belonging and psychological safety. All these characteristics of collegiality were seen to be present at Riverbank and were evidenced in chapter seven.

These characteristics enable the learning organisation culture of collegiality and commitment to lead to a supportive and developmental culture which, in turn, further develops commitment. There are several reasons why this happens. Teachers actively nurture a sense of belonging to the school through their promotion of membership and ownership. A sense of belonging fosters team work (Schein, 2004) and mutual understanding (Handley et al., 2006). Teachers develop this understanding because they are willing to share their ideas, as recommended by Senge (2006), and the HLTA recognised that teachers become role models and so pupils are able to see the ethos of sharing first-hand. Moreover, teachers recognise the value of sharing in less formal situations during observation and in the staff room so that sharing becomes a way of life.

Teachers’ involvement in the process of collaborative observation and feedback is based on sharing ideas even before the observation process starts as teachers, collectively, devised the feedback sheet that describes the characteristics of a good lesson so that the feedback at the end of an observation is founded on a developmental culture. Such authentic involvement allows a learning organisational culture to flourish (Mitchell and Sackney, 1998). Furthermore, the involved pupils feel valued and feel mutual respect so they feel increasingly secure in making constructive comments during feedback. This is because they know teachers listen to them as demonstrated in the way teachers consider the observing pupil’s views by reviewing the pupil sheet at the start of the feedback. Pupils also see their suggestions being used in subsequent lessons.

A collegial learning organisation culture is key to the success of collaborative observation at Riverbank because this culture, enhanced by the skills of dialogue,
enables teachers to recognise the contribution that the observation makes to teaching and learning and, thereby, embrace it positively. This is in contrast to many teachers’ fears that were outlined in the literature. Little (1985) acknowledges the challenge of observation when devoting ‘close, even fierce, attention to teaching while preserving the integrity of teachers’ (p. 34). Why, then, is collaborative observation successful at Riverbank? One of the main reasons is that, through the collegial culture, participants feel psychologically safe (Edmondson, 1999) to face the risks involved in being observed and receiving feedback. Both the deputy and another teacher referred to how they now enjoyed the process and this supports Fielding’s (1999) view:

Learning and teaching are often at their most exhilarating and most demanding when there is a shared awareness that both parties can be both teachers and learners (p. 23).

Advice is seen as friendly and different from Ofsted or performance management observations. In other words, in collaborative observations lessons are not judged or graded, but advice is recognised as developmental. The deputy explained that alternative ideas were suggested at feedback, but there was an understanding that these ideas were not necessarily the best, but were alternatives to consider. In addition, because alternative suggestions were made, teachers felt the process to be useful. Moreover, all teachers understood that they would receive positive feedback and one area for development no matter how good their practice and that this area would focus on children’s learning and not teaching and so might focus on an individual, a group or the class. Furthermore, it was noted by a teacher that positive feedback promoted feelings of empowerment that led to a desire to share with others, confirming Harris’s (2002) view that teachers must feel happy with the process if listening to pupils is to be successful.

In addition to feedback, the collegial culture of the learning organisation also promotes positive feeling towards collaborative observation in general and these feelings are linked to the fact that the process is valued at leadership level: time and staffing resources are devoted to the process by allocating a half day each week throughout most of each term for observations and their collective follow-up at staff meetings. This
gives the time for reflection which teachers do not have in the course of the normal week. Garvin (1993) confirms that time for reflection and analysis supports an environment conducive to learning. Moreover, because the initiative is linked to other pupil voice initiatives, and because it has been built up through these initiatives over time, the school is steeped in reflection on children’s learning and teachers are able to build their own, and collective, pedagogy. These collegial characteristics stem from the school’s vision which is focused on children’s learning and how it can be improved, as cited by the deputy. Senge (2006) observes that having shared vision in a learning organisation is a sign of genuine commitment rather than compliance and this releases energy.

As a result, teachers want to work on the areas for development they have been given and are motivated to work hard. Teachers benefit because pupils become more engaged with learning, as detailed by Rudduck and Flutter (2004), and value the pupils by keeping what they write on their feedback sheets rather than seeking to control by modifying their writing. The culture of valuing one another is also seen in the ‘give and take’ dialogic encounters at staff meetings, where commitment is further enhanced because complexities, through dialogue, lead to real commitment. It has been seen, through the research evidence at Riverbank, that collegiality in a professional context develops mutual understanding and, through this understanding, the value of collaborative observation to teaching and learning is recognised. This leads to the first significant conclusion: collegiality and commitment are closely linked and lead to a supportive, developmental culture that enables participants to recognise the contribution of collaborative observation to teaching and learning.

**Research question: how willing are the participants to engage in dialogue and what opportunities are there for dialogic encounters to occur?**

A willingness to engage in the dialogic practices of a learning organisation culture enables all voices to be heard. Such engagement by all contributes to improved teaching and learning.
The research has demonstrated that, through the process of collaborative observation, both teachers’ and pupils’ voices can be heard and this is needed as each voice brings a different perspective from which others can learn and seek to understand. One teacher remarked that it was an opportunity to appreciate those aspects of the lesson pupils have not understood. This demonstrates the genuine commitment that Fielding (2006) recognises in ‘dialogic schools’ that are open to change through listening to pupils. Pupils at Riverbank appreciate that teachers are serious about listening to them and so pupils feel valued and become more engaged with learning (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Through involvement, and a willingness to share, commitment is developed and this leads to successful team work which is essential in a learning organisation culture (Senge, 2006). The team’s capacity at Riverbank is increased through the less hierarchical structure of including pupils and teaching assistants alongside teachers (Fielding, 1999) and through the different skill sets that pupils bring to the observation teams (Lucas, 2010). By complementing one another’s interpretation, it allows the development of a fit between what an individual understands and the collective interpretation.

A willingness to engage in dialogic practices is seen in different aspects of school life at Riverbank and such practices are needed as they improve both teachers’ and pupils’ understanding of learning and they enhance interpretive skills (Cousins, 1998). This is because dialogic practices develop a language to talk about learning which strengthens pupils’ capacity for learning (MacBeath et al., 2009). These dialogic practices were seen in the research lesson observation and in the feedback at the end of the observation. Moreover, teachers evidenced the practices in staff meetings where new ideas were shared. As a result of various pupil voice initiatives, in addition to collaborative observation, a shared understanding develops and, because participants have developed a shared language, pupils understand about learning and their comments are sensitive and not derogatory, as evidenced by members of staff. This need for a shared language is reinforced by MacBeath et al. (2001). Consequently, in line with the original definition of pupil voice, participants at Riverbank have the tools and skills to gather information to help illuminate how pupils learn best and what helps or gets in the way of learning.
Pupils have not needed to be trained to take part in collaborative observation, therefore, although they receive encouragement throughout as part of the supportive school culture. This approach supports the views of Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) who claim that actions on the part of teachers to develop pupils’ capacity to share their voices is indicative of teachers’ serious intent to include pupils and is also indicative of the school’s dialogic culture which is central to a learning organisation (Senge, 2006). The result is that feedback at Riverbank is not judgemental, but is reflective and exploratory. The headteacher remarked that most pupils are able to verbalise accurately and the HLTA observed that pupils could complete their feedback sheets unaided. Furthermore, teachers themselves feel secure to speak out when engaging in dialogue at staff meetings and disagreements can be resolved, reflecting the deputy’s comment that participants ‘end up taking a bit of each other’s arguments – it just works’. As a result, therefore, of dealing with complexities through dialogue, real commitment develops (Kofman and Senge, 1993) and this is shown throughout the observation lesson, the feedback and whole school dissemination.

