

Professional Doctorate in Education

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Post 16 English and maths skills – 20 years ago, The Moser Report was going to solve the Post 16 English and maths problem. What impact has Moser had?

Abstract

This thesis is looking at The Moser report – ‘A Fresh Start, Improving Literacy and Numeracy’. This report written in 1999 was a major report commissioned by government to highlight the quality of the English and maths skills of adults in England. The report provided a range of recommendations, such as a skilled teaching workforce, a new curriculum, qualification standards and a new range of transferable qualifications, many of which were implemented. Skills for Life became a new curriculum area developed directly as a result of Moser. Twelve years later, Professor Alison Wolf published The Wolf Report – ‘A Review of Vocational Education’. The Wolf Report looked again at the English and maths skills of adults in England and made further recommendations, the main one being that all students should achieve a GCSE grade A* - C in English and maths. She stated that if they have not achieved this at school, then they would need to retake these qualifications alongside their vocational or academic programme within Post 16 education.

The thesis looks at the impact of the Moser report over the last twenty years, what has happened to Post 16 English and maths as a result of Moser and where we are now with English and maths skills as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Moser Report.

What has become apparent during this thesis is that the Moser recommendations from 1999 were accepted and implemented. Twelve years later Professor Wolf’s recommendations were also accepted and implemented. Both Moser and Wolf were intended to dramatically change the English and maths skills of adults in England.

2015 onwards however, is a very different story, where very little has continued to be carried out in the way of moving Moser forward and ultimately, twenty years later, although we now have standardised qualifications, curriculums and qualified teachers, we still have millions of people in England with poor English and maths skills.

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Preface: A Personal Journey

A thesis is the creation and interpretation of new knowledge. We need to see educational research as knowledge. It's the nature of epistemology. You look at the social conditions that are around you in order to construct new knowledge. For some of us, sometimes we are part of these situations and it can be difficult to see what is really happening around you. You become immersed in what is going on in life around you and forget to stop and focus on what is really happening. You need to take a step back, be on the outside looking through the window and take in everything that you see. You need to take time to reflect.

Any new knowledge that you create must be credible. It needs the power to elicit belief. Knowledge is conjectural, an absolute truth can never be found, and whatever we say today will be changed and amended tomorrow. This writing is a second in time, a snapshot of looking through the window and making sense of the world that you see.

For this piece of research, I need to introduce in more detail a journey I have personally taken through my life to this point. It is this journey, and the paths that I have chosen along the way that have impacted this research, the reason I am carrying out this research, as well as whether my future career path will continue within an area of education that I feel passionate about.

As a child, we moved around England a few times, born in Chatham, most well-known for the naval docks and a commuter belt into London, at the age of eight, we moved to Margate which meant a change of junior school. Two years later at ten years old we moved to Brixton, a multicultural area of South London that was antipodal from the coastal town of Margate. The move meant another change of junior school. In total, I attended three different junior schools over four years. A year later, I started at a Church of England Girls Secondary school which was a world away from the primary school I had attended in Brixton.

Fast forward another year when my parents decided to move away from London, we moved north to Derbyshire where I started year eight at a mixed comprehensive. Having a southern accent and coming into the school a year after all the friendship groups had been made, meant that I struggled to fit in. My first experience of secondary school had been with a strict uniform code, regular church linked activities, collecting house points and treating teachers with respect. During my four years at a mixed comprehensive secondary school in Derbyshire, life was different. There was no uniform, no house points and behaviour at the school was challenging. I decided that I needed to keep my head down, that I would get out what I put in so that I could go to university and pursue a career.

I left school with ten A-C GCSEs. The highest number of GCSE passes in my year group. I went along the traditional route of A-levels at a local college which I loved. It was a new world, away from school, where I made new friends and started to enjoy life. I then went to a local university with the intention of studying Law. For years I wanted to be a lawyer, I loved watching programmes showing lawyers in courts and I wanted to be one.

Soon after starting my law degree, I realised that maybe it wasn't what I wanted to do after all, there were so many other options that I hadn't considered. I continued with the degree, swapping some of the modules for European Studies modules. I finished my degree and could have gone onto further study in Law, but my heart wasn't in it anymore. I knew that Law wasn't a path I wanted to continue along.

Whilst at University, I worked in a shop at weekends to earn extra money as many students did. We sold amongst many other things, a selection of birthday cards. One afternoon a lady came in and asked me to show her where the birthday cards for 'Mum' were. I took her to the display and pointed to them. She picked a card and asked me if I thought it was nice. She came with me to the cash desk and paid for the card. After paying for the card, she asked for a pen and asked me if I could write the card for her. I was surprised and suggested that she may like to do it herself as it was

for her Mum. She looked at the floor and quietly said – ‘I can’t read or write’. I was stunned, I was nineteen, she was not much older than me. I was at university, busy analysing and reading Law reports, using technical legal language embraced in a world of academia and she couldn’t write a card for her Mum. It wasn’t until a few years later that I realised this was happening everywhere and that we had a serious problem in England with adults having poor English and maths skills.

When I left University, I started working in a bank. I still didn’t know which career path I wanted to take, and over time I did various other administrative jobs but got bored quickly and then moved on. At the age of twenty-two, I was in a management role, managing a team of people who were much older than me. This was a role that was challenging as people management was a new skill I needed to develop, not helped by some of the conflict caused by my team finding it difficult to accept their younger manager.

I started teaching by accident. Teaching was a profession that I had considered but had discounted as I didn’t feel that I wanted to be around young children all day. I felt that I wasn’t naturally maternal and would struggle with crying children and class control.

One of my friends had seen me help someone with English as a second language and suggested I would be good at teaching. I had never considered the possibility of teaching adults or Post 16. A year later I was on a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) course in London, learning how to teach English as a second language. Four months later I started teaching in a Midlands based college and from there my career developed. I quickly gained employment in one of the largest FE (Further Education) colleges in the Midlands, delivering ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) to mainly adults and then later to 16-19 year olds and was rapidly being asked to deliver more classes, working with employers to support their workforce with developing language skills. Every day was exciting, there was always something different happening. The

students all had stories to tell, some made me laugh, some made me cry, others will stay with me forever.

There is a misconception that colleges work nine to five in term time only. I often worked nights and spent a year delivering ESOL to an Asda depot night shift working 10pm to 3am. It was challenging, demanding and sometimes draining but I loved preparing exciting lessons, watching the students grow in confidence and realising that I was making a difference. We also delivered a range of intensive classes in the school holidays. I later had the opportunity to work with Her Majesty's Prison Service and spent a year teaching within a category B prison and several years working with the probation service, supporting students who needed to develop and improve language skills. Many of the prisoners I worked with had been drug mules from South America – mainly Columbia, in desperate need of money for their family. Whether I agree or disagree with what they did, my role was to advance their language skills to help them with their time in prison. Many didn't speak any English and were placed into an English prison system they didn't understand. I quickly developed a passion not just for supporting people with developing their language skills but for helping native speakers with advancing their English skills.

Teaching ESOL, led into Teaching Literacy and Functional Skills. I became a Teacher Trainer, teaching the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and other teaching qualifications that have come and gone over the years. I have managed Functional Skills provision, Teacher Training departments, worked with Universities and been subcontracted out to do consultancy work in Functional Skills and Skills for Life due to my expertise.

Twelve years later, I moved to the South Coast to join another college and manage their Skills for Life and GCSE English and maths provision. I also trained as an Ofsted Inspector for the Post compulsory sector. Throughout all of my management roles, being accountable for targets, retention, achievement and success, I have always maintained that I am a teacher

first – I continued to teach Functional Skills, ESOL and Teacher Training programmes. I maintained that I always wanted to remember what is at the heart of everything I do – the students who need to develop their language and literacy skills.

Throughout my career in Further Education (FE), I have managed Key Skills, Functional Skills, Teacher Training departments and a Skills for Life team supporting adult Functional Skills and ESOL along with English and maths for 16-19 year olds. During the recent years since the implementation of Functional Skills and the changes in government that took place in 2010 and 2015 I saw the role of Skills for Life change. Colleges deal with large cohorts of adults who continue to have poor levels of English and maths but in addition to this these providers are now required to deal with around two thousand 16-18 year olds a year who must do some form of English and maths as part of their study programme, having not achieved a grade C or above at school for these subjects.

Through the years of working in Post 16 education, I have been amazed at how I could transform lives by teaching fundamental language skills, taking the time to go through things with learners, find new and innovative ways of teaching and encouraging learners to become more confident in their own abilities.

Since leaving university, I have always studied as I have worked, passing my PGCE and Level 5 subject specialist teaching diplomas for ESOL. I went onto a master's degree in Lifelong Learning which allowed me to focus on how ESOL fees impacted the learners that needed language skills the most. I have supported teacher trainees in the literacy and numeracy classroom, devising new strategies and resources to support learners and then went into teaching many of these programmes myself.

At the start of this research, several years ago, I was too involved with my writing. I was working with students with poor English and maths skills on a daily basis and then researching and writing about their skills for my

research. I felt that I did so much to help people but was so disheartened to see that for every person that I supported, there were so many others who still needed help. Working in Education meant that I was being subjected to policy after policy and higher and higher targets and success rates. I often tried to explain to the managers and Principals above me that they needed to come and sit with the learners that I was working with. They needed to see how they struggle with life and what effort it has taken for them to get into the classroom, every step they took forward was a major one, it wasn't just about tick boxes and funding allocations. Being a manager was difficult. I was asking my team to achieve targets, having to question them when they didn't achieve and all the time knowing deep down that the learners faced the hardest struggle.

Then I was made redundant in 2016, a shock for me, but a result of further funding reductions in education. Departments were being merged and layers of management were wiped out. This provided me with some time to think more about my research and to step back from the passion. I was no longer submersed by students daily who were trying to improve their English and maths skills, I wasn't being bombarded with targets and data. I took a year away from teaching and the world of Education, it didn't mean I no longer cared, but it did allow me to look at my research with a more critical eye and objectivity.

Now I still work in education, but in a different role, the world of governance and leadership, helping schools ensure they have strong and focussed Governing Boards and taking them through the difficult times ahead.

As a child of the late 1970s, I was encouraged to work hard and follow my dreams, which was not a career in education initially. I came from a background where no one had been to university. I was the first. I knew that qualifications were important as England was changing and gaining a degree would help with a career. I had the motivation and family support to work and study hard, paired with the opportunity to go to university at a time when tuition fees were still covered by government grants. Looking back, I

am not sure I would have had the same opportunities without these grants. I saw opportunities and I took them. I feel disappointed when I see young adults who feel that they do not have the same opportunities and feel that they cannot succeed and follow their dreams. My hope is that my children will not be one of these, that they will have the passion to follow their dreams and know that they can achieve whatever they want.

I still want to help people and hope that this research will go a way to supporting all those who still have poor English and maths skills. My ideal question would be to find out **why after many years of support and funding being pumped into Education, especially English and maths, do we still have a problem with so many people having poor English and maths skills in England?** This piece of research is only the tip of the iceberg for this issue and I feel it would take many years of research and a full research team to investigate this further. However, I want to know why the reports that are provided by government, that outline how things will move forward, don't allow us to move forward. The Moser report, a key document published in 1999, made a substantial impact up to 2011, following this Wolf then made an impact, but from 2015 onwards the government agenda for supporting English and maths skills has been quiet. The Moser report is now over twenty years old and I still question why for every person that left my classroom for a better life with their English and maths skills, do I have someone else walking in the door ready to take their place?

This research has not answered the question that I intended as you will see upon further reading. However, upon further research and looking at the impact of the Moser report and whether England has made changes in response to Moser, I have identified that we moved forward in the first ten years following Moser with many of the recommendations becoming reality. The second ten years, as you will discover, saw much less in terms of the development of English and maths skills for adults in England.

Chapter 1: What is the English and maths issue?

As we begin this piece of writing and look into the English and maths issues of Adults (Those of working age – aged 16-65) in England, focusing on Moser and his report - 'A fresh start: improving literacy and numeracy', it is important to provide context of adult education, more specifically English and maths in England. The Russell Report (White Paper) in 1973 stated that LEA's (Local Education Authorities) should make opportunities available for men and women to complete formal education. Although at this point no specific reference was made to English and maths, adults realised that they could retrain or update their skills and they started evening classes or night school. Something that had never really happened in England before. Hamilton and Hillier have broken the history of English and maths into four phases.

- Phase 1 – Mid 1970s: A literacy campaign is led by a coalition of voluntary agencies with a powerful media partner, the BBC.
- Phase 2 – 1980s: Provision developed substantially, supported by Local Education Authority (LEA) Adult Education Services and voluntary organisations, with leadership, training and development funding from a national agency (Adult Basic Education. - ABE was born)
- Phase 3 – 1989 – 1998: Reduction of LEA funding and control, statutory status of Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy (ALLN) through a more formalised Further Education (FE) system, dependent on funding through a national funding body. The 1992 Further and Higher Education Funding Act.
- Phase 4 - 1998 to 2005: Development of Skills for Life Policy; new government strategy unit created; £1.5 billion of government money is committed.

(Hamilton and Hillier 2006: 14)

Although all phases are important, for the purpose of this thesis, phase four is the one that we will focus on. The Moser report which we will be exploring

in depth was published in 1999 and following on from this was the beginning of the Skills for Life Strategy¹, a professionalised workforce, national qualifications, a Core Curriculum and standardisation for English and maths for adults in England. Employers were being encouraged to become involved and national targets were set.

For many years, there have been long standing concerns that the English and maths skills of adults in England are poor. Until a few years ago at age sixteen you could gain GCSEs in an array of subjects in school but not achieve an A* to C in English and / or maths. You could use these grades to go onto further study and in some cases, gain a degree but still have weak English and maths skills.

English and maths skills in England are poor and what I find difficult to understand is that we do not as a nation seem to see that there is a problem. Talk to many adults with weak English and maths skills and they will say that they get by and make statements such as '*who needs maths, I ain't going back to school, I can use a computer or calculator*'. (Personal statements from pupils in an FE College) The world of social media where we communicate with people instantly, has led to further degeneration of the English language. Short forms are the norm and new 'text speak' is being derived all the time – lol. (Laugh Out Loud) Phones now have spell check and predictive text, which means that you only need to input the first few letters of a word and it comes up for you to use. New reality documentaries on television, showing families who cannot set a household budget for shopping are appearing more and more often. Families that take out loans and buy expensive cars, without understanding the percentage rate of interest they will be paying. Families that cannot work out whether 'buy two get one free' or '50% off' is a better deal on a product in a supermarket. (Personal experience statements and real life examples taken from my time working in FE.)

¹ The national strategy that was devised in England for improving Literacy, Language and Numeracy Skills.

English and maths surround us. Society does not need to understand algebra to function effectively but does need to have a level of English and maths that means that people of working age are employable and are able to run homes and lives efficiently, without running up debts that cannot be paid.

In England there is an issue with these skills, they are simply not good enough. The government has spent several years trying to improve English and maths skills, but the statistics still show a large number of adults in England with poor English and maths skills. A culture has been developed whereby it is acceptable to have poor skills. There have been many opportunities to develop these skills for free. Government funding has been made available to support English and maths for adults for over twenty years.

Governments over time have commissioned and delivered reports discussing the poor English and maths that England has. Commissions have been made to address the issue; however, the problem remains.

My question as to why there is still a problem is a long standing and ingrained question that unfortunately requires a much bigger piece of research than this allows and hopefully one day someone will be in a position to answer this.

What I intend to do throughout this research is to look at education policy with a focus on the Moser Report – ‘A Fresh Start’ published in 1999. A report that was going to impose changes on the English and maths skills of the nation and an answer to ensuring that these skills were up to an acceptable standard.² I will also, where relevant, be discussing other reports that were released following Moser. Moser was a major turning point

² Acceptable Standard – at the time that the Moser report was produced, English and maths levels had not been clearly identified, so the definition of ‘acceptable’ was not clearly defined. Qualification levels and Skills for Life had not been developed. Much later we have identified this as grade A* - C GCSE or equivalent.

for Post 16 English and maths and a major talking point in terms of just how bad our skills as a nation had become. 2019 was the twentieth anniversary since the release of the Moser report, so I will discuss where society is now and what the impact of Moser has been twenty years later. I will link to this, three other reports that have had some impact in the first twelve years following Moser as part of a strategy to improve English and maths skills for adults and in turn build a stronger economy.

My hypothesis is that many education reports themselves often describe in detail what is wrong, what is not working and what this means for us as a nation, they make some suggestions as to what should be done differently to improve the situation, whether teachers need to have better qualifications, whether the curriculum needs to change, even whether the terminology being used is correct, English or Literacy, maths or Numeracy. However, there seems to have been little impact of these reports considering the fact that English and maths skills today are still well below the standard that they should be. I argue that despite the Moser report, which was to implement change and improve English and maths skills of adults in England, as a nation, skills have **still** not sufficiently improved for England to be considered a world leader in economic skills growth despite these policies and the money that has been spent on developing English and maths skills over the last twenty years. Sadly there are still millions of people who struggle with basic English and maths tasks on a daily basis. I argue that much of this lies in the policies themselves. Moser started a crusade to develop English and maths skills and I will go on to explore how this happened. The first twelve years following his report saw major change and development within the English and maths world, more recently however, the English and maths crusade seems to have disappeared.

The main report that I will be focussing on will be Moser, however it is impossible to focus solely on this report as there are other reports that were released in the years following Moser which provided an impact on our English and maths skills and make references and links to Moser. I will be

looking at what they are saying and not saying and will make some references to policy decisions around these.

For ease I will refer to the following four reports as follows -

- **The Moser Report** – A Fresh Start Improving Literacy and Numeracy. (1999) I shall refer to this as ‘The Moser Report’ which it is more commonly known as. This will be my major focus as the twentieth anniversary of this report. What has the impact been of this report twenty years later.
- **The Foster Report** – Realising The Potential – A Review Of The Future Role of Further Education Colleges. (2005) This I shall refer to throughout the rest of this thesis as ‘The Foster Report’.
- **The Leitch Report** – Prosperity for All in the Global Community – World Class Skills. (2006) This was released very shortly after the Foster Report and shall be referred to as ‘The Leitch Report’.
- **The Wolf Review of Vocational Education.** (2011) This is the latest of the four reports but still one that has a lot of currency in the world of education. This I shall refer to as ‘The Wolf Review’.

The four reports were all written at different times and under different elected governments. The key theme running through these reports that I will focus on is English and maths, although not all the reports discuss English and maths as the main theme. First, there is no doubt that all four reports make reference to the fact that there is a need to improve English and maths skills as a nation. The common denominator is that they all clearly highlight that there is an issue with underdeveloped skills which links to employability and employers demanding more.

Second, all the reports have a common goal of wanting the nation to become more competitive with Europe and the rest of the world. There are key themes running through the reports that state a minimum standard of English and maths at level 2 / GCSE A*-C that can then demonstrate the employability skills needed for a competitive nation.

There's a tension though, a key political theme, the government wants unemployment rates to fall and to relieve the burden on the state system. Ultimately the government would like to pay less into the welfare state system and pay more into other areas such as the NHS, national security and military protection at a time when Britain is in a vulnerable state. Arguably you could suggest that if there were better English and maths skills and people were more employable, would there then be enough employment for all? Would there be people willing to do the low skilled jobs which are often manual labour and long hours? Employers could then have their pick of employees with a similar skills set. This is an argument that will not be investigated any further in this piece of research and is a possible avenue for further future study.

For this thesis, I will be using the word policy and report throughout. I have decided that the four reports that I am analysing in detail will be referred to as reports/reviews. They were not and have not been legally enforced, (although you could argue that the Wolf Report which recommended the implementation of study programmes, although not legally enforceable became enforceable by the very way that funding was dependent on the way that the policy was implemented). Study programmes are now a key element of Post 16 education.

I suggest that the word policy has a stronger meaning, daily I am governed by a Safeguarding Policy, which states that I must behave in a certain way and that I must report any potential harm that may come to children or vulnerable adults, among others. I have to sign to show that I have read and understand the policy and that I will do as it says. I am aware of the implications if I don't follow the policy, which could have disastrous effects on children, adults, me, my family and my career. I am governed by a Health and Safety policy to ensure that I have regard for my own Health and Safety and that of others around me. I have signed to say that I will follow data protection regulations and that I will use IT and communications systems responsibly. I am bound by policies in everything that I do. Do I rate these

policies the same as other documents that have been labelled policies? I argue that, no, not all policies are looked at with the same level of regard and that for policies that are lower down in the levels of importance, post 16 providers and practitioners decide what is to be taken from a policy and will often regard it as 'a take it or leave it option'.

Moser, Foster, Leitch and Wolf - Setting the scene

Having worked in the Post 16 sector for over sixteen years, I have seen governments come and go and along with them policies and reports that they have introduced. The aim of this thesis is to look more into the Moser report and identify if now, twenty years after Moser, there has been any real impact to what he published back in 1999. To support some of this I will also be making reference to the Foster, Leitch and Wolf reports which were all published following Moser.

My career started with delivering ESOL, then moved into Skills for Life Adult Literacy followed by Functional Skills English and then onto delivering Teacher Education programmes such as the PGCE³, Cert Ed⁴, PTLLS⁵, CTLLS⁶ and DTLLS⁷ programmes. I have delivered Level 3 programmes and managed GCSE⁸ and Functional Skills English and maths provision. Throughout my time in education, there are many reports that I have referred to, read many times and have impacted on what I do in terms of teaching delivery and progression of students in the classroom. The one I have referred to the most is The Moser Report.

I have mentioned some reports already in this thesis and have already made a number of references to them. To provide some further context to

³ Post Graduate Certificate in Education

⁴ Certificate in Education

⁵ Preparation to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector

⁶ Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector

⁷ Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector

⁸ General Certificate in Education

the reports, it is important to set the scene of the political context at the time the reports were written and the key themes.

The Moser, Foster and Leitch reports were all produced under a Labour government. They all had a brief that something needed to be done about the English and maths skills of the adults of the nation. Leitch was to look at the nation's long term skills need by HM Treasury. Wolf was written under a Conservative government commissioned by the Secretary of State to undertake a review of vocational education. The Foster Review was commissioned to inform the White Paper Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances.

A commonality throughout these reports is that the skills of English and maths of adults (adults for this purpose is defined as those of working age 16⁹ – 65) in England is poor overall when compared to other nations. The Moser report was the first to provide shocking statistics that stated just how inadequate society was, however, statistics can be manipulated, as I shall discuss later. Foster and Leitch built on these statistics and in many areas used the same or similar / updated statistics to show how far the skills of English and maths had progressed in the first five years following Moser. Wolf's report was a few years later. Her report looks at English and maths in a slightly different focus from the other three. It gets straight to the point by stating that there is a problem and that it needs to be fixed and that the fix is not going to happen overnight. Her report states the need for a change in the qualification framework of Post 16 education as a whole and the need for Post 16 to be for the student and not for the provider.

The reports make a range of common statements which I shall share as I progress through the reports. With the exception of Moser who wrote the first of the reports, they make reference to each other, or the information provided in the earlier reports. To gain a better insight into each report and

⁹ Before the age of staying in education was raised to 18.

in order to also draw on the impact on Moser, I will now outline the context of each.

The Moser Report

Labour had recently gained power (1997) following eighteen years of a Conservative Government. The Prime Minister was Tony Blair and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment from 1997 to 2001 was David Blunkett. Education welcomed the new Labour Government who had used the mantra 'Education, Education, Education' in their party speeches along with the theme tune 'Things can only get better'. Education was a major part in Labour policy and Tony Blair appeared very committed to improving education. It was a busy time as far as education policy and reports went. 'The pace of reform was immense'. (Abbot 2003:149) David Blunkett was one of the longest serving Secretaries of State for Education and Employment and with Education so high on the Labour agenda, he had the political support to implement what were seen at the time to be radical policies.

There were several educational bodies set up during Labour's term in power including the LSC (Learning and Skills Council), The QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) and ALI (Adult Learning Inspectorate.) These later became known as education quangos. A significant paper released in 1999 was a white paper – 'Learning to Succeed: A new framework for Post 16 learning'. This discussed the reforms to Post 16 education and mentioned the need for Lifelong Learning if a skills economy was to be created. Additional funding was made available to Post 16 providers and there was a large amount of retraining for teachers and the writing of new standards and curriculums within the Post 16 sector to ensure quality and consistency across England. The proposals from this paper became law under the Learning and Skills Act 2000. (Learning & Skills Act 2000)

This was the time that I started my career in education, I had no teaching qualifications but was taken on to teach and train at the same time. My PGCE and specialist qualifications were all funded by government in order to have a high standard of teaching that was consistent across England. There was money for new resources to develop new styles and ways of teaching English and maths and support for developing new programmes such as 'Flower Arranging' and 'Cake Decorating' with English and maths skills embedded. I spent part of my week working in the Childcare department, working with students studying childcare, who needed to develop their Literacy skills. On another day, I was delivering language with Beauty Therapy or English for Motor Vehicle Students. The idea was to engage students into something that they enjoyed and then to develop their English and maths skills through this. I wasn't a specialist in any of these vocational subjects, but I was able to support students with developing their English skills so that they were better equipped to deal with their vocational subjects.

This appeared to be a time of prosperity for education and Post 16 education was no exception. During this period, Citizenship was introduced into Post 16 and Primary and Secondary education. This was intended to help support social integration and to develop a better understanding of life in the UK. Over time this has developed into British Values. The Life in the UK test became compulsory for those wanting British Citizenship, with Citizenship being embedded into all ESOL provision.

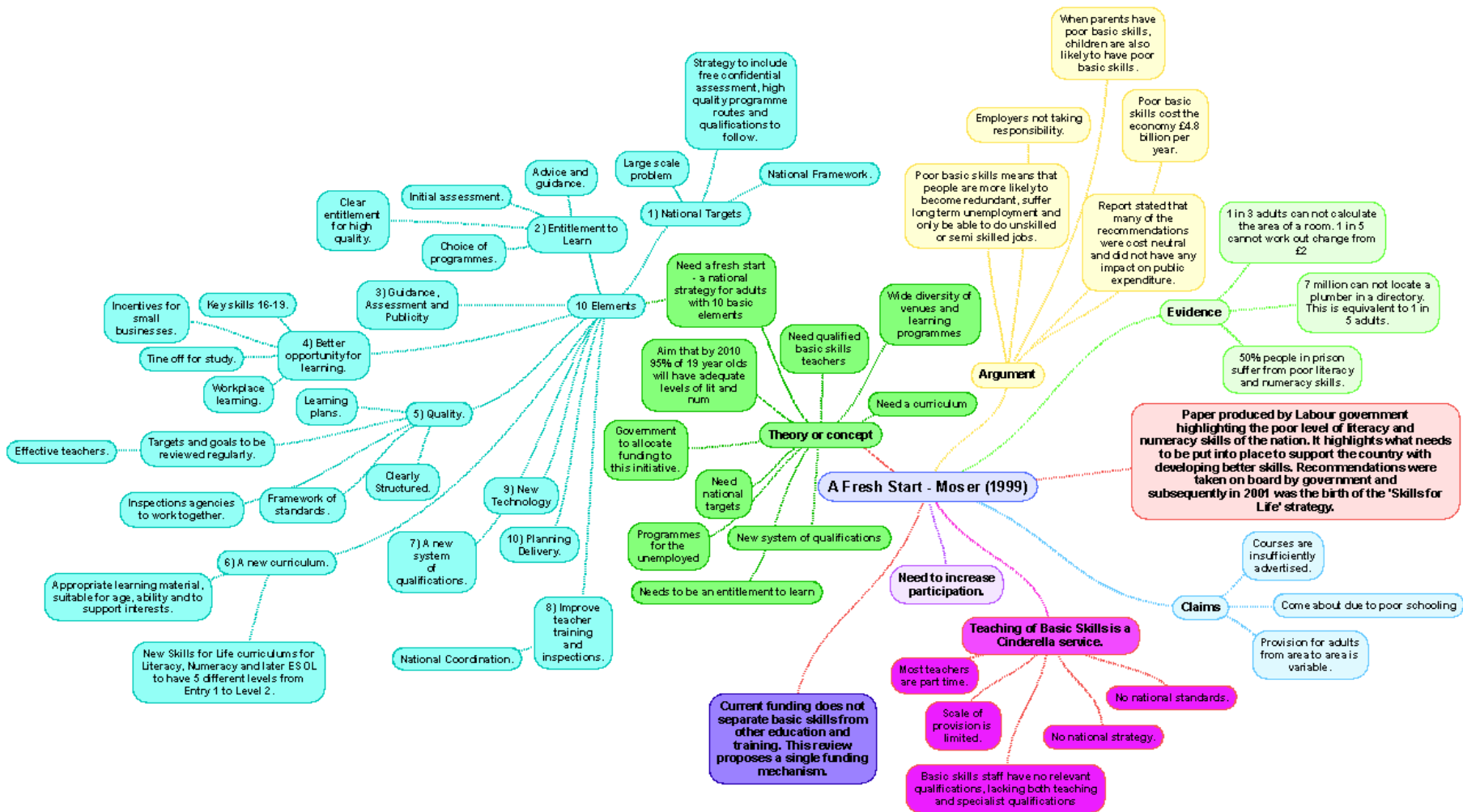


Figure 1- Key themes - 'A Fresh Start – The Moser Report (1999)

The Foster and Leitch Reports

Both of these reports were released under a Labour government. This period has been identified as the second phase of the Labour Government. (2001-2007) Tony Blair was still Prime Minister until Gordon Brown took over in 2007. Ruth Kelly was the Secretary of State for Education and Skills up to May 2006 when Alan Johnson took over. According to Abbot et al (2013), this period saw questions being raised about a number of key policies which had been introduced between 1997 and 2001. Despite this there was still a plethora of policies coming through, the most controversial one being the creation of academies which is still on the government agenda today. Academies were the government's answer to no longer having any failing schools. (This is another area that could be researched further but is not for this piece of writing.) The Department of Education and Employment was renamed Education and Skills. New targets were set for children in Key Stage 4 to achieve 5 or more A*-C GCSE passes which put pressure on schools to get children through an interesting mix of GCSE subjects.

Previously under David Blunkett, The Tomlinson Report had been released. He proposed a new exam system. Ruth Kelly took the decision not to implement this, however what she put into place instead were the new 14-19 diplomas. A vocational qualification for those who were not looking to go down a more traditional A-Level qualification route. This was another controversial qualification that has since disappeared. Schools found it difficult to offer these due to the need for additional vocational resources and safeguarding issues in transporting pupils to a local college to undertake the vocational part of their programme.

Alan Johnson was Secretary of Education and Skills for a relatively short time leaving in 2007, however, he is known for his part in raising the school leaving age from 16 to 18 which came into effect in 2013. His proposal at the time was that all young people must remain in education or training until 18.