Through hearing all voices in dialogic practices where the focus is on classroom-related issues, the learning of both pupils and teachers is improved (Louis and Kruse, 1998). Several factors at Riverbank contribute to this. The learning takes place during actual lessons in the classroom itself, as a natural part of ‘the daily rhythms of work’ as recommended by Fielding (2006, p. 310), and so the focus is on children’s learning. Pupils’ suggestions may directly influence pedagogy or may be explored at whole school level and lead to new, shared approaches which also lead to consistency of practice. As a result, the school has built more fast-thinking games into its curriculum and also now avoids ‘putting pupils on the spot’ by encouraging more talking-partner work. Moreover, a teacher talked of feeling empowered to share with others as a result of feedback in collaborative observation and this supports Rudduck’s and Flutter’s (2004) view whereby they link empowerment with an improved self image. Furthermore, the deputy explained how collaborative observation opened up the components of a good or outstanding lesson and that these could be shared so that an outstanding lesson could be achieved by all.
Dialogic practices are central to a learning organisation culture. By examining why all voices should be heard and why dialogic practices are needed, a conclusion has been formed that such practices improve the learning of pupils and teachers and this has led to the second significant conclusion: *all voices must be heard through dialogic practices in order to maximise the classroom learning of both teacher and pupil.*

**Research question: what is the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation and is there provision for listening to all voices?**

Through an examination of the experience of collaborative observation, it is seen, from the research evidence, how the experience leads to mutual understanding. From then on, mutual understanding is seen to develop the organisation’s capacity to learn.

The findings have demonstrated that collaborative observation improves pedagogy and pupils’ engagement with learning. This happens because all teachers feel positive about the initiative and this is because of the learning organisation culture that promotes dialogue whilst being supportive and non-judgemental. As MacBeath et al. (2009) describe, collegiality moves through dialogue to mutual understanding. Pupils develop some understanding of what it is to be a teacher and one pupil mentioned how seeing younger children learning motivated her to want to be the best she could be.

One of the aspects that develops mutual understanding is because, as the deputy remarked, the observer has thinking time which the classteacher in action does not. At the same time, the observer is able to see beyond surface realities as Rudduck and Flutter (2004) also explain that the teacher’s ‘everyday eyes’ have the weakness of habit and busyness. The opportunity to appreciate a different perspective is valuable, therefore, and teachers noted that a pupil perspective is different because it is not focused on learning objectives. This perception acknowledges SooHoo’s (1993) comment that, as teachers, we have ‘treasures in our very own backyards’ (p. 309).

It is because of the dual learning organisation culture of collegiality and dialogue combined that participants have the sense of security and the means to enable them to work through their initial apprehensive feelings and to then appreciate the contribution
that collaborative observation makes to improved learning and teaching, so developing a better understanding. Pupils are able to think about the learning that is taking place and have become increasingly comfortable in saying what they think and so their comments are constructive. In the process, because of the culture, pupils feel responsible and valued and participants develop mutual respect as acknowledged by Goldman and Newman (1998). Pupils feel that teachers genuinely listen to them because teachers show they are interested in pupils’ views. Teachers’ willingness to listen to pupils arises because teachers know this impacts positively on their practice and is recognised as a worthwhile experience.

The whole process is tightly focused on children’s learning and so pupils’ engagement and teachers’ pedagogy improve as a result. Reflective dialogue in the feedback session is likewise focused on children’s learning and what can be done to improve it. All participants are equal contributors, recognised as a benefit that leads to commitment by Dovey (2009). Therefore, participants are collectively engaged in finding a solution for why a group or individual has not fully understood the lesson and so an understanding develops together.

These contributory factors that lead to mutual understanding are based on the supportive and collegial culture that commits participants to want to improve learning alongside the dialogic processes that enable collegiality to lead to mutual understanding. At the same time, mutual understanding leads to organisational renewal (Dovey, 2009) which develops the organisation’s capacity to learn and enables learning to transfer across the organisation.

One reason for this is that collaborative observation provides the means to focus on organisational learning in the reality of the classroom in which learning takes place. All teaching staff, including HLTAs, are involved alongside representatives of pupils from years four to six. All participants, including pupils, have an understanding about learning and have developed a common language to talk about learning and this means that participants are able to access one another’s thinking. As a result, the components of outstanding and good teaching can be revealed to all participants so that they are no longer ‘mythical’.
Moreover, the process of collaborative observation has been built up systematically over time and this recognises the learning organisation as a journey rather than a destination as advocated by Garvin (1993) and others. Consequently, deeper, sustainable learning is developed in line with Rudduck’s and Flutter’s (2004) assertion that ‘it takes time and patient commitment to build open and dependable structures’ (p. 104) to enable pupils and teachers to work as partners and to learn and develop together. In the process, a coaching approach supports the emphasis on sustained improvement over time so that teachers feel secure in accessing what collaborative observation can offer.

Other pupils voice initiatives at Riverbank, such as pupils as researchers, support and strengthen both the learning organisation culture and participants’ knowledge about learning because these wider initiatives provide the opportunities to extend and develop talk on learning together across the organisation. In addition, listening to pupil voice in less threatening situations to start with, rather than observation, helps teachers develop a more receptive attitude (Mitra, 2003; MacBeath et al., 2009). Involvement in these wider activities gives opportunities for all pupils’ voices to be heard and the ensuing involvement is linked to commitment (Plowright, 2007). Further commitment to the organisation and to the observation process is fostered by feelings of belonging, a willingness to share and through feeling psychologically safe to take feedback. Empowerment also creates a greater desire to share, as previously mentioned, as does a sense of obligation, according to Segiovanni (2001):

> When purposes are in place and shared values are cultivated, an idea framework evolves in the school that encourages teachers to respond by feeling a sense of obligation to embody these ideas in their behaviour. There is, in a sense, a moral authority that emerges which compels them to participate in shared commitments and to be connected to others with whom these commitments are shared (p. 29).

These feelings of shared commitment are manifestations of the learning organisation culture that enables teachers to accept collaborative observation as beneficial and enables them to overcome their initial fears that are still felt when a new and less familiar subject is introduced.

The sharing engaged in at feedback is reflected in the fact that both teachers’ and pupils’ observation sheets are given equal value, reflecting mutual respect which
develops understanding. Records are kept of all observations in their original format, along with a QA sheet. These are filed together as evidence of self-evaluation that extends beyond collaborative observation into shared, developmental staff meetings in which outcomes of the observation are disseminated, discussed and decisions taken on whole school policy. This develops the collective skills of teachers in the classroom and improves the consistency of teaching. Alongside this, learning is further strengthened through the informal ‘chat’ that, it was recognised, could sometimes yield the most valuable information.

Because of the successful team ethos that Senge (2006) maintains is essential to the success of a learning organisation culture – ‘everything’s teams’ at Riverbank – the collegial culture has a greater impact as the teams re-form with different skill sets that include pupils and HLTAs during the observation process in line with Hammersley-Fletcher’s and Brundrett’s (2008) recommendation. Collaborative observation, therefore, provides a continual cycle of school improvement in which different teams can operate and come together at whole school level. This develops participants’ ongoing capacity to learn. Because all adult team members contribute to regular staff meetings, and include pupil suggestions through the QA sheets, the organisation’s capacity to learn is further strengthened.

It can be seen, therefore, that Riverbank has a learning organisation culture in relation to the earlier definition of a learning organisation in chapter three: the school has a strong learning capacity that it is improving constantly by seeking the viewpoints of both pupils and teachers through reflective dialogue in a cooperative commitment to improving learning. Moreover, the culture of collegiality, inherent in the learning organisation, is recognised by Fielding (1999) as a ‘binding force’ that will transcend a specific school. Likewise, the headteacher remarked that teachers would take the process with them, even if they left the school, because they can see its value. There is potential, therefore, for collaborative observation to reach out beyond a single organisation in line with Fielding’s thinking.

Collaborative observation facilitates the organisation’s capacity to learn because of the way it develops mutual understanding within a learning organisation culture. It provides an intense focus on classroom learning and this is developed through participants’ involvement over time. A collegial, committed culture with wide and
varied opportunities for dialogue enables learning to be recognised as beneficial and shared across the organisation. Participants are involved in recognising the components of effective teaching that provide the focus of observation feedback. In addition, the observation teams re-form regularly and include different skill sets so that all participants have the opportunity to share their learning both formally and informally even before the formal dissemination at whole staff meetings.

This leads to a third significant conclusion: collaborative observation is a useful mechanism to support classroom learning when it is underpinned by a learning organisation culture as it enables collegiality, through dialogue, to lead to mutual understanding and, thereby, develops the organisation’s capacity to learn.

Summary
Three significant conclusions have emerged from the empirical research. The first significant conclusion to emerge is that collegiality and commitment are closely linked and lead to a supportive, developmental culture that enables participants to recognise the contribution of collaborative observation to teaching and learning. The second significant conclusion is that all voices must be heard through dialogic practices in order to maximise the classroom learning of both teacher and pupil. The third conclusion is that collaborative observation is a useful mechanism to support classroom learning when it is underpinned by a learning organisation culture as it enables collegiality, through dialogue, to lead to mutual understanding and, thereby, develops the organisation’s capacity to learn.

In summary, therefore, the research recognises that both teacher and pupil voice must be heard within the supportive, developmental culture of the learning organisation. This enables teachers to recognise the contribution collaborative observation makes to teaching and learning and so develops a positive mindset towards pupils and their involvement in observation. The dialogic culture facilitates the hearing of all voices and enables collegiality to lead to mutual understanding. In the process, both individuals and the organisation learn.
A model has developed from the research to summarise the three significant conclusions described above. The model seeks to address the main research question by leading into a discussion on how collaborative observation contributes to a shared responsibility for learning. The next chapter explores the model in detail.
The previous chapter drew together the main findings from the empirical research by considering each of the research questions in turn. Three significant conclusions emerged in relation to successful collaborative observation and classroom learning:

- Collegiality and commitment are closely linked and lead to a supportive, developmental culture that enables participants to recognise the contribution of collaborative observation to teaching and learning.
- All voices must be heard through dialogic practices in order to maximise the classroom learning of both teacher and pupil.
- Collaborative observation is a useful mechanism to support classroom learning when it is underpinned by a learning organisation culture as it enables collegiality, through dialogue, to lead to mutual understanding and, thereby, develops the organisation’s capacity to learn.

Therefore, emerging from these three conclusions, the current chapter considers the main research question: how does including pupils in lesson observations contribute to a shared responsibility for classroom learning?

In order to help explain the answer to this question, a model, which emerged from the exploratory and inductive research, has been devised (figure 10.1). This model summarises the main ideas expressed in the research and its aim is to contribute to a greater understanding of pupil voice through its use in collaborative lesson observations. As such, it is a heuristic model because it is presented as a guide to help academics and practitioners expand their knowledge and thinking about how collaborative observation might contribute to a shared responsibility for learning and to better understand the contribution that collaborative observation can make to improving both teacher and pupil learning. Because the model has been derived from the research based on a case study of only one primary school in which collaborative observation works successfully, the research on which the model is based is too limited to be offered as a blueprint for other schools to follow.
Figure 10.1: Developing learning as a shared responsibility: collegiality, through dialogue, leads to mutual understanding in the process of collaborative observation
It is believed, however, that the model is useful as an anchor for views from the wider literature and as a springboard to stimulate discussion and to encourage thought on the characteristics that may need to be in place if collaborative observation is to be practised successfully and lead to a shared responsibility for learning.

**Interpreting the model**

The model seeks to describe the processes leading to learning as a shared responsibility based on the conclusion that collegiality, through dialogue, leads to mutual understanding during collaborative observation.

The three corners of the triangle, A, B and C, represent the three chapters of the findings: the experience of collaborative observation forms the apex of the triangle, and this experience sits on top of the foundations of the collegial culture and the dialogic culture, both of which are at the bottom of the triangle.

The boxes D, E and F, depict key findings in each of the three chapters. Hence, the experience of collaborative observation, box D, focuses on classroom learning and, in the process, improves pedagogy and pupils’ engagement with learning.

The collegial culture, box E, closely links commitment and collegiality. It promotes teams, essential to the learning organisation, which both manifest, and are manifested by, a sense of belonging, a willingness to share and psychological safety. The collegial culture is deep-seated as it is developed over time.

The dialogic culture, box F, improves participants’ understanding about learning because it develops a language to talk about learning. Consequently, it facilitates feedback at the end of the observation and the subsequent dissemination at whole school level.
The remaining three boxes, G, H and I, represent the significant conclusions which were discussed in detail in the previous chapter. To summarise these, both pupil and teacher voice must be heard within the supportive and developmental culture of the learning organisation. Because this collegial culture enables teachers to recognise the contribution collaborative observation makes to teaching and learning, teachers develop a positive mindset towards pupils’ involvement in observation. The dialogic culture of the learning organisation facilitates the hearing of all voices and enables collegiality to lead, through dialogue, to mutual understanding. As a result, both individuals and the organisation learn.

Finally, the model places a shared responsibility for learning at the heart of the collaborative observation process and the following paragraphs seek to develop further how this happens.

**A shared responsibility through collaborative observation**

The previous four chapters addressed the learning organisation culture that enables collaborative observation to take place successfully and they also recognised the value of collaborative observation in improving classroom learning. This chapter now asks why the actual observation is a useful mechanism, within the culture, to develop learning as a shared responsibility.

Sharing responsibility, at its basic level, is about sharing ideas on teaching and learning. It is not only about a willingness to *give* ideas to others, but also about a willingness to *receive* ideas from others. More than this, it is about not only being *willing* to receive from others, but also about having the *ability* to receive from others. The learning organisation culture, developed over time, enables participants to recognise and embrace collaborative observation with all its tensions of being observed and receiving feedback because participants know it improves learning. During this process, mutual understanding is developed.
Building on this sharing and receiving of ideas, however, a further step is needed to ensure a shared responsibility for learning. Schein (2004) explains this step by claiming that learning in the learning organisation becomes a shared responsibility when it involves ‘the willingness and ability to involve others (emphasis added) and elicit their participation’ (p. 418). Similarly, according to Mitchell and Sackney (1998), drawing other members in allows organisational learning to flourish. This means that participants need to have an inclination, or a sense of responsibility, to actively promote listening to other voices beyond their own in a genuine belief that this will improve teacher and pupil learning. In other words, it is a recognition that every voice does, indeed, matter.