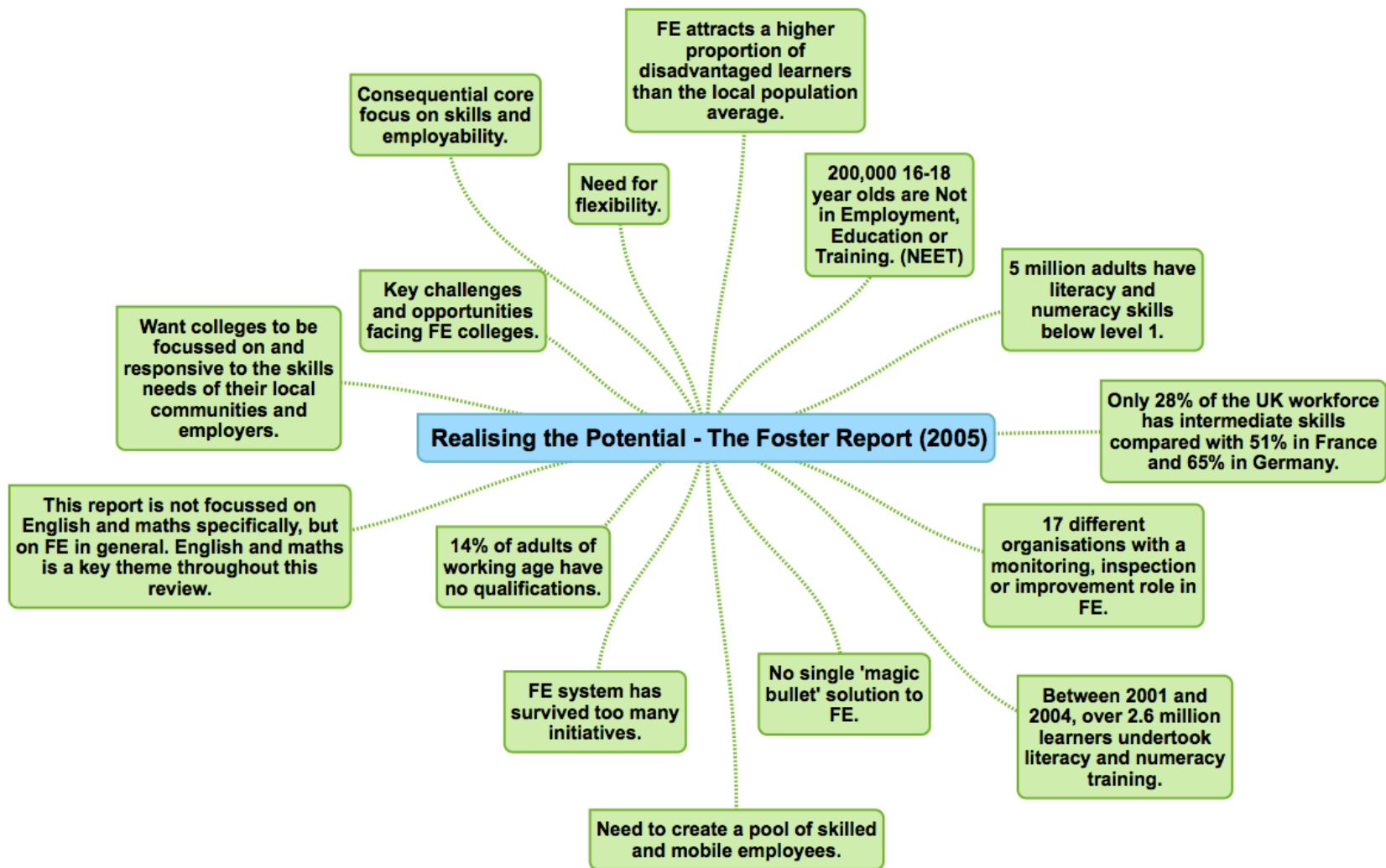


Figure 2 – Key themes - 'Realising the Potential - The Foster Report' (2005)

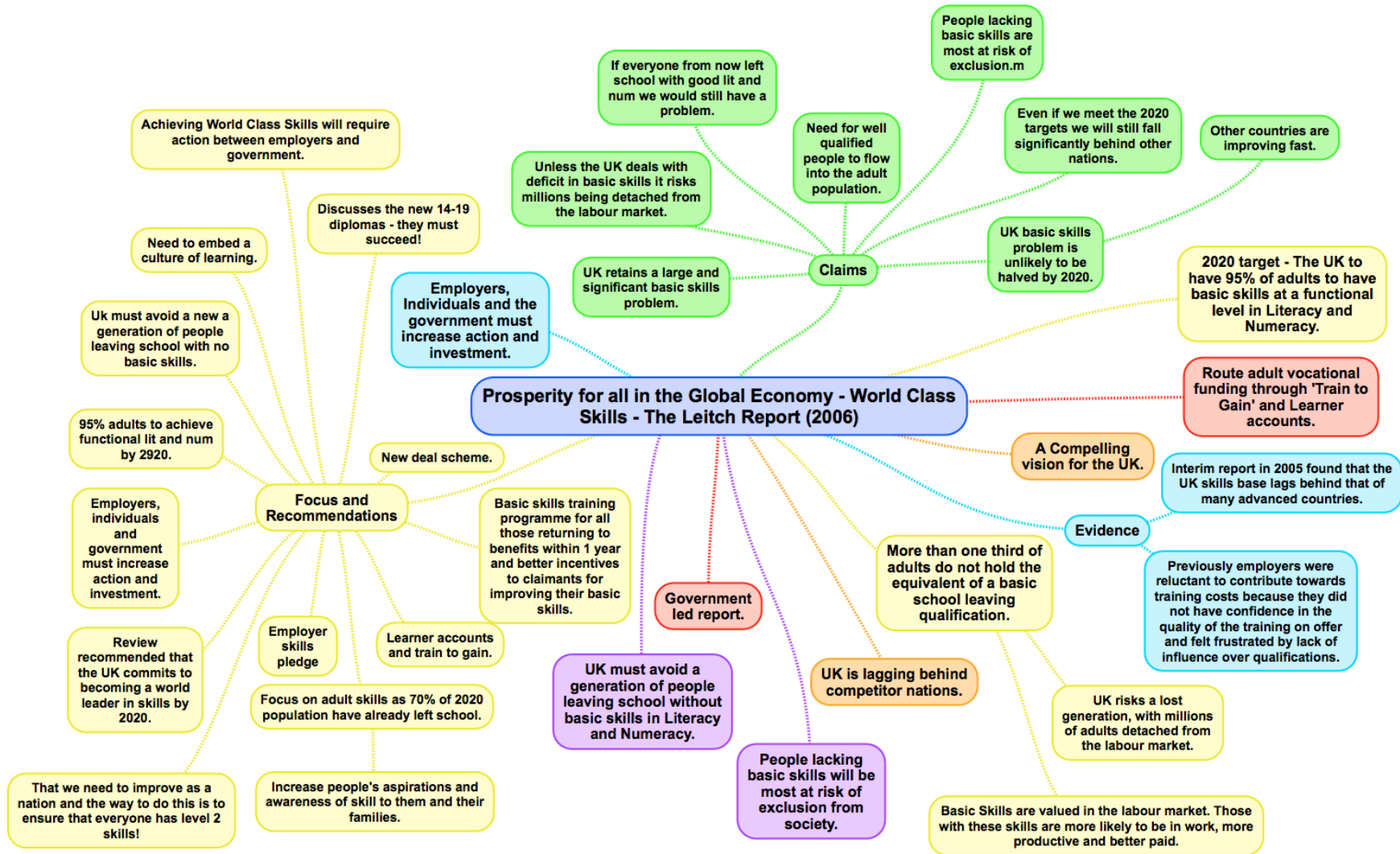


Figure 3 – Key Themes - 'Prosperity for all in the global economy, World Class Skills' The Leitch Report (2006)

Figures 2 and 3 identify the key themes from the Leitch and Foster reports. My intention here was not to outline or list everything contained within the reports but to gather some initial points when comparing against the other reports. What is interesting is that all of the reports, despite being produced at different times, are all quoting statistics and stating that there is a problem with English and maths as this thesis discusses. The Leitch and Foster Reports were not written specifically about English and maths. They were both written to look at the skills need of the nation in relation to other countries and the need to remain in the top ranks for World Class Skills. The very title of the Leitch report identifies the need for 'Prosperity for all in the Global Economy – World Class Skills' It sets a compelling vision for the UK to become a leader in world skills by 2020.

The Foster Report – Realising the Potential, looks more specifically at the role of Further Education (FE) in general and what is required to develop FE and in turn support the nation with developing the skills required to become a world leader. Similarly, the Leitch report states that the 'UK must become a world leader.' Both reports refer to English and maths in relation to the need to develop these skills in order to develop other more technical and vocational skills. They discuss the links between poor English and maths skills and poor employability skills. In relation to both The Leitch and Foster Reports I shall only be using where relevant any key points specifically relating to English and maths.

The Wolf Review

This was written under a Coalition Conservative/Liberal Democrat Government. The Secretary of State for Education was Michael Gove. His role as Secretary of State for Education, was a controversial one in the world of Education.

The Coalition government wanted a review of vocational education and skills. Cost cutting was a key component under the coalition. Suddenly Britain had a national debt that needed to be controlled and the focus was on saving money and cutting expenditure. Many of the education 'quangos'

were disappearing under the Coalition. The QCA and LSIS both went, along with ALI and other organisations. There was simply no more funding for them to continue. One of the key policy drivers of the government at this time was the academies agenda. The drive for all schools to become academies and break away from the Local Authority. It was thought that this would increase the quality of education. The policy on academies created controversy within education with many heated arguments between educationalists and policy makers. Today, under a Conservative government, the academies programme is still high on the agenda, as mentioned earlier, with schools labelled as 'inadequate' being forced to convert.

When Professor Wolf was asked to review vocational education, the foreword (as mentioned in Chapter 3) was provided by Gove, stating that the issue with vocational education was not a new problem and can be dated back to before the turn of the century.



Figure 4 – Key Themes - ‘Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report’ (2011)

The Wolf Report focussed on Post 16 education opportunities. It identified that Post 16 education had become money focussed in many ways. Funding was on a 'per qualification' basis, which meant that Post 16 providers were not necessarily looking at what was best for the student, but rather the way in which to maximise funding opportunities. The more qualifications that a student completed and passed, the more funding the provider received. Post 16 providers had developed a culture of putting students in for qualifications that they would easily pass or qualifications that they had already achieved. They were seen as an 'easy win'. Key Skills is a prime example of this. Students were all placed on to Key Skills Application of Number, Communication and Information Technology courses regardless of the English and maths qualifications that they already had. The assessment for these programmes were a mixture of course work where there was no limit to the number of submissions that a student could make and a multiple-choice question exam paper that could be retaken as many times as needed. Some students took the same exam 9 or 10 times and submitted course work so many times that it became questionable as to who the work belonged to. Professor Wolf identified that there were major issues with Post 16 education and proposed some radical changes that sent shock waves through the Post 16 community.

The first of these was to change the funding mechanism so that funding followed the student rather than qualification. This meant that the providers would only receive a certain amount of funding per person regardless of how many qualifications they completed.

The second radical proposal by Professor Wolf was to create Study Programmes. This programme would contain a vocational element, along with English and maths for all those that had not achieved a grade C or above in their GCSE and a work experience element to help try to encourage more young people to be 'work ready' and to be able to identify the skills that they require in the workplace.

The Wolf report talked about English and maths GCSEs being the 'gold standard' in terms of English and maths qualifications. Although not a paper about English and maths in isolation, its focus was to look at vocational education and centred much of its discussion on the need for Post 16 reform within English and maths. The need for funding changes and reforms to teacher education all linked to the poor English and maths skills that our young people had upon leaving Post 16 education.

Figure 4 identifies some of the key themes raised in The Wolf Review. Almost ten years on from this report, the majority of the recommendations that Wolf made have been implemented and in place for some time as we shall discuss further in chapter 6.

Chapter 2: English Education Policymaking

Having provided a review of the political context when each of the four reports were written, it is important to provide you with details of the political agenda as it stands today, (2021). Currently England is under a Conservative government. Boris Johnson is the current Prime Minister in the UK, having been elected in 2019 following Theresa May. Brexit¹⁰ has taken place following a Brexit in May 2016 where 48.1% of the population voted to remain and 51.9% voted to leave the EU. The letter was written to trigger Article 50 which will take the UK out of the European Union. The UK left the European Union on 31st December 2019 with 12 months provided to develop new trade agreements put into place. Brexit was discussed daily along with the fear of terror attacks on the UK and elsewhere which are becoming more frequent. The funding formula changed for Education which means that many schools have lost thousands of pounds worth of funding which will have an impact on the standard of education that they can provide. The current Education Secretary is Gavin Williamson who was appointed in 2019 by Boris Johnson. The previous Education Secretary was Damien Hinds who was appointed in 2018 and prior to that it was Justine Greening (2016).

Looking at the period from when the Moser Report was published in 1999 to the time of Brexit negotiations, the UK had politically gone through turbulent times. The country went through a period of economic crisis under the Coalition government where the extent of the national debt was uncovered at a time when the United Kingdom was breaking away from the EU. As yet, the nation is unsure on how this will impact the world of education and in particular the world of Post 16 education in particular.¹¹ Moser was written with good intentions and a firm purpose of improving English and maths skills. Subsequently Leitch, Foster and Wolf were to

¹⁰ Brexit – Britain leaving the European Union.

¹¹ This has since changed again following the Covid pandemic – see Postscript.

attempt to build on this. The one thing that is clear, is that despite the different governments that have been in power over the period that these reports were written, they have all wanted skills to improve – a common aim. In reality, recommendations are often put in place without an idea of how they can actually be implemented on the ground and the impact that it will have on both the students and staff who are required to follow through the recommendations and show results.

Moser, Foster, Leitch and Wolf all discuss the following key points in their reports. All points that Moser mentions in his report that then impact further in other reports in the initial few years following Moser.

- They all discuss poor skills, people lacking basic English, maths and employability skills.
- Need to improve the nation overall and to remain competitive with Europe and the rest of the world.
- Qualifications in English and maths seem to be a consistent issue. Are they fit for purpose, are there standards etc?
- Statistics are quoted in all reports, comparisons with other countries, numbers lacking in skills, how many achieved each year.
- All reports seem to have a future vision for England.
- They all touch on but do not directly state (other than Moser) that poor schooling is an issue.
- Both Moser and Wolf come up with suggestions – Elements or recommendations for moving forward.

In essence it can be identified just from the summary of the reports that there are a number of similarities in what they are stating. There is no doubt that all the authors wanted to identify the issues and state what needed to be put into place to try to resolve these. Moser and Wolf are much more specific in terms of linking to English and maths and the impact of these key subjects. Moser clearly started this journey, which Wolf then followed up twelve years later.

The authors

I think it is important to find out a bit more about the authors, who they are or were and their links to government, whether they have a background in education and if so whether this is English and maths and / or Post 16 education.

Sir Claus Moser

Sir Claus Moser was born in Germany in 1922. As a Jew, his family escaped to England in 1936 where Moser was then classed as an 'alien' until he gained British Citizenship in 1947. From here on he worked his way up the academic ladder and became a professor of Social Statistics. He was an educationalist and statistician who was Chair of the Basic Skills Agency when the Moser Report was published in 1999. His obituary identifies him as a Labour supporter but stood up for what he thought was right even if it meant that in the 1970 election which Labour were originally expected to win, the Conservatives regained power due to distorted payment figures that Moser had released. (Telegraph obituary 2015) He was noted for saying "I suspect that at root, Britain or perhaps should I say England – does not care as much about education as other countries.... Intellectuals are viewed with suspicion and cleverness is not admired." (Telegraph Obituary 2015)

Moser died in 2015 aged 92.

Professor Alison Wolf

Alison Wolf is a Professor of Public Sector Management at Kings College London. She also sits as a cross bench peer in the House of Lords. Her biography for Kings College states that she is an influential government advisor and has an interest in training and skills with a longstanding interest in assessment and maths. In 2012 she was awarded a CBE. (Kings College London Website)

Lord Sandy Leitch

Alexander Leitch known as Lord Sandy Leitch joined the House of Lords in 2004. He is part of the Labour party and has been chairman or director of a number of organisations including Allied Dunbar which later became Zurich and sat on the board of Lloyds Banking Group. His roles have mainly been in financial organisations.

Sir Andrew Foster

“Sir Andrew Foster has a longstanding career in public service. He was Chief Executive of the audit commission for England and Wales between 1992 and 2003. He was previously chief executive of the NHS.”. (David Ross Education Trust Website) He has been appointed to lead several reviews for government, including the review into the role of FE colleges and reviews into the future of athletics.

Out of these authors, Professor Wolf is the one that is most linked to education. Not only has she had an interest in training and more specifically in maths, but she has produced a number of papers and books linked to Post 16 education. A search quickly brings up over twenty that she has produced with one dating back to 1989 but the majority from 1995 onwards. As an author in education, it is evident that she is much more involved in the educational world than the other three who have all produced policies that have changed the way that Post 16 works and provided information, statistics and recommendations as to how English and maths should be better developed and supported in the future.

Moser is passionate about his work. Standing up for what he believes in, even if it goes against what others expect of him. He came from a disadvantaged background and understood the struggles that are faced by millions on a daily basis. He knew what it was like to not belong.

Having now provided some background in English and maths skills within the Post 16 sector of England and some background into the Moser report and subsequently other reports linked to Moser that have had an impact following the Moser report, I will now set out to look into English Education policymaking and the impact that this has had on any English and maths reports / policies that have been released.

The Moser Report is now twenty years old and I want to identify what impact, if any, Moser has had on English and maths some twenty years later. In effect, where does society sit now following the Moser Report and what did it influence throughout the last twenty years.

Later I will look at some of the literatures around policy making and policy production, the theories of who writes what and the influencers of policy. Now I want to look more specifically at some of the education policies that have influenced education in order to try and gain further insight into the Moser Report and those that followed.

The 1944 Education Act looked at the importance of education in relation to social mobility and the welfare state. The post war years had an impact on education as we know it today. There were changes to the school systems with the introduction of grammar schools and comprehensive schools and the 11 plus exam which dictated your future path. Secondary education was now free for all and children were to stay at school for longer.

During the 1960s a number of circulars were released. They advised what schools should be doing but didn't actually place any requirement on them. During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a tension between central government and Local Authorities. It was suggested that at this time, many policies were written by Local Authorities and ratified by government, whereas today this is very much the opposite. The Department for Education writes and releases the policy that Local Authorities help their schools to implement.

Abbot et al (2013) talk about education policy in detail. An area of consistency highlighted are the links between both Labour and Conservative governments. They both saw education as important and many of the policies that one party started, the other party continued or implemented. As time went on, Further Education was coming into its own and was often being linked to social class with only those who could afford it accessing further study.

Much of what is discussed by Abbott et al, (2013) is not about the educational policies themselves. Their work provides a very brief outline of various policies but does not say why it was commissioned, who was involved other than the appropriate Education Secretary or Minister and very little has been discussed on the impact of these policies. I was hoping that by reading this, I might gain useful insight into how education policy is written and how impact is measured but this is not the case.

The Ruskin Speech (1976) drew together some key issues in education, many of which are still paramount today.

“Following advice from the Head of Downing Street Policy unit, Bernard Donoghue, that he should have education as a major policy focus, Jim Callaghan had asked his Education Secretary – Fred Mulley, who had gone on record as identifying education as ‘a key to our industrial regeneration’ to pick out four key areas of public concern relating to education. These focussed on the appropriateness of the curriculum in comprehensive schools, especially the teaching of Science and Mathematics. Callaghan was interested and expressed anxiety that ‘school leavers appeared to be inadequately equipped to enter work’. He was also concerned about the 3 Rs¹² and the appropriateness of education for 16-19-year olds.” (Abbot 2013:69)

¹² Reading, Writing and Arithmetic

Reading this paragraph, it could just as easily have been written today. There is a concern about education. Maths and Science levels are still poor and school leavers still don't have the skills necessary to support them in employment. This is an example of how the policies surrounding education do not seem to have made any major impact.

A series of papers later named 'The Black Papers' dominated much of the 1970s and Callaghan stated in the Ruskin speech that

"Education policy should be guided by economic imperatives; students should be prepared for the world of work; existing classroom practice should be subject to critical scrutiny and central influence over education change asserted." (Abbot 2013:70)

They were right wing articles that 'often-attacked comprehensive education, the fall in standards, ill-discipline and inappropriate progressive teaching'. (Abbot et al 2013:2)

Following the 'Ruskin Speech', 'the great debate' happened in early 1977 where a range of regional conferences took place which helped to change the future of education. The debates encouraged parents and employers to become more involved in education and this changed the future of education policy taking into account the needs of the economic environment and the demand from parents that all children should be provided with equal opportunities. A key point from the Ruskin speech was that those that had completed a Polytechnic College Programme or university course had 'no desire to join industry'. This was concerning for the government, who wanted to ensure that skills within industry were maintained. There had been new methods and ideas discussed around teaching strategies. Ideas that we know today work well in the classroom but at the time of the Ruskin speech were seen as radical by both parents and teachers. Girls were still leaving school much earlier than boys and there was concern over the

numeracy skills of school leavers. A concern that we still have over forty years later.

1979 to 1997 saw England under a Conservative government, a key period of time with many educational changes including the new National Curriculum launched in 1988. This was a time where adults were being given a second chance at education. They were able to join evening classes and improve their skills. Many women were returning to the workforce and it was starting to become acceptable for both men and women to bring home an income to support the family. The 1980s saw the start of many women owning cars and going back to work once they had had children. We live in a very different economic climate today compared to forty years ago where the cost of living has raised substantially and not in line with wages. Many adults now have a change of career at some stage in their lives, where they are required to retrain and to develop a different set of skills and knowledge, the unique skills of English and maths that they have developed will be transferable from one situation to another. They are a lifelong skill.

I now move forward to a key change that affected my start in working in education, the change of government in 1997 from a Conservative government that had been in post for eighteen years to a New Labour government. This was also a point where Moser was to start to become instrumental in how English and maths policy for the next ten years would be formed. 1997 saw the start of what was to become known as the 'Blair years.' 'Education, Education, Education' was the mantra that was used through the election campaign, using the D:Ream song 'Things can only get better' as their theme tune. The Labour government wanted to make Britain strong again, to allow it to compete with the rest of the world. They believed that Education was their biggest economic policy. There was a need to raise educational standards and at the heart of this was a range of new policy initiatives. (Abbot et al 2013:136)

Following New Labour's win, the 1997 White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' was released. Written in just 67 days, it identified that

- Education will be at the heart of the government.
- Policies will be designed to benefit the many, not just the few.
- The focus will be on standards, not structures.
- Intervention will be in inverse proportion to success.
- There will be zero tolerance of underperformance.
- Government will work in partnership with all those committed to raising standards.

(Abbot et al 2013:138)

As a result of this paper a Literacy and Numeracy task group was formed. The purpose was to debate English and maths policy and put forward strategies for implementation.

The group focussed on schools and the need to improve English and maths skills. There were literacy clinics set up. Free books for schools and free books for toddlers to try and encourage children to start reading from a young age. There was funding made available for three hundred support advisors nationally for numeracy alongside money set aside for developing resources. New targets were set. (Abbot et al 2013:140) The period between 1997 and 2001 was a period of high expectation within the world of Education. It seemed to be at the core of every government policy. It was during this period that Moser was commissioned to write what became known as the Moser report, later referred to as a 'damning report' outlining the English and maths needs of the nation.

The money pumped into Education and policy continued throughout the New Labour years and in 2003 the new Skills for Life Literacy, Numeracy and then later ESOL curriculums for adults were released. Initiatives that

Moser had suggested. Skills for Life as an initiative was launched by Tony Blair in 2001, following the Moser report, to help the government reach its Public Service Agreement (PSA) and tackle adult skills gaps. Prior to this there were no national standards for teaching English and maths to adults. The level of teaching that you received varied from institution to institution along with the qualifications of the people who were delivering English and maths classes. Previously there had been no national standardised approach.

The Moser report was written at a period of great change for Education. New Labour were focussing on England becoming strong again and education and skills were the key. Although Moser was stated to be a damning report, the changes that were implemented in the first few years following Moser had an impact on both students, teachers and Post 16 for the next ten years or so until funding again started to run out.

In 2010, eleven years after Moser, a new general election saw the first coalition government in place for 33 years. A Conservative/Liberal Democrat government under the leadership of David Cameron, a Conservative leader. They asked for a review of vocational education and Alison Wolf presented her report. Professor Wolf's report was the first big report since Moser to have any real impact on the English and maths of the nation. Although not specifically written with just English and maths skills in mind, the report made references to further changes that were needed to develop the English and maths skills of the nation. Published twelve years after Moser, the forward to her report identified that the issues with vocational policy making go back many years. The report starts by saying "Since Prince Albert established the Royal Commission in 1851 policy makers have struggled with our failure to provide young people with a proper technical and practical education of a kind that other nations can boast." (Abbot *et al* 2013:186)

If we haven't got it right in 160 years, then I would suggest that we still have not got it right now, at a time when everything is taking a back seat to the current Brexit negotiations that are taking place.

To understand whether Moser has had an impact over the last twenty years, I argue that it is necessary to gain an insight into how Education Policy in England is written. What causes a policy or report to be produced? Who writes them? What is their intention? If we have a better understanding of English Educational policy making, then we would be able to identify the impact of Moser over twenty years in more detail and look at what is happening in the current climate. Looking back at some of the history of education policy there appears to be a pattern of policy fitting the government of the time.

We all make assumptions that people understand what we are talking about, that they have a shared knowledge and make sense of the world in the same way that we do. If different people are reading and interpreting policy differently, we have to consider whether one person is right and one wrong. We need to identify right and wrong in the interpretation. If teachers misunderstand a document which then had an impact on their delivery, one could argue it is due to the shared knowledge that they have being different from that which the author intended. "The point is that we cannot predict or assume how they will be acted on in every case, in every setting, or what their immediate effect will be". (Ball 1994:19)

The writer of a policy plays an important part. How important are they? Do they have the authority to say what they are saying? Are they to be trusted? What is their knowledge on the subject? Do they hold any credibility? Policy has a voice but only if it can be heard. In order for this to happen it is important that the author is credible and authoritative. (Ball 1994:23) Policy has an effect on what we do, especially in the world of education where education is funded based on whether policy has been followed correctly.

The 16-19 study programmes only get funded if all elements of the programme are in place and the correct number of hours have been met.

What I have attempted to briefly demonstrate here is that policy can have different meanings to different people, it can be credible in different ways and not all policies are legally enforceable. There is an argument for saying that policy is only as good as its interpretation and the interpretation will depend on the knowledge of the reader.

Having had a brief overview of the reports and a brief look at the political tensions and history around English Educational Policy making, I will now explore Education policy and how this may have had an impact. Over the last forty years, England has been under the influence of both the Conservative, New Labour, Conservative/ Liberal Democrat Coalition and a minority Conservative government who have all made many changes to the primary, secondary and post compulsory education sectors of England. One of the ongoing tensions that has impacted on the vast number of policy changes, reports and white papers that have been introduced throughout these years has been the ongoing need to develop the English and maths skills of the nation.

There are many reasons as to why English and maths along with work skills are important to have. Government policies state that these are the necessary skills required to support manufacturing and industry and therefore the country requires a workforce with a minimum skills set so that we can continue to compete with other leading nations. Individuals require the skills so that they are able to integrate into society, support family and children and be able to support themselves. Many adult learners on Skills for Life courses are often in receipt of various benefits and struggling to find employment. 'Job Centre Plus' often works alongside colleges asking them to provide English and maths courses so that learners can go on to gain employment and in turn come out of the benefits system, however as soon

as students find a job, they leave their course, still with no qualification and the providers get poor results assigned to them in relation to retention, achievement and success.

In 2009, (ten years after the publication of Moser) a House of Commons report was published which stated that

“the reason that we have high numbers of adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills is a legacy of a number of decades of schooling which did not equip learners with the skills required. Add to this the failure of employers to identify that these were essential skills required to survive in the workplace, and we then have several generations of people who have poor English and maths skills” (House of Commons – SFL report 2009:7)

This report argued that the schools are at fault and that the lack of English and maths skills that we have as a nation are a result of faults within the primary and secondary education system. Although I am certain that schools have a part to play in the development or lack of development of English and maths, there is an argument to say that the problem is embedded much deeper into the structure of our society. There are generations of families who consider it to be acceptable that they have poor English and maths skills. Their parents never had the skills and were able to ‘get by’ so why should they need the skills. There is a need to look at the culture of society in relation to English and maths. In addition to this, if this report is arguing that the schools are at fault then why does the change in policy get imposed on the post compulsory sector? This raises the question of what is going wrong with the policies that are being written and why over the decades, have we not improved our skills as a nation?

I now explore policy making in general to provide an overview of how policy is formed. This could be a research thesis in its own right and what I discuss here will only be a very small introduction into policy making. I then want to lead us into some discussion on the history of Education policy making and how policy, specifically in relation to education, has been developed and

produced over the last forty or so years. The intention is that we will have a better understanding of the Moser report in relation to policy making and that I can make some links and references to policy making and more specifically links to educational policy making that may have been a contributing factor in developing these reports and the impact that Moser has made over the last twenty years.

English Policy Making

Ball, in his book 'What is Policy' wrote that

“one of the conceptual problems currently lurking within much policy research is that more often than not analysts fail to define conceptually what they mean by policy. The meaning of policy is taken for granted..... policy can be used to describe very different things.” (Ball 1994:15)

It seems that policy is very much about what you interpret and how you interpret it. There was a study carried out that Ball discusses where

“7% of the sample of National Curriculum maths teachers taking part in a study, had never read any national curriculum documents.....and that a significant number of teachers had misunderstood much of what the documents were saying which then had an impact on the delivery of their classroom practice”. (Ball 1994: 17)

Ball identifies a useful starting point when looking at policy, in that policy is only the beginning of something and that the people reading the policy and implementing it, shape it into what it becomes. This suggests that the meaning of what is intended can then change depending on the knowledge and background and context of what is being read.

There is a long-steeped history of English policy making, which could be another piece of research within itself, however for this research I intend to be able to briefly identify and question policy in order to better understand the policies produced. How is policy made? What are the tensions in writing and producing policy? Who are the policy makers and how does policy exist at different levels?

The epistemology of policy making is important. When looking at English and maths in particular and the Moser report, I question whether these policy makers are qualified to produce a policy about developing English and maths? What knowledge and / or qualifications do they have in this

area? Are they a specialist within this field? Before they write a new strategy or policy, are they looking at what has gone wrong previously?

Whenever there is a change of government or statistical documentary evidence which shows that as a nation we are failing at skills development, a new policy is developed around English and maths Skills. As identified earlier, English and maths has been known by many different names over the last forty years. It was felt in 2001 following the release of the Moser report, when Skills for Life became the latest initiative, that using the words 'Literacy' and 'Numeracy' would be more appropriate than 'English' and 'maths'. At the time it was felt that the terms English and maths may impose fear among some, that learners would associate this with the classes that they have previously attended in school, the classes that they often dreaded. As a result of Moser, The Skills for Life initiative wanted to change this thought process and to demonstrate that there was much more to English and maths, relating it to the everyday contexts that we come across in our adult lives. Later, in January 2012, BIS announced that they wanted to move away from using Literacy and Numeracy and back to using English and maths. (LSIS Update – March 2012)

Does changing the name of something really make a difference to how it is seen by others, the skills gained? The expectations? We thought that using the word 'English' instead of 'Literacy' would pose fear into some yet now we are using the word 'English' again to try and ensure that we are aware of exactly what the qualification is that people are undertaking. A 'Literacy' qualification was seen by some employers as not being up to the same standard as those with an 'English' qualification. The same applied to maths and Numeracy.

These policies are passed through government, then schools, colleges and training providers are informed that they need to implement the policy and strategy within a given deadline. In some cases, large amounts of money

was set aside to support the initiative, TV and major advertising campaigns were put into place and support organisations linked to education, such as the QCDA¹³ and LSIS¹⁴ were tasked at providing support to providers in implementing the policy. Quite often these new initiatives were to be implemented within a set short deadline. Providers were often not ready for these changes in policy which involved changes in the way provision was delivered, teaching practices and developing the skills of teaching staff. In the post compulsory sector, as a result of Moser, The Skills for Life Curriculum and later Functional Skills, many teachers were being asked to deliver and support English and maths skills. These teachers came from industry and lacked English and maths skills themselves but were being asked to develop these skills in the learners that they were working with. Policies set by government can be ambiguous and frequently it is up to the institution to interpret the policy and implement it in the best way that they can. Whatever the policy, the statistics still continue to show that many learners are leaving school with a range of GCSEs, however they do not hold a GCSE A* to C¹⁵ in English and/or maths and often those that do, still do not have the transferable skills required to function effectively within work and life.

When looking into policy on education and the education acts that have been passed over the years, a book published in 1984 examining education policy in a thirty five year period from the 1944 Education Act to the mid-1970s, identifies that only three education acts were passed during this time with a limited number of policies being released that had no significant impact on the education system. (Chitty 2014:33) Compare this to the twenty years of 1979 to 2000 which saw over thirty education acts with 'large numbers of circulars, regulations and statutory instruments.' (Chitty 2014:33) From the late 1970s onwards it is evident that suddenly education was high on the government agenda.

¹³ Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency – No longer in existence.

¹⁴ Learning Skills Improvement Service – No longer in existence

¹⁵ Now a numerical grade of 9 to 4

As soon as the Labour party came into power in 1997, they published their first White Paper on Education sixty-seven days after gaining office. According to Chitty, this was 'impressive by anyone's standards', however it became apparent that many of the policies had been drafted earlier and many of the ideas were already being mooted. Two of the six principles within the white paper included policies that were designed to benefit the many, not just the few' along with 'education will be at the heart of the government'. (Chitty 2014:63)

One of the proposals of this white paper was that Literacy and Numeracy (as it had become known again) would be a priority for all children in school. The Literacy hour was introduced in 1998 and a numeracy hour in 1999. (Note this was initiated just before the Moser report was published.) Disappointingly, now twenty years later, we still seem to have the same problems with children coming out of school with poor English and maths skills, however this is an area for another piece of research.

In 2005, Labour gained power again and education policy was still the dominant policy area on their agenda. The Labour manifesto was 'Britain forward, not back' which was the start of 'World Class Skills', the need to be at the forefront of the world. Blair stated that education was at a 'turning point' and was 'poised to become world class. (Chitty 2014: 81) Gordon Brown who was Chancellor at the time stated that 'Education is our biggest economic policy.' Money had been pumped into schools and education for several years by the Labour Government, so schools and education should have been working at its best with some of the best students in the world coming out of our education system.

There have always been tensions over policies between governments with the biggest tension being between the New Labour and Conservative

governments. Which government has focussed on developing education more? Current government policy makers are convinced that the reason that we have a skills shortage as a nation and are falling behind other developed countries is due to the lack of English and /or maths skills holding back productivity growth and prosperity. (Wolf 2011:57)

In 2011, Michael Gove stated in his foreword to The Wolf Report that many of the problems that we have with providing an education to young people has not changed in years. Just a year after the Wolf Report in 2012, (thirteen years after Moser) Coffield and Williamson stated in their book that “The policy process in England is not only flawed, it is breaking down. Within the space of one week in June 2011, the coalition government had to withdraw some of its central provisions of its plans to reform the NHS and to liberalise the sentencing policy of the ministry of justice” (Coffield & Williamson 2012:74)

This statement identified, what Coffield suggested as, the start of a ‘political policy breakdown’. Coffield went on to state that if we don’t make changes to our Education system then we will continue to fall down the economic rankings that put us against other countries in relation to our skills. He states that we are ‘churning out learners from exam factories’ who are being taught how to pass exams but provided with no skills to survive in life. (Coffield & Williamson 2012) As a practitioner, I was finding many of these learners were appearing in my classroom. As teachers, we were teaching them to pass an exam, not gain valuable skills in order to be able to demonstrate the results of success that was required.

Chapter 3: Understanding Education Policy

For this chapter, I will discuss three key areas to support understanding education policy. The first of this is education policy itself and what this actually means. I will then go onto looking at different policy models that are used and how these are used in an education policy context. Finally, I will discuss education policy making or policy production as some call it and how policy making itself can cause unequal power relations.

Educational Policy

I have provided a brief outline about some of the issues surrounding English and maths policy and set a context to explain why England is where it is today. Now I want to discuss the academic context in relation to policy making and more specifically, in relation to educational policy making. Looking up the meaning of the word policy, it states 'a definite course of action adopted for the sake of expediency or a course of action adopted and pursued by government.' (Dictionary.com) If a policy is a course of action that government intends, then I would argue that the frequent changes in government mean that the policies are frequently changed as the intention of government is changed.

Abbot et al (2013) discuss education policy in detail. They have carried out research across the decades, providing an overview of policy in education through time. Not all of what he discusses relates to post 16 education, but there are some common themes that emerge. The discussions that they have around policy all relate to the range of policies and white papers that have been released under different education secretaries or education ministers over the years. Their book details the different ministers and secretaries that have been in place, the background of the Education Minister or Education Secretary and the policies that were produced while they were in office.

Policy is understood in many different ways and the way that we look at policy can vary, depending on the context we are working with. For example, this piece of research focuses on the education sector and educational policy, more specifically Moser and his report on English and maths published in 1999, however policy within the NHS (which is an area where I have very little knowledge and no expertise) could be understood in a very different way and the impact of policy within this sector could have different implications. Policy within the NHS could have life and death decisions. One would hope that within the world of education, although you could argue the social implications that could be impacted from policy, the policy itself would not lead to a life or death decision being made. As you read through this chapter, I will discuss in more detail the different ways that policy is made and the impact of this on education policy.

Clarke in 2012 wrote a paper called 'The (absent) politics of neo-liberal education policy', In this Clarke argues that

“fundamentally, policy is about the exercise of political power and the language that is used to legitimate that process.....Policy concerns the authoritative allocation of values and politics concerns the process of prioritising those values” (Clark 2012:297)

Although Clarke's paper is talking more specifically about the Australian education system as opposed to the English system, he discusses a link between education and individual economic success which we could relate to English and maths reports that this research is looking at in more detail. English and maths are seen as the pinnacle of the skills-based nation that are required in order to remain competitive with the rest of the world. Therefore, this has an economic success link. If as a society these basic skills are not improved, then as a leading country in the world we will no longer be able to sustain the economy that we have. English and maths policy, it could be argued, is being written out of the need for 'social and

economic value' and that as a nation there is a need to prioritise these values.