What is it about collaborative observation at Riverbank that sets it apart from other pupil voice initiatives and invites participants to move beyond inherent tensions and feel a responsibility to others to enable their voices to be heard? What is it about the practical aspects of the process itself, albeit within the learning organisation culture, that encourages participants to value all views and want to hear what others have to say? Five conclusions have emerged and, in order to report these clearly, they have been incorporated into table 10.1. The conclusions are listed on the left of the table and references from the literature to support these conclusions are highlighted on the right hand side.

The practical aspects of the collaborative observation process that enable and encourage participants to want to listen to others are briefly summarised below:

- Gives multiple opportunities for dialogue that put people above systems
- Takes place in the classroom with observers as equals
- Focuses on children’s learning
- Provides reflection time
- Develops flexible teams
Collaborative observation provides multiple opportunities for dialogue to take place during the lesson itself, during feedback and when all staff meet together.

Supporting references from the literature

‘Dialogic schools’ where dialogue is central are ‘holistic’ schools and such schools put people and relationships first rather than systems. They genuinely listen to people and do not attempt to control their views (Fielding, 2001a).

Dialogue enhances interpretive skills (Cousins, 1998) so improving participants’ abilities to involve others.

Levin’s (2000) research shows that information gained from teachers in their own schools is more compelling than external research or training. This is supported by the concept of COPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991) whereby less experienced members learn from the more experienced.

The benefits of equality that arise from collegiality promote a willingness to involve others (Little, 1982; Fielding, 1999).

The focus is specifically on the core purpose of children’s learning, be it the whole class, group or single individual, and not the teacher’s teaching. Although teachers receive praise for the positive aspects of their practice that promote learning, the focus is on how to solve, collectively, what can be done to help those children not learning.

A focus on learning is enabled when there is a shared language to talk about learning (MacBeath et al., 2001).

Clarity of vision is essential in a learning organisation (Senge, 2006).

Collaborative observation facilitates real reflection time, a precious commodity for busy teachers, and this is focused on real practice and not theory.

Time for reflection and analysis is important in a learning organisation (Garvin, 1993).

Listening to pupils has greater impact when it is based on first-hand experience of learners in the classroom or ‘authentic sources’ (SooHoo, 1993).

Collaborative observation enables the development of multiple, flexible, well-informed teams that meet to share ideas and reassemble at whole school level, both formally and informally, to engage in further dialogue.

The team offers a dimension of learning that the individual alone could not achieve (Senge, 2006).

Flexible teams that can adapt and re-form support the willingness and ability to involve others (Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett, 2008).

An individual observation moves to whole school commitment to have transformative potential (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004).

Table 10.1: Characteristics of collaborative observation that encourage participants to want to listen to others

With reference to table 10.1, collaborative observation provides multiple opportunities for dialogue from pupils’ sharing of learning during a lesson, through feedback and whole school dissemination. Evidence was revealed in the findings that dialogue was promoted at Riverbank at all opportunities with no attempt to control participants’
views. Dialogue is powerful as it puts people first before systems (Fielding 2001a) and enhances interpretive skills (Cousins, 1998). In the process, the classroom becomes the domain of both teacher and pupil equally, contrary to tradition, and both learn together in a way that is more powerful than external training (Levin, 2000). Feelings of equality that arise from collegiality promote a willingness to involve others (Little, 1982; Fielding, 1999).

The focus is on children’s learning and what can be done to help those not learning; the focus is not on teaching. The clarity of focus is achieved through the development of a shared language to talk about learning (MacBeath et al., 2001) and the research has revealed that this shared language is present at Riverbank, so contributing to the school’s ability to involve others. As a result, all at Riverbank have a shared vision that children’s learning is at the heart of all they do and, according to Senge (2006), this shared vision is essential to a learning organisation.

Collaborative observation provides needed reflection time (Garvin 1993) which is based on first-hand experiences (SooHoo, 1993). It also promotes well-informed teams which support the willingness to involve others because the teams are flexible and can adapt and re-form (Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett, 2008), leading to whole school commitment (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Reflection time and strong teams, recognised by participants at Riverbank, support the process when an individual observation moves to whole school commitment as the teachers meet to focus on the outcomes of one observation and its implications for the whole school. As mutual understanding develops, it reflects the transformative potential for organisational learning as described by Rudduck and Flutter (2004).

To summarise, the process of collaborative observation itself provides the opportunity to involve others and hear their voices. People become more important than systems and learn together on equal terms with time to reflect on children’s learning. Flexible teams ensure learning is disseminated and commitment generated at whole school level. In the process, therefore, all participants want to hear what others have to say and are given the ability to share a responsibility for learning.
Encompassing the five characteristics of collaborative observation that encourage participants to want to listen to others just described, there is an overarching dimension: collaborative observation is a mechanism that provides the opportunity to address Louis’ and Leithwood’s (1998) call for an organisation that can engage in ‘risky learning’ whilst, at the same time, provide a community of ‘caring and trust’ in order to enable members to commit to a collective responsibility for professional development. Louis and Leithwood claim that these two aspects of an organisation are oppositional, but also interdependent and must coexist in a collective responsibility for learning.

The previous chapters have detailed the collegial and dialogic cultures that provide the stability that enables participants to take risks when being observed and receiving feedback at Riverbank as detailed by Harris (2002). There has also been reference to ‘psychological safety’, described by Edmondson (1999). Collaborative observation, therefore, addresses Louis’ and Leithwood’s (1998) plea for schools to live with complexity and embrace the challenge of providing both risk and stability at the same time, also described as ‘creative tension’ by Senge (2006), in a collective, or shared, responsibility. Within this complexity, collaborative observation has the potential to generate real power because, in the development of a shared responsibility through risk and stability, the process is improving both pedagogy and pupils’ engagement with learning at the same time, not only because participants are in the same learning domain, but also because participants at Riverbank actively promote listening to what others have to say, acknowledging that every voice matters. Participants are equipped to take on this shared responsibility because they develop a mutual understanding through their collegial and dialogic practices. The overall conclusion, therefore, is that collaborative observation has the potential to improve classroom learning for both teachers and pupils when it is part of a learning organisation culture as this enables participants to hear all voices, experiencing both risk and stability at the same time, so that learning at individual and organisational level becomes a shared responsibility.
Summary

The main focus of this chapter was to address the main research question of how collaborative observation leads to a shared responsibility for learning. In order to answer this question, a heuristic model, emerging from the research, has been used to stimulate thought and discussion around collaborative observation within a learning organisation culture.

In addition to reviewing the previous chapters in terms of the three significant conclusions from the empirical research, the chapter has revealed five characteristics of the collaborative observation process itself, within a learning organisation culture, that invite participants to want to hear what others have to say and which lead to a shared responsibility for learning. Finally, the chapter has presented the idea that ‘risky learning’ should sit alongside ‘caring and trust’ when successfully sharing the responsibility for learning in the classroom. The research revealed that this was the case at Riverbank where it was seen that collaborative observation enabled teachers and pupils to engage in powerful learning at the same time. The conclusion is that collaborative observation has the potential to improve classroom learning for both teachers and pupils when it is part of a learning organisation culture.
Completing this thesis has been a rewarding experience, personally and professionally. Personally, it has enhanced my research and critical reading skills. I now realise that, in retirement, I am at the start of an exciting new journey and not at the end.

Professionally, because I still work part-time, I have learnt to use a more coaching style of questioning with headteachers and am more aware of the need for them to devise their own solutions. Because of my wider reading for the thesis, I am able to refer headteachers to useful journal articles or help them forge links with other colleagues as many more examples of the impact of pupil voice were given in the interviews beyond the examples included in the thesis. Hopefully, because the doctorate work has fired the same enthusiasm for education in me that my first teaching practice did forty five years ago, I have been able to pass on a continuing excitement for education and children’s learning.

It has been a great privilege to interview staff and pupils and observe teaching and learning for half a day in a truly inspiring school where the children’s learning is at its heart and recognised as being more important than the school’s excellent SATs results and outstanding Ofsted inspection. The challenge for me, as researcher, has been to remain objective and I hope my ability to do this is testament to my work at doctoral level. As a result of the participants’ valued comments, this thesis has contributed to a wider understanding of pupil voice in primary schools and also to the concept of primary schools as learning organisations.

Limitations

The research, as a case study of one primary school, however, is not intended as a generalisation of collaborative observation in other schools, although readers will be able to extract material they feel relevant to their own situations. Although all teachers
were interviewed, not all children who have taken part in collaborative observation were interviewed. More pupils were assigned for the final group interview, but a sudden snowstorm meant that only four out of the planned children were present. The other two group interviews with pupils took place near the beginning of the research because of timetabling restrictions and so the early pupil interviews were focused on pupil voice initiatives generally and collaborative observation was not the main focus. If I were to repeat the research, I would like to interview more pupils who have been involved in collaborative observation, as planned, and also those who have not yet participated in collaborative observation. How do they feel about not being chosen? Do they feel they have anything to offer? Why do they think others were chosen? Furthermore, the opportunity to observe more collaborative observation sessions would have provided a more rounded picture.

The way forward

This research could contribute to similar research in other primary schools or in secondary schools. I am not aware, however, of any other schools involved in the same kind of collaborative observation as Riverbank within the LAs I have worked in or have connections with, but feel it likely that there will be some nationally. It would also be interesting to follow the professional development experiences over a year of a newly-appointed teacher at Riverbank.

The most interesting point for further research, which was outside the scope of this study, was made by several teachers who remarked on the poor GCSE results achieved at secondary schools by pupils who had performed exceptionally well at Riverbank and the teachers questioned whether, at primary level, they were really helping the pupils in the long term, even though they did not doubt their own actions and commitment. As the headteacher remarked:

*I don’t think the children are ever picked up from the high quality that they’ve reached. I think they are allowed to slide back quite a long way* (headteacher).
It could be beneficial to conduct research with those pupils who have participated in collaborative observation at Riverbank and are now at secondary schools, exploring their long-term engagement with learning or to examine factors that develop and retain a learner identity.

As society moves ever more quickly into the technological age, it seems increasingly important that all voices are heard in a way that establishes genuine partnerships. Pupils, governors, parents and even teachers make comments, often unfairly, on social networking sites and can cause great distress in the process. Schools need to understand this new era, but not defensively. Genuine partnerships, such as those forged in collaborative observation, if they are based on a learning organisation collegial and dialogic culture, may contribute to a better understanding of learning in schools in the future so that people have the skills to be critical in a more informed and generous manner.

Fielding (2001a) feels that a school should ask itself if its cultural norms and values proclaim the centrality of student voice within the context of education as a shared responsibility. At Riverbank, my conclusion is that they do. Collaborative observation is only one process within the culture of listening to pupils, and within the wider culture of the school as a learning organisation, but a significant one. The headteacher summed up his feelings on the importance of collaborative observation:

*I still feel it’s the best professional development by far. I know a lot of schools don’t do any of this, and I don’t know how they can know what’s going on* (headteacher).

The school is not intending to stand still in its commitment to listening to pupils but, in keeping with its learning organisation culture, is viewing listening to pupils in its current form as yet another step on its learning journey:
I think, nationally, it might be a bit of a current fashion. I think, in this school, it’s something that will continue because I think it’s something that, when we started to do it, we realised that it does have an impact on learning.... So I think it’s something that will continue and will be developed further (DHT/teacher A).

Practitioners and researchers will continue to ask questions about involving pupils in lesson observations. Further research may build on this study, seemingly one of very few on pupils as observers, and so contribute to a greater understanding of pupil voice and adult voice in the quest to improve classroom learning. By facilitating the opportunity for dialogic encounter within an arena where every voice matters, collaborative observation not only promotes, but also celebrates, learning as a shared responsibility.

In 2004, Flutter and Rudduck asked where we should look to find solutions to resolve ‘the pervasive problems in education’ when the change and reform led by successive governments has not succeeded. Eight years on, with the right school culture, and with the help of pupils, perhaps we can now answer that question.
References


APPENDICES

Appendix A  Timetable of data-gathering sessions
Appendix B  Research questions in relation to interview guide questions
Appendix C  Research questions in relation to focus group questions
Appendix D  List of documents examined
Appendix E  Quality Assurance (QA) sheet
Appendix F  Observation sheet for pupil observer
Appendix G  Collaborative Observation / Peer Coaching Lesson Observation Sheet
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Appendix J  Letter to headteacher requesting the school’s participation
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Appendix L  Letter to parents requesting their child’s participation (the letter was sent to parents on school-headed paper)
Appendix M  Headteacher consent form
Appendix A

Timetable of data-gathering sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13/09/10</td>
<td>Focus group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentary analysis 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/09/10</td>
<td>Headteacher interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/10/10</td>
<td>Documentary analysis 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/11/10</td>
<td>DHT interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11/10</td>
<td>Observation morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal interviews with second HLTA, pupils in class, observing pupil, observing teacher and classteacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/11/10</td>
<td>3 x teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/11/10</td>
<td>2 x teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 x HLTA interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Research questions in relation to interview guide questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Interview guide questions with prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What is the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation and is there provision for listening to all voices? | What did you expect to gain when you started?  
What have you gained? What do the pupils tell you?  
How is this different from an adult perspective? Why did the children do the research into learning rather than the TAs?  
How have the children involved developed new skills for learning?  
When you started peer coaching with pupils did you think about any issues or problems it might throw up, and were you ready to deal with them?  
Have the children expressed ideas that you found difficult to accept?  
How do they show a grasp of classroom reality?  
What skills / training have you given pupils?  
Brief for lesson observations?  
Confidentiality and trust? What can they say to others?  
What have adults learned that has impacted on their practice?  
Relationship?  
Motivation?  
Awareness of children’s capacity to learn?  
Teachers at this school obviously have a good understanding of effective teaching judging by RAISE data, so what more can listening to pupil voice tell them?  
Government initiatives (SATs, Ofsted) have been accused of leading to short-term performance goals. What do you feel about this?  
How do you address it?  
What would ensure that listening to pupil voice is a positive experience for all parties? |