Another writer on policy is Bailey who in 2013 wrote a paper 'The Policy dispositive: historic formation and method'.

His paper suggests new ideas and theories. Bailey identifies that education is constantly in the process of being made and remade. He states that

“policy should not only refer to written and codified instructions or rules, such as policy documents, which are intended to guide conduct and practice, but should also denote complex processes of policy enactment, policy advocacy, policy influence and policy practice.” (Bailey 2013:813)

Bailey's idea is one that we can take and place alongside the English and maths policies that we are looking at. Bailey's suggestion is that policy is not just a 'set of rules or instructions' but that it is influencing practice. English and maths policy are written by the policy makers, usually a representative of the government of the time and then the expectation is that those working in education, the practitioners, are there to put it into place. Their role is to interpret and re-enact the policy to gain the results that are expected from the policy being in place. There is no room for error or failure and often a set timescale for achievement to be reached.

Bailey refers to Ball's work in 1993 where Ball distinguished between policy as text and policy as discourse – drawing on the idea that policies are contested, mediated and differentially represented by different actors in different contexts, (Policy as text) and that they are also constrained and taken for granted implicit knowledge and assumptions about the world. (Policy as discourse). (Bailey 2013:814) This leads us back to the idea of assumed knowledge and the fact that we need to have a knowledge or idea about a concept in order to interpret what is meant. Without that background knowledge or idea, we are not able to make sense of any new information

that is provided to us. Children make sense of the world by using imaginary play, observation and listening to what goes on around them. As adults we do the same, we may not use imaginary play, but one of the main teaching theories now used with trainee teachers is that of role play and active learning, the idea that we learn through doing rather than observation and listening alone. Practitioners will need to have the background knowledge on why the policy has been written and what is happening nationally with English and maths in order to be able to then put a report or policy into action.

A paper dated (1995) written by Ball looks at 'Intellectuals or Technicians? The urgent role of theory in educational studies' - His opening paragraph suggests that

"educational studies is in a sorry state and in danger of becoming sorer. That is to say, the weak grammars of educational studies, those concepts, relations and procedures upon which it rests, are becoming weaker" (Ball 1995:256)

He goes on to suggest that the 'invisible light that shines within the knowledge structures of educational studies is in danger of going out' (Ball 1995:256) Ball particularly discusses in more detail secondary education, which as stated earlier is not an area that we are going to focus on within this research, however if educational studies really is in a sorry state of affairs, then this impacts on education policy and education policy specifically in relation to Post 16 English and maths too. If the knowledge base is disappearing then who is able to make the decisions that policy needs, who can put together a report based on educational knowledge and studies in relation to what is needed to help future growth and better our skills as a nation? This brings me back to my question on how the writers of these reports, education reports, and more specifically English and maths reports and policies are chosen? What specialist experience and knowledge do they have in the field? Have they worked specifically in the field? Are they able to relate to what goes on in Post 16 education on a daily

basis? Are they able to empathise with further education and other Post 16 providers who are having to deliver key qualifications, gain results, ensure achievement and success all while being given budget cuts which means reducing the number of teachers. Frequently it is the most experienced teachers that leave, they have become demoralised with the profession, they no longer want to spend their weekend lesson prepping and staying up until 2am marking and writing targets, getting into the workplace for 7am to ensure everything is ready for the non-stop back to back day of classes ahead. The knowledge and experience that these practitioners, both teachers and managers have is leaving and becoming lost, this brings us to Ball's sorry state of affairs, and an education system that is becoming weaker with knowledge.

The power that the policy makers have in producing policy which could be seen as having unachievable targets is putting pressure on the practitioners of the Education sector which in turn causes a shortage of teachers and then causes a crisis in schools and Post 16 establishments. This in turn puts more pressure on those that are left in the sector.

Thompson and Cook take a more recent look at policy making. (2014) They use Deluze's three syntheses of time to talk about policy making.

"for us to challenge is to consider policy making as a step into an unknown future, to engage with producing policy that is not grounded on the unconscious interiority of solving the teacher problem, but of imagining new ways of conceiving the relationship between policy making and teaching" (Thompson and Cook 2014:700)

Much of their work in this paper is based on looking at student testing and linking this to teacher performance, where they state that education policy making is about teacher accountability, however some of their ideas can be related to this research. They identify the

“policy makers desire to become the problem solver as a discursive one, embracing an unconscious, if naïve, habit that requires an existing problem that has to be solved” (Thompson and Cook 2014:701)

They argue that policy making is about becoming accountable and wrapped around data.

“many teachers find themselves responding to policy that utilises words that makes a discursive sense to them (such as quality, excellence, accountability), but that are woven together and implemented in different ways from what could be expected, both for the policy maker and the teacher. This creates a tension between professional ethics and values which are sacrificed to performance”. (Thompson and Cook 2014:703)

This resonates with looking at English and maths policy. The documents that I have been exploring in more detail often use the words ‘quality’, ‘excellence’, and ‘accountability’, they are words drummed into English and maths practitioners daily. They are peppered through the reports that we are looking at, the need for England to have an excellent skills set, the need for employers and individuals to be more accountable, and the extra pressure that is put on practitioners to ensure that this is achieved.

They argue that a lot of what is characterised as policy change or reform is looking at the past and a desire or ‘habit’ to recreate events. They look at the idea of policy making as a reference to a process in the past and bringing that process into the living present. Could this be why so many English and maths reports and policies are repetitive? Why they seem to repeat the same ideas but with new language, trying to persuade the reader that the language change means that it is a new idea to be followed? ‘The past is the policy-makers memory of the past’. An important phrase to remember. How has this policy maker remembered the past, were they part of that policy process previously, were they a practitioner living the policy or are they simply reflecting on a past that they were not actively engaged in? I would argue that if the policy maker has no idea of what is happening

in the English and maths world then they are not going to be able to accurately reflect what is needed in the policy that they are producing.

The authors talk about habit and the 'habit of the policy maker as a change agent, driving the revolution needed to begin a higher culture of expectation' (Thompson and Cook 2014:709) but is that really happening when we look at English and maths policy? Are we still expecting more, or have we become disillusioned with the idea that the English and maths skills of the nation will ever get better, will England ever be competitive with other nations? Policy is put into place to drive change, to help improve the future, but it needs to be clear, it needs to have a purpose that doesn't necessarily just refer to the past. Education is a continually changing, there are cycles within education, there is a need to be able to compare one establishment against another, a need to have some data to interpret, a need to enable us all to achieve our dreams, however the way in which this is being driven must be achievable and not just another version of the past. Use the past to learn from and to create a new and different future. Time moves quickly, we can see this from the technological revolution that engulfs us today, we must ensure that policy has a clear purpose to drive this.

Policy Models

We could go onto explore Thompson and Cook's idea in much more detail especially in relation to English and maths policy making, however at this stage I argue that this could lead onto a different route for this thesis. Their idea of the policy maker as a change agent, being able to alter the future path of events - is a key theory and there is a need to consider this against the English and maths reports that I refer to in this research. Each report that is produced, has been produced with a need to change the course of events in relation to Post 16 education. There is a need for change and a need to improve the skills of the nation.

An older piece of research looking at how messy policy work can get is Gorur who looked at 'Policy as Assemblage' 2011. Gorur talks about the 'plethora of available policy models 'and how these did not satisfy her understanding of the 'messiness of policy work.' She discusses how messy policy work can get, using the concept of 'assemblage' to provide the tools to better understand the process of policy work. (Gorur 2011:1)

When we look at how to understand what happens during policy making, Gorur's research suggests that there is a lot more to influencing policy than just providing 'credible' research. She questions how 'facts' come to be accepted as fact and how policy can influence 'changing the way that people think about the world' demonstrating just how powerful policy can be when you are looking at the impact of policy on those around us. (Gorur 2011:2). Policy is complex and unpredictable. A bold statement which we can link to English and maths policy. As practitioners we are aware that a new paper, policy or report is on its way. It is talked about by the Department of Education for a while before publication with the phrase 'we will publish the findings.....' However, what the policy or report actually says can throw an unexpected curve ball. An example of this is the white paper released in 2016 on school academisation, a paper released that stated that all schools were to become academies by 2020. This caused turbulence in the education community. Schools did not want to be forced to convert to an academy. There was still much to learn about the academy programme and just three years later, many of the current Multi Academy Trusts (MAT's) are failing and are falling into financial difficulty due to the lack of support that they have. ¹⁶

In 2020 it was stated that

"Of the 62 MATs running mainstream secondary schools examined by the DfE, 45% were found to be "performing significantly below average" while

¹⁶ Now in 2020, there are still many schools that are not part of a Multi Academy Trust and a number of failing schools that have an academy order but no academy willing to take them on.

30% were found to be “significantly above average.” It appears that MATs are either thriving and flourishing as the government model intended or they are failing, and in some cases, spectacularly so.” (Francis Clark – accessed 8.7.2020)

The power of this one report released in 2016 was chilling, it created panic and resentment and caused some authorities to make rash decisions that were not always thought through for the best of those around them.

In an interview that Gorur carried out for her research. She discusses how one interviewee, talks about

“the joy of policy making... is that it is always susceptible to different forces and if you can read that strategic environment well enough, and if you are well enough placed... you can actually intervene and make differences which are quite remarkably fast and successful even though, at times, you are talking of very, very complex and difficult environments” (Gorur 2011:2)

Policy can be very influential and if you portray something in the right way, to the right audience, with ‘facts’ that support the policy, then you can influence change. You can also influence discontent and in the case of English and maths policy, there are instances where, when a new policy has been produced, there has been criticism on how it has been decided. The question of ‘fact’ is a difficult one. Who confirms what a fact is? What prior knowledge do you require in order to be able to ascertain that something is fact? There are statistical facts, but these can be manipulated. Policy making is subjective. Gorur talks about ‘how difficult it is to trace the boundaries and origins of policy influences and practice.’ (Gorur 2011:3)

When looking at policy produced by PISA, Gorur discovered that

“policy was not made by a few officials in well-appointed buildings during committee meetings, guided by graphs and tables, but involved a great deal of activity occurring at multiple levels at various venues. Not only were policy actors diverse and widespread, they were often difficult to identify – was a PISA scientist not doing policy work as assiduously as any minister of education? Were they not both engaged actively in similar practices,

translating interests and enrolling actors and building agreement and creating or closing disagreement?” (Gorur 2011:3) When we look at policy production, there are always several people involved. There will have been a large team working on producing information. Those that ‘play’ with numbers, that inherently produce statistics that the policy makers want, they decide on the format for the best presentation dependent on what is trying to be portrayed.

Education itself is built on policy. There is a large ‘phenomenon of evidence-based policy in education’. One policy builds on another and often the ‘evidence’ from one is portrayed in another and then another. This can mean that information and evidence change over time. A bit like a game of Chinese Whispers¹⁷, where the end message is not necessarily the same as the first message. The message has been misinterpreted and misconstrued over time and then you find that people are carrying out something different from what the policy intended. Gorur discusses how textbooks identify that

“Policy-making is a process of informed problem solving. A problem is first identified and then data is collected on the problem. Later the problem and data is analysed and then the advice that has been decided is used to make a policy decision. The work of policy is framed with the concepts of choice and decision theory.” (Gorur 2011:4)

This is a way of putting different elements of policy making into boxes. Each box has an impact and once one box is filled with information, the next box is then built on information of the next stage. (Gorur 2011:4) What Gorur does go on to question, is who or what defines what a policy problem is? Is policy making really as simple as compartmentalising separate bits of information, looking at them all and then coming up with a blanket response

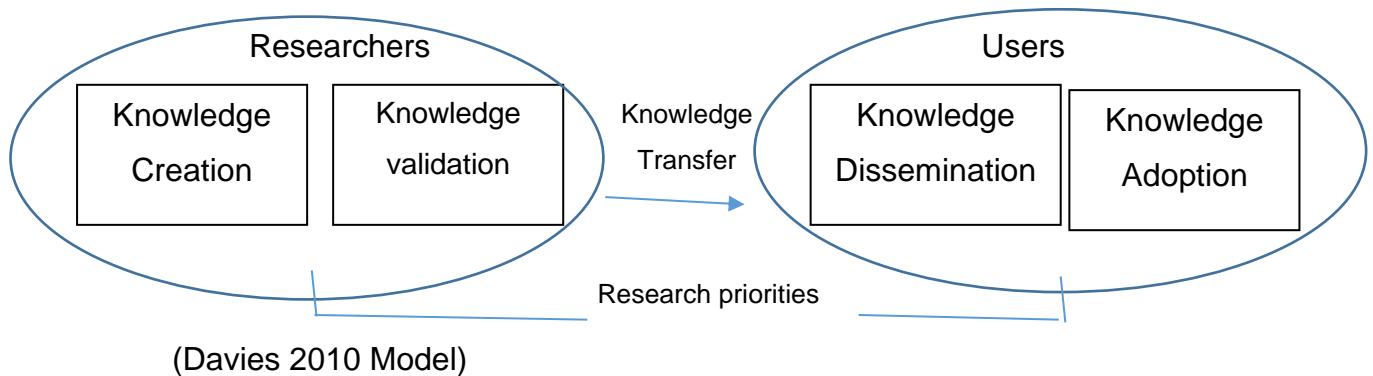
¹⁷ a game in which a message is passed on, in a whisper, by each of a number of people, so that the final version of the message is often radically changed from the original

that is suitable for all? We already know that with English and maths policy, 'one size doesn't fit all.'

Gorur looks briefly at four different models of policy making. I will not be discussing any in detail, however I have outlined them here and made reference to them in relation to education and more specifically English and maths policy.

Davies 2010 uses the 'two communities' model which outlines the researchers and the users and how they link together to outline research priorities and produce action (ie policy)

Figure 5 – Davies Policy Model (2010)

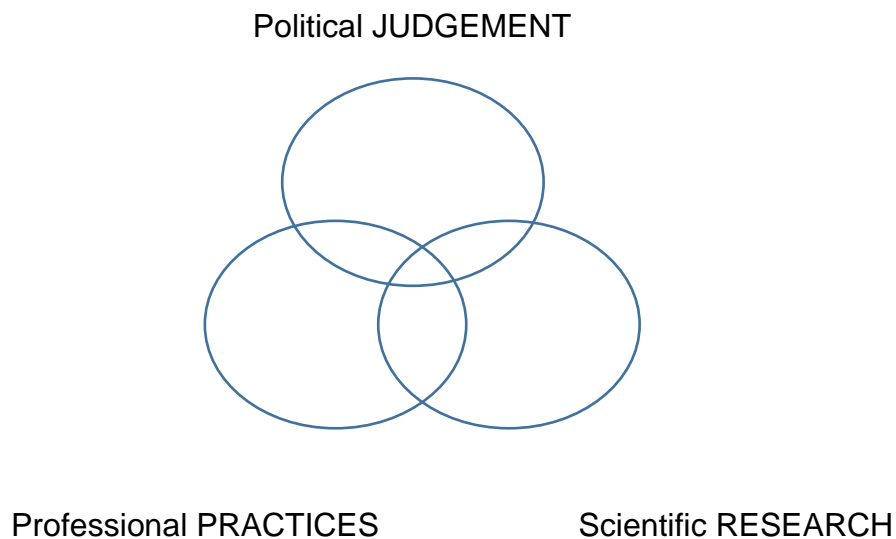


Gorur states that this model is too simple and linear, however in relation to English and maths policy you can see how the creation and validation of knowledge is then transferred to what we disseminate to others. Policy makers in English and maths use results and grades to validate the ideas that English and maths is poor across the nation and then this is disseminated into a policy that Post 16 providers are required to adopt and use. This model in itself isn't wrong, but the unanswered question is still that which runs through this research, in that if this is being done time and

time again, why are things not improving in relation to English and maths results?

Figure 6 – Head Policy Model (2008)

(Head 2008 Model)



Head uses three kinds of knowledge in his model, the political knowhow, the scientific / technical knowledge and the practical / professional experience. Each of them brings key information to the formation of policy and that you cannot have one element without the other as they all overlap. (Gorur 2011:5)

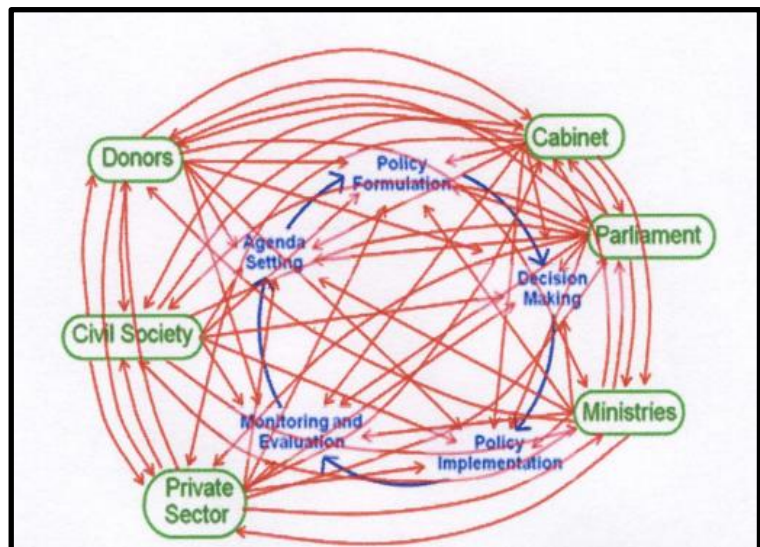
Looking at this in relation to English and maths, we can see that the practical and professional experience is from those that work in the field, the best people to be able to give this knowledge are the English and maths lecturers themselves. The scientific research being the facts and statistics that are being used to influence policy making, the facts that are being used to shock, to say that as a nation we are not very good at English and maths and that we do not have the skills that employers are looking for. The political judgement is that of the policy makers themselves. Educational

policy is in most cases produced by government, they take the technical information and use it to portray a message that they want to get across, using different ways of interpreting the facts to portray a picture that is needed. I question whether if using this model in relation to English and maths policy making, there is any use of professional practices and I suggest that often this is removed.

Figure 7 – Young Policy Model (2010)

(Young 2010 Model)

In this model Young takes the key elements of policy making, and then looks at those that influence from around the periphery. Lobby groups and other



pressures which can influence how far a policy maker is willing to go in writing policy. This comes across as a 'messy' model where it can all become an entangled web of influences. I argue that this model doesn't relate to the production of English and maths policy. There are many lobby groups and people that could externally influence, but the reality I suggest is that these are not listened to. (Young 2010)

Figure 8 – Nutley Policy Model (2009)

(Nutley 2009)



Nutley, looks at the different people that can influence policy making, along with how they can interact. Nutley states that when the number of influencers increase, there is '*diversity in their understanding of what counts as 'evidence'*' (Gorur 2011:4)

Young and Nutley's policy making models that Gorur discusses, start to discuss the additional influencers in policy making and how these can make things more complicated. It discusses how you start to question the information you are being provided with, when there are more people involved. How do you ascertain how correct the facts that you are being presented with are? How much can you drill down for background evidence? In the case of English and maths government policy making, there is a time limit, deadlines on what needs to be produced and time pressures are competing.

Gorur in her discussion on the complexities of policy making, explores how people see policy making differently.

“While rational realists imagine the policy terrain to be firm, mappable and navigable, post positivists see it as messy, complex and difficult. Where the former see social science as producing codified, transferable knowledge, the latter see it as a process of ongoing social learning in an ever-changing world. These views lead to different aspirations, the former seek to focus on decision-making protocols that facilitate ‘command and control’, the latter on ideas to promote continuous learning and self-organisations. If the former seeks to answer, ‘what works?’ the latter explains the question to ‘what works for whom, when and how?’ What kind of evidence works for what kind of problem / policy in what context and for whom?” (Gorur 2011:6)

Maybe if the policy making is very scientific, and there is an absolute answer, then policy making is not as messy. There is an absolute and that is what we must follow. However, English and maths policy making is political and messy. There is no science, just a lot of theory. I have worked with students, who try over and over, but will not be grade ‘A’ English students. It doesn’t mean that I ‘wrote them off’ as being no good for the economy, it means that I provided support and strategies to help them and prepare them with life skills for personal and social use as well as for employability. We all have natural talents and we need to remember that we are all good at some things and not others. The world would be a very boring place if everyone was the same. Human beings all have an inbuilt survival instinct, it goes back to the start of humankind, when we had to hunt and stay warm and be wary of predators. In nations such as England today, we no longer need to hunt to find food, but we do need to survive in other ways. Many of the jobs that schools are preparing children for today have not been created yet. We live in an ever-changing world and we need to be able to adapt and have transferable skills. There is no doubt about this. It is vital that English and maths policy isn’t penalising those that may

not achieve what is being requested and that it is supportive for all. Using the models discussed in Gorur's research, Education practitioners need to be involved along with the English and maths teachers themselves to ensure that the realities of what is happening in the classroom day to day are being taken into account. It is vital that practitioners and educationalists are aware of the facts and how they are being interpreted. Statistics can be manipulated, showing a percentage can make something look very good or very bad, showing the overall number can put something into context. A 25% failure rate of a cohort of only four students means one failed to achieve what was expected, for which there could be a perfectly acceptable explanation. 25% of a thousand student's means over two hundred and fifty didn't achieve and this is a more worrying statistic. We need to ensure that policy is being used in the right way. Policy is written and rewritten and the more re-writes that it has the messier it can get.

Policy making

In 2003 Gale produced a paper, where he speaks in detail about policy production. "Drawing attention to the 'how' of policy production challenges not just the premise of rationality in policy making but also how particular individuals and groups are involved in various contexts as policy makers" (Gale 2003:52) He questions three things when looking at policy production

- 1) Why are some items on the policy agenda and not others?
- 2) Why are some policy actors involved in the production of policy and not others?
- 3) What are the conditions that regulate the patterns of interaction of those involved? (Gale 2003:52)

When looking at these three questions in relation to English and maths policy making, I question what is included in the policy and what isn't and why? Looking at policy that is very much government led and in the education sector, it is vital to think back to my earlier statements where I look to consider who the people are behind the policy, are they the

technicians, practitioners or politicians and what decisions have been made in considering the message that they are trying to get across?

The twenty-two concepts of policy making and policy production used by different academics leads me to question the difference. If you think about the making of something, then you look at the process of making something from start to finish. If you make a cake, you gather the ingredients and equipment, look at the time required and then follow a formula until you achieve the end result. However, we could also call it cake production, where we produce a cake, again we gather the ingredients and equipment, look at the timings involved and then follow a formula to achieve the end product. Often one talks about a 'product' when it is mass produced for many people. Factories make products that they sell. Can we relate this to policy making / policy production? Policy is made for lots of people to use, it is something that will have a wide audience and influence the lives of many? For now I will use the term policy making.

Gale talks about 'policy actors' and how these can dominate policy? Who are the policy actors and how do they influence? Is it the politicians, those that have most influence over educational policy?

"Changes in government are telling moments for policy actors. They can result in the repositioning of policy actors within policy contexts, a reduction in their status and legitimacy as policy producers and sometimes their exclusion from policy making contexts all together". (Gale 2003:56)

If there is a change in government mid-way through a policy discussion, it can often mean that the policy is scrapped or radically changed depending on the positioning of the government in its views on education.

I mentioned earlier in this thesis the question of how policy makers are chosen. I have questioned the use of subject practitioners and subject experts in English and maths policy making. Are they used to support the

policy making, are their views sought? Do they talk to the people that are dealing with delivering English and maths qualifications on a daily basis? Gale describes a situation where

“xxx was chosen because she’s an expert at policy making, not because she knew anything about this particular issue.... She’s a very bright, able policy analyst. That’s her background... and that’s what they wanted. They didn’t want an educational person..... that was the rationale between choosing xxx as chair of the committee and xxx as the policy reviewer. They are both policy people”. (Gale 2003:58)

Gale goes on to say that in educational policy making, this positioning of people is not uncommon. If English and maths policy is not being contributed to by English and maths subject experts, how can one possibly expect those in the Post 16 education sector to be able to follow policy and to support it. What chance do they have at improving English and maths skills if they are constantly being asked to get them up to certain levels and qualifications are the only way of showing achievement? There is almost a blanket assumption by those that are policy making that everyone is the same, all capable of the same things. We all have great ambition and we are all capable of much more than we realise, we should have the opportunity to be able to nurture this and develop our skills, attributes, ambitions and careers, but as stated previously, we need to consider that different people achieve well at different things and this is what makes us human.

In their paper ‘Re-inventing public education’ (2010) Grek and Ozga discuss the ‘changing role of knowledge in education policymaking within the knowledge society’ They discuss the issue of ‘knowledge being used in order to re-configure education as part of a range of public services to meet individuals need’. (Grek & Ozga 2010:271) If policy is being used to service individual needs, then surely it should be written with the individuals that it is being written for in mind? If these individuals and their needs are not

being taken into account, then the policy will not support society and its public services.

As previously suggested, knowledge is key with anything that is decided. Our understanding of the world and the knowledge that we have influences the decisions that we make. 'Knowledge plays a key role in promoting policy, as it is only through the integration of knowledge that integration of policy is feasible'. (Grek & Ozga 2010:272) An interesting statement made in their paper is that 'problems do not seem to exist or matter to policy makers unless they appear in alarming red colours in statistical spreadsheets or media headlines' (Grek & Ozga 2010:272) Do the politicians that are writing policy only write it when something alarming has happened? Do the policy makers themselves have very little interest in the policy that they are producing but simply see it as a job to do? They come across an issue but may not necessarily see it as an issue as it isn't an issue to them. They are not the ones who are required to interpret the policy. They are not the ones having to implement the policy so the realism of what they are writing is meaningless to the policy makers themselves. If as in Gale's paper, the policy makers are being chosen because of who they are or the prestige of their background and not because of their subject knowledge and experience, then one could argue that all education policy making is meaningless. Those who write English and maths policy have no interest in the impact of the end result but that they are required to ensure that the policy meets the brief that has been set upon them.

I have already discussed Moser, released in 1999 where the poor English and maths skills of England were highlighted using stark statistics which shocked. This prompted a plethora of policy being released that has got us to this point. A rush to get policy 'out there' due to a sudden problem being highlighted. In their paper Grek & Ozga go on to suggest that

"Proliferation of knowledge in education governance has resulted in a weakening of education as a distinctive field of governance, rather it is the

regulation of knowledge that appears to determine the governance of education.” (Grek & Ozga 2010:272)

There is often political tension in policy making, with the need to ‘cut costs’ and ensure that the policy is servicing the future. There will be differences of opinions depending on the policy makers engaged in the policy and the organisations that are affected. A core point made and a point that I argue is prevalent in good policy making is that ‘knowledge is key’. Grek & Ozga state that ‘education policy is heavily dependent on knowledge policy and politics’ (Grek & Ozga 2010:285) however what I argue is missing is the practical knowledge that could inform these policies of what is happening ‘on the ground’ with Post 16 providers and the students that they are working with.

To continue looking at some of the previous academic research around policy making within education I also draw upon Liasidou. She discusses the idea of unequal power relations in Educational policy making, talking about policy making cycles and how the power of policy making is constantly shifting from one to another.

“.... Policy is the result of intense struggles between different social actors, whose interests, aspirations, and beliefs occasionally collide and render policy making a demanding task”. (Liasidou 2011:888)

This relates to what we discussed earlier, policy making is seen as a process where different people provide different types of input, namely the scientists or technical people, the practitioners (sometimes) and the politicians themselves. Liasidou calls them actors who are all fighting for their own piece of fame and all have a different viewpoint that they want to add to their ideas. With this in mind you can see how the tensions rise and a power struggle can take place. This links to the work of Gale and that of Grek and Ozga where we have suggested that those producing the policy are not actually interested in the policy itself. They just want to get their name in place and complete a task that they have been asked to do.

Throughout this research I discuss the idea that English and maths policy is open to interpretation, it is never clear what the writer intends the audience to do exactly. There is a level of ambiguity, possibly so that no one can be held accountable. If something is misinterpreted, then it isn't the policy writers' fault is it? Or is it? Liasidou's research states that policy is vague and generalised and full of contradictions, this is exactly what I have discovered as a common theme within English and maths policy.

Ball writes in Liasidou that "Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or change". (Liasidou 2011:902) The idea that policy is there to influence you but not dictate to you how something should be done. Ball explores the idea that policy sets out options that can be used to narrow your ideas and to enable you to identify which route to take out of a number of options. I argue this to be the case for English and maths policy as we have already stated that the policy itself is never clear to the practitioners that are required to follow it, however what if we were to relate this to a policy such as safeguarding, then there are a set rules to apply, given rules that we must follow, law and legislation states what we must do. In the case of a safeguarding policy we do not have a range of 'circumstances' that we can then try different options from. The idea that policies set a range of circumstances is not an idea that is supported by English and maths practitioners, they see policy as a given, as a set of rules that must be followed. In many instances, funding of a Post 16 provider is dictated by the 'rule of the policy', if this is the case then there is not a set of circumstances to interpret and make sense of. You need to do it a certain way to gain the funding to enable you as a provider to continue to exist. English and maths policies have given goals, statistics that the government wants the nation to have achieved by a certain point and if this is not achieved then Post 16 providers are being held accountable and questioned on their failure. It is not often that the successes are looked at or a discussion over what constitutes a success is discussed. I argue that if someone moves from being able to read nothing, to being able to follow

a 'quick read'¹⁸ book within two years, then that should be marked as a success, however if they have not passed a given examination then it counts as a failure.

As part of my research into academic writing already available in relation to policy, I will now briefly mention the media hype that you get around policy production and how this can influence what policy says and how it is produced. Lingard & Rowolle suggest in their paper 'Mediatizing education policy' (2004) that the 'production of public policy texts today is a heavily *mediatized* process' Referring to the way in which media considerations now affect both policy processes and texts. (Lingard & Rowolle (2004) Although I am not going to focus on the work of Lingard and Rowolle in relation to this piece of research, I will put forward the idea from their paper about political language from the Blair government having an impact on policy.

"While the critical discourse account of the political language of the Blair government provided by Fairclough (2000) is applied to the language of politics generally rather than to policy, his work does give some attention to the role of the media in contemporary policy. Fairclough refers to this as the mediatization of politics and notes how media representation under the Blair government has been incorporated as part of both policy production and the policy text and played an important manufacturing of consent role". (Lingard & Rowolle (2004:363)

The paper suggests that as soon as there is any policy release, it is followed by a media frenzy in which one media type starts by commenting and this is then followed with other journalists getting on board and different media types commenting and publicising the policy. (Something that was very apparent in the 2016 release of the academisation agenda as mentioned previously.)

¹⁸ A set of books published to support adults learning to read and improve their Literacy skills.

“Today with tighter control by politicians over the policy agenda, the release of any significant educational policy is usually accompanied by a media release and a media conference”. (Lingard and Rowolle 2004:364)

This could arguably be seen as a way of the political party of the time ensuring that they are able to influence how the policy is to be received. Interestingly, Lingard and Rowolle have discussed Bourdieu’s theory of ‘permanent amnesia’ which he uses to refer to the way that the ‘media report some issues without any recourse to earlier events or even earlier stories’ (Lingard and Rowolle (2004:367) They use this idea in relation to educational policy, suggesting that the

“concept of permanent amnesia has some purchase as a descriptor for aspects of the logic of practice in the sub-field of educational policy in respect of policy text production..... The ongoing restructuring of educational systems, the contractual employment of senior policy officers, the emergence of generic managers, all ensure the loss of policy memory within the processes of educational policy text production”. (Lingard & Rowolle 2004:367)

As previously mentioned, I question whether when a new policy is produced for education, especially in relation to English and maths, any account has been taken of the policy that was previously produced. In many cases, it seems that the same policies and reports and the same data are repeated over and over again. ‘Policy amnesia’ could be the answer for this. If policy writers and researchers are ‘deliberately;’ not looking at what goes before, then this could well be the reason why the same things seem to keep emerging with very little difference from the policy or report that was written before it.

Looking at the literature that has been produced in relation to policy making, it appears that it is a minefield of different ideas. There is a constant need to question who the policy maker is and what their reasons are for producing the policy. Are they an expert in the field, is there assumed knowledge, is the policy a set of rules to follow or simply a set of

circumstances for practitioners to address in their own way? When policy is written, what model is being used, if indeed any? Who are the influencers, the statisticians and the writers? If policy is being rewritten, is it getting messier, is the original intention still apparent and is there a possibility that the message is changing through the rewriting process? All of these literatures provide us with questions to consider in relation to educational policy and more specifically in relation to English and maths policy.

Is policy simply a text that has been produced? Black type on a piece of white paper? What gives that piece of paper the power that it has? Many of the literatures looked at suggest that policy is all about text, a piece of writing that has been produced which can be followed as you wish, that you can use your assumed knowledge to disentangle and to translate into something that is meaningful to you as a Post 16 provider or teaching practitioner.

The Moser Report was published specifically to demonstrate the impact of poor English and maths skills in England. Many other publications produced have been in relation to other issues with links to the poor English and maths skills that England has. There are common themes and a particular use of lexis that runs throughout some of the reports identified. We as a nation must question why within the paper, 'A basis for Choice', which was a report produced in 1979 by the Further Education Unit, (FEU) it necessitated the requirement for 'Core Skills' to be developed and linked to all vocational programmes and then thirty-two years later, the recommendations in The Wolf Report identified the need for learners to have English and maths GCSE and Functional Skills in order to be employable which should be linked to all vocational programmes. The question here is why has the same statement been suggested after thirty-two years of developing policy, changing strategy and spending money on the development of English and maths? According to Coffield & Williamson (2012:37)

“the response of government to any problem during the last sixty years has been piecemeal change to existing structures rather than addressing the causes of the problem”. (Coffield & Williamson 2012:37)

Policies seem to be reworded and restructured, but in essence there seems to be little change from previous policy and government. I am not looking to provide an answer to how we can ensure that the nation has the English and maths skills that we need, this has been an ongoing challenge that will continue, after all, it has not been answered in the last forty years, however **I want to discuss the impact of Moser, twenty years after his publication in relation to the improvement of English and maths skills in England.**

There is a considerable amount of literature around educational policy looking at all levels of education from early years to Post 16 and higher education, a number of papers speak more specifically about policy production, an area discussed earlier, within the world of education and some of these ideas can lead us to question how educational policy is produced.