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| How is collegiality manifested and how does this promote a commitment to the process of collaborative observation? | Do you think of this school as a learning organisation? Why? How? Do the children feel a sense of membership? How do you know? Are all adults equally committed to listening to pupils? Any expressed concerns, or shown concerns? How do adults show they genuinely want to listen to what pupils have to say? How are adults prepared for a pupil joining a lesson observation? How do you manage to cater so well for all children? Do you ever fail with any children? How have you improved children’s commitment to learning? Would you listen to pupil voice differently were it not for Ofsted and SATs? Do you think teachers / pupils are willing to share ideas, thoughts with others and why do you think this? Is there anything that makes you feel teachers are committed, or not committed, to peer coaching? |
| How willing are the participants to engage in dialogue and what opportunities are there for dialogic encounters to occur? | What does it mean, in this school, listening to pupil voice?  
*What started you off on the idea of listening to pupil voice?*  
*Which pupils?*  
*How do you listen to pupils? Formal / informal?*  
*Feedback to staff?*  
*Feedback to pupils?*  

Do children want to learn?  
*How do you encourage them?*  
*How do you help them understand how to learn?*  
*How do you convince them that it’s possible to learn?*  

Do teachers feel at ease in talking about things they feel need improving and what makes you think this?  

If you didn’t have pupils in peer coaching now, what would be lost? |
## Appendix C

### Research questions in relation to focus group questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Focus group questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What is the experience for teachers and pupils of including pupils in classroom observation and is there provision for listening to all voices? | **Tell me about the peer coaching sessions.**  
  • How does it make you a better learner?  
  • How does it make the teachers teach better? |
| How is collegiality manifested and how does this promote a commitment to the process of collaborative observation? | **Tell me about the peer coaching sessions.**  
  • Why have you been asked to do it?  
  • Why did you get chosen?  
  • How does it make you feel when you do the peer coaching?  
  • Are there other things you want to tell me about peer coaching?  
Do you feel you belong to this school / or are part of the school?  
  • What makes you feel that? |
| How willing are the participants to engage in dialogue and what opportunities are there for dialogic encounters to occur? | **Tell me about the peer coaching sessions.**  
  • How do you know if teachers take notice of what you suggest / say?  
  • What training do you get to do it?  
  • How is it useful having a sheet to fill in?  
**How do teachers listen to you in school?**  
Prompts if needed:  
  • Do you know if teachers want your opinions / ideas?  
  • Do you get a chance to say all the things you want to say? |
Appendix D

Documents examined as part of the research:

- Lesson observation forms filled in by observing teachers (see appendix G: Peer coaching lesson observation sheet)

- Lesson observation sheets filled in by observing pupils (see appendix F: Post lesson interview with pupil observer)

- Quality Assurance sheets (see appendix E)
APPENDIX E

XXX Primary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Assurance</th>
<th>Name of Monitor</th>
<th>Name of Teacher:</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record of Evidence of Self-Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Brief Outline of Context**

**Strengths/Impact**

**Points for Development**

**Implications for Development/Training**

**Comments**

**Signed Observer**

**Signed Teacher**

**Date**
APPENDIX F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post lesson interview with pupil observer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you enjoy most about the lesson?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did the children learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was it made clear to children what was expected and how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How were they helped to learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How were children rewarded and encouraged?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the same lesson was taught to another group what would you change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why would you change this part?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Pupil observer | Teacher observer |
## APPENDIX G  SCHOOL XXX – PEER COACHING LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET

Teacher: ………………………… Observers: ………………………

Date: ……………………… Lesson observed…………………………

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views of the Participant</th>
<th>Agreed Summary of Main Points</th>
<th>Views of the Observer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths:</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge SU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>T+L Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of TAs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strengths:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Areas for development:</td>
<td>Marking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inclusion EO SEN</td>
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<td>AfI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gain New KSU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Hard</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Comments:</td>
<td>Symbols + 0 -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ strength</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 ok</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- needs development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Observer:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see separate sheet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on marking in pupil books:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One area which the teacher will work on:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signed 1: ………………………… Signed 2: ………………………… Signed 3: …………………………
Appendix H

What does a collaborative observation session at Riverbank look like?

This account is based on the researcher’s lesson observation and conversations with research participants. In collaborative observation, two adults, either teachers or Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs), and a pupil conduct a lesson observation. Observers may discretely discuss their observations and opinions during the lesson at times when pupils are working, but not when the teacher is addressing the class. The focus is on children’s learning as opposed to the teacher’s performance. At times when children are busy with an activity, all observers walk round the classroom and monitor the children’s work, looking to see if pupils understand the task and are meeting the success criteria. At the same time, all observers coach the children individually and act as an ‘extra pair of hands’ to help the children improve their work and keep them focused.

At the end of the lesson, the observed teacher self-assesses the quality of teaching and learning against a tick list of about twenty points which teachers have jointly devised as indicators of what makes a quality lesson (appendix G). This sheet is updated periodically by teachers collectively to develop practice together. The two observing adults will have already filled in a copy of this tick list, but the observed teacher will not see this until his/her own self assessment has taken place. The pupil fills in a pupil sheet with a few outline questions that act as a writing frame (appendix F) and is free to make any additional comments on the back of the sheet. During feedback at the end of the observation, the three adults start by discussing the pupil sheet. The adults encourage the pupil to expand his/her thoughts or to explain them in more detail. Following this, attention is turned to the adult sheet and similarities on the teacher tick list are compared, all parties giving their reasons for their judgements and referring to individual children or groups. The process is not judgemental, but is a developmental dialogue with adults sharing their reasons and evidence base and suggestions made that might help pupils in the class or which could be shared at a whole staff meeting. The dialogue is firmly focused on children’s learning rather than teaching. Agreed viewpoints are recorded by an adult on a QA sheet (appendix E) that has, again, been devised together.

The QA sheet is discussed at the next staff meeting within a few days and adults decide what suggestions to incorporate into future lessons across the school, or for an individual teacher to consider. Consequently, collaborative observation becomes the focus of a regular cycle of school improvement, with the potential to impact on teachers’ pedagogy and pupils’ learning.
## Appendix I

An example of how the themes emerged from the interview and focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Selective coding</th>
<th>Initial coding</th>
<th>Comments made by the participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
<td>Care for the environment</td>
<td>They’re quite proud of it, actually. I think all the work that they do is valued and all the displays and everything else. I’ve never seen anything that’s been put up around the school that’s been damaged by anyone, which says, straight away, that they’re proud that they’ve been doing it.... I think they know they belong to it [the school] (teacher C).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The way staff talk to pupils</td>
<td>The way that staff are and the way that staff talk to them [pupils] I think they definitely feel like members. I mean, every time I talk to the children, I talk about the school being our school (DHT/teacher A).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of family and</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of family and feeling valued</td>
<td>I think we’re a family. We’re here for the children really. We’re probably a more secure environment than many of them have at home. They come here and they have structure. They have people speaking to them nicely all day long, treating them with respect (headteacher). Also, it is a community and the children feel that aspect.... It is a family (teacher D).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feeling valued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There’s a great sense of belonging, yes. They matter. They are made to feel like they matter (teacher E).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils feel voices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I would say they do feel a sense of membership. ... I think they do see a lot of pupil voice. I’m sure they must feel that we do listen to them (teacher B). Yes because... we get our ideas together and then tell the teachers, and then they tell the headteacher and he does most of the things that we’ve said (Nyan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are heard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very settled, and I know I can take my classroom on and I’m supported in that. And I’m trusted to do that and I’m very much a member of the class, staff and the teachers (teacher F). And with the peer coaching because observing each other and looking at your good points as well as your other points of how you do well in your classroom gives you membership of the school, and how much we do together as a staff to discuss and share experience and help progress (teacher B).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>They need to feel that this is their school and they have an active role in it (teacher F).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... something that gives them ownership of the school ... the little things that you keep doing all the time... It's how you explain why (DHT/teacher A).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We do include the children as members and pupils who have ownership of the school and I think the feeling of that runs throughout the school (teacher B).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership opportunities</td>
<td>It [collaborative observation] gives them a sense of ownership... they value the school a lot better, especially if they think, ‘Our opinions matter’ (HLTA).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to share</td>
<td>Everybody has an area that they lead and it’s very much down to you to lead it. I’m not certain what it’s like in other schools, but I feel that with my subjects I have very much ownership over these and I feel that brings a sense of membership – this is my role in this school (teacher B).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of a way of life in school</td>
<td>When I appoint new staff, I insist that this is the approach and they must be open to share with others (headteacher).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer coaching is a great opportunity to gather new ideas from colleagues that can be transferred to my own setting (teacher E).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are so used to sharing ideas; it’s just become a natural part of school life (teacher D).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal sharing</td>
<td>We ask others’ opinions on lessons we want to teach. We share effective lessons we have taught or pupils’ responses. This can happen in staff meetings or after observing a session, but also occurs as a natural part of staffroom conversation. Often it is these informal chats that are the most productive (teacher D).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>When positives are identified in my own teaching, it feels quite empowering and encourages me to share further (teacher B).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared vision</td>
<td>To make sure children are learning - all the delivery and the peer coaching and watching that the delivery’s meaningful – it’s making sure we’ve all got shared vision (DHT/teacher A).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological safety</td>
<td>Development over time – confidence</td>
<td>Friendly and non-judgemental</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All participants understand the value of sharing</td>
<td>We just feel that even the Year 6 teachers can learn something from my class and I can learn from their class – very much so. We feel that they [pupils] start at a place and end up at a place and we’ve got to know how to get them there and we’ve got to use the same sort of strategies (teacher F).</td>
<td>Our children observe this process regularly and understand that, as a staff, we are sharing and learning from each other (teacher B).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I feel the children at our school also adopt the same confidence when sharing ideas because it’s modelled to them frequently (HLTA).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I think the teachers and pupils are so willing to share ideas and be so honest because of the culture that is fostered in successful peer coaching and that culture needs to be wholly inclusive from the headteacher down (DHT/teacher A).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>And we work in teams. Everything’s teams! It’s not just one person on their own. That’s the kind of ethos we’ve got here (DHT/teacher A).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They’re very much a team - all pull together, support each other, care for each other (teacher E).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Initially the observation process was deemed as a very daunting one but after realising that this procedure wasn’t put in place to intimidate, staff began to relax and soon realised it was an opportunity to see what worked well in our school (HLTA).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I think this [feeling secure] is to do with the way peer coaching sessions have been developed over the years. They are markedly different from performance management for example or an Ofsted observation (teacher D).</td>
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<td>Peer coaching is a way of friendly faces monitoring the standards and teaching across the school to make sure this is happening... a friendly system of highlighting and agreeing areas to be addressed and following up on this in future sessions (teacher B).</td>
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<td>[Collaborative observation] is not carried out in a way that intimidates teachers. Often, when observing, teachers will appear to be chatting informally in the classroom. We often find that a lot of incidental learning takes place for teaching staff through this informal chat which adds to our</td>
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Empowerment and feeling good

It is about informing practice not judging the teacher... understanding that it is learning and not teaching that is being observed (DHT/teacher A).

The peer coaching process tends to empower the staff. Often staff who have been observed feel a sense of achievement after their lesson (teacher B).

The teacher being observed always receives a lot of praise during the experience and I think this helps... and teachers are not graded by others (headteacher).

Because teachers have the opportunity to observe others regularly, we become at ease with the fact that one area is always identified for development because the purpose is always to drive improvement (teacher B).

Everyone is involved in the cycles at some point and so no one feels victimised by it (headteacher).

The way the feedback sheet is structured – using the pointers on the sheet – makes sure areas for improvement are broached sensitively and there is lots of time to discuss the positives also (teacher D).

It’s a system we have used over a number of years so the school staff is used to it and comfortable with it. All do feel the extra pressure when being watched, but they often say that this is good because it keeps them on their toes and means they are more relaxed when a stranger observes them (headteacher).

Working through feelings

Initial stages - teachers

Prepared to trial

Daunting

We thought, at first, ‘Oh, we’ll just get somebody to watch and see how it goes’ (teacher F).

I think, from the first time - because we weren’t all quite so clear on pupil voice at the time and how it would be utilised within the school when children came into the classroom - I think the first time it was a little bit daunting (teacher B).