Ball goes on in his book to say that a policy simply creates a set of circumstances with you then deciding on a way forward and a course of action to take. (Ball 1994:19) Is this what has happened to English and maths policy over the years? Ball discusses policy further in looking at policy as discourse. He states

“Discourses are not about objects, they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention..... Discourse is about what can be said and thought but also about who can speak when and where and with what authority.” (Ball 1994:21)

This reinforces an argument that I make about policy being interpreted as a set of words which leads us to believe something in a certain way

depending on our epistemology. Policies move with time and language in relation to how we interpret and enact policies.

I have looked at the academic literatures here in relation to Moser twenty years on, to provide some theories, ideas and suggestions as to the complexities of Education policy and policy making. Many of these literatures show that despite a policy or report being released, there is not always the impact that we hope will take place. Policy making is complex and as suggested throughout this chapter is generally not carried out by just one person and in many circumstances the author of the policy may not have any direct background in what they are writing about.

As we go on to explore whether Moser has had an impact after twenty years, we need to keep in mind that even if an impact has been made, it may not be the impact that was intended. We have clearly shown throughout this chapter that policy can be interpreted in many different ways by different people and this causes distortions.

As discussed here there are these 3 things that influence policy. The educational policy itself, the different policy models that are often used along with the advantages and disadvantages of each and finally the policy making process – sometimes called policy production. Here I have only briefly touched on policy but what is apparent is the impact that education policy, policy models and policy making has on English and maths in England. As I discuss English, maths and Moser further in Chapter 5, I will reference back to some of the key themes mentioned here.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Knowledge means that we know something which is generally factual about a situation, we then link this to our understanding of the world, our ideology and what we believe to be right and wrong. When we take part in any interaction whether verbal or textual, we make an assumption that the person or people that we are talking to have an idea of what we are talking about. There needs to be some back-ground knowledge on the subject. In order for me to write about English and maths policy in England and discuss poor English and maths skills among adults, the audience needs to acknowledge what we mean by English and maths skills and that there is an inherent understanding of what is meant by poor skills in English and maths. The skill level judged by others is almost always context driven. In order to understand further what I am writing about there is a need to be aware of the current situation in terms of the social agenda and what is happening politically. The fact that we have been through many years of political uncertainty, have a national debt and are currently dealing with Brexit issues, decisions that are agreed by parliament are not always carried out or carried out effectively. Decisions are often retracted or reversed such as the 'Education Excellence Paper' with the academies agenda being a prime example of this.

We assume a preconceived knowledge that the reader of a written text will have background knowledge of the subject in question and any specialist language surrounding that subject. There is a question as to how far this should go? Educational reports and policies are generally written with key audiences in mind. In relation to the Moser report it was written with the following in mind - Political leaders, educational leaders, heads of department in Post 16 education, including those focussing on English and maths and those that focus on more vocational subjects. Teachers and trainers and those that are training to become teachers and trainers will have studied Moser. Governors who are volunteers and support the

Leadership and Management of Post 16 education will be aware of the Moser report and in some cases, maybe even the students themselves that the report may or may not relate to.

Our schema plays a large function in our everyday life and our working life. This is our knowledge and understanding of the world. When writing this research, I expect the reader to have a knowledge of English and maths within the Post 16 sector. That they are aware that we have poor English and maths skills as a nation and that it has been an ingrained social and economic problem for some time. Is this a step too far? I argue that I risk making an assumption that may not be true. Who will be interested in this research? How will it be interpreted?

Genre plays a large part in the Moser Report used in this research; the type of text is discussed along with the linguistic features of the text. The pragmatics of language is where we are concerned with the writer and the writer's background, attitudes and beliefs, their understanding of the context in which a sentence is written and the understanding of how language can inform and persuade. As we write we portray our own beliefs and understanding of a situation. Indeed, in this research, I suggest that my beliefs will underpin what I write, even if I don't intend them to do so.

The English and maths problem is a practical problem as Moser states in his report. It concerns what we all do. The reports are simply epistemic reasoning in response to the problem, with no practical solution. Looking at Moser, there is an argument that the solution lies in society itself and I argue that until society changes, government will not be able to cure the English and maths crisis. Looking back on Moser it appears that maybe this was the message that he was trying to get across in his report. Until society changes its attitude, the English and maths issues that we face will not improve in England.

This research is not based on data or interviews. It is based predominantly on the Moser report, with some discussion around other reports that Moser had influenced Moser has had a lasting impact on those that are of working age from 1999 onwards along with reports that are referred to in educational studies today and dictate the Post 16 education sector. As stated in Chapter 3 when looking at academic literatures around understanding educational policy, we act in order to follow the suggestions of the reports with no real reason as to why.

My intention with this thesis is to look at the Moser report in detail and then to look at what has happened in relation to English and maths Post 16 education in the 20 years that have followed Moser. Has Moser had any impact on where we are today? To support this, I looked at some of the academic writing around policy making, more specifically educational policy making, and I looked at who writes policy and its impact. This large Chapter I argue as being necessary to provide you with some background on who writes policy and why. I argue that as educationalists we question who has written what we are required to follow and what the intention was at the time. Educationalists also question why there is often policy after policy, and it appears that nothing changes. What had become apparent from my previous chapter is that educational policy writing is very complex and would require another thesis to discuss in the level of detail required. What I have ascertained as we move forward with investigating Moser further, is that policy is driven by the political circumstance at the time. Much of the impact of Moser took place in the first ten years following its publication and very little in the last ten years prior to its twenty-year anniversary.

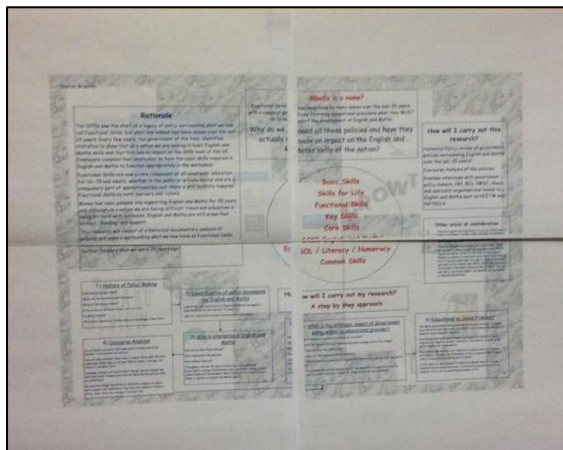
Ethical Issues

The research involves the analysis of policy and how this impacts on Post 16 education daily. There will be no interviews and no experiments or quantitative research carried out. There will be no risk to individuals or

providers from this research. This research was carried out subject to appropriate ethical guidelines. No individual providers will be named during the research.

Analytical Approach

Figure 9 – Initial Plan of thesis ideas



My initial rationale and thoughts for my thesis. Originally, I wanted to analyse a large number of reports in the hope I would find the answer to the English and maths problem.

This quickly changed to looking at four key reports, Moser, Foster, Leitch and Wolf. This later changed again to looking at the impact of Moser over twenty years.

Having identified initially that I wanted to explore four reports in detail (Moser, Foster, Leitch and Wolf), it quickly became apparent that this thesis needed to look at life after Moser and explore its impact in more detail.

I have provided a brief overview of what was happening within England at the time politically, with references to health, employment, skills and education. In relation to my earlier discussion around who produces policy I also questioned the authors of the texts, who they were, what their background was and their experiences in education.

I discussed the Moser report, key themes and final conclusions or recommendations. Are they merely suggestions or are they stipulating future changes to Post 16 education?

For Moser, I will provide an explanation of what his intention was and will go on to look at where we are with Moser some twenty years after the report was written. I want to explore whether there was a follow up to his report and whether after twenty years, there has been a significant impact to English and maths skills across England directly as a result of Moser.

Figure 10 – Key themes identified during research and planning

Moser and the other reports that link closely to Moser all relate either whole or in part to the English and maths crises that we have within the Post 16 sector. The issue we have in England is that our English and maths skills are



so poor that we now have a skills deficit. A culture whereby we state openly that it is acceptable to be poor at maths – a statement that would not be made so openly in other European countries.

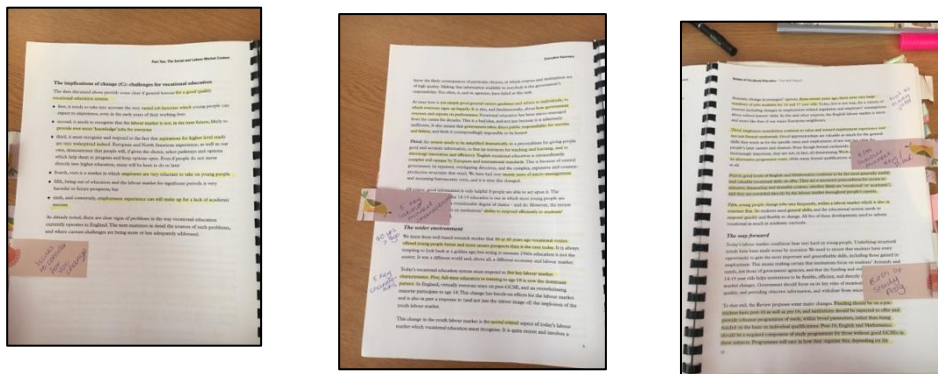
Although Moser is the main report and the impact that this has had twenty years on, it is important to look at Foster, Leitch and Wolf in relation to Moser. There are many other reports and policies that I could also look at (as stated in appendix three), however, I need to limit the boundaries of this thesis.

I have chosen Foster and Leitch as they were produced within a few years of Moser being published and although they were not completely based on English and maths directly, they had areas that linked to this and to the Moser report. They were produced at a time when Moser and Skills for Life

were still very dominant in Post 16 and there was clearly a large amount of work being carried out to support English and maths.

The Wolf Report, I have chosen as twelve years after Moser, I argue it was the last major report to have any impact following Moser and focuses on the English and maths skills of England at the time. It demonstrates that in the twelve years since Moser, the skills have not improved quite as well as was expected. Wolf, like Moser made a lasting impact on educational practitioners and the changes that were placed on Post 16 providers.

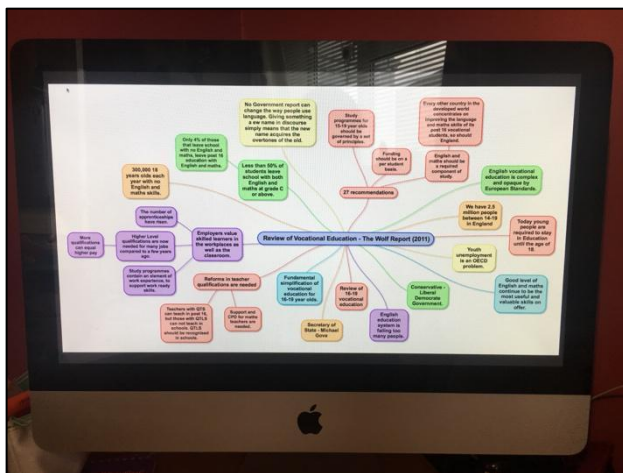
Figure 11 – Researching the Wolf Report



Pages from the Wolf Report, highlighted notes, margin notes and post it questions.

My approach to the reports has been consistent to each. I started with a printed copy that could be read, using highlighting and notes in the margins along with post-it notes outlining key issues, key facts or questions. I then went on to mind map each of the reports (these you will see later in this piece of research) outlining the key points of each, creating sub sections and sub questions of what the report was saying, or what it wasn't telling me and issues that I wanted to investigate further.

Figure 12 – Mind map of the Wolf Report



Mind map of the Wolf Report, key points and questions noted with sub strands where themes were similar or needed further discussion.

There is a mind map for Moser, Foster, Leitch and Wolf as seen in chapter 1.

I have also added mind maps in appendix 4 of other reports and policies that I looked at.

The next step was to compare the mind maps – common strands, key themes, repetition to Moser – what were the similarities and differences. I started to look at them to see what the assumed knowledge was that the author of each report expected you to have. How did they replicate, improve on or move away from what Moser had initially identified.

When I was looking into this research, I carried out background reading into other Skills for Life related documents and reports that may have influenced my thinking and ideas. I used mind mapping software and outlined some of the key ideas and points that have been raised in these readings which I have attached as Appendix 4a – 4m. In an ideal world, I would have gone through all of these papers in much more detail and discussed all of them further and made links between them and Moser, however, with limited time and resources, I was not able to do this but wanted to leave them as a reference for further research and thinking.

I looked at each chapter of Moser separately to start with and wanted to have a list of subheadings so that I could write about the same themes / areas. My intention was that I could then compare this with Foster, Leitch

and Wolf to identify the impact of Moser on other reports, however I quickly realised this wasn't possible, especially for the Foster Report. My initial investigation was to explore the four reports in detail in relation to the impact on English and maths starting with Moser, but I knew that this may move the research away from its main point which was the impact of Moser twenty years on. It was decided to look at Moser in detail and to identify where it was twenty years later using the other three reports to support the process.

Ingrained throughout the analysis of these reports I quickly identified the need for theory and discussion on education policy as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Twenty years is a long time in the world of politics and education, it is a generation. The way that politics moves forward is continually changing. It is imperative that we keep this in context when looking at the report and refer where possible to any other papers that have mentioned the issue of English and maths at a similar time.

Figure 13 – Mind map on policy



When I realised that I needed to look at education policy in more detail, I started to look at all the policy documents linked to education that had been released and this raised a series of questions that I then needed to narrow down.

When I discussed the ethics of my research earlier, I stated that this research was solely about an analysis of Moser and its impact. My initial thoughts when I first started out on this journey was that I would interview the authors of all four reports. I wanted to understand their thinking behind the report, whether they were restricted in what they could or could not write

and whether they would say the same thing if they had the opportunity to do it all again. I was interested to ascertain how Foster, Leitch and Wolf felt about their reports and how they impacted against Moser and whether they were given a brief in relation to the writing of their report against what Moser had written a few years earlier. As I progressed further, I realised that although this would answer questions, it would not necessarily make any difference to the outcome of the research and moving forward with English and maths policy and Moser's impact. Time and resources was another issue which meant that this was an avenue I was unable to explore further.

In the case of these reports along with Moser is that they are presenting an argument stating we have an issue with English and maths skills nationally. It provides actions for moving forward and in some reports identifies the consequences of not carrying out these actions. The actions placed in some of the reports are time bound, there is a need to improve English and maths skills by a given year, a time when England needs to have upskilled and be competitive in the European and indeed the world market. The references to time change with each report.

Discourse helps us with how we look at the social world. We analyse information, identify action, analyse action and representation and then either support or don't support what we have been presented with. The reports that I have explored to help identify the impact of Moser have all been imposed on Post 16 providers at some point in the last twenty years. They are reports and policies that practitioners have been advised to interpret and follow. In some cases, such as the implementation of study programmes which was initially proposed in Professor Alison Wolf's report, the funding allocation that a provider received was and still is linked to how study programmes are delivered, with emphasis on all elements of a study programme being delivered and to an appropriate standard. This has had a detrimental effect on Post 16 providers in some cases, who have had to deal with the impact of having several hundred or in some cases over a

thousand more students undertake English and maths classes alongside their vocational learning whilst in Post 16 education. The impact of not just requiring additional English and maths tutors, but also resource allocation, exam space and staff and the retraining of staff has meant that funding has had to be sourced often unsuccessfully from elsewhere.

There is a Conservative tension over policy that spills over into Education and needs to be addressed. As more of the UK is privatised, I question if we are facing yet more of a capitalist approach? Will this move towards education in the future? We have already seen the government's proposals for all schools to become academies by 2020. The idea that schools will group together as a not for profit trust in order to better support each other. Academies will still receive funding, but it will be directly from the Department of Education rather than the current maintained system of receiving funding through the local authority. Once schools have converted to academy status, they break away from the local authority and the support that the authority offers and there is no going back.

This is 21st century Britain, not a third world country with little regard for the importance of education. We have many issues to deal with in the world today and our biggest threat now is terrorism. In England, we have suffered several attacks over the last couple of years, as well as attacks in other European countries. We have many issues that we need to focus on and many agendas that we need to follow. I put forward that in reality the English and maths need should never have existed, as a country we should not have got ourselves to a position where we are required to focus money and resources on developing the English and maths skills of adults of all ages, but the reality is stark and without improving the level of education in English and maths of our young adults, we will continue to need a welfare state system that supports those with low skills as they are unable to enter the employment market and therefore not able to get better paid employment. We will continue to need to invest in our healthcare system to

support all those in need, some of which are in need due to the low level of basic English and maths skills that they have, causing many complex issues which then go on to impact on health and social care.

We have a legal requirement to stay in education until the age of eighteen whether that is in a college, school, with a training provider or in an apprenticeship. During this study, there is a potential opportunity to start looking at the role of secondary education and how they have a part to play in supporting English and maths education. This is for a future piece of research. To keep a focus on this research, I will not be discussing English and maths within the primary and secondary (Key stages 1-4) sector.

Positionality

When looking at papers around Education policy, it is important for me to consider where I place myself when looking at these papers and the impact this has on this piece of research. Having spent over sixteen years working in Education, predominantly within the English and maths Post 16 sector (which is where I was at the start of this research) but also with schools both secondary and primary (which is where I am now) I first look at policy and reports from a practitioner angle. How does it impact me with the work that I did / do in the classroom and the impact that it has on the students and children that I work with? Is it in their best interest? Having been a department head with additional responsibilities, there is a part of me that looks at everything I read from a leadership and management perspective. What is the impact on my team, how will this affect them and what timeframe do I have? I then look at all that I read from a researcher prospective – what does this mean, how does it impact my research, and what links does it make? What is it telling me? When I started with the research, I was too passionate about what I was writing, I was involved with students on a daily basis. I wanted them to achieve all that they could, and this impacted on me as a researcher. It was difficult to remove myself from that passion and look objectively at what I was discovering and reading.

Having changed roles mid-way through the research, I have achieved a distance, not losing the passion for wanting our English and maths skills to be better but allowing me to look at things that I find out and read more objectively. I can now position myself differently allowing my thoughts and arguments to become less self-obsessed and more critical of what I discover.

When I started with this research, I did not expect to go through the life changes that I have been through, the changes in career, and suddenly taking time out as an older mother to look after a young family. My outlook on life and the importance of things changed. I am still passionate; I want everyone to have good English and maths skills that they can take with them through life. We should all have that opportunity. I work hard with my children, to encourage them to look at books, count things and engage in cognitive activity. They are in a privileged position, where they have two well educated parents who have studied to Higher Education Level, they have supportive grandparents and are in a financially stable home. Law of averages says that they will do well. Those that often don't do well with English and maths are those that don't have that level of support behind them. There is often a cycle of poor skills from generation to generation. These are the people that I want to help, I want government policy to be able to do something that breaks the cycle of poor skills and to change the culture that we have here in England.

Chapter 5: A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy (More commonly known as ‘The Moser Report’) - 1999

Policy and context

Following the election of a New Labour government in a landslide victory in 1997, Sir Claus Moser was instructed to carry out a review of Literacy and Numeracy skills in England. An independent committee was set up which worked closely with the Department for Education and Employment and with the Basic Skills agency. The report – ‘A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy’ identified a shocking statistic that one in five adults in England were not functionally literate and many more had problems with numeracy. (Moser 1999:Ch1) The document implied that decades of poor schooling and employer’s not taking responsibility for developing skills played a part in causing these statistics. In addition to this it implied that adult Literacy and Numeracy teaching was a ‘Cinderella service’¹⁹ with no consistency or curriculum for adults and that inspection needed better coordination for all provision in order for Literacy and Numeracy skills development to be identified.

The scale of need identified in the report was vast with 8 million people in England identified as having poor English skills and 15 million people with poor maths skills. The number of adults that did not have functional Literacy and Numeracy skills ranged from those that could not read or write at all to those that had rusty skills and no qualifications. Those in the age range of forty-five or over were found to have more profound functional Literacy and Numeracy problems along with the unemployed. The report stated that skills declined the longer adults were unemployed and often the reason for unemployment was due to a poor level of Literacy and Numeracy skills. It revealed that shockingly many of those with poor Literacy and Numeracy

¹⁹ Often in a college’s worst accommodation with resources originally designed for primary aged learners.

skills were unaware that they had poor skills. The decline of Literacy and Numeracy skills often progressed through family generations. Children with parents with poor skills were more likely to have poor Literacy and Numeracy skills themselves. People with poor Literacy and Numeracy skills would frequently be in low paid jobs or unemployed, which increased the deprivation of families and often societies which in turn had consequences for communities who were in need of regeneration and development impacting on the political social agenda.

It was identified in the report that there was a link between poor literacy and numeracy skills and crime, with a higher crime rate amongst those with poor skills. This was causing further consequences for the criminal justice system. Employment and opportunity for employment was seen as key to the report with research identifying that adults with poor basic skills were more likely to:

- Have unskilled or semi-skilled jobs
- Twice as likely to become redundant
- Four times more likely to experience long term unemployment or a patchy career.

(Moser 1999:Ch3)

The Moser Report made some very bold statements that shocked the nation. Prior to this it was as if the English and maths issues had been hidden away. The extent of the problem had never been discussed. Suddenly Moser had uncovered, into full view, our social problem. **‘1 in 5 people can’t locate a plumber in the yellow pages’.**²⁰ (Moser 1999:Ch 1) This may seem somewhat outdated in our modern world of technology, after all I now ‘google’ a plumber but the principle is still fundamental in that 20% of the working population didn’t know how to use an alphabet index to locate information.

²⁰ Telephone Directory

In 1999, Labour had been in power for two years following eighteen years under a Conservative government. There was no adult curriculum or rigorous inspection for English and maths delivery and adult education providers were very much left to their own devices to teach English and maths with no consistency between institutions and no qualifications available for students other than the traditional existing GCSE English and maths qualifications. There were no qualifications for the teachers of Post 16 English and maths.

Following a long period of high unemployment under the Labour government, unemployment rates began to decline with 6.9% unemployed in 1997, dropping to 6% unemployed in 1999. (www.ons.gov.uk) The last curriculum review that had taken place in schools followed the Dearing report in 1995 and 'Curriculum 2000'²¹ was now on the horizon with an expectation that it would be implemented from September 2000. This was to raise standards for all pupils in Secondary and Post 16 education.

The Moser Report

The Moser Report was written by an independent committee who had been tasked with reviewing the Literacy and Numeracy skills of England. The purpose of the report was to outline where England was as a nation in relation to Literacy and Numeracy skills and to identify the areas that required development. The government wanted to outline what was required in order to ensure England remained competitive. The report was written for government officials and educationalists with a clear agenda that its intention was for action – for change to be made and for improvements to the shocking statistics that it had included. The readership would initially be the Labour government minister responsible for education – David Blunkett and the Department for Education and Employment, followed by

²¹ Curriculum 2000 was a reform of A-Levels, introducing the AS Levels which was similar to half an a-level. This was implemented for a number of years before new policy was introduced returning back to the A-Level system.

Post 16 providers, Local Authorities and those working within the world of Post 16 education.

The report makes an assumption that the readership will have a knowledge of the terminology used, that Literacy and Numeracy were used to represent English and maths and that there was an understanding of how the current adult education system for Literacy and Numeracy worked.

The use of strong and emotive lexical phrases to add pressure to what the government needs to do is paramount throughout the text. Phrases included

- The government **will have to**...
- The government **should**...
- The government **must**...
- There **should be**....
- The home office **should**....

These are all phrases that are consistent throughout the different chapters of the report, placing a responsibility on the government (who the report is intended for) to take action and to make change. It is clear that the audience was to be the Labour government and that the report was to make clear that change was required.

There are threatening comparisons within the text with statements such as 'only Poland and Ireland had a higher proportion....' (Moser 1999:16) and using bar charts to provide a stark visualisation of how badly England compares to other countries. The use of visual bar charts in colour are a powerful way to evoke panic and fear into the reader. (See Figure 14 on page 86.)

I will argue that although a report written for government, there is a level of simplicity to the document. The report is not written from an academic standpoint. The intention does not seem to be that it is to be placed into a world of academia. The lexis used throughout is easy to understand and

would be considered everyday language. It provides a stark realism into what is happening in the world of English and maths.

I argue that the very use of the phrases Literacy and Numeracy show a somewhat apprehensive approach to the research that is being carried out. There are no differences between 'English' and 'Literacy' the content or what is being learnt and the skills that are lacking are the same, however there seems to be a fear of the words 'English' and 'maths'. A fear that if they are discussed too much then we are showing weakness as both individuals and as a nation. The lexical use of the terms 'Literacy and Numeracy' mean that there is a 'softness' to the approach. It implies that it is not as worrying for us in the same way. There is a feeling that the word 'Literacy' is less dominating than 'English', with it becoming slightly more acceptable for us to be able to say we have a problem with these skills.

When working through the report, the use of dates, statistics and numbers in a numerical form is dominant throughout. The report starts with a shocking revelation that 'something like one in five in this country are not functionally literate and far more people have problems with numeracy'. (Moser 1999:6) The report goes on to use a mixture of numerical numbers and percentages to support explanations. To demonstrate that we have shocking skills. The use of 1 in 5 implies that 20% have skills below a functional level. What the report does not state within this paragraph is what a functional level is. Does it mean that 20% of the population cannot read and write their own name or does it mean that some people cannot write their own name and others can function well but struggle with more complex tasks such as writing a detailed ten page report or delivering a ten minute presentation.

There is a difference in how numbers are used. In some areas of the report ordinary numbers are used – eg '1 in 5', in other areas a percentage is used – eg '20%'. Again, this can portray a different message to engage the

audience. The writer has chosen the way to portray the data that will most likely shock in each situation.

The report uses numbers when setting targets for the future. It states that '450,000 need to pass the threshold for literacy'. (Moser 1999:9) What does this actually mean? 450,000 to improve their skills marginally or considerably? Who are the 450,000, what percentage is that? How was that number calculated? It almost seems like a number that has been randomly chosen with no explanation. In addition to this there is a potential flaw in numbers when making comparisons. The report makes statements such as 'over three years of the campaign, 125,000 learners had been helped to improve their reading and writing'. (Moser 1999:39) however this talks about learners in the 16-65 working age range. It states how many have improved their skills which ultimately makes us assume that the numbers are declining, however the report makes no reference to new 16 years olds entering the working age range who need help and support in developing their skills.

The percentages that are used are ambiguous. The report states that 75% of callers said that, 'though they had been thinking about improving their skills, the TV and radio adverts encouraged them to call'. (Moser 1999:40) 75% of how many people? Percentages are often used to hide real data. If only 10 people called the phone line and 7.5 people were encouraged through the adverts that equates to 75% but ten people out of the population of England is not many! The data within the report varies from figures to percentages throughout with no reference made to using consistency in data which would provide a more in-depth knowledge of what is going on.

The use of statistics in either format is there to evoke passion or sadness. To provide a reaction from the reader. The report is being written for the government with an intention that if they read the report it will cause concern and in turn create an impact followed by change. The writer wants change

and the report is written in a way that you will want to empathise with the writer and aspire to be a perpetrator of change to make things better, to help all these people with low English and maths skills.

The use of capitalisation within text is often used to appear to shout a message out to you and to come across as somewhat abrupt. Chapters one to three are all about identifying the problem within England and the scale and impact of the problem in relation to English and maths skills with chapter four onwards stating the way forward. This could insinuate that the capitalisation of the subheadings in the first three chapters are there to shout and shock. To draw the reader's attention to 'how bad we are', to stress the importance of the problem.

The use of bold subheadings throughout the rest of the document draws the reader to key topics and allows you to jump about throughout the document to read specific sections. This use of subheadings could presuppose that the writer suspects that the document will not be read as a whole but rather as a paper that will be 'dipped in' and 'out' of, that readers will look at the parts that are relevant to them on a personal or work based level.

If you read the document in full, chapter five onwards determines the writers' plans for moving forward. It provides a list of recommendations to the government on what can be done to improve the situation following the evidence that has been uncovered. The recommendations continue to make use of the modal verb 'should' to stress what the government needs to do in order to improve the functional literacy and numeracy skills of England.

There are twenty-one recommendations within the report with the final recommendation almost stating that the Department of Education and

Employment need to make sure that previous recommendations are put into place. It's using a recommendation as a check for recommendations! We will discuss the recommendations further on in this chapter.

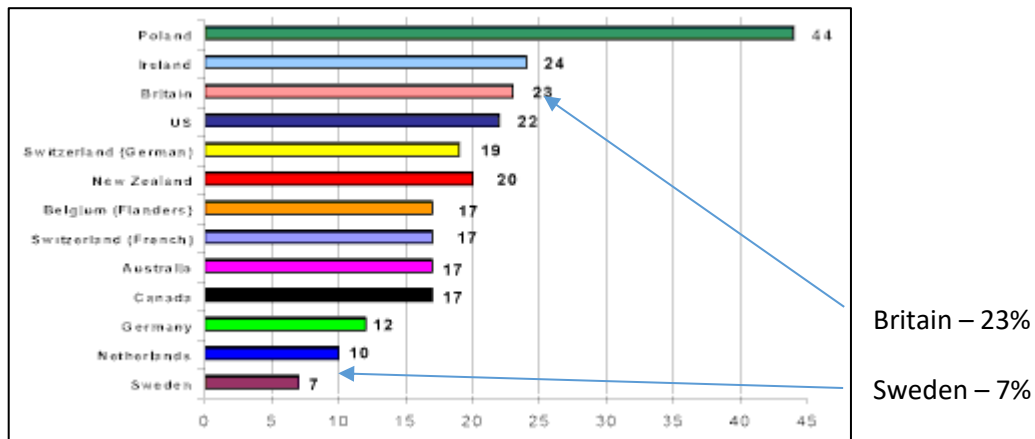
The links between the chapters establish a story being told. The story starts with shock, what has happened so far, that we have a problem and it's a big one. Then it goes on to explain what the impact of this problem is and that it will get worse if nothing is done to 'fix' what is happening. The report uses figures and comparisons to other countries to instil a fear within the reader within these chapters. The story untangles by providing recommendations of what can be done to 'fix' the problem using the stressed modal verb 'should' to insinuate that it is the government's responsibility to ultimately improve the functionality of Britain's English and maths skills.

The Moser report was clear in outlining the government agenda for moving forward. A new national strategy was to be developed with targets set for 2010. Basic Skills were no longer to be a second-rate qualification, teachers were to become subject specialists in their field with a range of specialist qualifications suggested. A new curriculum was to be designed which would have clear expectations of what was required for a student at each level from Entry 1 to Level 2. New qualifications were to be developed. The report wanted a national framework of standards and qualifications in basic skills covering curriculum, teaching standards and methods of assessment along with guidelines for inspection. It outlined that all agencies were to be involved including the Department of Education, QCA, BSA, FSFC, UfL, FE, LA, TEC,²² unions and the voluntary sector (Moser 1999:Ch 5) and that funding arrangements to support the strategy would be put into place. The report had a broad vision – a clear transformation for millions of adults in England with poor basic skills. The report stated that “If these targets can be achieved by 2010, England will be close to where Sweden is today in

²² See Appendix 5 for abbreviations.

Literacy.”²³(Moser 1999:Ch 5) This was a new approach to basic skills, which previously had no curriculum, or standards and no structure of delivery. Could England really achieve this by 2010?

Figure 14 - % of adults with Literacy skills at the lowest level.



(‘Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society OECD 1997 in Moser 1999:Ch2)

The report outlined ten key areas that were vital to support the UK with developing English and maths and moving the economy forward.

- 1) National Targets
- 2) Entitlement to learn
- 3) Guidance, assessment and publicity
- 4) Better opportunities for learning
- 5) Quality
- 6) A new Curriculum
- 7) A new system for qualifications
- 8) Improved inspection and teacher training
- 9) New technologies
- 10) Planning of delivery. (Moser 1999:Ch 1)

²³ ‘Britain and the US have more severe Literacy problems than most other OECD countries. Britain fares poorly against its international competitors. Only Poland and Ireland have a lower literacy level than Britain.’ (Moser 1999:Ch2)

The report defined a role for employers to play and that there was an expectation that they would support their workforce with improving their basic skills. For people working in adult education, 'A Fresh Start' had become a well-known report that many years later is still referred to. It was the first major report to be commissioned to be written exclusively on English and maths for several years and whether you agree with the statistics stated or not, there was no disputing the issue that there was a need to improve English and maths skills within England. The recommendations provided a baseline that was put forward providing the starting point of the Skills for Life strategy that came out in 2001.

Moser was to end the English and maths problems that the nation had. A new strategy, Skills for Life was to come out of his recommendations, qualifications for both learners and teachers were to be standardised and employers were to take on some of the responsibility for developing English and maths skills. The quality of English and maths teaching for adults was to improve following this report. Many of the recommendations were taken on board and Post 16 life was changing. No longer was it the A-levels, GNVQs, and BTECs that everyone was used to, but new qualifications along with adult learning was becoming more widely available and accepted.

The Skills for Life curriculums that were later produced following the Moser report were written with the support of practitioners. Post 16 providers were involved with supporting the development of the new curriculum and at producing new resources that were to be mapped to the curriculum, Practitioners were being listened to as these new changes were taking place.

When looking at the Moser Report, its intention as stated was to clearly propose a national strategy. It highlighted at the beginning that this would be a major challenge and one which would take several years to fully

implement. After discussing the scale of the problem and some of the many causes for this, its aim was for national targets that everyone would be accountable to. Guidance, assessment and publicity were discussed along with the better opportunities that were needed for learning. Moser set out a need for a new curriculum, a new system of qualifications and better teacher training and delivery. ICT was to be incorporated with discussions around this being a powerful tool to develop literacy and numeracy skills. This is questionable as often you find that people with poor literacy and numeracy skills also have poor IT skills. The report suggested a need for better funding and a much more streamlined and standardised approach to delivery.

In his report Moser looked at the impact of having poor literacy and numeracy skills on the individual, for families, for communities and society and for the economy. The impact on all of these sectors was monumental. As you read through the report and Moser discusses the issues identified above, he starts to make commendations. These are as follows –

Figure 15 – Table of Moser Recommendations

	Recommendation
1	A National Basic Skills Strategy for adults
2	Targets
3	National Promotion Campaign
4	Entitlement
5	Programmes for the unemployed
6	Workplace Programmes
7	Trade Unions
8	The University for Industry
9	Community Based Programmes
10	Basic Skills Support in Colleges
11	Family Based Programmes
12	Quality Assurance
13	Inspection
14	Teacher Training
15	Use of Information and Communication Technologies
16	Curriculum and Qualifications
17	Local Partnerships and Action Plans
18	A National Strategy Group
19	Role of the Basic Skills Agency
20	Funding
21	Research

(See Appendix 1 for more detail of each recommendation)

These recommendations were all taken on board and implemented over the first few years following the publication of the report. Moser's recommendations were designed to enable people to become more aware of the scale of the problem and its causes. His ambition was for a national strategy which is his key thread throughout the recommendations. He wanted a standardised qualification system and curriculum and standards set for teachers that would be delivering Literacy and Numeracy programmes. His report initiated the idea of setting targets, and later as we see in both Foster and Leitch, national targets were set for both 2010 and 2020. The immediate impact of Moser's report was the Skills for Life agenda which was launched 2 years later in 2001.

Moser's report stated that everyone should have an entitlement to learn that needs it, with a 'choice of opportunities for learning and access to a range of study programmes'. (Moser Summary 1:19) He wanted to ensure that appropriate guidance was given to students. This was what later became known as initial, diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. These assessments were to support students with knowing where they were and what they were hoping to achieve. Other terminology that became popular as a result of these changes were 'emerging, consolidating and established'. All words that many students would not necessarily understand, and I would explain as 'low, middle and high'. These were all levels that teaching practitioners were required to use to demonstrate a student's ability at something and to explain what they were required to work on next.

Moser's report set out a new range of opportunities for learning. Not all students felt comfortable going into an FE (Further Education) college, so classes were set up in schools, libraries, community centres, hospitals and workplaces to try and remove the fear factor from the classes. Job Centre Plus worked with Post 16 providers and offered classes to those looking for work. The Prison and probation service also started to offer classes to help offenders with their rehabilitation.

The quality of the learning was paramount and the idea of a clear curriculum, enabled practitioners and providers to be able to plan and prepare and for standardisation across different providers. It meant that for students who may move around, that there could be continuation in their learning. National qualifications were paramount to support the new curriculum. The qualifications were required to be in different elements and at all the levels. Qualifications were offered by a range of different awarding organisations.

Moser recognised that in order for there to be good quality delivery of literacy and numeracy, that there would need to be a teaching profession that could support this. He wanted Literacy and numeracy teachers to be fully qualified as you would expect in any other subject, for them to have full teaching status and a specialism in either literacy or numeracy. This led to a range of new teacher training programmes being set up.

Behind all of this was the question of funding. For all these recommendations to be put into place, Post 16 providers needed to be better funded, millions of pounds were set aside to help develop these recommendations and to form what became known as the Skills for Life Strategy.

Moser set out many recommendations, Foster and Leitch although not mentioning the recommendation directly in their reports, they encompass the ideas with the need to develop the skills of the nation. Wolf moves the Moser strategy on by stating that there is still a problem and now the strategy needs to change.

Ten years after Moser, an article was written by Joseph Lee, which stated that £163.9 billion later, 5 million adults in England could still not read.

As a response to Moser, the Skills for Life campaign and what was labelled as “one of the highest profile campaigns of its kind”, (Lee 2011) had not been as successful as everyone had hoped.

NIACE had carried out a 12-month enquiry into the development of Literacy and Numeracy since Moser and it identified that “too many resources had been directed to people with the fewest literacy problems” (Lee 2011)

Chapter 6: Twenty Years since Moser.

Part 1 - The First Ten Years

Having outlined and discussed the Moser report in Chapter 5 and having discussed policy in Chapters 2 and 3, I will now look at the impact of the Moser report on English and maths for Post 16 in England. Moser saw the beginning of Skills for Life and a decade of government money spent on Post 16 English and maths. The Moser recommendations implemented new qualifications for teachers, a curriculum developed for Literacy and numeracy and formal standardised qualifications in English and maths. Literacy and Numeracy had been highlighted as an area of importance to be tackled and national targets were set for England to meet. A formal recognition of the English and maths issues that England as a nation was suffering had taken place.

The impact of Moser can be broken down into two ten year blocks. As one may expect, many of the changes and implementation of the recommendations took place in the first decade. The second decade saw some of the changes continuing with the release of the Wolf report. (Which we shall discuss later in this chapter.) As we approached the twenty year anniversary of Moser, it was evident that the impact of Moser in more recent times was not recognised. In the early years I can argue that there was a significant impact – all of the adults that improved their English and maths skills during the years 2000 – 2011 or even up to 2014, have potentially had an improved quality of life. However, it can be argued that as we moved into the second ten year period (2009-2019) the impact of this report is negligible, however, could this simply be as you would expect when time moves on?

The initial ten years²⁴ following the Moser report saw many of its recommendations put in place. There were a series of publications

²⁴ 1999-2009 approx.

produced that made direct links to Moser, English and maths and Skills for Life. Moser was a key reference within teacher training courses and English and maths classes were readily available at a range of venues across England.

If we take some time to look at his recommendations, we can clearly see that they fall into different clusters (key areas) which were all implemented in the first ten years following his report. There were 21 recommendations made by Moser. His report outlined ten key areas as identified in chapter 5 and each of the recommendations fit into one of these areas as shown below²⁵ –

Figure 16 – Table of Moser key areas (clusters)

Key Area	Recommendation
1. National Targets	Recommendation 1 – National Basic Skills Strategy for Adults. Recommendation 2 - Targets
2. Entitlement to Learn	Recommendation 4 - Entitlement
3. Guidance, assessment and publicity	Recommendation 3 – National Promotion Campaign
4. Better opportunities for learning	Recommendation 5 – Programmes for the unemployed Recommendation 6 – Workplace Programmes Recommendation 7 – Trade Unions Recommendation 8 – The University for Industry Recommendation 9 – Community Based Provision

²⁵ Some of the recommendations fit across more than 1 key area.

	Recommendation 10 – Basic Skills Support in Colleges Recommendation 11 – Family Based programmes
5. Quality	Recommendation 12 – Quality Assurance Recommendation 21 - Research
6. A new curriculum	Recommendation 16 – Curriculum and Qualifications
7. A new system for qualifications	Recommendation 16 – Curriculum and Qualifications
8. Improved inspection and teacher training	Recommendation 13 – Inspection Recommendation 14 – Teacher Training
9. New technologies	Recommendation 15 – Use of Information and Communication Technologies
10. Planning of delivery	Recommendation 17 – Local Partnerships and Action Plans Recommendation 18 – National Strategy Group Recommendation 19 – Role of Basic Skills Agency Recommendation 20 - Funding

1) National Targets

The government was keen to set National Targets (Recommendation 2) and targets were set for 2005 and then later for 2010. Moser in his report stated that the targets needed to have staging points and that to make sense of the targets a baseline survey was required. Moser felt that the targets would be achievable if enough government funding was put into supporting them.

Looking at the recommendations, we can identify that within the first ten year period²⁶ from the year 1999 to 2010, the government was focussed on ensuring that these recommendations were put into place. They set up a Basic Skills Strategy (Recommendation 1) and as part of this developed what became known as the Skills for Life Curriculum. (Recommendation 16)

Moser looked at the need for national targets and a national strategy. Shortly after the Moser report was released, Brooks et al was tasked with carrying out a review of Adult Basic Skills. Published in 2001, this came just two years after Moser and a year before Skills for Life. The majority of the report is based on Moser or replicates what Moser had written in his report in 1999. Brooks et al state that adult basic education since the 1970s had seen swift growth, yet elsewhere people were constantly being informed that although there was growth in adult basic education in the 1970s and early 1980s, it had then been very quiet and did not get the recognition or support that it deserved. He refers to 'national surveys' which state that 20% of the adult population²⁷ have poor literacy and poor numeracy. 'Less than functional' is the phrase used but there was still no real definition of what was meant by functional. ²⁸

'Perversely bad' – a statement used to try and shock the reader, Brooks et al state that there is a desire for self-development, yet a barrier of stigma – 'Self-development V stigma' – an internal battle that many adult basic skills students and later Skills for Life students have faced. In terms of surveys for adult basic skills, Brooks et al identified that there were twelve national surveys of basic skills of adults in England between 1972 and 2000, the majority of which took place in the 1990's. (Brooks et al 2001:14) I question here why it had taken until the Moser report (published in 1999) to identify that there was an issue with Basic Skills. If there were six surveys undertaken in the 1990's why were these surveys not acted on? The

²⁶ approx.

²⁷ Noted as aged over 18

²⁸ Functional is still given different definitions at different times.

Conservative government were in power throughout most of the 1990s with Labour coming into power towards the end of the 1990s, it is possible that English and maths may not have been high on the government agenda. Brooks et al state that the surveys did not look in detail at the geographical areas in relation to the level of need for basic skills, however they state that the higher level of need is found in the areas where there is more deprivation. This is an argument that has been in place for years, not just in terms of basic skills but in terms of social mobility and social need. Those areas of higher deprivation tend to have the lower advantages when it comes to levels of education and this will in turn cause a higher level of need for basic skills.

Brooks et al state in Section 3 of the report, that women tend to be worse at numeracy than men and that the unemployed are worse at spelling and grammar. This may well go back to schooling in relation to women having poorer skills and more research would need to be carried out into age groups and patterns to be able to investigate this further. There have already been links and research carried out between having poor English and maths skills and unemployment. This research along with the Moser recommendations led to Job Centre Plus English and Maths courses being made mandatory for many of those claiming unemployment benefits (Recommendation 5) and English and maths classes being made compulsory for many of those that were given probation orders or sent to prison.

2) Entitlement to Learn

It was vital that Skills for Life courses and qualifications were available to all that required them. This meant that they became government funded qualifications, that anyone without a Grade C or above GCSE was entitled to. It wasn't 'means tested' for Literacy and Numeracy, (ESOL had separate funding rules.) The government wanted to reach the 'hardest to reach' and as well as providing classes in community venues and making them more

friendly and accessible, they needed to make them financially accessible too.

'The New Skills Agenda', (Appleby and Bathmaker 2006) seven years after Moser and four years after the start of Skills for Life, looked at the radical transformation of adult education in England. The entitlement to free basic skills had been created, however they argue that there was now even more inequality in gender and for learners where English was not their first language. They reiterate the arguments that Skills for Life is just a new name for Basic Skills and that a new name, a new report, and further funding has given Skills for Life – namely English and maths – a boost but not necessarily in the right direction. They argue that life after Moser meant that adult literacy was firmly on the agenda (Appleby and Bathmaker 2006:705) however the key focus was to improve employability and skills – national productivity. Seven years after the release of the Moser Report they question what the ambitious targets put in place actually meant - '750,000 adults to be helped by 2004 and more targets for 2010'. In Moser's report, recommendation 2 stated that national targets needed to be set for 2005 and 2010, we know now that these targets were met, but for every number that was met we still have more people with poor English and maths skills in England. The targets had been met but the number of people with poor English and maths skills had not declined at the same rate. Skills for Life wanted to improve the skills of the nation over a ten-year period. This need to improve skills within ten years meant that targets were set. (Recommendation 2) Bathmaker questions whether the targets set really related to the outcomes and what really were the outcomes? I would argue that there is no doubt that Skills for Life, thanks to Moser, was a major policy strategy in England, with the need for a 21st century society. Skills for Life was the first major English and maths programme since the 1970s and culture and society had changed.

A clear question that Bathmaker answers is 'Why was Skills for Life developed'? 'To ensure that England has one of the best adult literacy and numeracy rates in the world (Bathmaker 2007:3) The government dictates

that society should all have the essential English and maths skills that are required to function effectively.

3) Guidance, Assessment and Publicity

Moser identified that a clear structure was needed to identify starting points and Initial Assessments were put into place, to support with identifying the skills that a learner already had and the skills that required development. The assessments were often 1:1 with a qualified Skills for Life Tutor and along with a discussion with the learner, the most suitable class would be recommended. Support if needed would also be identified.

Once in the class, a learner would be entitled to a diagnostic assessment, a detailed assessment which looked at a range of skills to identify where within each level a learner is. This was termed *emerging, consolidating or established*. It was the baseline for their individual learning plan which then stayed with them throughout their course, documenting as they progressed through varying stages.

This process meant that their progress and development could move with them if required. If a learner transferred to another provider, they didn't need to start again. Their plan could be presented to show where they were and what they were working on.

In relation to promoting Skills for Life, the Gremlins Campaign was a major influencer. This was a government backed TV campaign on the BBC which encouraged those with poor English and maths skills to find a local provider and look to start improving these skills. The Gremlins Campaign was hugely successful and following on from this there were a number of more regional and local campaigns to support with developing skills.

Family learning was key within schools and encouraged many parents to start improving their skills. Family Learning groups became extremely popular with the advantage that many providers provided a creche to support childcare. Fully government funded opportunities provided for learners as a result of Moser, which ran throughout most of 2001 – 2010.

4) Better Opportunities for Learning

Once Skills for Life had started to become 'common place' in colleges and with education training providers, a range of community venues started to offer the qualifications too. (Recommendation 9) Colleges would often be called upon to deliver the qualifications, but the community venues enabled those learners who were reluctant to walk into a college, a place to learn that felt more comfortable. Skills for Life classes were set up as part of Family Learning, (Recommendation 11) often in schools. This would enable parents to start to engage with developing their skills. Often the provision at these venues would be provided by colleges.

The Prison and Probation service were another area that took on Skills for Life, with judges issuing education community service orders to adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills – they would get given an order of x number of hours of Skills for Life and they would be required to attend Skills for Life classes every week for a given amount of time. Those that were in prison that had skills below the level expected would be placed on a Skills for Life course instead of being given prison jobs. There was an expectation that they needed to develop their skills before being allowed onto other programmes or to work within the prison system.

Working with these learners was challenging but rewarding and having spent some time working in a prison delivering Skills for Life, it was rewarding to see when learners had developed their skills enough that they were starting to help others. A volunteer system was set up within some prison classes, where those that had developed their skills would be 'allowed' to support others - an opportunity for both to develop skills further.

In addition to the Prison and Probation service, as a result of Moser, employers were asked to take on some responsibility. (Recommendation

6) They were asked to sign up to an employer's pledge. Skills for Life Classes would take place in the workplace and in work time. Employers would release their workforce to attend classes (which often took place in offices or canteens.) Learners would follow the curriculum and undertake Skills for Life exams in the same way that they would in a college.²⁹ Again FE Colleges and Training providers were often called upon to deliver the programmes.

With all of this provision, Skills for Life departments became large departments within the Post 16 sector and often the department that brought in the most money for the FE sector.

When we look at the recommendations, we can link Brooks et al's review to workplace provision, something that was starting to take place in the United States. Moser in his report, two years earlier, explained that employers needed to take on some of the responsibility for supporting learners with poor basic skills and to look towards allowing time off for study or workplace learning. This later became recommendation 6. Part of the Skills for Life initiative was setting up courses in the workplace. Many of these were union arranged and led. (Recommendation 7) Unions set up links with providers and many of the big unions were influential in encouraging employers to support the development of skills of their staff. A tutor would go to a workplace for a few hours and either teach small discreet groups or some 1:1 support to workers that were released from their role during work time to develop skills. This often happened in factories and manufacturing outlets, along with transport centres such as bus garages and major distribution centres. Skills for Life classes were not 9-5, with many workplace sessions taking place in the early morning or late at night to accommodate 24 hour working and shift patterns. As well as becoming a professionalised workforce and highly qualified, Skills for Life teachers were now expected to work unsociable hours.

²⁹ These exams would also take place on workplace premises in some circumstances.

5) Quality

The quality of basic skills provision prior to Moser had been poor, with different levels of teaching and learning and varying success. Many of the teachers were not qualified and there was no standardisation of qualifications. The content of basic skills varied from one provider to the next. Along with this, there had been varying degrees of research into basic skills prior to Moser with no real impact of any of the research available in terms of supporting the development of the skills of the nation.

It was clear that the key to all the recommendations was that the quality of what was being provided needed to change. There was a need for further research, support and monitoring of the impact of Skills for Life.

If we look at the impact following Moser and other reports that were released around the same time we can see that in 2000, (a year after Moser) Hamilton and Barton released a paper looking at the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), questioning 'What does it really measure?'

They wanted to evaluate the work of IALS which was completed in 1997, two years before Moser was published. The paper looked at the validity of the test and whether it portrayed a complete picture. The aim of the test was to compare literacy levels between a range of countries in order to compare wealth and well-being along with other indicators, in the hope that this would influence policy decisions. The IALS was funded by international policy makers, meaning it had the power to influence and provide money when required in order to develop skills. Their introductory paragraph provides a summary of the intention of their paper for their analysis of the IALS.

"The first section presented basic statistical distributions, looking at literacy in relation to age, education, social background and gender, the second section is concerned with correlations between education attainment, literacy score and level of earnings. The relationship of literacy to health, crime, welfare assistance and community participation are briefly discussed. Section 3 discusses literacy learning across the lifespan and

presents data from the background interview about literacy practices at home and work” (Hamilton and Barton 2000: 379) The discussion around English and maths skills and the social and cultural issues around English and maths is a link that was made well over twenty years ago. They argue the methodology of IALS, stating no ‘cultural neutrality’ meaning key features were not taken into account which are essential. Cultures are different and approaches are different, and no account had been taken of this during the survey.

The IALS survey took place prior to the release of Moser, however the survey findings were released following Moser. I would question whether Moser should have waited for the results of this report or whether he had access to the report. Two different surveys / reports were happening at the same time about essentially the same subject. Along with this you also had Brooks et al carrying out a review of Adult Basic Education. Although the IALS was an international survey, there were different versions of it, one being a British version.

When analysing the text, Hamilton and Barton discovered that even in the British version of the IALS that was undertaken, there were Americanisms which would make it unfair for British literacy students to follow. Eg – use of ‘Recreational Swimming Facility’ instead of Sports Centre or Leisure Centre as we know it.. The United Kingdom uses a 24-hour clock for travel timetables whereas this is not so in some other countries. There are cultural inconsistencies which can mean that the data is not as accurate as it could be. It was clear that there was an inconsistent quality of data.

In their report, Brooks et al discusses the lack of basic skills surveys from 1996 onwards, prior to this they state how frequent they were but then they stopped. Yet three years later in 1999, Moser released his report which followed the research that he had completed in relation to the basic skills of English and maths and his description of how poor the nation was with their English and maths skills. Hamilton and Hillier stated that several surveys

of Basic Skills or English and maths had been carried out in the 1990s. I argue that we start to see inconsistencies here with the data being released and the knowledge of what is actually being measured in relation to English and maths.

At the end of their paper Hamilton and Barton question whether policy makers only listen to large scale research of the kind that IALS is. What is interesting is that this paper was released only a year after Moser and again identified very similar things in terms of the poor skills. We now have three pieces of research that were carried out almost concurrently stating the same findings. There was clearly a need for the improvement of English and maths skills in England, the quality of provision, assessment and qualifications was poor and the Moser report set about to change this.

6) A New Curriculum

Skills for Life curriculums were set up in Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL and later ICT. There was a need for a curriculum that recognised different levels and stages within levels. The curriculum identified that adults had varying levels of knowledge and that they could have skills at one level in one area and another level in a different area. For example, reading could be level 1 but writing skills could be at entry 1.

The Curriculum had 5 levels.

- Entry 1
- Entry 2
- Entry 3
- Level 1
- Level 2

(Level 2 at the time was deemed to be the equivalent of an A* to C GCSE.)

Within these levels there were further descriptors. – *Emerging*, *consolidating* and *established*. These became key terms amongst teaching practitioners in this field as a way of identifying which skills a learner needed to develop.

Within this curriculum, learners were provided with Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and targets that related to life skills. For example a learner

may want to be able to complete forms or to read an instruction manual for some DIY work. Some learners wanted maths skills to support them with a trade – for example being able to measure a room to see how much paint you would need. Teachers were encouraged to set learners realistic and achievable targets that related to their personal needs. This allowed learners to take ownership and responsibility for their learning.

The book 'Changing faces' discusses ESOL, which for the purpose of this thesis, I will not go into. ESOL is a separate area and a different type of student with very different needs. ESOL tutors need a separate group of skills in order to be effective. They do in their book however, state that the three very separate areas of ESOL, literacy and numeracy 'have been welded together under one umbrella'. There appeared to be a lack of understanding between the differences of a Literacy learner and an ESOL learner. (Hamilton & Hillier 2006:ix) This often causes inconsistencies in data as ESOL learners were often counted as literacy learners or placed on the wrong provision. This wasn't helped by the difference in funding available to Literacy and ESOL learners. The Right to Read manifesto stated that "there are at least two million functionally illiterate adults in England and Wales. They are either unable to read or write or they have a reading age of less than you would expect in a nine-year-old". (Right to Read Manifesto p22 – quoted in Hamilton and Hillier 2006:1) When I compare this to Moser some twenty years later, the figures have increased. The Right to Read campaign was either under-estimated or lacked the professionalism and standardisation required to ascertain exactly how many people in England had poor literacy skills.

'Changing Faces' was published seven years after Moser although looking at much the same period as Moser, the Adult Basic Skills Review and the International Adult Literacy Survey. The book followed on many of the key themes that others including Moser had already highlighted in their report or papers. By the time this book was published, the Skills for Life agenda was embedded, and the new curriculums were being followed.

(Recommendations 1 and 16.) Moser wanted a standardised level of learning and a nationally accepted level of qualification.

7) A new system for qualifications

Along with the curriculum and the need for Individual Learning Plans which were a working document to help show progress, came the need for more structured and accountable qualifications. (Recommendation 16) Skills for Life qualifications (Recommendation 16) came about at the same time as the curriculum and allowed learners to move from one establishment to another in order to undertake and complete qualifications if necessary. This supported those on 'job centre' courses and workplace courses as well as those that may move around the country. Awarding Organisations were tasked with setting up a range of qualifications that were linked to the new Skills for Life Curriculum and nationally accredited. For Literacy and ESOL, these were split into separate assessments for reading, writing, speaking and listening. Once a learner had achieved all four at a given level, they had passed that particular level. (Recommendation 16) The term 'spikey profile' was used for those that had achieved skills at one level in one skill and another level in another skill. There were a number of awarding organisations that offered Skills for Life qualifications and the certificates were transferable, meaning that learners could move from one provider to another. Having a 'Spikey Profile' meant that a learner could take an exam in one skill at one level and another skill at another level.

8) Improved Inspection and teacher training

Recommendation 14 stated that there was a requirement for a more professionalised workforce. Prior to Moser, Literacy and Numeracy teachers were often people with no formal teaching qualification. The recommendations in the Moser report stated that this was doing a dis-service to these learners and that the workforce required professional recognition.

Skills for Life teachers were obliged to become fully qualified teachers obtaining a Certificate in Education or PGCE³⁰ or equivalent and a subject specialism in Literacy, numeracy or ESOL. (Recommendation 8) Funding was provided by the government at this time for people to undertake these qualifications and a range of part time courses were set up for practitioners who were already working in the sector but had a requirement to gain a qualification.

The Adult Basic Skills Review looked at the teaching and assessment of adult basic skills. These were key elements discussed in Moser, where he identified that tutors were mainly female and part time. Basic Skills tutors were more likely to have flexible contracts with many adult basic skills teachers being women who had a career break or had given up their career for children and in turn wanted something to do to help support the local community. Teaching reading and writing a few hours a week helped them to do this but meant that there was no consistency in what they were delivering. Students received different levels of input and support from different teachers and often these teachers would have no professional teaching qualifications. Following the Moser report, in which Moser highlighted the same issues, Skills for Life developed with a range of programmes and a new curriculum with standardised levels. At the same time there was the introduction of Level 4 and later Level 5 subject specialist qualifications in delivering Language, Literacy and Numeracy. (ESOL, English and maths.) This was to follow on from a full teaching qualification such as a Certificate in Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Cert Ed or PGCE). Brooks reinforced what Moser had already stated - a need for national targets and recognition of standards along with set qualifications and an effective teaching workforce across England.

³⁰ PGCE -Post Graduate Certificate in Education

The recommendations suggested in Brooks et al, are the same recommendations as Moser, with the same key theme - the basic skills profession is under professionalised and mainly consists of women as teachers, due to the flexibility of hours and zero hours contracts that can be worked. This is picked up in recommendation 14, where Moser identifies a need for a trained workforce and professional teaching qualifications. Poor teaching previously had led to varying standards and consistency in basic skills teaching which did not necessarily support those who were trying to support and develop their skills. (Brooks et al 2001)

Hamilton and Hillier (2006) looked at the development of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL from the 1970s to 2000, just after the release of the Moser report. As stated earlier, they start by discussing the 'Right to Read' campaign, the first of its kind to promote English and maths classes for adults and providing an opportunity that was out in the open for adults to better their skills. They discuss in detail, much of what is discussed in Moser (and in Brooks et al) an un-professionalised mainly female workforce of teachers, (Recommendation 14) many of which hold no qualifications and took on their role of literacy or numeracy tutor because they could fit it around their other commitments (mainly childcare.) They discuss the fact that there was no standardisation of literacy and numeracy and therefore what students got from one provider differed greatly to what they would get from another. (Recommendations 12 and 16) There were no official qualifications and no options to transfer studies from one provider to another.

9) New technologies

Along with a new curriculum, qualifications and improved opportunities was the need to ensure that learners had access to technology. The world was evolving and in 1999, many more households began to have access to the internet. Computers were becoming commonplace in households and along with this was the need to ensure that adults had the skills required to access them. ICT courses and the ICT Skills for Life Curriculum followed

after the Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL curriculums. Learners were encouraged to undertake ICT courses alongside their English, maths and ESOL and teachers were required to embed ICT into their programmes.

Access to ICT in colleges could be difficult, there wasn't enough equipment for everyone, however again with 5 curriculum levels and a range of qualifications available, learners were encouraged to develop these skills.

During the Moser period, online learning centres (often called 'Learn Direct') were set up, where learners could attend at various times and sit at a computer and develop their skills. A teacher would be available to support if needed. This style of learning suited some learners but not others. Over time, websites became available with interactive English and maths activities for learners that were structured into the 5 curriculum levels. Teachers were encouraged to move away from traditional worksheets and become more interactive in their approach to teaching and learning.

10) Planning of delivery

When looking at life after Moser, just seven years after his report was released, funding strategies had changed which meant that funding was removed from less productive areas, with adult literacy and numeracy being one of these. The changes meant that in order to receive funding, a set of exams needed to be passed and often within a certain amount of time. This goes against the idea of flexible learning for learners, tailoring it to their needs and expectations as recommended in the Moser report. There was a shift happening from lifelong learning and inclusivity to employability and the skills needs of the nation. Appleby and Bathmaker looked at the differences between a knowledge-based economy and a knowledge-based society. Skills for employability and skills for social inclusion. They co-exist but they argue 'are not given the same policy priority.' Discouraging when the message has always been about social inclusion and employability going 'hand in hand'. (Appleby & Bathmaker (2006:707) They mention the 'shocking statistics' of Moser saying one in five UK adults is 'functionally

illiterate' although as I have discussed many times there are different expectations of what this means.

In 2007, Bathmaker wrote about 'The Impact of Skills for Life on Adult Basic Skills in England'. She discussed the Skills for Life strategy symbolising the prominent place adult basic skills have in education and society. I would argue that a positive response to the Moser report was Skills for Life and the new curriculums. It was the start of a need for a much better system in England for adult basic skills, a system of standardised qualifications and teaching and learning to be at a level that would be expected for any other course. Skills for Life was no longer seen as the hidden course carried out in the old derelict buildings that it once was. Skills for Life had become a curriculum area in its own right. The delivery of Skills for Life was seen as important as any other subject, teachers were to be qualified, classrooms were to be appropriate and qualifications were standardised. Along with this a funding stream allowed providers to ensure consistency in their approach.

Student destinations and data

As discussed earlier, just before Moser, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) had been carried out in the 1990s, led by the OECD and reported that the UK had a large number of adults with poor English and maths skills. Moser followed this and these two in turn gave the newly elected labour government what it needed in order to raise a large-scale initiative which became Skills for Life. The figures that were quoted in IALS and Moser and then later in Books et al and by Hamilton and Hillier, all vary greatly and although there is no doubt that there is an English and maths problem in England, there is discrepancy over the figures quoted. The 2004 figure quoted by the National Audit office quotes twenty six million people as needing support, a figure much larger than Moser quoted and more worrying. The thing to keep in mind is that the measurements are all different, some are comparing against Level 2 qualifications, GCSE equivalence and others are quoting against much lower expectations and

work readiness. I would suggest that it is very unlikely that the true extent of the problem with English and maths in England will ever be known.

In the world of post compulsory education, extensive work is carried out in order to maintain records of where a student goes after they have left a course, whether this is because they have dropped out, or passed their course and moved on. This is often referred to as student destinations. During the 1990s, record keeping was poor and this impacted on the Moser report as much of the information that Moser required was not available. It was therefore difficult to ascertain data on why students left if they did not complete a course or why they didn't go onto the next level if they had completed a course. The data as to whether a student who did improve their English and maths skills went onto another training programme to gain a new skill or qualification was somewhat limited. Recommendation 20 looks at funding, in order to ensure funding to the provider, students had to complete a course. If a student moved on before obtaining certification, then often the provider did not get the funding required which started to cause friction in the Post 16 sector. A student may well feel that they have improved their skills and this has enabled them to move forward in their personal or working life. For the qualification provider, student destinations and data became important. There was a need to see the impact of Moser and Skills for Life on these students (recommendation 21- research) and the student destination data allowed this to take place.

Data was manipulated by the fact that funding was based on learning aims and learners could be doing more than one learning aim. For example, one adult could have been studying literacy and numeracy and doing different elements within each. If data was being looked at on a learning aim basis then this would inflate the numbers. Bathmaker (2007) questions what it means to complete and not achieve which is another element of conflict within the data. Learners could have developed their skills but not necessarily achieved anything in relation to completing an exam. Outcomes

and achievement are based on exam results. This means that there could be a large number of unaccounted for learners who have improved skills but have not been recorded as doing so. The other discrepancy in data following the launch of Skills for Life is that if learners had been counted towards the 2004 targets were they then counted again towards the 2007 targets or not and should they have been or should the 2007 target have been a new set of learners on top of the 2004 targets? These are complex issues and can mean that it looks like targets have been met when in-fact they may not have been.

The term 'functional' was used before the onset of Functional Skills. Moser and Skills for Life used the term Functional Literacy and Numeracy and this phrase was embedded into Post 16 qualifications. Moser and the DfE led society to believe that everyone needed to be more functional in order to gain employment or to function adequately, but as stated through this writing what does functional actually mean? It means different things to different people and has many different standards.

"Whether this best serves the long-term improvement of adults' capabilities in basic skills and their participation in society as citizens as well as workers, is a question to which we should constantly return". (Bathmaker 2007:27)

Brooks et al mention that course completion rates were generally poor in basic skills, however the best rates were those that were on family literacy and numeracy courses, this tended to be because people wanted to support their children better with home and school work and realised the importance of developing their own basic skills. This has stark links with Moser where he highlights the circle of deprivation and the fact that those with poor literacy and numeracy tend to have children with poor literacy and numeracy skills. By improving these skills, people are attempting to break the cycle and to provide a better chance for their children. Lee (2011) in his article twelve years after Moser discusses a key factor for people

developing their English and maths skills - 'they want to be able to support their children'. He discusses that the most popular classes seem to be those that are linked to family numeracy and are run through schools. (Lee 2011)

Overall, we may not ever actually know the true English and maths skills of the nation and course completion rates. Adults on English and maths courses start and stop programmes at various stages depending on social situations. Despite all the discussions, home learning, online support etc that providers put in place, there will always be people that do not complete their programmes. However, they may have improved their skills, just not completed a qualification or reached the end of their programme. We can see that Moser's recommendations were implemented within the first ten years, a new curriculum was put into place with new standardised qualifications, a quality assurance system was set up and teacher training qualifications were compulsory for those working in the delivery of English and maths programmes.

Post 16 providers were encouraged to be as flexible as possible in offering provision, working with employers, probation services, prisons, job centres, schools and community centres as well as faith based centres to try and reach all sections of the community. Skills for Life was free to all those that did not have an English and / or maths qualification and government targets were set to ensure that we were reaching those that needed it. New resources were developed and organisations set up to support those who were working in the sector.

There is an interesting reference made between basic skills and mental health in Brooks et al, where he states it is not clear whether depression leads to poor basic skills or poor basic skills leads to depression. Over the last few years, we have all become much more aware of mental health and efforts have been carried out in order to try and remove the 'taboo' around mental health and provide an opportunity for people to be able to discuss mental health issues more openly. Many celebrities and famous people

have been involved in programmes to try and support mental health charities and work is being carried out to re-educate people in the support and dangers of mental health around all ages. Looking at Mental Health and English and maths skills would be another research project to investigate but not one that I am going to discuss further in this thesis.

One of the recommendations by Brooks et al is that there should be an annual survey of basic skills. I argue whether this would be of any benefit now, however there are clearly still problems and it appears that this is not showing any great improvement as this very research suggests - twenty years following Moser, we are still no better in relation to our English and maths skills in England. I would suggest that rather than an annual review of basic skills which does not give any time to identify impact, a ten year review of the English and maths skills should be put into place. This would identify the numbers that have improved their skills in English and maths as well as the number of those that have come out of the school system and into Post 16 education with poor English and / or maths skills.

By 2010, Moser had made an impact, millions had been spent on providing a professionalised workforce, a set curriculum and formal qualifications, the majority of employers were on board and targets were being reached. There were, however, still significant numbers of people with poor English and maths skills and this led to another report being written, this time by Professor Alison Wolf.

Part 2 - The Second Ten Years

In March 2011, Professor Alison Wolf released what has now become known as The Wolf Report. A Conservative, Liberal Democrat coalition had been in power for a year. Spending had been cut in all areas including education with the Post 16 sector being one that was hardest hit. Funding for qualifications was reducing, yet the expectation was greater. Providers were being asked to do 'more for less'. There was an expectation that delivery and quality would improve, and that England would progress towards being a world leader in skills in 2020. Professor Wolf was to review vocational education. The Wolf review was, I believe, to be the start of the second ten year impact of Moser. Moser was now almost twelve years old and there was a need to look at addressing the issue again.

Having two forewords – one by the Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove) and the other by John Hayes the Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, Michael Gove refers to 1851 and the fact that since there has been a Royal Commission, policy makers have struggled with providing young people with a proper technical and practical education. This is yet another reference being made to the fact that despite years of policy and money being provided for education, as a nation, England was still no further forward with employability skills. There is a comment made that other nations can do it, so why can't England? (Wolf 2011:4) Wolf in her report highlights that “...*the system actively discourages 16-19-year olds from catching up with their English and maths so that each year 300,000 18 year olds start adult life without the equivalent of an English or maths GCSE.*” (Wolf 2011:5) A powerful statement that suggests that the English and maths issue is not going to disappear.

Wolf identified that English and maths needed to be included in Post 16 education and that there is an expectation that everyone should have a grade C GCSE or above to function effectively within the workplace in order

to be able to improve the skills for the nation. Wolf had identified that there were large numbers of people leaving school at 16 without a qualification in English and / or maths. They were often placed onto vocational courses and struggled with a lack of basic skills.

Wolf caused radical changes to the Post 16 sector and the impact meant that there then became a shortage of English and maths teachers. Moser had identified that these teachers must have professional qualifications, but this took time and there were many teachers of vocational subjects who lacked the English and maths skills that they needed to be able to undertake English and maths teaching programmes or support learners with their English and maths skills.

Professor Wolf and her report is most well-known for the introduction of study programmes. These came into force in 2014-15 where all learners who had not achieved a grade C³¹ or above in English and maths at school, would study these subjects alongside their vocational or academic programmes. Providers were required to include the embedding of English and maths into vocational programmes as well as offer extra English and maths support in the way of either Functional Skills or GCSE programmes. Ultimately Wolf wanted everyone to have achieved the minimum standard of a C grade GCSE in both English and maths by the time they left full time education.

The report offered a new set of recommendations – there were twenty-seven in total. Although not all of the Wolf Report was to do with English and maths explicitly, recommendation nine was in relation to English and maths following on from what Moser had started ten years earlier.

“Students who are under 19 and do not have a GCSE A*- C in English and/ or maths should be required, as part of their programme, to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or which provide

³¹ Or equivalent.

significant progress towards future GCSE entry and success. The latter should be based around other maths and English qualifications which have demonstrated substantial content and coverage; and Key Skills should not be considered a suitable qualification in this context. DfE and BIS should consider how best to introduce a comparable requirement into apprenticeship frameworks". (Wolf 2011:15)

This recommendation marked the end of Key Skills in Application of Number and Communication. For many years there was ongoing concern that Key Skills qualifications were not fit for purpose, however they were still provided as a qualification by many providers as they were a way of securing extra funding. A 'cash cow' as they were referred to. The introduction of study programmes would stop this from happening.

One of the most striking paragraphs within the report is that in box 1 on page 23

"No government report can change the way people use language. And giving something a new name in official discourse simply means that the new name acquires the overtones and connotations of the old. What can be examined clearly is whether or not different educational pathways encourage young people's progression. This was the charge given to the review; and it's in this light that it examines the whole range of vocational education for English 14-19-year olds" (Wolf 2011:23)

Throughout the years, English and maths have been called many different names. Literacy, Numeracy, Core Skills, Key Skills, Basic Skills, Functional Skills etc. However, this very report is saying that simply providing a new name, will not fundamentally change what needs to be done. It almost implies that rather than give it yet another new name, let's make it a compulsory qualification that sits alongside all other qualifications. The report lays blame on successive governments for the issues that it is identifying within Post 16 education.

“It is important to emphasise, at the outset, that these problems have not been created by individual vocational qualifications, or how they are taught. The report will argue, instead, that the major causes are the complex, expensive and inflexible regulatory system created by successive governments, and the perverse incentives created by current funding and accountability mechanisms. Unravelling this government-created triangle, and restoring clear, direct links between 14-19 vocational education on the one hand and the labour market and higher-level training and study on the other, is therefore a major priority for the future of millions of young people”. (Wolf 2011:45)

Funding organisations such as the SFA (Skills Funding Agency) were a key audience for this report. The report identified that funding should follow the student, not the qualification. This meant that funding rules were required to be rewritten and processed and new funding formulas came into force following this report. Understanding the funding formulas and regulations was an area that Post 16 education providers were required to interpret. If the funding rules were not followed, then it meant that Post 16 providers stood to lose thousands of pounds worth of funding. The tracking of students and what they were studying was paramount. This meant that data management teams were required to restructure how they tracked students and link this to funding. Student destinations were key. This was a big step forward from when Moser had produced his report twelve years earlier.

Wolf goes on to state that “Functional Skills, as developed and delivered, are conceptually incoherent. The idea is that English and mathematics should be ‘embedded’ in real life examples that are related to the vocational course that someone is studying and to ‘real life’. This is very difficult to do, because it demands that the teacher of the subject knows a great deal about a wide range of contexts and can develop high quality materials for each. (Wolf 2011:170)

The underlying message implies that teachers were not equipped to deliver Functional Skills and that the expectations were too high. In reality this was true. Many vocational tutors were very good at the vocational aspect of their subject area, however many struggled with their own English and maths skills and were not confident in being able to support others.

Wolf goes on to say that

‘this report will, unfortunately, have much to say about current problems and the changes needed. However, we need to recognise the historical strengths of vocational education in this country. Any further reforms need to preserve and build on current strengths and achievements’ (Wolf 2011:44)

The Moser report was now twelve years old, Skills for Life well established along with new curriculums and qualifications that had resulted from the recommendations in the Moser report. There was clearly still an issue with English and maths and the Wolf report was the next one to try and attempt to tackle this. Wolf went a step further than Moser not just looking at adults but highlighting that many of the issues originated from those that had recently left school with poor English and maths skills, and that there were currently no requirements for this to be addressed. She argues that people could get a whole range of qualifications but still have poor English and maths skills which would impact on their daily lives. Professor Wolf wanted to see a change in the system that led to the Post 16 sector taking on some responsibility for addressing this need.

I would state that Wolf was the start of the end for the Moser report, a report which was now twelve years old, had achieved all that it had set out to do in its recommendations, but had not solved the English and maths problem that England had. Wolf took the next steps in setting out a new range of recommendations to support not just adults but identifying that there were many leaving school without the English and maths qualifications that they needed which meant that for every adult who had improved their English

and maths skills in a Skills for Life classroom, there was always another person ready to replace them. The targets may have been met but the numbers were not declining.

There were, as with Moser, critics of Wolf. In 2014, FE News published an article 'What has happened to 14-19 Vocational Education'. It wanted to see where England was as a nation, three years after the Wolf Review had been released. Whittaker stated that the Wolf report was a 'Vehicle for Radical Change'.... It was viewed with promise. (Whittaker 2014) Wolf herself commented that she was 'relatively pleased with government progress in implementing her recommendations' although some were doing better than others. The Senior Policy Maker for the AoC, Deborah Ribchester, stated that the biggest change had been that of funding, whereby funding was now on a per student and not per qualification basis. This was implemented quite quickly but had caused a much wider impact on FE colleges and Post 16 providers, many of which were having to restructure in order to ensure that they could offer a comprehensive study programme with the money that they were receiving. Stephen Jungnitz (Association of School and College Leaders) stated that 'since the report had been published, 16-19 funding had been cut by around 25%', meaning that colleges no longer had the resources to be able to offer the most effective study programmes. (Whittaker 2014)

Whittaker talks about the fact that although the Wolf report had led to changes in FE, there had since been more 'policy initiatives' that did not always seem to all be working together to form the bigger programme that everyone was striving for. In the article, Professor Wolf was asked to pick her top ten recommendations and comment on them. Her third was recommendation number nine 'Students under 19 who do not have GCSE A-C in English and / or maths should be required to pursue a course which leads either directly to these qualifications or provides significant progress

towards future GCSE entry and success'. When asked to comment on this recommendation, she stated

“Heavy lifting, say friends of mine who are principals. Yes, agreed – but no regrets. This is one of the two recommendations I thought most important. I am delighted they adopted it, and still believe that the GCSE is what the labour market recognises and it was time we joined the rest of the world in what we make compulsory” (Whittaker 2014)

Mick Fletcher, An FE Consultant argued that the ‘labour market recognises GCSEs because they have been around for a long time, not because they are fit for purpose’. (Whittaker 2014) This is a matter of opinion and without further research cannot be proved or disproved, however when Functional Skills were released, employers were very reluctant to accept them for some time. They did not understand what they were or the value of them. There was limited understanding on the way that the levels worked and what they were comparable to. (Fletcher 2011 in Whittaker 2014)

Mike Hopkins, Chief Executive of a major Northern FE College, commented on the recommendation for English and maths stating that

‘it was the right thing to do, but the government should not come to think of the sector as a sticking plaster to solve the deficiencies of pre 16 education. Future governments should provide additional resources.’ (Whittaker 2014)

This suggests that there is a problem which links back to education within schools.

The Government response to the Wolf Recommendation on English and maths, three years on, was a joint response linked to the funding recommendation, in that ‘From September 2015, the requirement that students who have not achieved a grade A* to C³² GCSE in English and

³² Or equivalent

maths will continue to study those subjects and it will become a condition of funding'. This feels like a government non-committal response, a statement almost that the funding conditions are changing, and Post 16 providers need to adhere to this.

In 2011, following the release of the Wolf report, Baker wrote an article in 'The Guardian' where he stated that the Wolf review was 'yet another review of vocational education which has brought on that sinking feeling again'. He argues that 'The problem of what to do about non-academic pupils has beset policy makers in England for at least 50 years. There has been a bewildering alphabet-soup of new initiatives, courses and qualifications.' (Baker 2011) He refers back to the Newsom report of 1963 "which coined the phrase, half our future... As Newsom put it: they represent half the pupils of our secondary schools; they will eventually become half the citizens of this country, half the workers, half the mothers and fathers, and half the consumers". (Newsom 1963)

This brings me back to my question – if they knew there was a problem in 1963, why years later are these skills still being tackled? Why are there still many Post 16 students and adults with poor English and maths skills?

Baker is extremely critical of Wolf and her report and passionate about the students that have tried and failed. He states that 'Wolf seems to pin too much faith on academic qualifications. She wants all students under 19 to continue trying to get GCSEs in English and maths, however often they have failed'. As a practitioner, I have worked with many of these students, the ones that keep trying to re-sit Functional Skills and GCSEs. Many of these students have tried and tried, they attend extra classes, have learning support and want to achieve, but have reached a point where they need a break. That is not to say that they won't achieve their English and maths at a later date, but sometimes people need time away, they then need to look at it with fresh eyes. Many adult students did not achieve their GCSEs at school but went on to achieve their qualifications later in life. England is a

country that provides society with a second chance, education being one of them. There is always the opportunity to try again.

Baker goes on to say that 'Functional Skills, while they may not be perfect, were developed because GCSEs in English and maths were not considered to be any guarantee of the sort of functional literacy and numeracy that employers wanted'. (Baker 2011) There could be an argument here as to whether GCSE's are fit for purpose³³. Functional Skills support those students who struggle with GCSEs, who need to be able to relate what they are learning to real life situations. Those that need to build up their skills step by step. They are key in helping students feel that they can achieve and that what they are learning has a relevance to their life. He asks the government to 'stop interfering', He wants 'schools, colleges, employers and awarding bodies to work out what is best for students not aiming for university, rather than enforce on them what they should be doing'. Just as Moser had his critics, there are critics of Wolf and her recommendations.

When we stop to look here at what has happened since Moser, there has clearly been some research carried out around English and maths skills in England during the late 1990s and early 2000s. There is a question as to why there were several pieces of research being carried out at the same time. I have highlighted that there are differences in the data produced which means that there is no clear picture showing how poor the English and maths skills are of adults in England. Many of the recommendations that Moser made were taken on and Skills for Life was developed and still exists with standardisation, qualifications and a curriculum. Following Moser, we had the Wolf Report, which provided further recommendations in relation to improving English and maths skills. This started to look at those that had just left school and were going into further study, whether

³³ GCSE's have been reformed over the last couple of years due to discussions around their suitability. A new grading system is now in place with more exams and less coursework being relied upon.

that was academic or vocational. Many of the recommendations that Wolf made were also implemented. Following Wolf, other political issues have taken over and Post 16 education no longer seems to be a government priority. Moser was very important for a number of years along with Wolf, but more recently both seem to have almost been forgotten. Developing and improving the English and maths skills of adults and Post 16 in England has become less of a priority. Skills for Life classes are still running but with limited resources and support. Funding has been reduced and there are fewer classes available than five years ago. Students on vocational qualifications without their English and maths qualifications are still expected to work on these alongside other courses but I currently do not have any data in relation to how many of these achieve and whether it is enough to make an impact on the English and maths skills of those in England. I suspect that for a large proportion of these students, although they may improve their skills, they may not necessarily achieve what the government wants them to achieve.

Following the Wolf report and the implementation of ensuring that all those that leave school without a GCSE in English and maths, have the opportunity to retake the qualification, we can start to call this period the quieter years of Moser. Wolf was instrumental until around 2015 when Post 16 providers were changing the way that they delivered programmes and adults were still being encouraged to develop their English and maths skills. At this time the Brexit agenda had started and the school academy agenda was about to be released. The funding for Skills for Life provision had declined along with the number of skills for life qualifications available and funding for teachers to train in this area. 2015 onwards saw very little in government looking at English and maths for adults and the recommendations that Moser made were not as prevalent. The recommendations of Moser had been put into place and now as Moser started to approach his twenty year anniversary there was little impact to his recommendations.

Throughout the first 5 chapters of this thesis, we have explored English education policy making, how we understand education policy and the different policy models Moser may have used. This has provided an insight and a context into the policies that I have been looking at in relation to English and maths – the main one of these being Moser and understanding the constraints that are in place when producing policy. I then went on to look at the Moser Report in detail, looking at the recommendations that were made and whether these were put into place and how Moser influenced English and maths policy that followed him. Moser used a range of strong lexical phrases and statistics in order to demonstrate the current issues with poor skills. As suggested in chapter 5, statistics can be manipulated and interpreted in many ways and this needs to be kept in mind.

And Moser now

I started this thesis with wanting to see what had happened in the twenty years following the Moser report being published. Moser was influential in the education world, he wanted to make a difference and wasn't afraid of standing by what he believed in. Having studied his report and examined literatures and arguments around policy and education policy in general, I want to provide some context as to what is happening now in relation to English and maths.

In September 2014, 15 years after the Moser Report, the House of Commons produced a report on 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy' (Select Committee report into Adult Literacy and Numeracy) which was presented to government with a range of recommendations looking at the type of literacy and numeracy provision that was available, the standard of English and maths providers and English and maths in relation to the unemployed, community learning initiatives, Union Learn and the Army. The committee worked with a range of providers and gathered responses from learners and providers on English and maths provision. Their report was to explore

why adults in England with poor literacy and numeracy skills were being let down and how the government could help improve standards in reading, writing and maths. (BIS 2014) The report identified that

“England is the only country in the developed world where the generation approaching retirement is more literate and numerate than the youngest adults, with adults aged 55 – 65 in England performing better than 16-24 years olds at literacy and numeracy”. (BIS 2014:8)

‘Much of the investment from BIS goes to learners who are already working at Level 1 or Level 2 rather than those that are at entry level’. David Hughes from NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) reported that the hardest to reach are those working at entry level, but they are the ones who need the support most. (BIS: 2014:9)

A HMI (Her Majesty’s Inspector) identified that the language used to talk about English and maths had an impact on the reluctance of some adults to engage in developing their skills. She identified that to ‘raise the profile nationally of English and maths, talking about literacy and numeracy is not helpful.’ She explained that it was more powerful to use the terms English and maths. (BIS 2014:10) This is again another example of the change in language to try and portray the image that the phraseology of - literacy versus English and numeracy versus maths - has a direct impact in the willingness of adults to take up the opportunity to continue to develop their skills. In 1999 Moser referred to Literacy and Numeracy. By 2011 the Wolf report terminology had returned to discussing English and maths.

This use of discourse is a future area for further exploration. Do the terms Literacy and Numeracy cause people to become more fearful of attending classes than the use of the terms English and maths? As discussed earlier, Wolf stated that giving something a different name does not change what it is. Government policy over the years seems to have used a variety of terminology for English and maths but whatever the language used; the outcome has not changed. If there is a social fear around the words ‘English

and maths' then this is something that government policy itself cannot change. The change is a cultural one and one that would take many years for people to accept.

The Wolf report identified GCSEs as a 'gold standard', the valuable qualification that everyone needs to have with English and maths being the most essential. Helen Casey from the NRDC (National Research and Development Centre) identified within the report that 'GCSEs should not be recognised as the gold standard. Government seems to have a 'preoccupation' with GCSE and the 'gold standard'. They are not a qualification to suit all students and Functional Skills are a 'valuable tool'. (BIS 2014:10) As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, not all students are capable of gaining GCSEs, yet there are many that do progress with their English and maths skills. However, this is often not recognised with the targets that are set and the success rates that are monitored. Students achieve in English and maths in many different ways and the distance travelled for many is vast, there is a need to recognise this.

There is a 'tension in whether GCSE is a qualification to ensure someone is being prepared for further study or whether it is a qualification to support with preparation for work.' (BIS 2014:13) The report makes a recommendation that

"GCSEs are not always the most appropriate qualification for adults to work towards and that the government needs to look at giving employers, colleges and adults themselves the flexibility to choose the type of learning that best suits those adults" (BIS 2014:44)

Due to changes in funding, colleges are now expected to ensure that English and maths is being delivered to those without an A*-C, however the amount of funding that they receive has decreased by approximately £1400 per student. This led to serious consequences to Post 16 providers who

had to reduce the number of teachers they have and carry out a range of restructures following other funding cuts. The committee realised this was a serious concern. How can effective English and maths support be provided for those that need it with restricted funding support to ensure consistent and high-quality provision? In reality, one could argue that there has not been enough funding in the Post 16 education system for many years. Post 16 has always been underfunded compared to schools and Higher Education (HE) establishments and teachers in Post 16 education have often been seen as not as qualified as those in schools and HE despite studying the same qualifications and specialisms. 16-year olds arrive at college or on an apprenticeship or training programme with poor English and maths skills and are expected to develop these skills up to a GCSE A* - C³⁴ in what is effectively eighteen months of study. If they have not achieved during eleven years of school, eighteen months will not get some of them where they need to be. Funding is now lacking in all areas and as it becomes more restricted so too is the level of support that can be provided to these students both in school and within Post 16 provision.

England has a strong culture of adults and 16-19 year olds saying that they cannot do maths and that they find it acceptable to say this. In England, people are usually not forthcoming with admitting that they cannot read or write so why is it seen as culturally acceptable to not be able to function sufficiently in maths? MP Matthew Hancock stated in the report that it was 'unacceptable for people to claim they cannot do maths' (BIS 2014:19) and that as a nation it is imperative that society changes its mind-set. (BIS 2014:19) This is a social concern and an issue that requires development with social interaction. I could argue that the English and maths issues in England are not just educational, it is not the fault of education providers and funding, but a social issue. Having poor English and maths skills has now become socially acceptable. As stated throughout many of the papers that I have studied, English and maths is not just about reading, writing and

³⁴ New grading system of 1-9 means this is now GCSE 5-9

numbers. Behind this sits the social aspect of being able to function effectively in society and being able to work and support family.

Hamilton and Hillier (2006), seven years after the release of the Moser report, looked at social practice and questioned what it meant? “A social practice approach emphasises the uses, meanings and values of reading, writing and numeracy in everyday activities, and the social relationships and institutions within which literacy is embedded”. (Hamilton and Hillier 2006:17) “This approach identifies literacy, numeracy and language as part of social practices which are observable in ‘event’s or ‘moments’ and are patterned by social institutions and power relationships. This view encourages us to look beyond the texts themselves to what people do with literacy and numeracy, with whom, where, and how”. (Hamilton and Hillier 2006:18) They discuss how the need for literacy and numeracy is a social need, not necessarily an educational need. Moser outlined the poor skills of the nation and provided shocking statistics to try and evidence this, but as I look back on this several years later, is it about education or about belonging? Do adults require these skills in order to be seen as effective in society? What does being effective mean? Is it being part of a community, being able to share with others, support schools and local events or is it about being able to work, pay taxes and put something back into the local and national economy?

As I look at Moser twenty years later, the physical English and maths need was discussed in the report but actually I could argue that the need was much deeper than this. Should the report have had a more human capital focus? Should Moser have looked more into the habits, knowledge and social and personal attributes that are embodied in the ability to perform labour and produce economic value? Now, mental health awareness is very topical and people are becoming more open with mental health issues. With this in mind, I could argue that society now needs to look at the English and maths issue from a mental health perspective.

Moser's report looked at what the government needed society to achieve in order for the nation to stay successful, however, I could question that it is not about the government and being a leading nation nationally but rather about the need for individuals to feel that they belong and can work together. The social integration of building communities is what would make us stronger as a nation.

A key recommendation in Moser is that better collaboration is required between government departments (Recommendations 1, 4, 17, 18 and 21). For what seems to be the first time in a government report, criticism was made stating that government departments were not working together. English and maths were and still are a national problem and affect the Department of Education, BIS and the Department of Work and Pensions. Matthew Hancock stated that

“progress on tackling the lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills in adults cannot be achieved until the government integrates all education, employment and skills policies across the three main funding departments involved”. (BIS 2014:42)

There is a need to not keep replacing one scheme after another but to maintain and develop an effective English and maths scheme that can help England move up the OECD³⁵ rankings and provide employers with the skilled workforce that they require.

In December 2014, the government published their response to the select committee report. BIS responded to the recommendations that the committee had made stating that

‘support for English and maths continues to be a high priority for the government. We will continue to invest in this area and to work with the

³⁵ OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Further Education sector and others to identify how our investment can make the greatest difference for the individuals it is designed to serve.’ (BIS 2014:25 – Report 2) BIS identified that developing English and maths skills led to improvements in confidence, health and family life as well as social inclusion and less of a reliance on the benefit system. Fifteen years later, the social need for English and maths had started to be recognised.

The report stated, ‘Over the last 15 years, successive administrations have made considerable investments in schools and adult education’, (BIS 2014:2 – Report 2.) I would argue that investment in adult and Post 16 education has taken place over a much longer period than this, causing concern that in December 2014 when this report was published, the numeracy levels of England remained largely static. The underlying question is still there, if all this money has been allocated into supporting education and English and maths why is England not top of the OECD rankings and more recently why are our 16-24 year olds having lower literacy levels than those that are over 50?

The report clearly states that the government continues to prioritise English and maths for all adults who have not yet reached GCSE standard and to continue with the support that it offers for HM Prison service and ‘community education’, however the recommendation in the select committees report that a new national campaign should be launched to promote the need of English and maths skills and to get people learning and improving their skills was rejected. Often the people that are hardest to reach are those that are not aware that the support is available and lack the confidence and social skills to be able to seek out and accept help and support. Moser had identified a need for a national campaign in 1999 (recommendation 3) which had taken place.

In this report, BIS refers back to The Wolf report where Professor Wolf identified that ‘GCSEs are the English and maths qualifications with the

strongest standards and with the greatest power to signal capabilities. (BIS 2014:9 - Report 2) The response in this paper by BIS is that the government continues to place an emphasis on GCSE English and maths, however in a separate paragraph it identifies that 'some learners will need to study for other qualifications as they progress towards GCSE'. (BIS 2014:9 – Report 2) A recognition that not everyone is able to undertake an academic GCSE qualification straight away, but still with the intention that ultimately all students need to gain the 'gold standard A* to C' in English and maths.

What remains clear in the most recent papers is that English and maths continue to be important priorities for the government, and they are a key focus of the Ofsted agenda with many colleges and providers receiving poor Ofsted responses specifically in relation to their English and maths provision. In 2014 the government pledged £30m to try and support developing an English and maths workforce encouraging teachers to retrain to teach English and maths to GCSE standard. A range of English and maths enhancement programmes were developed to support teachers with this. New GCSEs were developed (from September 2015) with the idea being that they have become more rigorous '*and to take account of real-world contexts*'. (BIS 2014:14 – Report 2) An all-party parliamentary group for maths and Numeracy was set up to try and raise awareness in parliament and encourage them all to promote the value of numeracy. (BIS 2014:15 – Report 2)

In September 2014, the select committee stated that there had not been enough collaboration between government departments. In their response, BIS accepted this in part and recognised the need for BIS and the Department for Education to work closer together and that consideration would be made to a cross government strategy for English and maths. Fifteen years after Moser, there were still difficult tensions in the English and maths world. English and maths skills were still an issue with many adults not having skills up to an acceptable standard and many children still

leaving school without the skills that they required to function effectively. This leads me to question what the impact of Moser was? Moser stated much of what this report mentioned fifteen years earlier. Millions of pounds worth of funding, qualifications for teachers, new accreditation and curriculums have been put in place over the fifteen years to try and combat the English and maths issue, but the fact remains that not much has changed. The government has released many strategies for dealing with English and maths but none of these seem to have worked.

One may well expect that a policy or paper has a period of time in which to be effective and have an impact and as we are looking back over the impact of Moser over twenty years, it would appear correct that it should have had its biggest impact in the immediate period following its release. The later years were much quieter.

From 2015 onwards, we have seen very little impact from the Moser recommendations and little discussion around the skills levels for adults in England in relation to English and maths skills, however this is time moving forward. In 2015, the Moser report was 16 years old, the Wolf Report 5 years old. Wolf had clearly replaced Moser with a new set of recommendations which were now being implemented across Post 16 education. Wolf built on Moser and by the time her report was published there was an expectation that the teaching workforce in Post 16 education were teacher qualified (recommendation 14) and that quality assurance protocols were in place. (Recommendation 12) Post 16 providers were used to following curriculums and approved qualifications (Recommendation 16) They were used to working with employers, the Prison and Probation Service, Trade Unions and other organisations, - (Recommendations 5,6,7,8,9,11,17) These were no longer seen as something that needed to be developed further, as they were an expectation – the quality may have varied, but quality control procedures should limit this.

Wolf had moved Education on from Moser – the expectation now was that everyone should be able to have the opportunity to achieve an English and maths GCSE that they can take with them into their future. This is no longer an aspiration, but should now be a given. Providers are expected to work with those that do not have English and maths. A request is now an expectation.

As we approach ten years since Wolf and the Twenty years since Moser, it is only right that we have moved on once recommendations have been implemented. Moser's recommendations were all put into place. They may not have had the significant impact on the figures that the government was wanting, but they have become a 'normal' part of Post 16 Education.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

In 1999 Moser released his report 'A Fresh Start: Improving Literacy and Numeracy' – a report which identified that millions of people in England were unable to perform simple tasks such as finding a plumber in a yellow pages³⁶, calculate their change from a loaf of bread and read a bus timetable correctly. As discussed, the report made a number of recommendations to the government including the need for a professionalised and qualified workforce, a standardised curriculum and accredited standardised qualifications. There was a need to reach out to the wider community and to remove the stigma attached to English and maths. 2001 saw the start of many of his recommendations being put into place.

A curriculum and a professionalised workforce is now in place and has been for a number of years. A range of accredited qualifications and classes were set up for different groups of people in a variety of varying situations to help people improve their skills. Some of these classes are still running, some have had to close down. Millions of pounds worth of public funding has been spent on developing the skills of the English nation in order to ensure that it stays competitive with other leading nations.

Following Moser, a number of other reports were commissioned including Leitch and Foster who were not focussed solely on English and maths but within their reports made mention to the work that was being carried out on developing the English and maths skills of adults in England.

In 2011 Professor Wolf published 'A Review of Vocational Education' a report which became as popular as the Moser Report in the Education

³⁶ Telephone Directory

World. She took Moser another step forward and stated that all those that left school and moved onto further Education without an acceptable English and maths qualification would need to address this as part of their study programme. Post 16 providers were the ones who were going to ensure that this happened. Vocational Programmes changed with many students studying English and maths qualifications alongside their vocational qualification. Teachers were required to retrain to gain the valuable extra skills that they required to be able to support their students.

In 2014, fifteen years after the publication of Moser, a BIS report suggested that there were still large-scale issues with English and maths and that government departments were not working together. Fast forward to 2019 - and twenty years following Moser - 2014 to 2019 had been quiet, with no new reports or developments and no new statistics on where society is with English and maths as a nation. Brexit has been the main focus for these years and a Brexit deal was required by the end of 2019³⁷ as the UK prepared to leave the EU. This had an impact on education and the English and maths skills of those in England.

Having spent the last few years looking at these now somewhat outdated reports in detail, wanting them to provide answers and demonstrate further impact of Moser, I question what they say even further. I had wrongly assumed that the reports would provide a better understanding of what a practitioner should do once the reports were published.

A common underlying theme throughout Moser and similar English and maths reports, is that as a nation, England has a problem with English and maths. This problem has been around for decades and is now possibly so ingrained that there may not be a solution. I argued this at the start of this

³⁷ The UK left the EU in December 2019 but negotiations for trade were not finalised until December 2020

research, it is not a new idea. English and maths skills are fundamental to everything in our daily lives and to be able to provide for and support those around us.

Government Policy

The reports are all written by different people and I suggest, for different reasons and different government priorities that it would take another thesis to untangle. As I have explored an introduction to policy making, I have discovered that policy making is a web that this thesis cannot untangle. When I looked at policy making, I identified three key themes – Education policy in general, policy models and policy making. Policy is about influencing practice and political power, it has been identified by some that education is a ‘sorry state of affairs’ and that education policy is often to put accountability onto the teaching workforce. What is clear is that policy needs to have a clear purpose.

I explored policy models and looked at who defines a policy problem. The Davies, Head, Young and Nutley models were discussed and the different influences and input that they all have. I would argue that over time different education policies have followed all the varying models although I would suggest that Davies and Head are the main models followed, or I would assume were followed.

We still have the issue of policy making or policy production. There was a discussion around a rush to get policy out due to a sudden problem that had arisen, and this often happens in the education world. There is often media hype around policy production and education policy is one that society takes a keen interest in.

To further understand these reports, each would need to be researched independently following different methods of policy making, however I

suggest that this would be an unproductive exercise. It would not change what has happened before it and in order to change the future, there would need to be a shift in social culture which I would argue the nation as it currently stands is not ready to embrace. Government policy cannot change the way that as a society - it is culturally acceptable to have poor English and maths skills. There are still many that do not see what these skills are worth and how they can help improve our social mobility and status. This has become a human capital issue and not an English and maths issue.

There are many different ways of writing education policy and no consistency or style that link these 2 reports. Education policy would need to be explored in detail in relation to the English and maths issue specifically and then these papers would need to be taken and analysed against the policy interpretations directly. By the time this happened, I would argue that there would have been many more English and maths education reports produced which would have caused just as much difficulty in the Post 16 world. Part of the research would need to be time spent with the policy makers that work within the Department of Education and discussions around the processes.

History

As I have discussed throughout, the papers and reports that have been produced can be interpreted in different ways and the policy maker can only encourage you to think one way or another. The late 1990s and the Moser report were the first to make a statement on the skills of the nation since the initial, 'low key' initiatives of the 1970s. It is interesting that now, twenty years later practitioners and academics still refer to what is now a historic document.

Back in 1999 Moser saw the start of a coordinated national policy for English and maths, the demand by the government was huge, skills were

to be developed and improved. Eleven years after Moser in 2010 targets were released, there were indeed many thousands of people who had improved their skills in English and maths, however there were still large numbers of people with poor English and maths skills. Now another ten years later and twenty years since the release of the Moser report, the country is in a very different place. Focus on Brexit and leaving the European Union has meant all focus on skills has vanished. Skills for Life still exists but many providers have had to scale down their provision. Programmes need to be cost effective and if they are not sustainable, they are closed. Post 16 providers have been through restructure after restructure and many Skills for Life tutors have moved into teaching in other areas or into different career paths altogether. As I approach the end of this research, I wanted to see whether after twenty years of Moser, any further papers or reports had been released to celebrate the anniversary of Moser. It appears that no further reports have been released.

Twenty-year anniversary

I searched for any twenty-year anniversary references to Moser or indeed anything in the last ten years that has been produced as a result of the Moser report and its findings. My findings were minimal. In November 2019, Alex Stevenson produced an article for FE News in which he stated that ‘unfortunately nothing much has changed since Moser. There are still nine million adults who have poor basic English and maths skills.’ (Stevenson 2019:1)

Stevenson states that “Whilst it has been argued that the Skills for Life strategy, encouraged by national targets, focused on the ‘low hanging fruit’, it is important to remember that many adults were engaged and supported back into learning for the first time. Thousands of people learnt new skills – with particular success in literacy, less so in numeracy – and were able to progress to further learning, to benefit from new opportunities at work, or to

feel more confident to help with their children's homework" (Stevenson 2019:1)

I contacted Alex Stevenson who is Head of English, maths and ESOL at the Learning at Work Institute. He confirmed that no further research or studies have been started in relation to Moser over the last few years, either as further research or policy or papers produced. "I'm afraid I'm not aware of much in terms of further papers etc. We didn't do much in the way of additional research, for example, as part of the roundtable – it was more a case of using the anniversary to raise awareness of the issue." (Stevenson 2019 via email) The roundtable event that they held in October 2019 was a discussion but no further follow up has since been carried out. There has been some further research into maths led by the national numeracy association but nothing in relation to literacy.

Looking over the last twenty years, the first ten years and the second ten years following Moser appear to be very different. During the first few years, there was a wealth of follow on publications and reports. Continued research into the English and maths skills of the nation by both government and academics took place. The embedding of the new curriculum and raising of standards was all part of the process.

Having looked at the second part of the last twenty years, it has all gone quiet. Government has a different focus and along with this, the academic world more recently has been quiet in relation to English and maths (much more so for English). Maybe I suggest because there is nothing more to comment on at this point. As I was looking at many of the literatures that I have used in this piece of writing, one of the things that I noticed was that there was repetition. After I had read the first few, I was reading the same thing over again. The wording may have been slightly different, but the concerns and recommendations were the same, the findings were the same

and the discussions around how English and maths is not just an academic concern but also a social concern remain consistent.

For this research, I wanted to look at whether twenty years after Moser, there were any significant changes or impacts. 2019 was the 20th anniversary of Moser and it appears to have seamlessly gone unnoticed, I was expecting new research, some comparisons, or some reports on where society was as a nation twenty years later, but it appears as if in the last ten years, Moser has been forgotten.

There is still an emphasis on English and maths in the Post 16 sector with the requirement for GCSEs and Functional Skills along with some limited adult education in Adult Literacy and Numeracy, but as the funding declined so did the demand for these subjects. It is disappointing that the second ten years was so very different from the first, where there was so much enthusiasm and energy in the sector by all those concerned. Politicians and their reports, public funding and enthusiasm from practitioners to support their learners. It appears that the Moser has lost its appeal in the world of English and maths.

Have the English and maths issues been solved? No they haven't, as stated continuously throughout this document, Government and academics continue to talk about it and for a number of individuals their English and maths skills have improved, but ultimately the issue hasn't been solved and as the world has moved forward, other issues have become apparent which have overtaken this need.

When looking over this research and what has happened in the twenty years since the Moser report was published, I question what has changed in relation to the English and maths skills of adults in England. I wonder whether any of the policies and recommendations that have been put into

place have been worth it? Looking back at my discussion with Alex Stevenson around the 20th anniversary of Moser, I argue that if the Learning at Work Institute and other organisations have done little in relation to more recent research and publications, is there anything left for us to be able to change? Moser is a paper in history now, a twenty-year-old document that looked at English and maths before the new millennium. English and maths problems were highlighted in the 1970s, 1980's, 1990's, 2000's and 2010's. Fifty years later we still have what is now a historical problem. The last fifty years have not solved this issue, so one could now argue whether it is a problem that needs solving or is it simply too big and engrained that it has just become an acceptance by all?

I started this writing, wanting to look at a range of reports that date back over twenty years. I wanted to look at every one of the reports and reviews and policy papers that had been written since Moser, but time had a significant impact on this. Moser, in its day was the most known of these reports providing shock revelations and statistics about the world as I knew it and the English and maths skills of England. Skills for Life and the adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL curriculums came into being because of this report and the professionalism and standards of adult teaching dramatically improved.

Alison Wolf then released the Wolf report, and this dramatically changed English and maths GCSEs with the need for Functional Skills to be introduced to support learners developing their English and maths skills. Following Moser, the Wolf Report was the next most influential for change. Suddenly there was a requirement for those still in education at 16 to improve their skills and for providers to put on many more specialist English and maths classes to support these learners.

Following Wolf, there was a period of quiet time, the academisation agenda had been announced and was followed by a period of some schools

converting to academies and others not, the challenge of Brexit then meant that changes within the world of Education took a back seat.

What is so intractable about this problem? What did Moser try to do? Going back to an earlier reference, this problem with English and maths is so ingrained within society and is not just a learning issue but also a social issue that it is beyond change. Socially, there is an acceptance that it is 'OK' to not be great at English and maths. Culturally, society has developed ways to live, whilst not having these skills. People with low skills often have lower paid jobs, but they can get their salary topped up by government with Universal Credit and other benefits.

Moser

As I reach the end of this, Moser now comes across as a man who wanted change, he started the crusade to develop and improve English and maths. The challenge was just too big for one person to champion. At the start of this research, I wanted to champion this challenge. I wanted an answer to what could be done to develop the skills of the nation and see an improvement, and to be able to explain that what was happening was wrong which is why there is still an English and maths problem. If the nation is not on side and the government have let it fall to one side, then one person alone cannot make the social and cultural change that this challenge needs.

Twenty years after Moser, what was the driver? There is no doubt that adult Education in English and maths has dramatically improved. There are a large number of qualified teachers out there who have full teaching status and specialisms in delivering English and maths. English and maths have curriculums and levels, there are a range of accredited qualifications and they are recognised across the country and towards other qualifications. Moser was certainly a driver in all of this throughout the first ten years up to circa 2010. Some of the impact for Moser is certainly recognised in the Wolf

review, with further demands being made on English and maths. The development of Functional Skills, moving on from the Skills for Life Literacy and Numeracy qualifications and then changes to GCSEs and the need for students to retake the qualifications have all been instigated following Moser.

Despite all of this, government and society hasn't succeeded with what it is doing with English and maths. The Wolf report was published in 2011 and is ten years old, there have been no further drivers since this. Is Moser plausible? Is it believable? In my opinion, yes, it is. As stated, figures and statistics can be manipulated, however having been a practitioner in the field of Skills for Life and GCSE English and maths from 2002 to 2016, I have worked throughout the time of all these reports and seen first-hand the effects that poor English and maths can have on adults and the Post 16 sector. I have worked with many of these adults year after year and have seen the impact that developing their skills can have on their life and the issues that they can face on a daily basis. Yes, figures and statistics can be manipulated but overall, the key points raised in Moser, I argue, are not disputable.

I discussed early in chapters 2 and 3 the issues with policy and although I have only very briefly touched on this, could policy be the reason that Moser has been 'forgotten' twenty years later? It could well be. Policy is written for different audiences at different times. It has had an influence on English and maths over the years. Policy is written by policy makers and not subject specialists in the field and is often written in such a way that it can be interpreted differently.

I suggest that there is an issue with Education policy in general in that it is not consistent and not allowed to show evidence of impact and change. Education is constantly changing and so is society around it. Society now consists of Millennials and Gen Z, people who live around technology and

social media which is constantly evolving with the way that we work. I believe that education policy makers need to work more closely with those in the field in order to try and come up with new and innovative ways to develop the skills of the current and future workforce. Some of this was mentioned briefly in Moser with the skills that were needed for the nation but again has not been developed any further.

Where now?

What happens now? Looking back over the years that I have been working on this thesis, has the need for developing English and maths skills for the nation changed? I argue that it has not. I started this research several years ago and throughout that time, although I still work within education, I have had a change in career. My move has been from working with Post 16 providers to working with schools from Key stage one to four. I still see day to day how funding impacts hugely on what providers can do, what they can offer the children / students in their care, how some providers can do better than others due to areas of deprivation and support that they receive. I still work with schools trying to ensure that they do their best for children / students. I still want to make a difference and I want everyone to have the English and maths skills that they are entitled to and should have.

Why did I start this research? I wanted to make people aware that the English and maths problem isn't going to go away, it is too deeply ingrained. It doesn't have a 'quick fix' either, there are too many variables. I wanted to understand why there are reports and legislation that say that things must be carried out in a certain way to ensure skills are developed, and that certain qualifications must be undertaken. There is an expectation that everyone can achieve the same. Wanting to analyse every report and piece of educational legislation at the start of this thesis, I realised that the research that I was doing was nowhere near big enough for the scope of the English and maths problem. It would take several decades to

understand the writing of every English and maths related report and I'm not sure that could ever be achieved.

I was perhaps too close to this research when I started writing several years ago. Working in an FE college, dealing with students on a daily basis who did not have basic English and maths skills. Students that would ask me how many centimetres were in a metre, students that couldn't tell the time on a clock face and regularly used text language in their assignments. Some of these students didn't know how to check they had the correct money for their bus fare home. I wanted to portray how angry I was that I couldn't make this better. Over the years, I have moved away from this anger and been able to step back and look in from the outside. It is easy to now blame funding cuts, not enough money for teaching and materials but when I first started working in education in 2002, money was being spent on English and maths support and in education. There was money for new buildings and materials, practitioners were constantly being given new materials to work with. All Skills for Life teachers were issued with Skills for Life materials. Yes, students improved their skills, but I was still seeing the same problems each day with new students coming through. It is easy to blame funding and I have no doubt that it is part of the problem as stated in chapter 6, but society needs to ultimately take responsibility for its own actions too.

As suggested in Chapter 2, English policy making is key within this research. This is something that at the start of the research I didn't expect. The more that I focussed on this, the more I discovered that there are certain rules in policy making that have to be adhered to and that the policy makers are not usually educationalists that are working in the field. This is one question that I set out to answer. I wanted to know what experience and qualifications the authors of these policies had in order to be writing about English and maths within the Post 16 world. It seems that you only need to know how to write policy to be able to write it and that the subject

of the policy is irrelevant. This has proved disheartening as there are so many people who depend on this policy for their future in order to be able to function effectively in society and to be able to provide for themselves and their families. I discussed in Chapter 2, how policy after policy is issued as a way of solving a problem within a political context but there is never enough time to actually look at the impact of the policy. It can take several years to see whether policy in education has had an impact, but with policy after policy being released in relation to English and maths, there is never enough time to see whether it has worked.

I discussed a range of academic literatures in which I looked at two distinct areas, educational policy in general and educational policy making. Initially my thoughts were that these two things would not be very different, but they were. Policy making is an area of research that this study could not begin to tackle. It would need to be a separate question and the different theories of policy making just within the education world itself would need to be investigated. I have discussed some of Gorur's work where he discusses influencing policy makers and policy making, again this is something that would have a large impact on the English and maths issue but one that this research does not have the time to investigate further.

Chapters 2 and 3 spend time discussing policy making in general within the education world. What has become apparent is that policy has different meanings to different people. It is not enforceable, and that different people can write policy, not necessarily those with the expertise and subject area in the field. Is it really the right thing to keep producing policy after policy in the world of education and specifically in relation to English and maths? Should more experts in the field be used to support new policies and decisions? Would an expert at English and maths be an expert at policy making? Highly unlikely but I do not yet have any suggestions as to how we can overcome this other than more joined up thinking. The literature that I have looked at has influenced my thinking but is not going to change the

English and maths issues and are not providing answers. I have, however, looked at the impact of Moser, twenty years after its publication and where we are now in relation to English and maths policy.

I have come to discover that policy is very much about what you interpret. When I write about anything, I assume a preconceived knowledge of my audience and write with this in mind. If my audience does not share the same preconceived idea, then they may well interpret the policy differently. Policy is not legislation and therefore is a guideline to be followed but is not stated as a definitive. I have identified that English and maths policy is difficult to ascertain and understand and often it is unclear who it is aimed at.

I have discussed within this research some of the different theories of policy making, looking at the theories that I feel relate better to the reports that I have been looking at. Policy making is complex and theory based. I decided to touch briefly on discussing some of the complexities within policy making but I am by no means an expert on this area and would not do it any justice. What I have discovered is that there is media hype around policy and educational policy. Some people would argue that there is often a 'media frenzy' when new policy is released and I now refer to the phrase 'permanent amnesia' which has been used by the media at times when they have chosen to focus on some things and not others and often 'forget' what has been focussed on before causing contradictory results.

What I can be sure about, over the twenty years since the publication of Moser, is that English and maths policy is political and messy. It is used as a tool between political parties. The one thing that all parties can agree on is that there is an English and maths problem. What can't be agreed is how to tackle this problem, often with one solution being promoted and then superseded by another.

Where do I place myself?

A question that has changed throughout this writing. At the start I thought I knew the answer to this. I was an English practitioner working in the Skills for Life sector dealing with Post 16 and adults daily encouraging them to undertake exams so that the provider I worked for had its retention, achievement and success data. I wanted to support the students better and have a better understanding of why the number and statistics of those with poor English and maths skills were not improving.

There are issues that still concern me that I have either not covered in detail or the research doesn't allow me to develop further at this point. Attitude is one of them, why does the nation have such a poor attitude towards the importance of English and maths skills. Why is everyone so accepting that it is 'OK' to have poor skills? We live in a country of opportunity.

Why did society get to this point? It is clear that this issue goes back many years. Has it always been so complex and entangled? Why is policy so complex and unpredictable? Policy is influential, it states things that become accepted as fact even if that was never the intention. Where are the origins of policy? There is no science to policy, it's simply theory that is being stated by the author, read by many and accepted by the masses. Policy manipulates and is judgemental. The media pounce on policy and this in turn influences how policy is accepted and whether it is accepted. It assumes shared knowledge which often isn't the case and causes a conflict of information. All of these areas surrounding policy are issues that could be researched in a further piece of research and would possibly need to be carried out prior to any further English and maths research in order to further understand why English and maths policy isn't working.

I am concerned about where education is on the government agenda. Government focus has come away from Post 16 education. Some may say

this is 'breathing space', to catch up on the fast lane of the last few years, others are dreading the 'calm before the storm.' A further research opportunity could well be to work with the DfE and identify where education is in their plans and its importance.

I have questioned myself over and over during the last few years, why am I doing this? I have questioned why would anyone else care about what I write? Everyone has their own understanding of the world around them, their own interests and concerns, every life is different and the things that are important to people are different too. There are social rules of convention which affect how people communicate and what information is communicated. Our language changes according to the people interacting with us, often using different language in our professional, social and personal lives. Years ago, our social world would have been face to face, letter and telephone, today much of this social world is social media, Facebook, Zoom and WhatsApp. Our beliefs and understanding and social conventions help us understand this world. All of this is based on language and the pragmatics of language which make us function within society. Moser and later Wolf became part of my social world and have impacted how I function within both my professional, social and personal life. Professional because I work within the world of education and the fact that I am writing this. It has impacted on my family and friends from a personal and social perspective. Why would people care about what I write? It will influence further research and has identified that there is a desperate need for more research to be carried out into not only educational policy (which already has a lot of research but leads to more questions) but into our English and maths problems. A much bigger piece of research that looks at the starting point if one could be found and whether policy is the right route to take in order to tackle this issue. A piece of research that looks at the human capitalist side of English and maths and the social acceptance of poor skills. In 21st century England there shouldn't be an English and maths crisis.

Finally

There are many critics of FE and Post 16 education, but one could argue that it is used as a 'scapegoat' and often patched up until the next crack appears. Policy doesn't always support Post 16 and further research needs to be carried out to understand why FE is often seen as the poor relation to Primary, Secondary and Higher education.

As I bring this writing to a close, I have identified throughout this chapter a range of further research that needs to be carried out before I can start to provide some further answers or look into why there are poor English and maths skills. I could argue that it is simply what makes us function as society. After all, if everyone had excellent English and maths skills, would everyone still be employable, would there be enough jobs to go round and who would do the low skilled jobs? I could argue that poor skills are required in order to ensure society continues to function effectively.

Is there a need to make a major change to the English education system? If so, what would this be? One could argue that Secondary English and maths needs to be researched more? Could there be more support here so that English and maths skills are improved at a lower age, before people join the workforce.

I could look at carrying out research into the culture of society in relation to English and maths? Why does society deem it acceptable to be where it is now? Twenty years following the publication of the Moser report and the implementation of his recommendations, there are still many of the same issues. There is still an English and maths issue and the statistics are still very high for those that have poor English and maths skills.

What does this mean now?

Moser made a difference. He highlighted the issues with English and maths and he put into place a better system of curriculum, qualifications and teachers. This was later followed by Wolf, who changed the funding requirement to further attempt to support better English and maths for the Post 16 sector. Now twenty years later, the English and maths issue is not solved but waiting for the next policy or report to tell us that as a nation England has poor English and maths skills. As mentioned earlier, the last few years in Education have been quiet, however we still have a large skills gap and still large numbers of people of working age who struggle with basic daily English and maths tasks. Education Policy appears to have a habit of repeating itself and with this in mind, my initial thoughts would be that we will see another report similar to that of Moser within the next 5 years. 2021 is the tenth anniversary of Wolf. We could review where we are with Wolf, ten years later, as a next step. The country has a growing national debt and we are continuing to enter a period of uncertainty. One thing that is for certain, is that we need to continue to offer English and maths support for adults and continue to support them with developing these skills, however we can only support those who are willing to accept support. I have mentioned throughout that there is a social issue with this thesis and the inherent English and maths problem in that as a society we accept poor English and maths skills and until we come up with a way to change society's concept of these skills, we will continue to write reports, which we will then review ten and twenty years later.

Should the Twenty year anniversary of Moser have been something more than it was, I would argue not, the recommendations are the 'norm' and were built on by Wolf. The Wolf recommendations have become the new 'norm' and we move forward. They have both made a difference to many people in England who have had the opportunity to gain valuable English and maths skills from qualified teachers following a standardised curriculum and qualifications. There is the option to retake these qualifications and an expectation that they are embedded into all other academic and vocational qualifications. We will continue to have this

ingrained English and maths problem as it is a social and human capitalist problem much more than an educational problem.

Postscript – Covid 19

I finished writing this in the summer of 2019 and at that point made a decision that I would not look at any new publications, reports or documents. Following changes that were required by my examiners in October 2019, I started working on a redraft of the thesis to focus more on Moser. 2019 came to a close and the world entered the year 2020. By February a pandemic had started to spread across the world that became known as Coronavirus or Covid 19.

The UK and indeed the world have never seen anything such as this in our lifetime. Covid 19 has meant that businesses have been closed down, everyone had to work from home where possible and schools closed in March 2020 for the rest of the academic year. This has caused an impact that nobody could have foreseen and an impact on education and the economy that will take many years of recovery.

For me, whilst writing this I have had to manage looking after two children under five and an elderly relative who needs 24 hour care during what became known as 'lockdown' – a time when people were not allowed to leave their houses or meet with anyone outside their household. Restaurants, bars, non-essential shops, leisure facilities and education were all closed. Parents were encouraged to support their children's learning from home with 'home-schooling' becoming a new norm and sessions being delivered via email, Zoom and other online platforms. I was still required to work for some of the time, working from home whilst managing to keep children occupied. For some of the time I was placed on furlough leave like millions of others in the UK. My husband, a key worker had to continue going to work with strict precautions being put into place to prevent any further spread of the virus. For me, like many, this has been both physically and mentally demanding and has impacted on the time

spent following up on this piece of writing. No one could ever have foreseen the impact this has had and is continuing to do so. Schools and Post 16 providers reopened for the new academic year in September 2020 with pupils placed into bubbles, so they don't mix with other groups. Once furlough ended, like many others, I had to start working from home, managing home schooling and caring duties. The impact of Covid-19 has been huge. In January 2021, we were placed in yet another lockdown with schools being closed for 3 months. A life of home-schooling, working from home and using social media to meet friends is the new normal.

Society is in unprecedented times with children in year 11 in 2020 and 2021 not taking GCSEs, they were awarded grades based on their mock exams and Teacher Assessed Grades. The same went for many college and university students who have all been awarded qualifications with no exam being taken, based on predicted grades and mock examinations taken.. For children and Post 16 students, having spent much of their last year doing remote learning, their grades will now be assessed on course work and teacher assessment.

All school children have missed out on a huge amount of education in 2020 and 2021 and although schools reopened in September 2020 with strict social distancing guidelines in place, many children struggled to adapt to new rules and social agendas and the risk to everyone was still high. In January 2021, when schools closed again and lockdown hit for a third time. Remote learning was a new term and children were expected to continue learning using new platforms such as Zoom and Google meet. There was an expectation that children were learning at least 4-5 hours per day and Ofsted continued to carry out online monitoring of remote learning. Parents were required to support this along with working from home in many cases. This has highlighted the English and maths issue further with many parents finding it difficult to support their children and realising that their own skills were not good enough to support others. In addition to all the school

closures, many children are having to self-isolate for 10 days, every time that they have been in close contact with someone who has the virus. This has meant that more than ever remote and online learning has been required. Children who are self-isolating still need to learn and now the government's priority is to look at Covid Recovery Programmes for education. This will affect a whole generation of children.

In December 2020 a vaccine was found that provided hope, it would not cure the virus but hopefully mean that should you catch the virus, you have less chance of being hospitalised or dying. Vaccines take time to roll out and getting the whole nation vaccinated is a huge coordinated task that is the current government focus. Several months later and many have been vaccinated in England, but world-wide the virus is still spreading and restrictions both in England and abroad are still in place.

The impact of this on English and maths for Post 16 is yet unknown. There were no face to face classes for months and although there has been access to online learning, for many people without the skills to access this or even the equipment that is required, this will mean that English and maths skills will continue to decline across the nation. It has already been identified that there is a decline in the levels of English and maths of many school children, with many parents struggling to support their children with home-schooling. Home schooling during a pandemic is not the same as home schooling in general. Parents have only been able to try and touch on the very basics and many have not had the skills and understanding to support their children further. This will impact in the future on those leaving school and those requiring English and maths support as they move into further education and employment. In addition to this not everyone has the access to the IT and internet facilities that are required. Many of those with poor English and maths skills have poor incomes and limited IT resources. Many children and Post 16 learners have not had access to online learning

and support, and this in turn will mean another decline in the English and maths skills of both children and adults in England.

One thing that I have noticed over the last few months as schools have been closed and parents have been engaged with trying to support their children with home learning, is that schools are seeing more and more parents join their children for online lessons and input. It appears that parents want to learn too and many of those that have been asked in the schools that I am currently working with, have explained that they do not understand a lot of the work that their children are doing and want to be better prepared to help them. Reading and writing has been difficult in many households with parents struggling to support their children, As the world changes throughout the pandemic, this could well highlight that there is a need to see the return of 'family learning' classes and a want for parents to be able to improve their skills to be better equipped to help their children in the future.

The world has now changed and with this the twenty-year anniversary of Moser is a distant memory of a world that everyone was part of just eighteen months ago. A world with an 'old normal' as we adapt to a 'new normal' of social distancing, hand sanitiser, face masks and bubbles.

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Appendix 1 – Moser Recommendations’ (Moser 1999)

Recommendation 1	<p>A National Basic Skills Strategy for adults</p> <p>The Government should launch a National Strategy to reduce the number of adults with low levels of basic skill.</p>
Recommendation 2	<p>National Targets</p> <p>As part of the National Strategy, the Government should commit itself to the virtual elimination of functional illiteracy and innumeracy.</p> <p>In addition to the accepted participation target for 2002, the Government should set specific basic skills targets for adults and for young people to be achieved by 2005 and 2010, on the scale proposed in the new National Strategy.</p>
Recommendation 3	<p>National Promotion Campaign</p> <p>There should be a continuous high profile promotion campaign, with clear segmentation for different target groups of learners, to be devised by a new Adult Basic Skills Promotion Task Force. This should be set up in 2000.</p>
Recommendation 4	<p>Entitlement</p> <p>All adults with basic skills below Level 2 should be entitled to a confidential assessment of their skills on demand, access to free, high quality information advice and</p>

	<p>guidance, and access to a variety of programmes of study - all free of charge.</p> <p>People who have successfully completed basic skills courses should be a priority target for the first million Individual Learning Accounts funded from TEC resources to help them progress.</p> <p>The Government should consider how, in the long term, Individual Learning Accounts can be most effectively used to motivate these learners.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p>	<p>Programmes for the Unemployed</p> <p>The Government should:</p> <p>ensure that the basic skills of all New Deal clients are assessed soon after they make contact with their Personal Adviser, and that intensive basic skills courses are offered early on to those with basic skills at Entry Level or below;</p> <p>ensure that all claimants for benefit are entitled to assessment of basic skills and offered effective provision to improve their skills if below Level 2.</p> <p>The New Deal Task Force should be asked urgently to ensure that clients with basic skills below Level 2, on options other than the education and training option, get access to basic skills support.</p> <p>Training should be provided for all Personal Advisers so that they can identify basic skills needs and encourage the take-up of basic skills opportunities where this is necessary.</p>

<p>Recommendation 6</p>	<p>Workplace Programmes</p> <p>The Government should set up a Workplace Basic Skills Development Fund. This would provide seed funding for companies to set up basic skills programmes either in the workplace or at a local institution such as a college or adult education centre.</p> <p>Up to a fixed budget limit, the Government should finance the wage cost of day release for up to 13 weeks for people with basic skills below Level 1.</p> <p>The revised <i>Investors in People</i> guidance should include a requirement for companies to have effective arrangements for assessing and dealing with basic skills difficulties.</p> <p>Training for basic skills at the workplace should be funded on a par with funding of such programmes in FE Colleges.</p> <p>A 'pledge' scheme for companies should be introduced to allow them to indicate their support for raising standards of basic skills among adults.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p>	<p>Trade Unions</p> <p>Unions should provide Basic Skills Programmes for their members based on the new National Strategy.</p> <p>Unions should work with the TUC to train and develop union learning representatives who would support and advise learners and work with employers on the development of basic skills provision in the workplace.</p> <p>Unions should be encouraged to submit bids to the Union Learning Fund and the Workplace Basic Skills</p>

	Development Find for the development of basic skills programmes.
Recommendation 8	<p>The University for Industry</p> <p>In pursuing its commitment to making basic skills a priority, the UfL should</p> <p>Ensure that all learners undertaking courses below level 2 through UfL endorsed programmes should have access to and guidance on basic skills help available.</p> <p>Ensure that in working towards its targets for basic skills support in the workplace and elsewhere materials, tutor support and qualification meet the quality standards we propose.</p> <p>Commissions multimedia basic skills products, online learning and digital TV programmes to provide for adults with basic skills needs through learning centres and at home.</p>
Recommendation 9	<p>Community Based Programmes</p> <p>Local Basic Skills Action Plans should specifically include community based provision to meet increased local need, for which particular resources should be identified. The Secretary of State should take account of the adequacy of such community based provision in approving local Adult Basic Skills Action Plans.</p>
Recommendation 10	<p>Basic Skills Support in Colleges</p> <p>As soon as possible, and no later than 2002, all providers funded by FEFE should, as a requirement of funding, be</p>

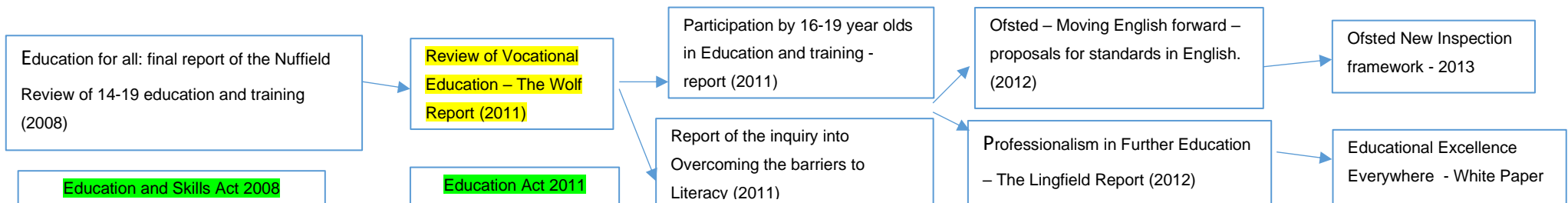
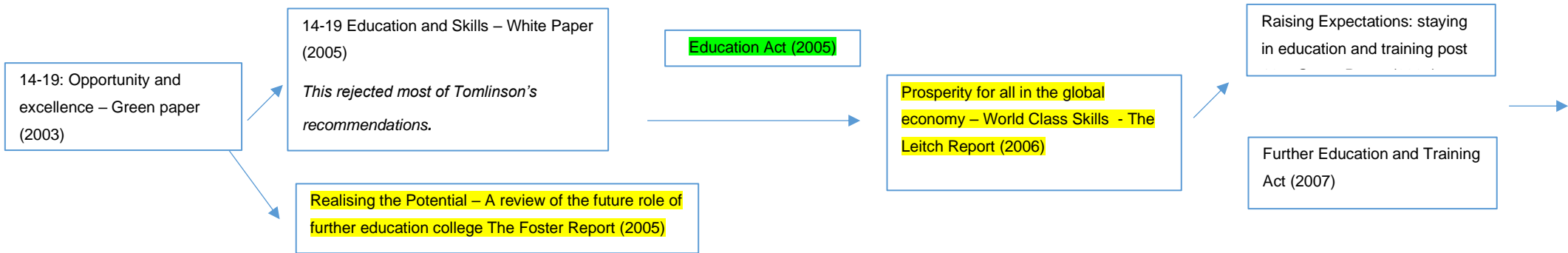
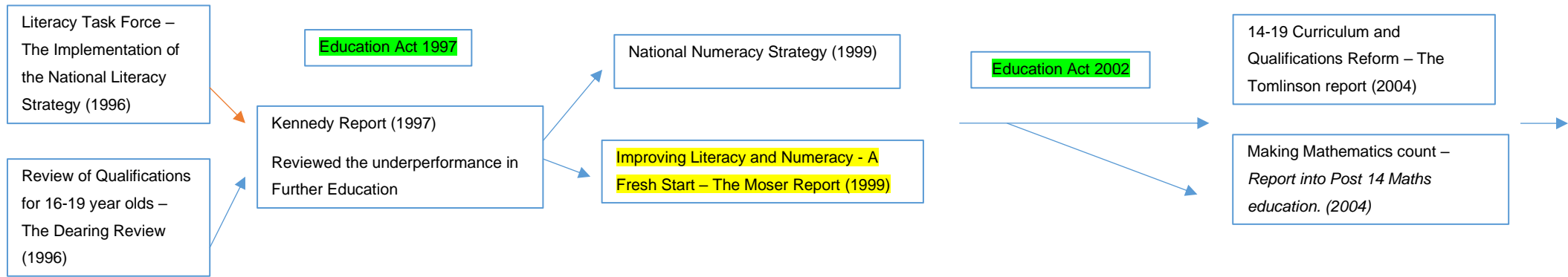
	<p>required to assess all appropriate students enrolling and offer additional support.</p> <p>By 2002 all students assessed as requiring additional support with basic skills in colleges should be able to take up this help.</p>
Recommendation 11	<p>Family Based Programmes</p> <p>All Infant and Primary Schools in educationally disadvantaged areas should have family literacy and numeracy programmes by 2002.</p> <p>The Basic Skills Agency should continue to develop and evaluate new models of family literacy and family numeracy programmes.</p>
Recommendation 12	<p>Quality Assurance</p> <p>By 2002 all basic skill programmes should be required to meet a new nationally determined framework of standards in order to qualify for funding.</p>
Recommendation 13	<p>Inspection</p> <p>The three Inspection agencies, FEFC, Ofsted and TSC, should all work together on a common inspection framework based on clear and transparent standards and consistent with the proposed national quality framework.</p>
Recommendation 14	<p>Teacher Training</p> <p>All new staff and volunteers should undertake recognised initial training in teaching literacy and numeracy to adults.</p> <p>The BSA, the new Further Education National Training</p>

	<p>Organisation (FENTO) and others should work together to produce new qualifications for teaching basic skills to adults.</p> <p>By 2005 all teachers of basic skills should have this qualification of an equivalent.</p> <p>Diploma courses in teaching basic skills to adults should be established in University Education Departments.</p> <p>Intensive courses for teachers to become familiar with the new curriculum should be mounted.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15</p>	<p>Use of Information and Communication Technologies</p> <p>In view of the importance of Information and Communication Technology in basic skill learning programmes, the DfEE should ensure, in collaboration with relevant bodies, that such programmes receive all the necessary advice and support.</p>
<p>Recommendation 16</p>	<p>Curriculum and Qualifications</p> <p>There should be a new national basic skills curriculum for adults, with well-defined standards of skill at Entry Level, Level 1 & Level 2.</p> <p>Only basic skills qualification based on this new curriculum should be funded from the public purse. Whether assessed by coursework, test or a mixture of both they should use a common set of standards laid down by the QCA.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17</p>	<p>Local Partnerships and Action Plans</p> <p>Implementing the National Strategy locally should be the responsibility of the local Lifelong Learning partnerships. These would include representatives of those concerned</p>

	<p>with adult basic skills. Their composition would be submitted to the Secretary of State for guidance.</p> <p>Each Partnership should be required to submit an Action Plan for the approval of the Secretary of State.</p>
Recommendation 18	<p>A National Strategy Group</p> <p>A new National Adult Basic Skills Strategy Group, with Ministerial chairmanship, should be established by the Secretary of State to oversee the implementation of the National Strategy. It should be supported by a Technical Implementation Sub-Committee.</p>
Recommendation 19	<p>Role of the Basic Skills Agency</p> <p>The role and responsibility of the Basic Skills Agency should be revised so that, building on its present responsibilities, it can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise each partnership on their Action Plan Promote and disseminate good practice Coordinate and promote the professional development of teachers Promote basic skills nationally Assess progress against targets Report to the Secretary of State each year on progress towards meeting the national target.
Recommendation 20	<p>Funding</p> <p>A priority for the Technical Implementation Sub-Committee should be to produce more definitive estimates of all the costs involved in the National strategy, refining the broad estimates made here.</p>

	<p>The FEFC, TECs and other major funding bodies should modify their funding mechanisms to provide incentives for providers to increase the scale of adult basic skills provision.</p> <p>The FEFE should increase the entry units for basic skills to encourage outreach work, and to account for the requirement of institutions to assess all appropriate students.</p>
<p>Recommendation 21</p>	<p>Research</p> <p>The Department for Education and Employment should ensure that a research programme is set up to provide a systematic basis for the proposed strategy, including continuous monitoring of action plans. This should be done in collaboration with the Basic Skills Agency.</p>

Appendix 2 - Policy papers relating to English and maths and / or Post 16 education (SOURCE: www.educationengland.org.uk (accessed 20/04/2017))



Appendix 3: Political Parties

When looking at policies, reports and strategies or white papers, it is important to have an awareness of the governments that have been in power over the forty years of this study and who was in power when the different reports were produced.

Years	Government Party	Prime-Minister
1974 – 1979	Labour	Harold Wilson (1974 – 1976) James Callaghan (1976 – 1979)
1979 – 1997	Conservative	Margaret Thatcher (1979 – 1990) John Major (1990-1997)
1997 – 2010	New Labour	Tony Blair (1997 – 2007) Gordon Brown (2007-2010)
2010 – 2015	Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition	David Cameron (2010-2015) (Nick Clegg for Lib Dem)
2015 - 2017	Conservative	David Cameron (2015 – 2016) Teresa May from (2016 – 2017)
2017 - present	Conservative	Teresa May (2017- 2019) (Did not get a majority vote, Working with the DUP as a minority government.) Boris Johnson (2019 – Present) (Majority Vote)

Appendix 4: Government Policies

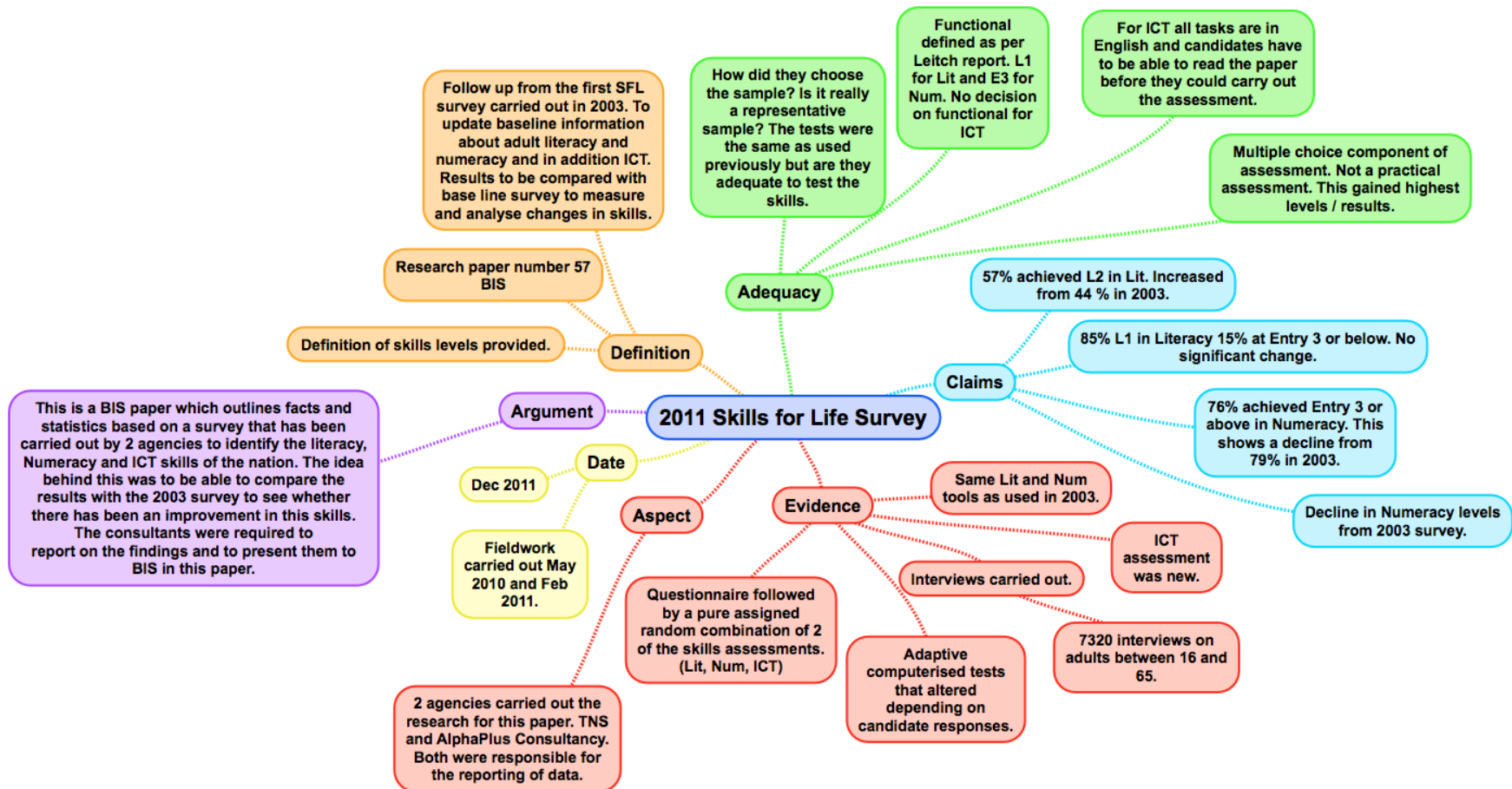
Some of the Key Government policies, papers and acts that have influenced Education and/or English and maths strategies over the last forty years include:

- The Warnock Report of Special Educational Needs – 1978
- White paper – ‘A new training initiative: a programme for action’ – 1980
- Green paper – ‘Education and Training for Young people’ – 1985
- Education Reform Act – this replaced GCE’s with GCSEs – 1988
- White paper – ‘Education and Training for the 21st Century’ – 1991
- Tomlinson Report – 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform 1996
- Dearing Review of Qualifications – 1996
- Kennedy report on poor participation of minority groups in FE – 1997
- Moser Report – A fresh Start, Improving Literacy and Numeracy 1999
- Learning and Skills Act formed under David Blunkett – 2000
- FE Teacher Qualification review – 2001
- Green paper – Extending opportunities: Raising standards – 2002
- White Paper – ‘Education and Skills’ following up the Tomlinson Report – 2004
- White Paper – ‘FE: Raising Skills, improving life chances’ – 2006
- Leitch Report – Prosperity for all in the Global Economy – World Class Skills’ – 2006
- 2020 Vision – Report of Teaching and Learning – 2006
- Realising the potential – A review of the future role of Further Education Colleges - Foster Review - 2006
- World Class Skills – Implementing the Leitch Review – 2007
- Initial teacher Training Reform – 2007
- Education and Skills Act – 2008
- White Paper – ‘The importance of teaching’ - 2010
- Review of vocational Education - The Wolf Report – 2011
- Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers – 2011

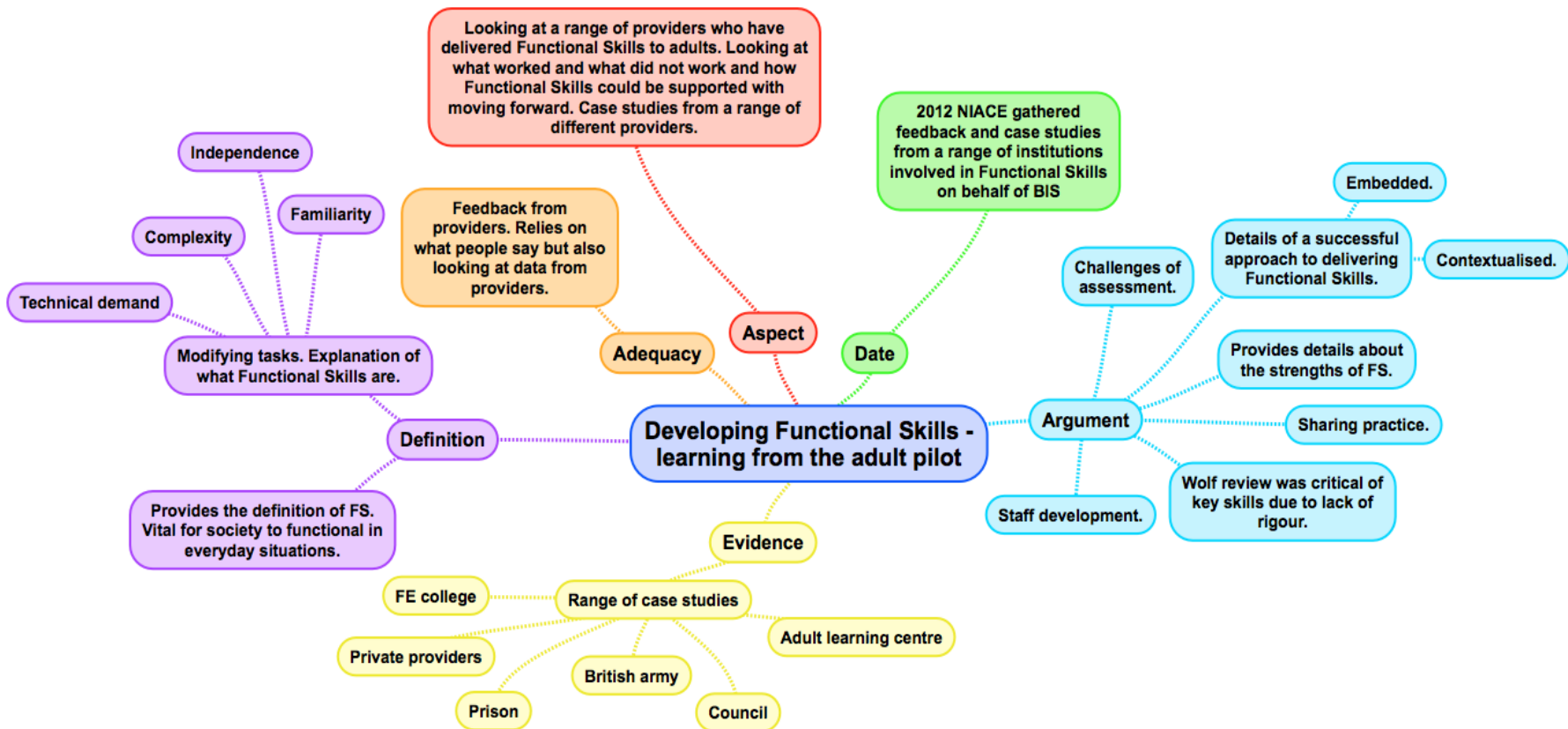
- New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System reform plan – 2011
- Education Act - 2012
- Lingfield Report – Professionalism in Further Education – 2012
- Education Excellence Everywhere - 2016

This is not an exhaustive list; there are other policies and papers that have impacted on English and maths Education over the years.

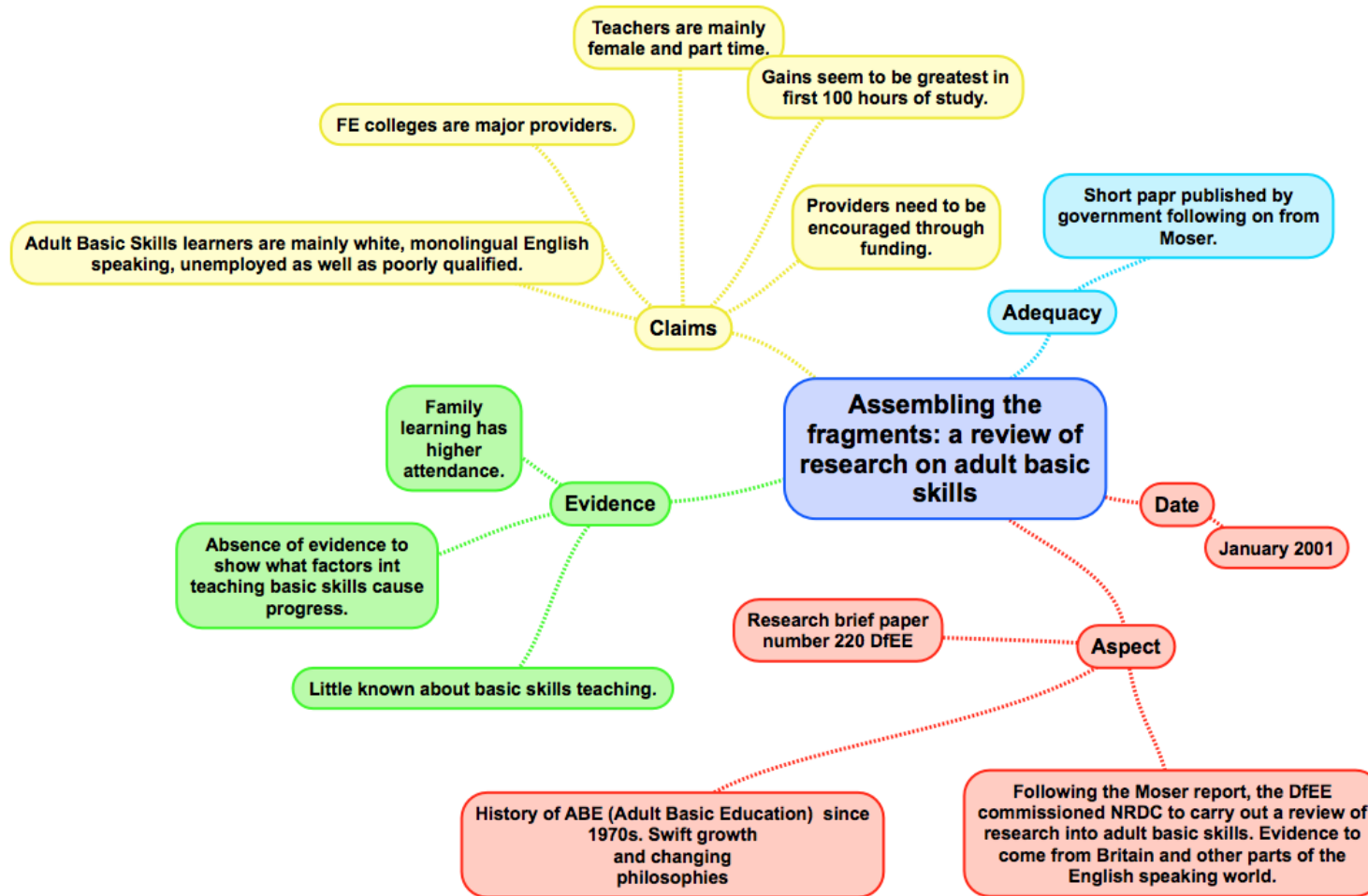
Appendix 5a



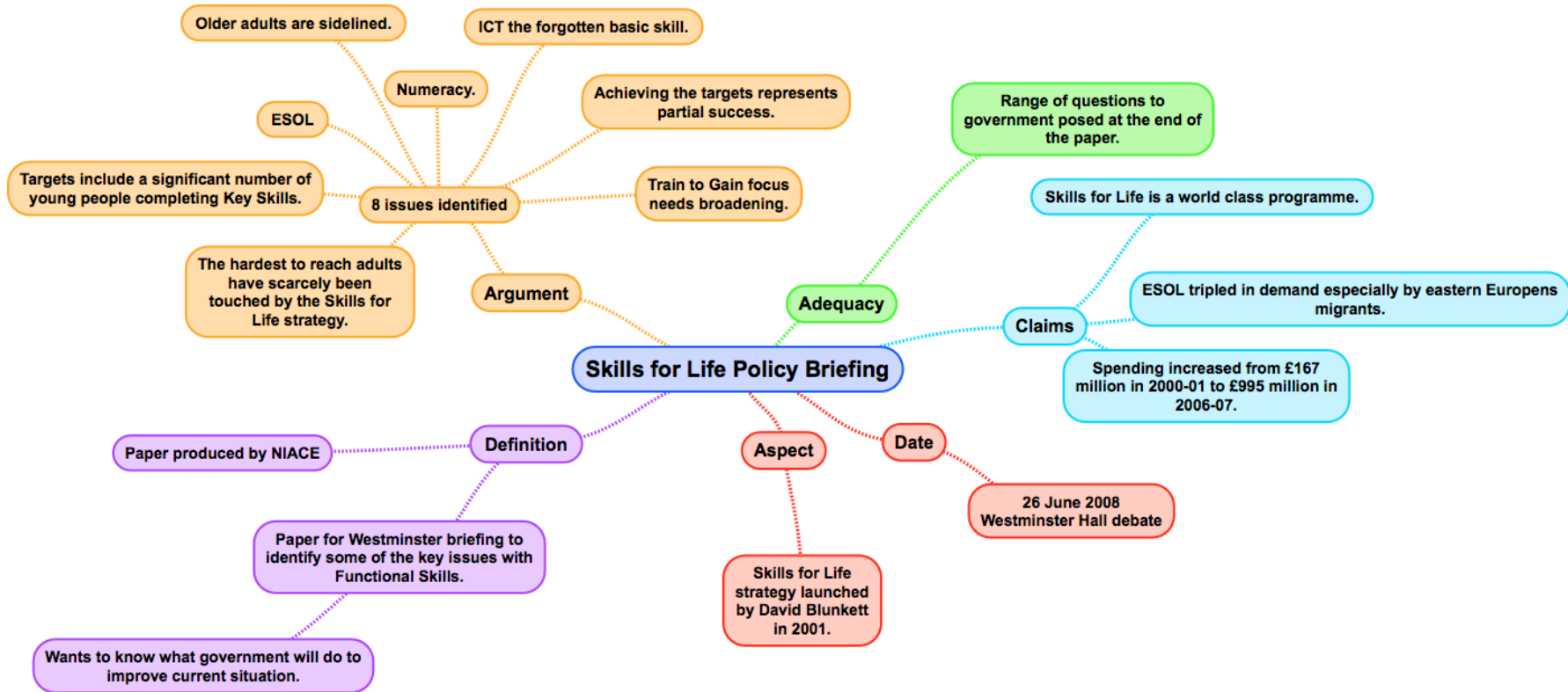
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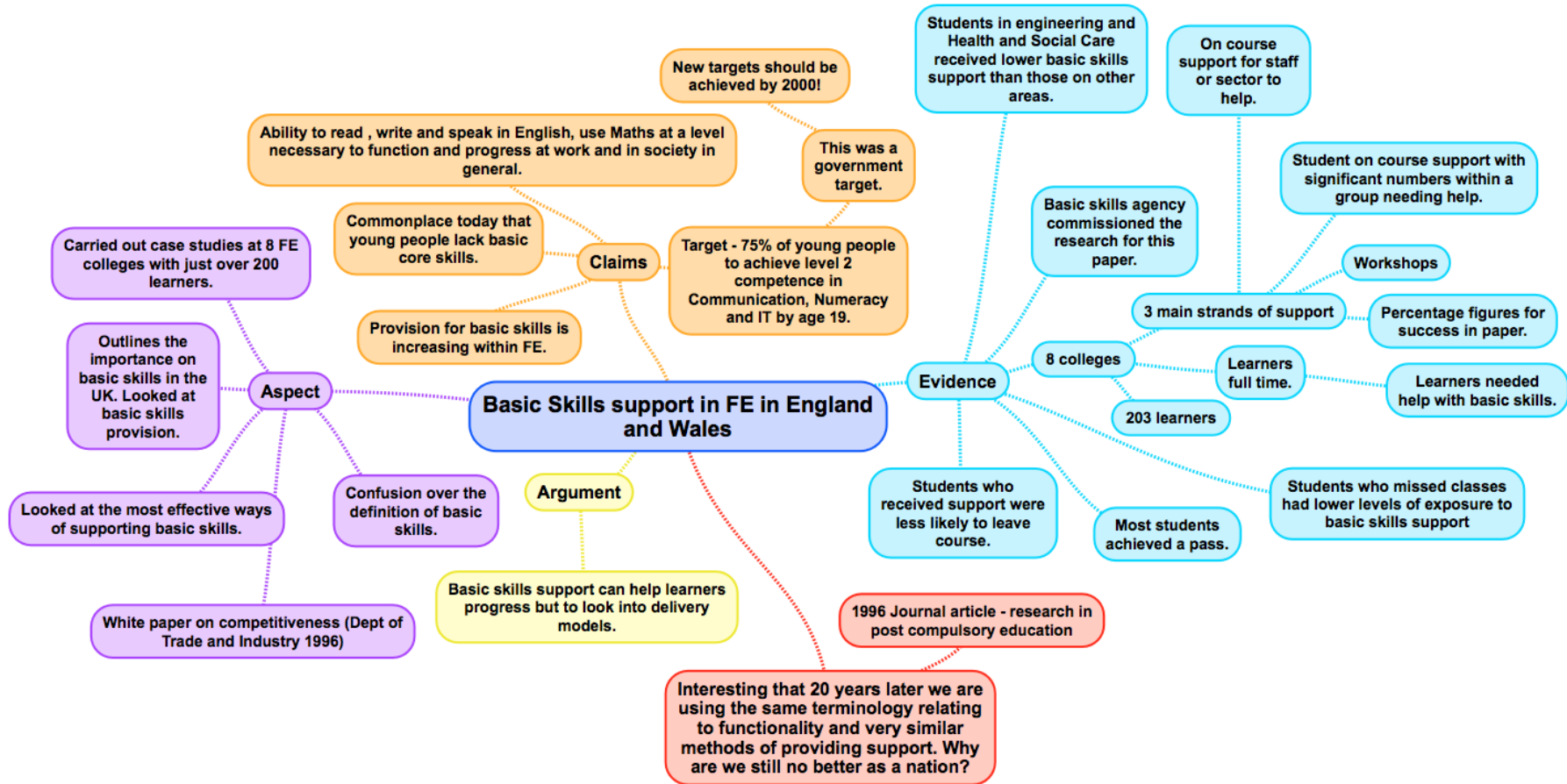
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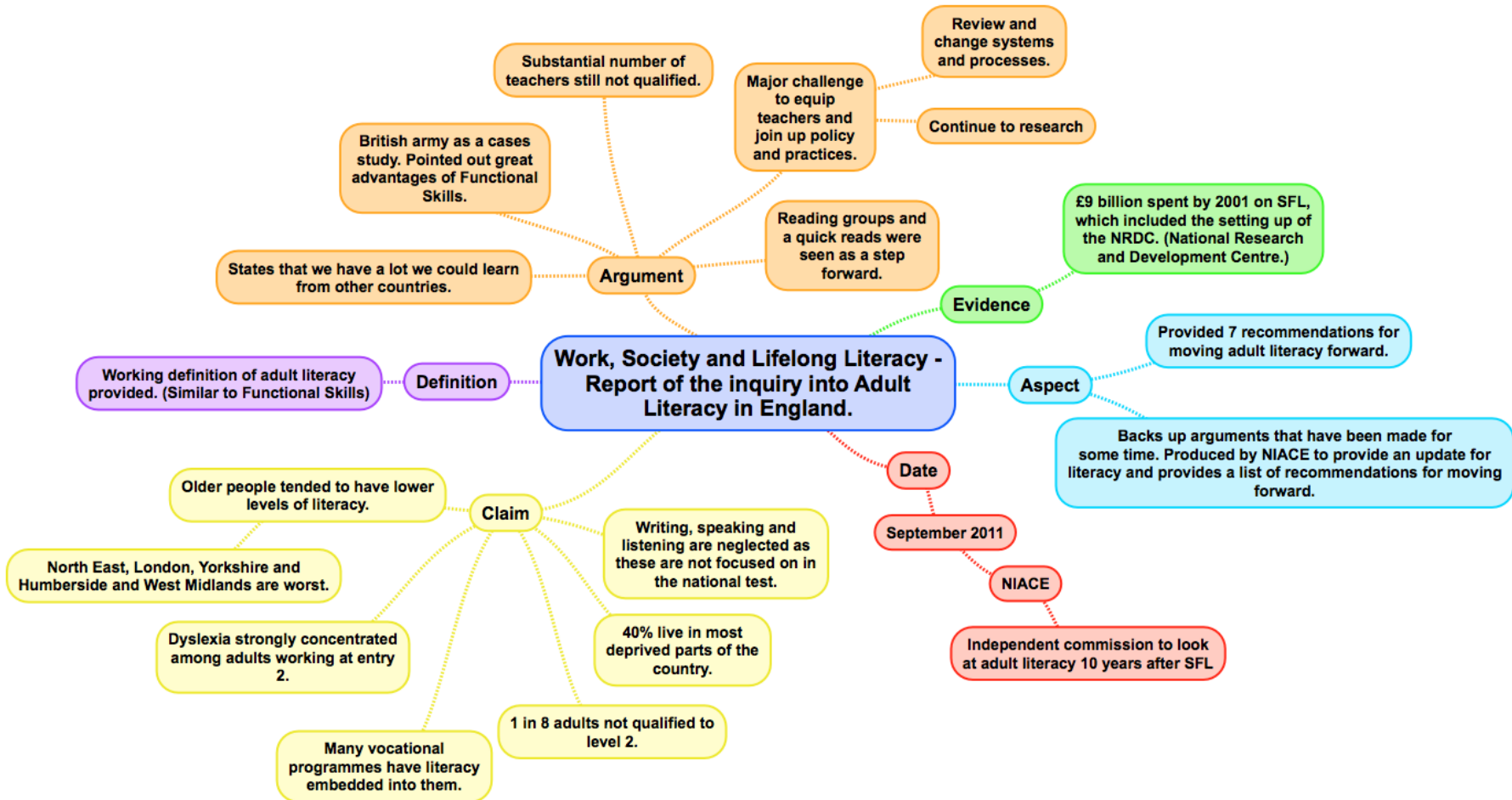
Appendix 5d



Appendix 5e



Appendix 5f



Appendix 5g



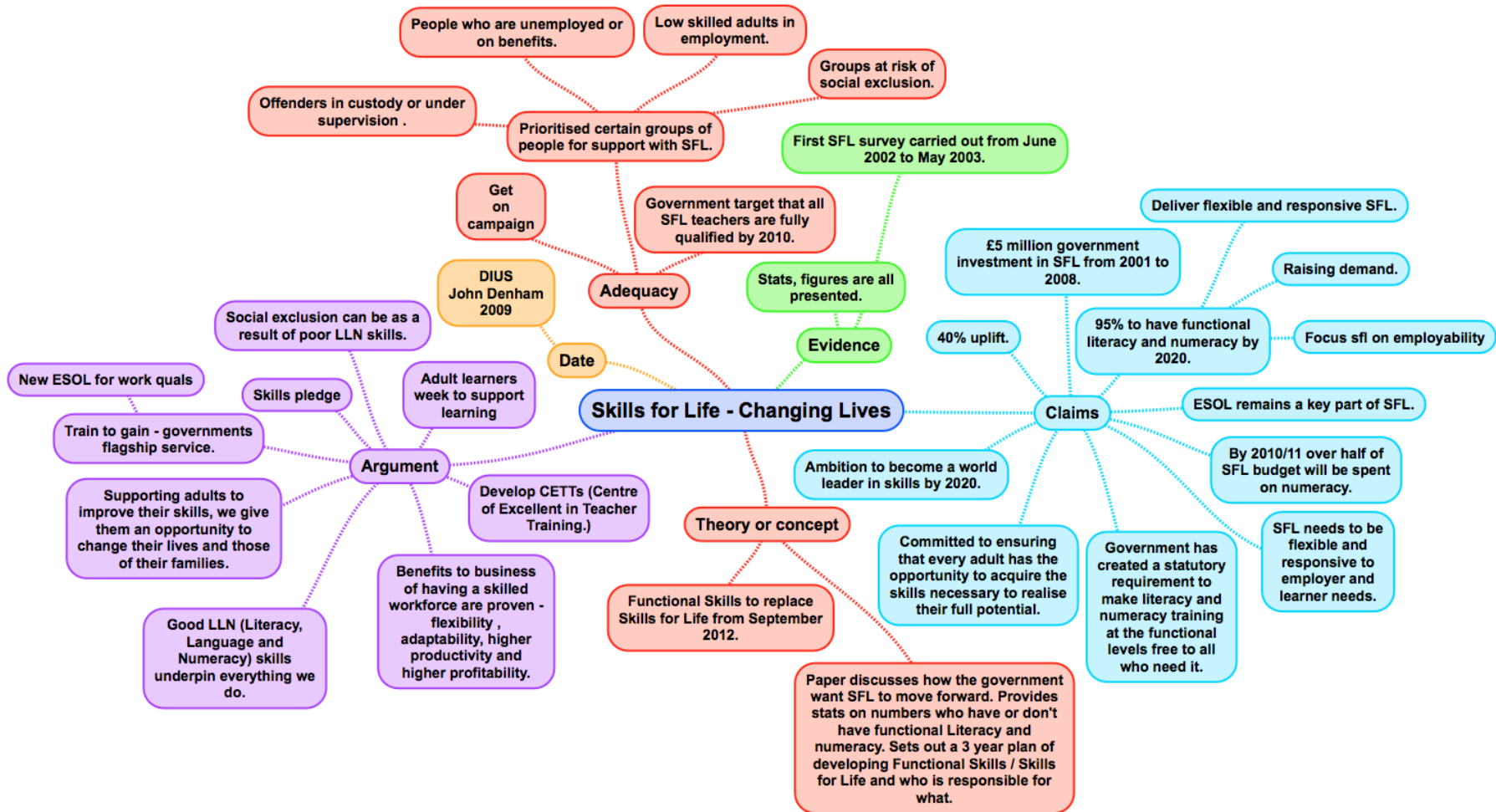
Appendix 5h



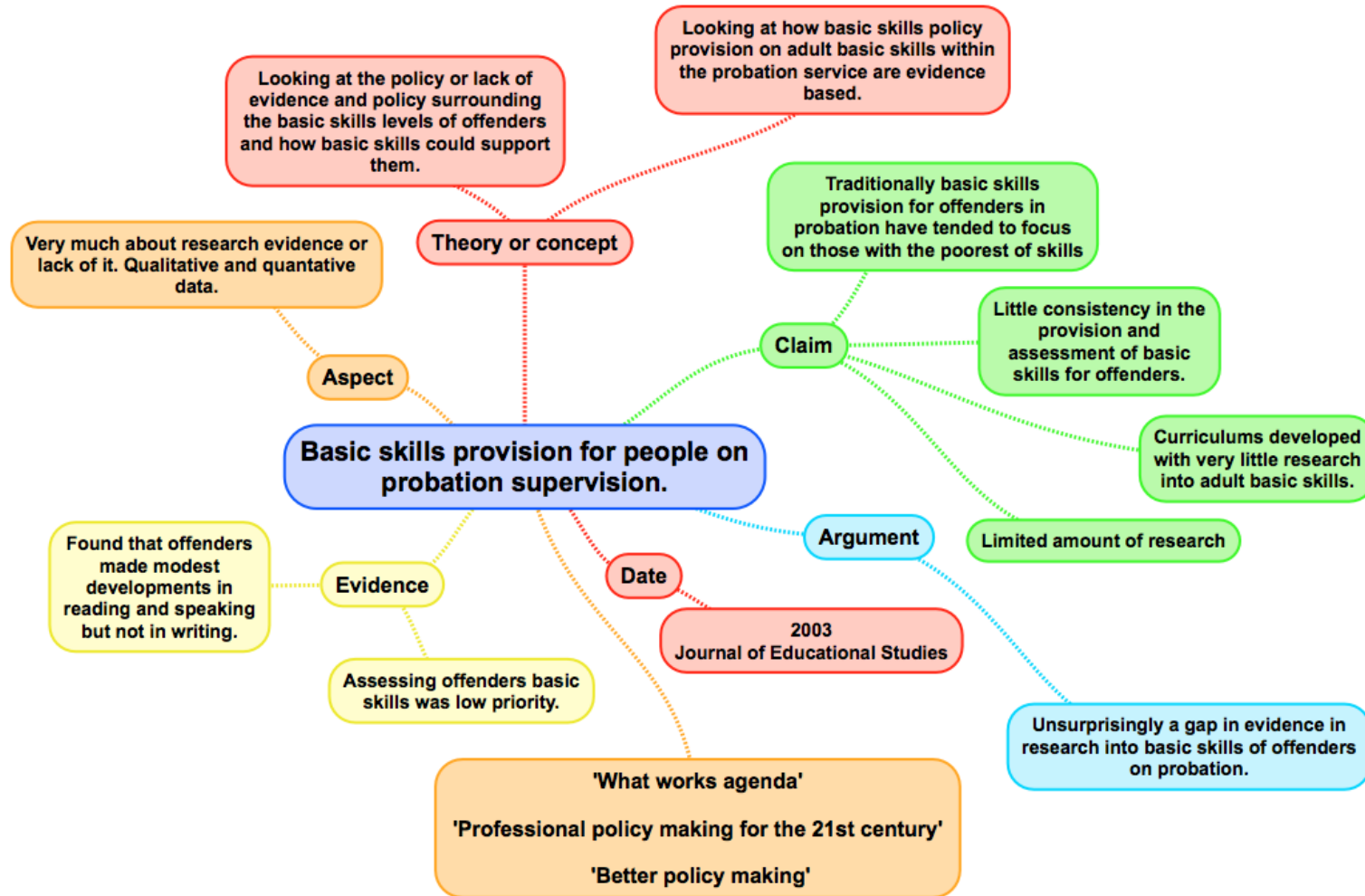
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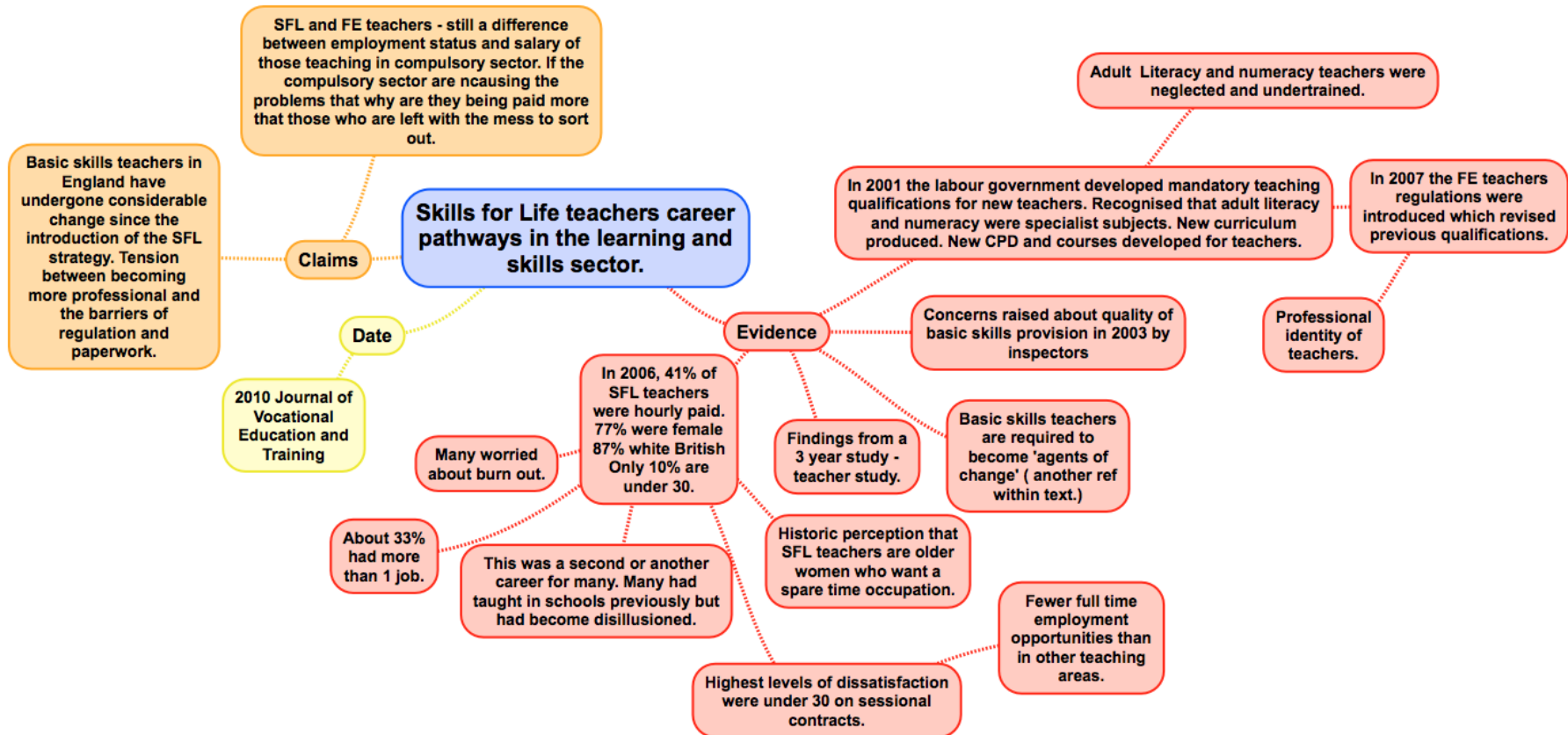
Appendix 5j



Appendix 5k



Appendix 5I



Appendix 6: Acronyms

ALBSU	Adult Learning Basic Skills Unit
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
AoC	Association of Colleges
AoLP	Association of Learning providers
AoN	Application of Number – Key Skills
BIS	Business Innovation and Skills
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
Cert Ed	Certificate in Education
Comms	Communication – Key Skills
CTLLS	Certificate to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DTTLS	Diploma to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
FEU	Further Education Unit
FESFC	Further Education and Skills Funding Council
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council England
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IIP	Investors in People
LA	Local Authority
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSIS	Learning Skills Improvement Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education

PTLLS	Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QCDA	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
SfL	Skills for Life
TEC	Technology and Enterprise Council