And in a way, it’s quite funny because you’d think the adults are quite daunting, but I did actually find it a little bit daunting when a child came in because, really, they are the experts! It was funny how it did make me feel at first, because I wouldn’t have expected it. But I was a little bit intimidated at first because they’re prepared to tell me, ‘No, I don’t want to learn like this,’ or ‘I want to learn this way and you could have done it...’
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Change in feeling with time</th>
<th>Perceived benefits</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Like this (teacher B).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>And then, as time went on, I found it is worth it, to talk through with them [observing pupils] what I saw (teacher F).</td>
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<td>It’s more practical... it’s a subject that people feel more apprehensive about being watched. You don’t do it every day. But I think it will be good for us... Even though I am a bit nervous about someone else coming in, I think it will be good. I just see it as a time to get some advice and talk about it. How would you deal with it? Would you do it differently? (teacher F).</td>
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<th>Possible challenges</th>
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<td>I think my biggest problem was that children wouldn’t agree – that some would say ‘I want to do this’ and others would say, ‘I want to do that.’ You’ve got to cater for all (DHT/teacher A).</td>
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<td>A child has never written, ‘This was boring. I hated this. This teacher’s rubbish.’ I’ve never had that. I suppose there could be a problem if I had, but, again, I think that would be an issue with an individual child possibly, we’d been struggling with anyway because I wouldn’t think that they’d say that with the lessons that they get (headteacher).</td>
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<td>They’ve never come up with difficult things – they pick out things that would improve the lesson and they’ve been really interesting, actually... So, for instance, someone was watching my lesson and the image that I put up, she didn’t think it lent itself to the text. So her input was, ‘I would have chosen a picture like this.’ And then you think, that would have really worked. The next lesson then, you impact on that. But I don’t think they’ve ever come up with anything I felt was unmanageable... They do really watch the lesson. They are really thinking about the learning that’s taking place.... They are really sensible and sensitive, as well, about what they are being asked to do (DHT/teacher A).</td>
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<td>I’ve not really bothered about what they’d say to anybody else. It’s part of the whole school process (headteacher).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Pupil feelings</th>
<th>Initial feelings</th>
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<td>A bit shy and a bit nervous (Kate).</td>
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<td>And the first time you feel a bit scared because, like, you’ve never done it before and like it’s loads and loads of teachers (Gill).</td>
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<td>Developing confidence</td>
<td>Do pupils say what they think?</td>
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<td>They’re quite good at answering questions and they’ll write what they think. They’ll tell teachers what they think and how they want to see the lesson changing (Nyan).</td>
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<td>The writing was actually pretty good (Gill).</td>
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<td>They [pupils] feel they can tell us what they think and they don’t feel worried to say what they think because we say, ‘It doesn’t matter. We want to know’ (teacher F).</td>
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<td>If I don’t particularly like something, I put it down (Gill).</td>
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<td>Sometimes I would get scared to put it down (Erin).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes I put what I don’t enjoy (Nyan).</td>
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<td>You’re not afraid to put that? (interviewer).</td>
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<td>Sometimes - I feel like I would be getting the teacher in trouble (Nyan).</td>
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<td>What about getting yourself into trouble? (interviewer).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes (Kate).</td>
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<td>But sometimes you realise that you’re not going to get in trouble for saying what you don’t like so you can say it (Gill).</td>
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<td>One or two children have said about peer coaching, when they’ve been in and observed, that it makes them feel they can go on to do this sort of work in the future, because it’s like they’ve been trained in a way (teacher B).</td>
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<td>Mmm, I feel they could [speak out] – there’s no doubt about it... They’ve been given that responsibility.... They love it. The responsibility of it! It’s really bringing them on (teacher E).</td>
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<td>It [collaborative observation] makes me feel I’m responsible (Nyan).</td>
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<td>I think they feel valued because we’ve taken their comments on board and they’ve been chosen to watch and we really want to hear what they’ve got to say (teacher F).</td>
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...they get to come in and see that we want their opinion, and other teachers’ opinions, that we are always trying to make ourselves better for their benefit really. And I think it gives them a feeling of respect – respect for us that they can do that (teacher B).

I think in this school it’s a general respect and an understanding that the children know how they learn best (teacher B).
Re. Evaluation of pupil voice in the learning organisation

Dear XXX

As you know, I am studying for a doctorate in education with the University of Hull. As part of my doctorate, I would like your school to feature as the case study in my research. You will be aware that your school has a forward-thinking, creative outlook to involving pupils in leadership and so your school is the ideal choice from which others will be able to learn.

I am writing to ask you, as headteacher, and other relevant teachers in your school, to take part in an individual interview as part of this evaluation. I would also like to interview the group of children, collectively, who have been involved in classroom observations and pupil research. You may also have some documents you would like to share with me related to the above pupil activities.

About the interviews
The interviews will take no more than an hour and will take place at the school at a time that is best for you. I will send you a copy of the interview guide questions before the interviews.

All interviewees will be free to drop out of the interview at any time.

The questions will be about the learning organisation, pupil voice and school improvement. I would like to use a tape recorder as an aid to my memory and to allow me to concentrate on the interview itself. After the interview, I will type the views into a computer and will use these notes for my evaluation. All names and that of your school will be kept separately from notes and tapes and only I will be able to identify who said what. A transcript of the tape of each individual interview will be returned to each participant for verification of accuracy or for additional explanatory comments to be made.

Confidentiality
I will not use your name, or that of any other person interviewed, or the name of the school in my thesis. Were any journal articles to be written after the thesis, I would not use the school's name unless you express a wish for me to do so.
Concerns

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Institute for Learning Ethics Committee, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX; Tel No 01482 465988; fax 01482 4661.

What to do next
If you are happy for your school to take part in my research, please fill in the consent form and could you also circulate the letters and consent forms to teaching staff and parents? I will then contact you shortly to organise the times of the interviews.

Thanks for helping
By taking part in my research, you will be helping me to obtain my doctorate. Also, you will be helping other teachers and researchers to become more aware of more creative and extended uses of pupil voice. I would also be happy to disseminate the results of my research to you and your staff at a mutually convenient time. If you would like to discuss any aspect of my research, please feel free to contact me by phoning 07504 944509 or emailing gloria.birks@btinternet.com

Gloria Birks

Research supervisor: Dr David Plowright
Dear Colleague

I am the School Improvement Partner (SIP) at your school and I visit the school at least once a term to work with XXX and XXX. XXX usually invites me to look round the school and so you may have seen me on more than one occasion.

I am studying for a doctorate in education with the University of Hull and XXX has agreed for your school to be my case study school. My focus is on the learning organisation and pupil voice. XXX has a more detailed letter if you would like to read it. I would appreciate it if you would agree to take part in an interview, and maybe a focus group interview with all teachers together and you will be free to withdraw your consent at any time. If you would like to discuss any aspect of my research, please feel free to contact me by emailing gloria.birks@btinternet.com

Confidentiality
I will not use your name, or the name of the school, in my thesis and so you will not be identified in any way.

What to do next
If you are happy to take part in my research, could you please fill in the consent form attached to this letter and return it to XXX, who will forward it to me?

Thanks for helping
By taking part in my research, you will be helping me to obtain my doctorate. Also, you will be helping other teachers and researchers to become more aware of more creative and extended uses of pupil voice.

With thanks
Gloria Birks

I am happy to be interviewed by Gloria Birks for her doctoral thesis and understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time.

Signed

Date
Dear Parents / guardians

Mrs Birks, our School Improvement Partner, is researching for a doctorate in education with the University of Hull. Our school is taking part in her research which is about ‘pupil voice’. As you know, your son / daughter has helped us in school by carrying out research or by looking at children's learning in other children's classrooms.

Mrs Birks would like to ask the children who have taken part in our activities some questions. She will do this with the children together as a group. We know Mrs Birks well. She works for the Local Authority, is a retired headteacher and a regular visitor to our school. If you are happy for your child to take part, could you please sign and return the slip below?

Thank you

Mr XXX

............................................................................................

I would like ......................................................... (child's name) to take part in the group interview for Mrs Birks' research.

Signed ................................................................. Date
APPENDIX M

The IFL ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSENT FORM

I, XXX, headteacher of Riverbank Primary School

Give permission for the teaching staff and selected pupils to be involved in a research study being undertaken by Gloria Birks. I understand that the purpose of the research is to study the development of a learning organisation through listening to pupil voice, as part of a doctoral thesis.

The involvement for the school means that Mrs Birks will undertake personal interviews with each member of the teaching staff, focus group interviews with teaching staff and pupils selected by me, and have access to any relevant school documentation that I wish to share with her.

I understand that

1. The aims, methods and anticipated benefits of the research study have been explained to me.
2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent for the school to participate in the above research study.
3. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained through the school will not be used if I so request.
4. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals.

I agree that

5. The school may not be named in research publications or other publicity without prior agreement.
6. I can request the opportunity to check factual accuracy of the research findings related to the school.
7. I can request to receive a copy of the research findings or publications.

Signature: 
Date: