

**Independence as the constrained freedom to individuate:
a study from an internal perspective of the aims and evaluation
processes in early twenty-first century secondary schools
belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) associations**

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I, Christine Anne Mannion Watson, certify that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

Originally conceived as a school effectiveness study to address a gap in school effectiveness literature, which largely excluded the private sector, this research was designed to examine the purposes of Independent Schools Council (ISC) independent secondary schools which were free to set their own aims, and the ways in which they judged their success in achieving their goals, given that they are not subject to inspection by the government's agency The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). As the study evolved, the focus shifted to an exploration of how independence was constituted in the schools studied, and the constraints under which they operate.

The inquiry opens with an examination of the different categories of independent school and gives reasons for the choice of schools studied. This is followed by a review of literature relating to private schools, which is principally historical; studies of educational policy-making, and of the conflict between the individualist and collective aims of schooling.

Initial scrutiny of the aims statements of 84 schools and accompanying questionnaire responses revealed the uniqueness of each school's stated goals, although certain aims appeared characteristic of most schools surveyed, notably the development of individual potential and provision of a supportive environment. Further analysis highlighted the concept of individuation, both of the institution and of the pupil. Interviews with representatives of the inspectorate and a small number of headteachers, and analysis of a sample of inspection reports shed further light on this, particularly in the field of evaluation.

However, the freedom to individuate was not found to be absolute. Constraints identified included government policy, external expertise, school personnel, concerns about social justice, and the need to market the school. The aims analysed largely reflected parental choice factors evident in the relevant literature, suggesting that neoliberal ideology also restricts a school's freedom.

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Abbreviations used in this thesis

Ministerial departments responsible for education:

DCSF *Department for Children Schools and Families (June 2007-May 2010)*

DES *Department for Education and Skills (2001-June 2007)*

DFE *Department for Education (May 2010 onwards)*

DFEE *Department for Education and Employment (1992-1995)*

Others:

A Level Advanced Level General Certificate of Education

ASCL Association of School and College Leaders

ALIS Advanced Level Information System

EAL English as an Additional Language

EBacc English Baccalaureate

ECM Every Child Matters

GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education

GDST Girls' Day School Trust

GSA Girls' Schools Association

HMC Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference

HMI Her Majesty's Inspector/Inspectorate

IAPS Independent (formerly Incorporated) Association of Preparatory Schools

ICAJE International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education

IGCSE International General Certificate of Secondary Education

ISA Independent Schools Association

ISC Independent Schools Council

ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

ISI2/ISI3 Second/third cycle ISI inspections

ISIS Independent Schools Information Service

ISSR Independent Schools Standards Regulations

LEA/LA Local Education Authority/Local Authority

LDD Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

NC National Curriculum

NCSL/NCTL	National College for School Leadership (now National College for Teaching and Leadership)
NMS	National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools
OFSTED (Ofsted)	Office for Standards in Education
MIDYIS	Middle Years Information System
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
NUT	National Union of Teachers
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RI	Reporting inspector
SEF	Self-evaluation form
SENDA	Special Needs and Disability Act
SESI	School effectiveness and improvement
SHMIS	Society of Headmasters and Headmistresses of Independent Schools
SJBP	Society of Jesus British Province
SMCPC	Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education/Development
TES	Times Educational Supplement
YELLIS	Year 11 Information System

Chapter 1 Introduction

Rationale for the present study

The current research was originally conceived as a school effectiveness study focussing on English secondary schools in the independent sector. Given that a selection had to be made, for reasons of manageability, I chose to concentrate on the secondary phase as this was the area of education where I had most experience, thus facilitating access to respondents. Moreover, it seemed likely that success criteria would be more subject to influence from external examinations than in the primary phase and this might have affected schools' aims. My original literature survey had revealed that most school effectiveness research had focussed on the maintained sector (Reynolds, 1997).

However, given the increasing interest on the part of successive governments in creating 'independent' schools within the state-funded sector (Wright, 2012), the consequent blurring between the private and public educational sectors (Whitty, 2008; White, 2016) and comments made by some of the interviewees, I decided to broaden the scope of the research to examine the nature of independence in schools whose heads were in membership of one of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) associations. There were several reasons why these schools were chosen, which are outlined briefly here, but analysed in greater detail later in the chapter.

Firstly, I had identified no recent study of this aspect of independent education in the literature I had surveyed. Secondly, these schools were funded principally from fee income, rather than government capitation, and formed a sizeable category of schools. Thirdly, they were exempted from the requirements of the National Curriculum and were free to set their own aims. Moreover, they were not subject to inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) but by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). Finally there has been a recent resurgence of concern about the elitism of ISC schools and the advantages their pupils enjoy as regards higher education and employment prospects (Whitty, 2001; Ryan and Sibieta, 2010; Vasagar, 2011; The Sutton Trust, 2012; Sullivan et al., 2014; Dorling, 2014a,b) and the tax benefits many derive from charitable status (House of Lords, 2017). As a consequence,

current Labour Party policy has sought, so far unsuccessfully, to legally oblige independent schools to share their facilities and resources (Wiggins, 2016). An examination of the nature of these schools' freedom, and uses to which it was put, could illuminate some of the ways in which the education they offer could be considered privileged, and the consequent concerns about social justice.

My research focussed on two dimensions of independence: the aims these schools set for themselves, and the evaluation processes, including inspection, which were employed to judge their success in achieving their goals. These aspects were intended to illustrate some of the characteristics of independence as experienced by such institutions in the early years of the twenty-first century. I hoped that the insights gained might be of value not only to this group of schools, but also by way of a comparator to non-association private establishments and to the growing cohort of secondary schools funded by government but deemed 'independent' (McInerney, 2013). Their number is likely to increase during the current administration, given that the recent White Paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (HM Government, 2016) contained plans for all schools controlled by Local Authorities to become Academies in the next 5 to 6 years, although the element of compulsion has now been rescinded. Finally, it was intended that the proposition as to the nature of independence, which might result from my research, could be applied beyond the field of education to other autonomous organisations.

I believed that my experience as a head and governor in ISC schools, coupled with that as an Ofsted trained inspector, and later Team and Reporting Inspector for ISI, would enhance my capacity to interpret data relating to this topic. Thus my theoretical sensitivity, in a mixed method study, which incorporated some analysis strategies from grounded theory, as defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1992), would be enriched by professional practice

Which schools are considered to be independent in the present study?

Overview of the different types of independent education in England

Over the last thirty years successive governments of both major political parties have shown an increasing interest in creating more autonomous state schools, many of

which they have labelled as independent (Wright, 2012; Gunter and McGinity, 2014) in the belief that this will lead to an improvement in standards of achievement (Abbott et al., 2013). Therefore the term ‘independent’, when applied to schools, can no longer always be assumed to be synonymous with ‘private’ or fee-paying, as it was in earlier years (Walford, 2003). In fact, Robertson and Dale (2013) point out that there is no longer a clear boundary between private and public education. There are now a very large number of schools which the government deems to be independent, some of which are state-funded (Walford 2014b), and others which are fee-paying.

Consequently, it is necessary to clarify how I have interpreted the words ‘independent’ and ‘school’ in order to explain the choice of schools which are the focus of this study, given that a study encompassing all autonomous schools would have been unmanageable. The Ofsted framework for inspecting non-association independent schools (2013) defined a school as

“an establishment which provides education either for five or more pupils of compulsory school age or for one or more pupils of compulsory age if they have a statement of educational need.”

Whereas the above definition provides clarification of what the state considers to be a school, it does not define independence. In the context of this study I have defined independence as:

- Freedom from government control and external authority;
- Financial self-sufficiency;

Prior to the introduction of the common inspection framework in September 2015, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the non-ministerial government department, published successive frameworks for inspecting education in non-association independent schools. In addition to private schools, the 2013 framework listed the following types of school as being independent:

- City technology colleges
- City colleges for the technology of the arts
- Academies
- Free schools
- University technology colleges (UTCs)
- Studio schools

They were thus subject to the independent schools standards regulations on registration and, thereafter, to inspection under section 5 of the *Education Act* 2005. Under the terms of this Act and the later 2008 Education and Skills Act, the Secretary of State can approve inspection bodies other than Ofsted. One such body is the Independent Schools Inspectorate, which is authorised to carry out inspections of schools that are members of the Independent Schools Council. These schools are fee-paying and have traditionally been known as private or public schools. No reference is made by Ofsted (2013) to elective home education, frequently referred to in common parlance as home schooling. A description of home education arrangements can be found in Appendix 11.

Levels of government control over independent schools

Figure 1.1 summarises the principal areas of freedom enjoyed by different categories of independent secondary education providers and the areas where government control is apparent. A more detailed description of state financed independent schools can be found at Appendix 10.

Figure 1.1 Independent schools and levels of government control

Type of school	Major income source	Selection	Aims	NC	Timetable	Governance	OFSTED inspection
Home education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	✓
CTCs	☒	☒	✓	✓	✓	✓	☒
Academies	☒	☒	✓	✓	✓	✓	☒
Free schools	☒	☒	✓	✓	✓	✓	☒
UTCs	☒	☒	✓	✓	✓	✓	☒
Studio schools	☒	☒	✓	✓	✓	✓	☒
Non-ISC private schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	☒
ISC schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

☒ = controlled directly by government ✓ = freedom from direct government control

Despite recent attempts by governments of different ideological persuasions to set up ‘independent’ state schools, as discussed above, the very notion of such an entity would seem to be a contradiction in terms, since the schools, listed by Ofsted as

independent, enjoy a very limited degree of independence. They are subject to the authority of the state, their degree of autonomy is circumscribed in that they are accountable to Ofsted, the government's inspection organisation and as Courtney (2015) points out, any theoretical curricular freedom is limited by performance measures such as the EBacc, which specifies the subjects in which achievement is required in order to be judged positively by the inspectorate. Moreover, they are dependent on the state for funding, and all belong to a generic group: City Technology Colleges, Academies, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges or Studio Schools. None of them are free-standing. Seldon (2010) argued that even the new models of school, introduced by the coalition government, would remain more "*state*" than "*independent*" and would not have the freedoms which were currently enjoyed by independent fee-paying schools.

Private Schools

In his introduction as editor of *British Private Schools – Research on Policy and Practice*, Walford (2003) refers to the contributors' use of the terms "*private*" and "*independent*" interchangeably to describe the whole range of schools that are not maintained by the state. These schools own or rent their own premises and are free to set their own staff terms and conditions, curriculum, and admissions policy (Ryan and Sibieta, 2010). In Britain, these schools are officially designated as 'independent schools' which encourages the idea that they are not in any way dependent upon local or central government for support. Walford (2003) points out that many of these schools derive considerable benefit from their charitable status and, hence, cannot be said to be completely independent as they are not entirely financially self-sufficient. Nevertheless, their principal source of income is the revenue from the fees they charge, and in a few cases, from endowments. Thus, they are more independent than the schools discussed above.

In 2003, when the initial phase of this research was undertaken, there were 2160 registered independent schools in England educating 7.86% of children in schools aged 5 and above (Walford, 2006). Ryan and Sibieta (2010) remark that the percentage of children attending independent schools has remained fairly constant over a number of years in England at just over 7%. The research was limited to schools in England given

the differences in the educational systems between the different parts of the United Kingdom (UK) (Ball, 2008; Chitty, 2009)

Schools which are private fall into two categories:

- The first group comprises those which do not belong to an ISC association and are often privately owned. These schools educate about 20% of those pupils in fee-paying schools (Walford, 2006). Walford argues that many of these schools are very small, with fewer than 200 pupils, and some have as few as 25 pupils. They were often established for religious reasons. At the time of this research, for example, there were 80 private Muslim schools, 80 evangelical Christian schools, and several Hindu or Buddhist schools. However, all but one of the Jewish schools belonged to the maintained sector (Hart et al., 2001). Several schools have also been founded to offer a more liberal and broader education than that on offer in the state sector. Many of them belong to umbrella organisations such as the Human Scale Movement.

Despite appearing to be more independent than maintained sector schools they are all, in fact, subject to monitoring by the state organisation, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), which conducts regular inspections and produces reports which are published in the same way as happens with maintained sector schools and, since 2015, using a common inspection framework. For this reason they were excluded from the current research. A comparison of the level of independence enjoyed by the different types of private schools especially between ISC association and non-association schools could be an area for future research.

- The second group is made up of those schools whose heads, bursars or governors are in membership of one of the associations of the Independent Schools Council (ISC), the overarching representative body for the independent sector (Smithers et al., 2008), namely HMC, (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference); GSA (Girls' Schools Association) ; IAPS (Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools); SHMIS (Society of Heads); ISA (Independent Schools Association); ISBA The Independent Schools Bursars' Association; and AGBIS (Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools).

Walford (2006) estimated that 80% of those pupils who are educated at an independent school attend a school in membership of one of the ISC associations. This assertion is confirmed by the *ISC Census* for 2003, the year during which the initial phase of the research was carried out. The 2016 *ISC Census* indicated that this figure is still representative of the current situation. As Walford (2003) points out these schools were in the vanguard of the move away from using the terms “*public school*” and “*private school*” in favour of “*independent school*”, in the late 1960s, because the former terms were associated with elitism, an image which they were keen to dispel. These schools do appear to enjoy a greater degree of autonomy than the non-ISC schools as illustrated in the table above. They are not subject to direct monitoring by Ofsted if the head is in membership of one of the associations, but rather are inspected by the ISC’s own inspectorate, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) whose inspectors are, in the main, practitioners, or recently retired practitioners, from the independent sector. The remit of this inspectorate and its relevance to the question of independence will be examined at a later stage. It is on this group of schools that this research focuses.

A profile of ISC schools 2003 -2011

The ISC (2003b) *Census* outlines the main features of the schools in the sector for the period when the research started and that of 2011 (ISC, 2011a) outlines the situation at the end of the research. As the format of the *Census* changed over the years it is not always possible to establish a direct comparison of all features. Certain caveats should be borne in mind when considering these statistics. Firstly, they refer to the whole of the UK, consequently they can only serve as a rough guide to the position in England. However, there are only a few independent schools in Scotland and Northern Ireland and relatively few in Wales. In fact, Gorard, Taylor and Fitz (2003) state that fewer than 2% of pupils in Wales are educated in the independent sector, as opposed to between 7 and 8% in England. Hence the overall picture was likely to be similar to that stated in the *Census* as the majority of the pupils referred to were at school in England, and any regional differences would not substantially alter the overall picture. Secondly, the whole age range of schooling is subsumed within the total figures, whereas this

research focussed principally on the 11-18 age range. Nevertheless, the following data help to set the context against which the research took place.

- In 2003 there was a total of 1277 ISC schools of which 1059 (83%) were charities. Almost all of the schools which were not charities belonged to two associations: IAPS and ISA. These schools did not feature strongly in the survey sample for this research. It is probable that almost all, if not all, the schools surveyed in this research were charities. By 2016 the *Census* states that there were 1280 ISC schools. The increase may be due to some schools joining ISC, as stated in the 2014 *Census* (ISC, 2014b).
- In 2003 there were 507,611 pupils in ISC schools of whom 3% were non-British with parents living overseas. By 2011 this proportion had risen to 4.8%. The 2016 *Census* shows a further increase to 5.3%. In addition, there were a further 19,752 non-British students with parents living in the UK. There is no comparative figure for 2003. Thus by 2016, just over 9% of ISC school pupils were non-British nationals. These statistics are significant in view of some of the research findings.
- There was little change in the ratio of boys to girls in the eight year period. In 2003 boys made up 51.3% of the pupils and girls 48.7%. By 2011 there had been a very slight increase in the proportion of girls who made up 49.0% of pupils with boys constituting 51.0%. These figures remained similar in 2016.
- The number of pupils in schools belonging to associations where most of the schools were co-educational increased between 2003 and 2011, whereas schools belonging to GSA, which cater only for girls, saw an overall drop in pupil numbers, reflecting an increased tendency to choose co-education rather than single-sex education.
- The proportion of boarders dropped by 0.5% between 2003 and 2011 from 13.9 % of the total number of pupils to 13.4%. In both years there were more boarders in schools belonging to HMC than in all the other schools put together. By 2016 the proportion of boarders had risen again slightly to 13.6%.

The focus of the research

Originally conceived as a school effectiveness study, exploring the approaches independent schools adopted in judging the extent to which they achieved their goals, the focus of the research shifted, during analysis, to an exploration of the nature of independence in secondary schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC), in the early years of the twenty-first century, as reflected in aims and evaluation methods. The creation of a large number of 'independent' secondary schools within the maintained sector, since the *Education Act* 2002 established autonomous state funded institutions, and, more significantly, the *Academies Act* 2010, provided for the conversion to academies of existing schools, has potentially changed the definition of the word independent as applied to schools. An understanding of the nature of independence as experienced in schools which are not funded by the state offers a framework for comparison with the different concepts of independence as constructed in the new types of state-funded independent schools such as academies and free schools.

Data examined were firstly, ISC schools' statements of aims and heads' responses to a questionnaire on their formulation and publication, as ISC schools are free to set their own goals. Secondly, I analysed the findings from a series of interviews with heads, which examined the evaluation processes of a number of schools, comprising self-evaluation procedures and methods as these were not determined by an external body. Finally, I considered the characteristics of inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, as reflected in a sample of written inspection reports, and comments made during interviews with headteachers and ISI representatives.

A study undertaken by Johnson in 1987 suggested that heads of private schools considered their schools distinctive in their offering and ethos to the extent that they were unique. Speaking at the conference for reporting inspectors (University of Warwick, 2012) a representative of ISI stressed to lead inspectors the fact that each ISC school considered itself to be distinctive and that the inspectors' work should reflect this. This remark appeared to support Johnson's observations. Fuller et al. (1997) and Peel (2015) comment on the diverse nature of independent schools, ranging from famous public schools to those making specialist provision for dyslexia. Consequently,

it might be erroneous to talk of an independent 'sector'. Thus, there are potential consequences for any evaluation processes purporting to judge a school in the light of its goals, yet using common sector-wide inspection criteria, as the ISI second and later frameworks have done.

Therefore, one aspect of the research was to examine the extent to which individual schools are distinctive in the aims they set themselves, and hence, in that sense independent not only from the state, but also from each other. This provided a starting point for my analysis, examining whether each institution had aims which were in common with other schools of a similar type, whether they had sought to emphasise certain goals rather than others, thereby hoping to establish a degree of institutional individuation or uniqueness which differentiated them from other schools, including those funded by the state, or whether, in fact, there were some aims which were characteristic of the sector, and others specific to individual schools. Similarly, evaluation processes were examined to establish whether schools tailored their self-evaluation to suit their particular school's purposes and interests, or whether a similar focus and methods were adopted across the sector. Moreover, I aimed to identify any similarities with the maintained sector approach, as described in the study of LEA schools undertaken by Davies and Rudd (2001), which might suggest a uniform approach across the sectors. The role of the inspectorate in establishing a school's identity as an individual institution or as part of a national system was also examined. Comparison with the approach adopted by Ofsted was used to help illuminate this issue.

Thus my research sought to answer the following questions:

- What were the aims of ISC secondary schools at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Were they unique to individual schools or characteristic of the whole sector?
- In what ways did ISC schools evaluate their success in meeting their declared goals?
- What light do the aims and evaluation processes shed on how ISC schools' independence was constituted?
- What were the constraints which limited their autonomy?

This research focuses on the period between April 2003 and December 2011, the point at which the ISI inspection framework underwent another major change. Since then, the process of regulatory review has been ongoing requiring frequent amendments to inspection procedures (*ISI Update*, April 2015) and another major reform of ISI inspections took place in January 2017. The questions which this research sought to address, concerning the nature of the independence enjoyed by ISC schools, and the constraining factors which limit autonomy, continue to be relevant to any consideration of how the work of such schools should be regarded and evaluated. Moreover, given the increasing prominence of ‘independent’ schools in the maintained sector, it is hoped that the findings might provide a means of reaching an understanding of the different uses of the term ‘independent’, and a reference point for comparison of the different interpretations of the term. Finally consideration is given to the implications of the research findings for the question of privilege and social justice, which is frequently associated with private education (Dorling, 2014 b, c).

Chapter 2 Literature Survey

Introduction

This research was initially conceived as a study in school effectiveness examining the aims of schools in membership of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) associations, and the ways in which they measured their success in achieving them, with a particular focus on the role played by self-evaluation. The ISC schools were exempted from the requirements of the National Curriculum and subject to their own inspection regime. Hence I wished to explore whether they had demonstrated independence from the maintained sector, which was still very extensive in 2003, in the definition of their goals and how they determined whether or not they were effective. Therefore, the original literature survey focussed on the following areas: the aims of education in general and those defined by the government for the National Curriculum; school effectiveness and school improvement; self-evaluation, together with relevant contextual literature on private education. However, as the research progressed, questions concerning the nature and extent of the independence enjoyed by these schools emerged from the data. Consequently other literature, principally that relating to governmental attitudes to the independent sector and educational policy-making became more relevant as these were a potential source of constraint limiting freedom. My literature review was therefore rewritten at a later stage. The school effectiveness review and original survey of the historical aims of schooling in England are now to be found in Appendix 5 as no literature was found relating specifically to the independent sector, and thus relevance to the research topic is now limited. Self-evaluation is discussed within the main body of the text, as is the related topic of inspection.

The Independent Sector: the context of the present study

This chapter is divided into four sections: the history of the independent sector; the debate over the aims of schooling and consequent governmental relations with private schools; general education policy; the nature of independence. Much of the associated literature is composed of factual accounts rather than polemic. Consequently I have focussed on the work of a small number of authors to avoid repetition. Reference is

made, on occasion, to articles in journals produced by the ISC, or its constituent associations, where this appears to confirm or develop claims made in academic studies.

The history of the Independent Sector

A review of the historical purposes of ISC schools sets the context for the present study and serves to highlight the potential influences which may have constrained these schools' freedom to set their current aims.

Independent schools prior to 1944

Johnson (1987) and Tooley (cited in Aldrich 2004) signal that, prior to the 1870 Education Act, which established state-maintained elementary schools, all education in England was private. In fact, as Seldon (2001) points out, it was not until 1944 that secondary education was provided for all pupils by the state. Hence, much provision at secondary level was private until the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, literature relating to the history of secondary education prior to the twentieth century is essentially describing the history of private education. Many of these histories could be said to be, to some extent, biased as they reflect the particular standpoint or academic interest of the writer. Some of them have been written by former heads of well-known public schools such as Rae (1981) and Seldon (2001), who do not question the existence of the private sector. White's (2007, 2011) histories are rooted in a more philosophical interest in curricular development and the desirable aims of schooling. Walford's (1990, 2006, 2014a, b) studies, however, extend beyond historical analysis to include questions of privilege and social justice and Delamont (2003) adopts a feminist standpoint.

Rae (1981), a supporter of the independent sector, having been Head of Westminster School, argues that the history of Britain's independent schools begins in 1382 with William of Wykeham's foundation of Winchester, which was the first school to be established with entry open to both poor scholars and to the sons of noble and influential people, drawn from different parts of the country. Rae states that, although other schools existed prior to 1382, they were not of the type described above. Eton and Westminster were later established on a similar basis in 1440 and 1560

respectively. Thus these schools' original purpose embraced a commitment to social justice. Rae's analysis of the available evidence concludes that, until the eighteenth century these schools did educate a mix of different social classes, but that during the sixteenth century the view began to emerge that academic education should be the preserve of the children of gentlemen. By the early nineteenth century, he claims, the poor were almost totally excluded from the old public schools, and from many of the newly founded ones.

This view is supported by Walford (2006), whose academic research has focussed largely on independent schooling and, most recently, associated issues of social justice. He asserts that the only education available to the poor until 1870 was private or charitable schooling. Walford states that, in the state's view, the purpose of educating the poor was to instil religion and morality and ensure they took their pre-ordained place in society. The *Newcastle Commission Report* (Pelham, 1861) advocated the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and arithmetic to the children of workers, in sharp contrast to the curriculum offered to their wealthier peers. Provision for upper class pupils is described by Walford (2006), Johnson (1987) and White (2011). Their education was furnished by a small group of 'Great Schools': Eton, Winchester, Westminster, Charterhouse, Harrow, Rugby and Shrewsbury, which offered a mainly classical curriculum. The curriculum was not seen in vocational terms, as their pupils were not expected to have to work for a living. Their clientele was almost exclusively drawn from the landed gentry and the aristocracy. Thus, the oldest of these schools would appear to have departed from their original purpose of educating a mix of social classes.

Walford (2006) and White (2011) describe the establishment by Protestant non-conformists, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of private schools to serve the affluent middle classes, offering practical education for the sons of merchants and manufacturers living in larger towns. Aldrich (1982) and White (2011) point out that, when speaking of middle class education until the nineteenth century, we are usually referring to boys' schooling. Walford (2006) describes the origins of private girls' schools. Although some education had been available to girls from the upper class through the convents in the Middle Ages, no organised schooling was

available to them after the Reformation until the seventeenth century. At this point a few private boarding schools were set up to teach girls the 'accomplishments' needed by 'ladies of leisure' who would be good daughters and wives.

Girls studied reading, writing and religion, but also needlework, music, dancing, household management and French. This contrasts sharply with the academic curriculum made available to boys as described by White (2011). It was not until the nineteenth century that the development of more academic day schools for girls took place (Roach, 1991). Delamont (2003), a feminist sociologist, who has specialised in the study of gender and education, links the establishment of academic girls' schools to the rise of feminism between 1848 and 1918. The Taunton Commission, originally established to examine education provided by private and endowed grammar schools for boys, was pressurised by leading female educational practitioners from some of the new establishments, into including girls' education, and found it deficient (Aldrich, 1982; Walford, 2006).

Seldon (2001), a political biographer and historian who is also a former independent school head, now Vice-Chancellor of the private University of Buckingham, describes the expansion of private education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from a relatively small number of ancient establishments, such as Eton, Harrow, Westminster and Winchester, to the foundation of privately endowed schools in areas of major population and economic growth such as London, the Midlands and the South-East. He attributes this development to the emergence of a professional and upper middle class and the paucity of secondary state provision until the *Education Act* 1944 made state secondary education compulsory and free of charge. The impact of the growth of the middle class on educational provision is examined in greater depth in White (2011) in his analysis of the origins of the secondary curriculum.

In his discussion of the relationship between the Trades Union Congress and the Public Schools, Griggs (2003) describes the origins of the Direct Grant Schools. In 1926, following the publication of the Hadow Report, a certain number of grammar schools took up the option of receiving a direct grant from the government in exchange for accepting 25% of their pupils free of charge. The second *Report of the Public Schools Commission* (Donnison, 1970), whose remit included examination of the Direct Grant

Schools, described them as selective independent schools which have freely entered an agreement to provide services for the State and charge fees to the parents of some of their pupils. Thus, the boundaries between private and state-maintained education became blurred in the period leading to the establishment of state maintained secondary education for all pupils. To some extent, this can be seen as an attempt to counter accusations of elitism resulting from the exclusion of the poor from more academic schooling. Such measures will be examined in greater detail below in the section devoted to governmental policy towards independent education, and when considering the relationship between the two sectors.

Independent Schools post 1944

Rae (1981) and Walford (2006) describe one of the biggest changes in provision during the twentieth century with the move towards co-education. Traditionally boys and girls were educated separately, with boys' education accorded more importance. Walford points out that even where charitable foundations were set up for the benefit of both boys and girls, provision for girls, who were always in the minority, was considerably poorer. However, by the 1980s and 1990s the gender segregation had lessened, partly through a genuine desire to open boys' schools to a wider clientele, or alternatively to boost their academic standing, and keep their schools full without lowering entry standards (Walford, 2006).

The resultant pressure on girls' schools, reinforced by a growing tendency in society towards co-education, has meant that some have had to battle to survive and some have been forced to close. Dooley and Fuller (2003) examine in greater detail the impact of the introduction of girls into former boys' independent schools from a feminist perspective. They concur with Walford and Rae in stating that the reason for the move to co-education was frequently economic. Their analysis of the prospectuses of a sample of these schools in 1995, and then again in 2001, revealed a flexible use of the term 'co-education'. Moreover, they found little evidence of a change of culture taking place, resulting from the presence of girls, nor any declared intention to make such a change in the future. They concluded that many were content to remain schools which were predominantly boys' schools but that they were keen to make use of girls in their marketing. In view of the comments in the literature concerning the historic

differences in the content and purposes of boys' and girls' education and the recent move towards greater co-education I decided to include pupil gender as a factor, when analysing the aims of the ISC schools in my survey, to establish whether such differences still persisted.

The recent increase in the number of private Faith Schools

Most literature concerning Christian faith schools, for example, those affiliated to Roman Catholicism, does not tend to distinguish between state and independent schools. Writers such as Grace (2002), addressing issues relating to the current market culture and Catholic values in education, or the papers produced by Arthur et al.(2007) discussing the Catholic School curriculum, for example, refer in general to Catholic schools. However, the growing number of private Muslim schools and New Christian schools has been the focus of some study. As there were no schools in the sample of schools in my research study which belonged to these groups the review will be limited to a brief overview of the main issues.

Walford (2006) highlights a great diversity amongst private Muslim schools and the grounds for opposition to them which have arisen. These differ from earlier ideological reasons for opposing the private sector. Muslim schools are seen, by some, as fundamentalist; some feminists have opposed the establishment of separate secondary schools for girls on the grounds that they may be a way of inculcating a conformist and repressive view of the role of women. Thus, it would appear, from the literature, that the issues surrounding Muslim independent schools are specific to this group of schools only, and do not, necessarily, apply to independent schools in general. Moreover, none of these schools belonged to an ISC association at the time of this research. For this reason they are not included in this study. However, my analysis of ISC schools' aims by pupil gender would enable me to see whether such criticisms about reinforcing female submission to males were reflected in the aims of girls' schools in general.

Walford (2006) and Baker and Freeman (2005) describe the emergence of the new Christian schools in the 1980s. None of these schools belong to the ISC and hence they do not feature amongst the schools surveyed in this research. The following overview is, therefore, merely to help set the context. As with Muslim schools, the new Christian

schools' origins are attributed mainly to dissatisfaction with state schools and a desire for a closer link between the education the children receive and the faith they profess, particularly as regards moral values, in this case based on the teachings of the Bible. However, he argues that the reforms that have occurred in recent years have made it easier for parents to find a state-funded Church school more in line with their beliefs, these are outlined by John Burn ed. (2001), who describes the distinctively Anglican approach to education which should be found in Church of England schools following the *Dearing Report* (2001). Hence, Walford argues, there was less need for these newly formed private Christian schools and their numbers have declined in recent years.

However, in view of both the historical and current links between private schools and religious belief, I decided to examine the impact of religious affiliation on ISC schools' aims as this would demonstrate whether there still existed private educational provision whose aims are informed by the tenets of a particular Christian faith. Historical reviews of private schools tell us about the origins of the sector and the initial aims of certain schools, but there was little in the literature about the aims of independent schools in the late twentieth or twenty-first centuries. My research has attempted to address this lacuna.

The debate over the aims of schooling and consequent governmental relations with private schools

My research focuses on the aims which ISC schools set, the ways in which their fulfilment is evaluated, given that, theoretically, they are free from political interference in these matters, and examines some of the constraints which limit their freedom in these areas. I considered a review of the recent and contemporary context with respect to political attitudes to the purposes of schooling a necessary precursor to this.

Griggs, (2003), Rae (2005), and Walford (2006) observe that, broadly speaking, the Conservative Party has tended to support private schooling, when in power. Evidence of this is the Assisted Places scheme designed to give help with fees to parents of academically able pupils who could not otherwise afford them (Edwards, Fitz and Whitty, 1989) introduced by the Conservative government in 1980. The Labour Party,

on the other hand, has attempted to reduce government support as reflected in their immediate abolition of this scheme after electoral victory in 1997. This divergence in approach can be accounted for by the traditional differences in belief about the goals of schooling. Questions concerning the desirable aims of education, the nature of knowledge, and the school curriculum, initiated by the ancient Greeks continually preoccupy philosophers, sociologists, politicians and policy-makers (Moore, 2015). Harris (1999) argues that the aims of schooling are the result of the prevailing political climate. Consequently, universal agreement as to their nature is unachievable. Similarly, Apple argues that a nation's school curriculum is determined by the politics of 'official knowledge' (Moore, 2015). Likewise, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) contend that educational goals are always influenced by the values dominant at the time, frequently leading to compromise between interest groups over which values should predominate. Schiro (Moore, 2015) attempts to understand approaches to education in terms of four philosophies or ideologies which are frequently in contention with each other for pre-eminence:

- The scholar/academic philosophy which focuses on helping children to learn the accumulated knowledge of a culture, transmitted through traditional academic disciplines. A political choice is made as to what knowledge children should acquire. Learning equates to the internalisation and storage of factual knowledge;
- The social efficiency philosophy which views the purposes of schooling as the preparation of young people for their role as future contributing members of society and concerns itself with socialisation and the needs of the economy. The main objectives are socialisation, and the maintenance of the nation's economic status quo.
- The learner-centred philosophy focussing, not on academic disciplines or the needs and concerns of society, but on those of individuals. The goal is *"the growth of individuals, each in harmony with his/her own unique intellectual, social, emotional and physical attributes"* (Schiro, cited in Moore, 2015).
- The social reconstruction philosophy where the emphasis is on the development of social responsibility in the individual rather than focusing on

promoting the individual learner's wellbeing, with a view to enabling social evolution or change.

These philosophies, though not mutually exclusive, are, he argues, in perpetual battle for dominance and illustrate the fundamental political and policy differences and tensions which underlie debates about the purposes of education:

The conflict over education's role in relation to society is evident in the opposing forces of collectivism and individualism which have clearly had a bearing on political attitudes to the independent sector in England in the period since 1944. Johnson (1987) suggests that the main cause of opposition to independent schools lies in the conflict between these two opposing views of the purposes of schooling. Analysis of these standpoints is relevant to consideration of ISC schools' aims, as many of them were founded for charitable purposes (Trafford, 2013), which could be said to equate, in some respects, to Schiro's social reconstruction philosophy, and according to Peel (2015), still express a commitment to social justice.

The individualist perspective is based, partially on Schiro's learner-centred philosophy, but also on arguments concerning freedom. Thus, parents should be free to choose their preferred educational route for their child. Education is viewed as a private good for the benefit of the individual who will be able to exchange their skills and knowledge for employment. Its most extreme exponents hold that education is not a proper function of government, and thus support home schooling (Lubienski, 2003; Rothermel, 2003). In conflict is the viewpoint which considers education a collective good, for the benefit of society in general, whose interests lie in developing everyone's talents to the full to serve the needs of social cohesion and the economy, roughly equating to Schiro's social efficiency philosophy. Schooling, therefore, should be provided by the state through a national system (Sturt, 1995). An understanding of the history of this debate will help to set my research in context and illuminate some of the factors which may have constrained the independence of the schools in this study.

Several underlying questions have a bearing on this issue. In a democracy, what is the role of the state? What are the rights of individual citizens? Should governments committed to collective goals such as equality of opportunity, attempt to change society through active intervention, for example by redistributing benefits more fairly,

as suggested by Rawls (Olssen et al., 2004), thus investing more heavily in schools in poorer areas, or even by legislating to abolish the private sector? Are such actions, in fact, currently possible in our society? There is no universally acceptable answer to these questions. Individual citizens' views will depend on their political and ideological inclinations, and ethical frameworks, informed by a number of factors including class and religious conviction.

The debate concerning individual as opposed to collective goals in schooling has many dimensions: ideological, political, philosophical, ethical, and no single study addresses the debate from all angles, nor is it possible to discuss them all in depth in a short review. Thus, I have chosen to focus briefly on the most relevant aspects of educational policy relating to secondary schooling, since the 1944 *Education Act* introduced state-funded secondary schools for all. This demonstrates the increasing influence of the individualist view on maintained sector provision, and the consequent development of a market in state schooling, coinciding with a decrease in opposition to the independent sector. Literature concerning educational policy and whether it reflects an individual or collective stance during this period falls into several groups: historical narratives; analyses of particular governments' policies; critiques of educational policies; the processes of educational policy-making. The first group consists of work which chronicles the major landmarks in educational policy. Historical accounts such as those by Aldridge (1982) which highlights the state's reluctance to become involved in education, Chitty (2009), and Abbott et al. (2013), are fairly neutral in tone, presenting a relatively unbiased account of policies and their effects, although Chitty's concluding chapter expresses regret that the communitarian approach to the school system seems to have disappeared from the political thinking of all main political parties in England. In contrast, other accounts are specifically committed to a particular viewpoint. As a former editor of the journal *Forum*, supportive of comprehensive education, Gillard presents his online history of education in England (2011) as the "*long struggle to create for England's children an education system that values them all*" and concludes that it has been a "*sad story*". On the other hand, Peel's (2015) history of UK independent schools from 1979-2015 is undoubtedly biased in favour of private education. This somewhat anecdotal, though well-researched,

account clearly favours the individualist stance in determining educational provision, although the conclusion acknowledges the need for the private sector to do more to address the “*glaring social inequalities*” (2015: 242) that persist. This point is examined in Chapter 8.

Particularly relevant to the current discussion are those studies which focus on an individual political party’s attitude to educational policy, especially the Labour Party’s policies with regard to the existence of the private sector. In the twenty years following the 1944 Act, the Labour Party’s main preoccupation was its implementation, and thus possible schemes for bringing the public and private sectors closer, as suggested by the Fleming Committee report (1944), were ignored and the independent sector was largely left to its own devices (Edwards, Fitz and Whitty, 1989; Griggs, 2003). The question about the relationship between private and state education resurfaced in the late 1960s. This coincided with the reorganisation of state secondary schooling, initiated by Anthony Crosland in circular 10/65, which asked local authorities to send in plans for reorganising secondary education in their areas, on comprehensive lines (Edwards et al. 1989; Griggs, 2003)

Rae (1981; 2005)) argues that Labour’s Shadow Education Minister, Roy Hattersley, made clear in 1973, Labour’s intention to abolish private education, a plan that was passed at the 1980 Conference (Peel, 2015). This is reflected in the various commissions which were set up to examine the relationship between the two sectors. Whereas in the nineteenth century, commissions on educational matters focussed on the separation of different types of school and their curricula (Aldrich, 1982; Roach, 1991; Seldon, 2001; White 2011), from 1970 onwards, their remit was to bring the maintained and independent sectors closer or to integrate the two (Griggs, 2003) . Griggs, in particular, focuses on the work of the various Committees or Commissions set up to this end. Crosland set up the Public Schools Commission led by Sir John Newsom which adopted a more threatening approach to independent schools’ existence than that which was evident at the time of the Fleming Report. The Commission’s remit was to recommend a national plan for integrating the schools within the maintained sector of education. Griggs (2003) examines the Labour Party leadership’s lack of response to the Report, published in 1968, which he attributes to

fear of alienating, either Labour Party members if any support was given to the schools, or powerful sectors of the Establishment, if serious reform were suggested. Rae (1981) refers to the *Party's Notes for Speakers* (1958) and highlights the difficulty faced in reconciling the wishes of the abolitionists with the notion of democracy. Edwards et al. (1989) argue that defenders of independent schools claimed that independence was an essential defence against state monopoly and their critics asserted that abolition was the only effective remedy for the privileges they perpetuated. The predominant view was that abolition was neither fair nor feasible, but independent schools were too exclusive and should broaden their intake and purposes.

The Commission was reconstituted in 1968, led by Professor Donnison. The terms of reference once more included the remit to recommend a national plan for integrating the schools with the maintained sector of education, and expressed similar objectives to those outlined in the Newsom Report. The Commission also paid particular attention to the issue of the direct grant grammar schools and their participation in the move towards comprehensive schooling. The Commission members agreed that these schools should take part in LEA reorganisation schemes, but were divided as to how this should best be done and proposed two different schemes. In 1976, when the Labour government was in power, the direct grant scheme was abolished, and the participants had the choice of becoming independent or fully joining the state sector. However, instead of swelling the ranks of the maintained schools, the majority opted for independence, and the size of the independent sector was, in fact, increased rather than reduced (Rae, 1981; Moore et al, 1989; Seldon, 2001; Walford, 2006).

Griggs (op. cit.) and Tapper (2003) both analyse, in some detail, the Labour Party's attitude to private schooling: Griggs compares and contrasts it to that of the TUC, whereas Tapper focuses on the changes that occurred with the move from Labour to New Labour, characterised by Ball (2013) as the continuation of Conservative neoliberalism, rather than traditional socialism. Both Griggs and Tapper concur that the Party's commitment to equality of opportunity is difficult to reconcile with the existence of the private sector in education. Both writers allude to the Party's stalling tactics rather than commitment to reform which has resulted in the continued

existence of the two separate sectors. Examination of the dilemmas faced by Labour gives some insight into the ideological conflict that Sturt (1995) argues has bedevilled education policy-making in England. Various explanations have been proposed. For some the root cause has been a concern about democracy and the extent of the right to interfere with individual liberty (Rae, 1981; Tapper, 2003). For others, fear of alienating the swing voters located amongst the middle class and aspirational working class (Whitty, 2008) or powerful sectors of the establishment (Griggs, 2003), and incurring electoral defeat, explain the reluctance to act. Peel (2015) argues that it has been a combination of the above. It would seem, therefore, that in addition to ideological arguments, those of political expediency have constrained action, and continue to do so. Jeremy Corbyn, the current Labour leader, has attacked independent schools but admits change will be difficult to achieve (Vaughan, 2015). Moreover, some party members have expressed concerns as to whether the Party will gain electoral success under his left-wing leadership (Dearden, 2015; Helm and Boffey, 2015). Thus, within the Labour Party the question as to whether such radical reform is, in fact, feasible remains unanswered. Is it, indeed, possible to pursue collective, as opposed to individual goals in contemporary English society? Chitty (2009) suggests that, given the continued fear of all political parties of losing middle class support, it is not.

Tapper highlights a shift in Labour's educational policy in an attempt to gain electoral support. Rather than abolish the private sector, the Labour Party chose to cooperate with it, but to use regulation in order to require private sector organisations to achieve politically determined targets, as discussed below. As evidence of Labour's change of approach Tapper refers to the 1997 *Labour Party Manifesto's* proposal to "*build bridges*" between the two sectors which by the 2001 *Manifesto* had become "*the promotion of partnerships between schools*". Turner's (2004) study of independent state school partnerships conveys these partnerships as a positive initiative which succeeded in establishing a rapprochement between the two sectors. As this work was published by the National College for School Leadership, a government initiative, this view could be considered partial.

Tapper's assertion that co-operation between the sectors lay at the heart of New Labour's educational policy was encapsulated by Lord Andrew Adonis, Labour's Schools Under Secretary, in his contribution to the *ISC Bulletin* (April 2008) when he declared that independent schools had a role to play in Labour's national mission to give every child a world-class education. Adonis referred to a growth in the number of school partnerships and the funding made available to those involved in the official Independent/State Schools Partnerships Scheme. This claim would seem to be confirmed by the annual statistics produced by the ISC. The ISC 1997 *Census* (the year that Labour came to power, after a long period of Conservative rule) made no reference to partnerships between ISC schools and maintained sector schools. By 2010 (the year in which Labour lost the election) figures showed that around 80% of ISC schools were involved in partnerships with local state schools or with the community. By the 2016 *ISC Census* this figure had increased to 87%.

In the final years of its most recent period in office, which ended in 2010, Labour began to encourage independent schools to sponsor the new Academies which were being set up free from local authority control. Adonis (2008) asserts that such sponsorship is consistent with the ideals of the Labour Party since many independent schools were founded on charitable ideals. Michael Gove, who was, at the time, the Conservative Shadow Schools Secretary, supported this initiative. Writing in the same publication he stated that Lord Adonis's instincts were right, indicating that both major parties were now in favour of co-operation between the two sectors. The *Census* (ISC 2012) included statistics on sponsorship showing that 19 ISC schools were Academy sponsors and a further 14 were co-sponsors. Thus the literature suggests that the two sectors will, for the foreseeable future, continue to co-exist, with governments of both major persuasions encouraging mutual respect and co-operation rather than antagonism. However, despite the decrease in overt hostility to the independent sector from political opponents, the degree of government regulation of independent schools by both political parties has increased notably, as discussed by de Waal (2006) in her critique of the inspection of regulatory compliance.

In summary, ideological opposition was exerted by the political left in the post-war period but towards the end of the twentieth century this declined, to be replaced by a

wish to partake in the activities of the sector through partnership (Adonis, 2008). Moreover successive recent governments of both major persuasions have promoted a hybrid type of school which is called independent but financed by the state (Wright, 2012), as discussed in the previous chapter. The lines between the private and the public sectors are no longer so sharply divided (Robertson and Dale, 2013). This development raises questions concerning how independence can currently be characterised. My research was intended to explore this matter as it relates to ISC schools, their aims and evaluation processes.

Critiques of educational policy-making informed by the increasingly individualist stance of both political parties have also been made by academic sociologists of a left-wing ideological persuasion. Writers such as Ball (2003, 2008, 2013) and Gewirtz et al. (1995) view policy-making through the lens of social class and hence are critical of those policies which put the middle class at advantage. Although Ball (1990) criticises the 1944 Education Act on the grounds that the tri-partite schooling system which it established, mirrored the class-divided vision of education reflected in the recommendations of the Clarendon, Taunton and Newcastle Commissions of the 1860s, together with Gewirtz and Bowe (1995), he reserves greater criticism for the 1988 *Education Reform Act* (ERA). They especially attack the sections on Open Enrolment which created a market in state education. This has culminated in the creation of Academies by Labour (Adonis, 2012), and, more recently, Free Schools by the Coalition (Higham, 2014), a step which Ball (2012b) claimed marked the beginning of the end of state education. The recent proposal in the Conservative White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (2016), which proposed that all schools should become academies by 2022, would have, effectively, finally dismantled the national system of school education.

Ball (1990) attributes the origins of the ERA to the economic and political theories of Hayek, one of the main architects of neoliberalism, an argument supported by widespread acknowledgement of the hegemony of neoliberalism after the fall of communism (Allais, 2012) in the policy-making of governments both in the UK and elsewhere, from the 1980s onwards, (Chomsky, 1999; Harris, 2007; Torres, 2009; McGregor, 2009; Reay, 2012; Crozier, 2015; Angus, 2015). The basic tenets of Hayek's

arguments are examined by Olssen (2010) who refers to them as the most complete and coherent statement of liberal principles of individualism, and a limited role for the state, as individuals are deemed to be better catered for by the market. Ball (1990) and Giroux (2004) refer to the social inequalities which ensue from such an approach. The current neoliberal approach to state education implies that abolition of the private sector alone would not advance collective goals and address concerns about the achievement of greater social justice; a wider solution would be necessary.

Criticism of the neoliberal stance and its effect on schooling has not been limited to academics or politicians of a left-wing persuasion. The issue has posed a major dilemma for those schools affiliated to a particular religious faith such as Roman Catholicism (Foley and Grace, 2001) or Quakerism (Friends' Schools Joint Committee and Society of Friends, 1973). The neoliberal perspective, which Angus (2015) claims, now predominates in education, privileges some individuals at the expense of others, and is fundamentally at odds with the commitment to social justice implicit in the tenets of these denominations. Such faiths advocate the promotion of education for the common good rather than solely for the individual's benefit. The need to compete in an educational market has meant that pupils who will enhance the school's reputation and marketability, such as those who perform well academically, are valued more than those who may have particular needs (Grace, 2000, 2001; Gewirtz et al., 1995). Schools whose religious standpoint promotes fairness and equality find themselves forced to compromise their goals in order to ensure their survival (Grace, 2002). This concern may be equally applicable to many independent schools which owe their foundation to religious affiliation (Walford, 2006; White, 2011). This point was taken into consideration during my analysis of the aims of the schools in my sample where the existence of a possible link between a school's aims and religious connection was examined.

In conclusion, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed a marked increase in the significance accorded to individual rather than collective goals in schooling in the maintained sector (Chitty, 2009). Consequently, opposition to the individualist view in determining the goals of schooling would currently, have to embrace both sectors. Greater social justice cannot simply be addressed by the

abolition of independent schools as proposed by Labour in the 1970s. As Reay (2012) and Crozier (2015) argue, neoliberal attitudes of competitive self-interest and belief in the economic value of education predominate in British society, with the consequence that inequalities have increased rather than reduced (Dorling, 2014 a, b). In fact, Nagel, as early as 1991, argued that the inequality gap could only be closed by human transformation or institutional invention, both of which seemed unimaginable. The situation has not improved since he wrote this, over twenty years ago.

Nevertheless, despite the increasingly individualist stance of state-funded schools, research conducted by Dorling (2014c) a social geographer, and groups such as the Sutton Trust (2012) and Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014, 2015), committed to the promotion of greater equity, have demonstrated that inequalities between the educational and career opportunities of those educated in the private sector, and those whose education is funded by the state, persist. Peel (2015) highlights the predominance of independently educated occupants of senior positions in the legal profession, the armed forces, the diplomatic service, the civil service, and journalism. Likewise, White (2016) discusses inequality in employment opportunities resulting from private schooling. Thus, concerns about the equity of a system which allows such disparity continue to be a matter of contention, and the debate continues as to whether independent schools have strayed from their original charitable purposes as was apparent in the long-running dispute over charitable status.

Fiscal Policy and Charitable Status

The different political approaches to the independent sector are reflected in differing policies concerning taxation with particular regard to charitable status a debate which continues to impact on ISC schools and their goals. Palfreyman (2003) focuses in particular on the taxation implications of charitable status and the Labour Government's threat to remove this and any ensuing benefits from independent schools. He clarifies the legal, as opposed to the popularly understood, significance of the word 'charity', which encompasses the propagation of education, even in the absence of any element of poverty, for a "*sufficient section of the community*". He lists the main ways in which independent schools seek to demonstrate their provision of public benefit including:

- The granting of scholarships and bursaries to genuinely poor children.
- Free summer schools for gifted poor state school pupils.
- The sharing of facilities such as playing fields with other schools.

The activities of all charities, including independent schools, are overseen by the Charity Commission. Palfreyman lists the principal benefits which derive from charitable status namely exemption from the following taxes:

- Income tax provided the income is used for charitable purposes
- Corporation tax
- Capital Gains tax
- Stamp duty
- Rates

In addition, charities do not have to charge Value-Added Tax (VAT) on their services and can recover income tax on donations mainly through Gift Aid. During the period following the publication of Palfreyman's article in 2003, the timeframe in which my research took place, a longstanding dispute ensued between the Charity Commission, led by Dame Suzi Leather, and the Independent Schools Council (ISC), concerning the issue of charitable status and public benefit, which culminated in a Tribunal hearing. The ISC's viewpoint is amply summarized in a series of Public Benefit updates, written by Matthew Burgess, in the ISC bulletins over this period. Burgess briefly outlines the nature of the dispute, and the current position, in the June 2012 *Bulletin*. Burgess echoes Palfreyman's views about the importance of understanding the legal definition of charity as opposed to the publicly held one. Burgess refers to the Tribunal's ruling that charitable status depends on what a school was established to do not what it does. This, he argues, implies that governors must ensure the school meets its original aims, and that they must provide more than a token benefit for the poor. It is for the governors to decide what they do in this respect rather than for the Charity Commission to assess what is a reasonable level of provision. Given that the 2010 and 2015 elections both returned a government less opposed to independent education, in the short term at least, the debate over charitable status and public benefit appears to have abated somewhat. However, the recent government consultation document "*Schools that work for everyone*" (DfE, 2016) does express the wish that independent

schools should ensure they contribute sufficiently to public benefit to justify their tax exemptions, although, in response, Lord Lingfield (House of Lords, 2017) stated that the amount given in bursaries was more than twice that received in tax benefits. Nevertheless, concern about the exclusiveness of the independent sector persists (Dorling, 2014c). In the light of these concerns I examined the research data to establish whether there was evidence that the commitment to social justice which characterised the original independent schools was still in evidence.

Regulation and Inspection

As signalled above, despite the recent relaxation in moves to integrate the two educational sectors, there has been an increase in the regulation of schools in both sectors. Macbeath et al. (2005) refer to a growing body of recent literature on the topic of school inspection. Most of this work concerns the maintained sector and therefore falls outside the scope of this review. The studies referred to below refer specifically to the independent sector. Seldon (2001) discusses the introduction of regulations and registration procedures for independent schools contained within the *Education Act* of 1944, but points out that the Act did not involve any major reform for the independent sector. Even fifty years later this appeared to be the case when the section of the Independent Schools Joint Council's (ISJC) inspection handbook devoted to registration stated:

“Registration simply means that the school has met the basic legal requirements in terms of number of children, suitability of curriculum and teachers, certain health, fire, building and other requirements” (ISJC handbook, 1994 Part1:1.1).

Compliance was monitored by occasional visits from members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). This was so until the Education Act of 2002 introduced a set of regulations grouped under seven standards with which independent schools were required to comply. These standards were more wide-ranging than their predecessors and are still in force at the time of writing, with a further eighth standard introduced in 2015. Further details of these are given in Appendix 6c. These standards are composed of several hundred regulations which are changed frequently (ISI 2015a). Schools that are considered to have regulatory failures are monitored by the inspectorate to ensure deficiencies are remedied (ISI, 2017), and can be closed where a number of regulatory failures including safeguarding and health and safety persist (Dickens, 2017).The

debate that ensued, as a result of the 2002 Act and the new regulations, centred on whether they posed an increased threat to the independence of private schools by government. Anastasia de Waal (2006) saw the Act as an attempt by government to establish uniformity across the maintained and independent sectors. This view echoes that expressed by John Sabben-Clare (1994) that, following the establishment of Ofsted in 1992, independent schools were expected to “*toe the line*” and operate on a “*broadly parallel track*” to the maintained sector.

This view was reiterated by Power (2010) arguing that the move from self-regulation to external regulation was designed to allow inspection to bring independent schools into a national framework of regulation. De Waal (2006) argues that the regulations were not established by an impartial education watchdog but by government, thus establishing a monopoly over what counts as quality in schools, once affecting only the state sector, but now also the private sector. However, she is less critical of the Independent Schools Inspectorate’s inspection process itself, seeing it as more constructive and collaborative than the mere enforcement of compliance.

Nevertheless, de Waal points out that the autonomy of ISI is circumscribed by supervision on the part of both Ofsted and the government department responsible for education. A sample of inspections is monitored by Ofsted which produces an annual review, and de Waal concludes that the closer ISI inspections mirrored Ofsted’s own, the more positive their annual inspection report. Any recommendations contained within the annual review must be addressed by ISI. In conclusion, de Waal argues that, whereas the imposition of regulations concerning basic health and safety and child protection may be justifiable, independent schools should not have to comply with regulation concerning teaching content and style. She refers to the long battle between Summerhill and Ofsted for the right to continue operating according to AS Neil, the founder’s wishes, as opposed to adhering to that legally prescribed in the regulations.

Given the above arguments, that increased regulation and inspection threatened the independence of the private sector, I decided to explore headteachers’ perceptions of the view of ISI’s role in the second part of my research and also to include interviews with senior spokespersons from ISI about ISI’s role and relationship with Ofsted.

Educational policy-making in England

This review was not undertaken at the outset. Its relevance to this study did not become apparent until the analysis of the research data, most notably, that derived from the interview transcripts and inspection reports. It is confined to educational policy-making in England from the Education Act 1944, which introduced state maintained secondary education for all, until the present day since, as Ball (2008), Chitty (2009), and Walford (2005) point out, educational policy in other parts of the United Kingdom differs in several respects, and has done so increasingly with devolution. My purpose was to better understand the context of my research findings, and some of the possible areas of constraint which appeared, from my data analysis, to exist. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) cite Dye's definition of public policy as whatever governments choose to do or not do. They concur with Ball (2013) that policy encompasses actions, not merely text. Thus a policy is both a product and a process. It is with these definitions in mind that the following overview is made.

The review is divided into three parts: a historical overview of general trends in educational policy-making since the 1944 Education Act; an examination of the principal characteristics of educational policies and their implementation; the mediatisation of policy-making in education, all of which may have had a constraining influence on ISC schools' independence. It should be pointed out that literature which critiques recent educational policy has been undertaken from the standpoint of opposition to the neoliberal ideology which has informed government thinking. Studies have concentrated on policy-making as it affects the maintained sector and do not extend to consideration of the impact of the change of the central government's modus operandi on the independent sector, and yet it seems unlikely that independent schools have remained entirely unaffected.

All the literature surveyed, whether historical, sociological, or socio-political in emphasis, charts the increasing role played by central government in the formation of educational policy, from being only one of the players in policy-making, conducted through consultation with other interested parties, when the 1944 Education Act was implemented, to one of policy determination and imposition. Kogan (cited in Glatter,

2012) refers to a move from a position where government gave broad policy steers to one of a compliant society.

By the 1960s, generally considered the highpoint of consensus, Chitty (2009), citing Lawton, argues that there already operated a “*tension system*” between, on the one hand, the politicians and their political advisers, and on the other, the Education Department’s officials and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI). Part of the latter’s role was to advise central government on matters relating to educational policy based on evidence which they had collected (Smith, 2000). Chitty, suggests however, that the traditional independence of HMI was eroded by the DES in the mid 1970s, as its members became responsible for legitimising policies in advance by presenting appropriate evidence and arguments. Thus, they became an integral part of an increasing system of central control of education. Prior to the establishment of ISI, ISC schools were subject to monitoring visits by HMI, thus there was a potential link established between government policy and the control of ISC schools.

Comments made by academics such as Biesta (2015) and Perryman (2006) on the remodelling of the teaching profession could potentially be relevant to both sectors. These reforms included the use of national tests to monitor the performance not just of students, but also their teachers, thus potentially leading to “*teaching to the test*” (Mansell, 2013); the consequent frequent reconfiguration of professional goals, often leading to a value conflict (Hammersley-Fletcher, 2015), and reduction in teacher autonomy over the curriculum (Ball, 2013); and the introduction of the National Curriculum, whose requirements informed the Independent Schools Standards Regulations. Furthermore, limitations on the role played by the teaching profession in devising and implementing education policy (Whitty, 2002; Woodhead, 2009), as government relied more on external advisers for guidance (Chitty, 2009; Gunter et al., 2015; Adams, 2016)), may well have impacted, if only indirectly, on all educational provision. A number of other studies also focus on the increasing centralisation of educational policy-making, from the 1970s onwards (Helgoy et al., 2007; Glatter, 2012; Pring, 2012a; Higham and Earley, 2013). Arthur (2005) cites the establishment of the National Curriculum as an example of the assumption of control by central government over what children should learn and how this should be assessed,

reflecting Apple's view that the curriculum is politically determined (Moore, 2015). Moreover, the increasing emphasis on citizenship during the Labour administration from 1997 onwards, he argues, was aimed at producing a particular type of citizen with certain character traits which have instrumental value for the state. Such a view is not entirely new; See and Arthur (2011) argue that character education has long been seen as a solution to social problems. My analysis of ISC schools' aims and ISI inspection reports explored the extent to which central government policy in these areas may have influenced these schools.

Higham and Earley (2013), in their analysis of central government control under the Coalition government after the 2010 elections, argue that, despite the rhetoric of autonomy, and increase in the creation of independent state schools such as Academies and Free Schools, exempted from many of the requirements of the National Curriculum, central government, in fact, retained what they term "*criteria power*" over the aims and content of education. This is achieved through controls such as the definition of what constitutes success and the resulting criteria upon which inspection judgements are based. This view is supported by Woodhead (Shaw, 2009), who refers to inspections as instruments of state control forcing teachers to follow the politicians' agenda. Moore and Clarke (2016) argue that teachers' desire to appear professional leads them to adopt approaches to schooling with which they might not agree. Moreover, as Higham and Earley (2013) point out, the Secretary of State for Education now has the power to control such schools directly through the contracts which are made with each individual Academy or Free School. Arguably, control over these state maintained 'independent' schools is just as centrally exercised, if not more so, than that exerted over traditional maintained schools. My comparison of the inspection frameworks and a selection of reports from both ISI and Ofsted set out to examine whether a similar form of central government control was exerted over ISC schools through inspection judgements.

Characteristic of the increase in centralised control are a number of devices for policy implementation, referred to by Helgoy et al. (2007), Lingard and Ozga (2007), and Ball (2008) as "*technologies*". They argue that education policy-making has become dominated by the perspective of economics, a view supported by Arthur (2005), and

Chitty (2009). Education, Ball argues, is viewed principally as the producer of labour and skills, and values such as enterprise and entrepreneurship, in response to international economic competition, a view shared by Harris (2007). Macbeath (2008) concurs that economic rather than educational logic has driven education policy-making in recent years, suggesting that the social efficiency ideology defined by Schiro (Moore, 2015) has predominated. Gunter et al. (2015) survey the extensive literature relating to the use by governments of external consultants to inform policy-making, and in particular, the impact on education. They highlight the emphasis on private business models of organisational culture as a means of ‘modernising’ or changing educational institutions and view this as intimately related to the capitalist stance of recent governments. Thus the link between economic concerns and educational policy-making is reinforced.

Key concepts in modernisation have been the market, associated with competition and choice; performance, linked to accountability systems and targets (often set nationally); and management as a tool for replacing a professional approach in schools with an entrepreneurial one (Ball, 2008; Helgoy et al., 2007; Higham and Earley, 2013). Ball argues that this has led to a “*one size fits all*” model of operation in education. In a brief literature survey it is not possible to examine all of these concepts in detail, but their existence is relevant to the current research when considering whether there is any evidence that ISC schools have been influenced by such approaches, and the move towards uniformity, or whether they have resisted national and international policy trends.

Allied to modernisation is the concept of globalisation, whereby national boundaries are being blurred by organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, The World Bank, the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and multinational corporations. Feniger and Lefstein (2014) discuss the impact schemes such as the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has had on policy-making, the media, and consequently, the public in general. It seems unlikely, therefore, that ISC schools have remained immune from such influence. Macbeath (2008) comments on the continuous demands for improving students’ performance which result from the data generated by the OECD, despite the

criticisms made that the PISA tests do not, in fact, test the knowledge and skills for life that they purport to assess, merely students' ability to perform in test situations (Dohn, 2007).

Riddell (2013) examines the changes which have taken place in policy realisation from a period of "*policy rationalisation*" to one where government initiates reform but, increasingly, since the formation of the Coalition government in 2010, has involved the private sector in the implementation of it. Policy rationalisation involved identifying a problem, developing a policy "*solution*" and implementing that policy. This process, referred to by Michael Barber, Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit as the process of "*deliverology*" (Riddell, 2013) , reached its peak under New Labour between 1997 and 2005. These policy "solutions" were equally applicable to maintained and independent schools and therefore, potentially, a source of constraint. Examples are the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (HM Treasury, 2003) agenda, introduced in reaction to the death of the child Victoria Climbié, which informed Ofsted inspection judgements from 2004 onwards and also affected ISC schools since, until 2012, ISI inspectors were required to report to the LEA on each of the 5 ECM outcomes, as part of the inspection process, and the Prevent Strategy, aimed at reducing terrorism which is currently mandatory in both sectors.

The final aspect of educational policy-making which is relevant to this research is that of "mediatisation". Using Bourdieu's concepts of field and practice, Lingard and Rawolle (2004) explore the increasing use of journalistic practices in the field of education policy-making. They highlight the intervention of media specialists in the production of policy texts, the conception of policy as sound bites, reflected in the proliferation of aphorisms, a point emphasised by Franklin (2004), and the development of media strategies for the various stages of the policy-making process. Two other characteristics of Bourdieu's theories on journalism are referred to: that of "*circular circulation*", whereby a story begun by one media outlet becomes adopted by others, and that of "*permanent amnesia*", whereby policies are reported without reference to any earlier relevant policies. Such techniques augment the impact of individual policies on the public at large. Gewirtz et al. (2004) examine the concept of 'spin', defined as impression management, in the process of public policy-making, and

in the presentation of policies in ways that are appealing to broadcasters. They suggest that tactics of reward and punishment are used to encourage academics and journalists to “*tell the right story*”, thus stifling genuine public debate and often preventing the publication of accurate information. Franklin (2004) supports this view, arguing that journalists are bullied, harangued and sidelined if they do not present the government’s policies favourably. He examines the devices recent Labour governments used to package policy for media presentation, namely: rhetoric, repetition and rebuttal, and the centralised control of communications.

In fact, Mansell (2013) claims that assessment data such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Advanced-level General Certificate of Education results are, on occasion, misused or misinterpreted in the media in order to pursue particular political ends and shape public perception. Baroutsis (2016) remarks on the media portrayal of schools which validates distrust in educators and legitimises neoliberal reforms and test-based accountability. The publication of ‘league tables’, which have included independent schools, is evidence of this. The reluctance to adopt a critical approach to policy-making and only consider one standpoint is reflected in Winstanley’s (2012) account of the DfE’s working group responsible for devising the Gifted and Talented policy when certain members deliberately excluded any form of questioning from academic philosophers in order to avoid preventing “*getting things done*”. Likewise, Noyes and Adkins (2016) analyse the reframing, to suit policy, of research into the value of studying mathematics post-GCSE.

If this is the case, the role of the media in legitimising policy, and certain forms of educational practice, is relevant to the question of independence in the conduct of ISC schools. Such institutions may have found themselves responding, albeit subconsciously, to media coverage of policy, believing it to genuinely represent what has been found to be best practice. The attention given by journalists to the implications for policy and practice of the publication of the PISA tests scores and international league tables (Feniger and Lefstein, 2014) may be one area where this is the case. This was explored indirectly in some areas of my research questionnaire and interviews.

The nature of independence

There is very little recent academic literature relating specifically to the nature of the independence enjoyed by private schools. That which exists relates principally to financial independence and the fiscal benefits consequent upon charitable status, reviewed above. However, Johnson's (1987) study suggests that it may be inappropriate to refer to an independent sector as the heads she interviewed all believed their schools to be unique. The question of possible institutional uniqueness as a characteristic of independence, and the extent to which it might be appropriate to refer to an independent sector, informed my data analysis.

Both Tapper (2003) and Roach (1991) in their examination of the relationship between the independent sector and the state, describe the origins and rapid growth of HMC in response to the Endowed Schools Act 1869, as a powerful and influential group committed to independence from state interference. Thus freedom from state control might be considered an attribute of independence. My interviews with heads included discussion of their perceptions of the state's approach to independent schools through inspection in order to shed light on whether the points made in the historical accounts reviewed above still obtain today or whether state control of private schools does indeed appear to have increased, as argued by de Waal (2006) and Power (2010).

In a brief article, in the HMC journal *Conference and Common Room*, entitled *Independence for What?* Dunford (2008), argues that independence is about more than "freedom from" governmental control and also involves "freedom for" certain purposes. He suggests that this greater freedom might include freedom to decide on the curriculum, to develop self-evaluation approaches focusing on a school's own priorities, and closer accountability to parents. In addition, Burgess (2009) lists other freedoms including decisions about the school's philosophy and ethos. Likewise, Seldon (2010) enumerates possible areas of autonomy which should characterise any school deemed independent. The focus of my study on the aims and evaluation processes in ISC schools was intended to encompass not only the question of freedom from government control, but also the use these schools made of their theoretical autonomy in defining their aims and ethos, and evaluating their success. In addition, I

hoped to identify those factors, other than party political beliefs, which limited their independence. These are areas which are not addressed in any depth in the current literature.

The literature reviewed thus far indicates that, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, ideological opposition to fee-paying schools is deemed to have declined regardless of the political persuasion of the governing party. Consequently, the financial benefits such schools enjoy persist. The regulation of the sector, including more curricular control, is considered to have increased, which is perceived as a threat to the sector's independence. More recently, in response to the government's introduction of new forms of state schools, allegedly independent in nature, the argument has arisen that greater autonomy is required by both sectors (Seldon, 2010). Cantrell (2010) echoes Seldon's view concerning the need for further independence from a governmental view of education arguing that the private sector has acquiesced to the government's perspective on education to the extent that it now promotes a culture which is far from humane, liberal or holistic.

This study seeks to contribute to this debate by illuminating the nature of the independence enjoyed by ISC schools in the early years of the twenty-first century, as reflected in their aims and evaluation processes. It is hoped to convey not only an understanding of the position of those schools themselves, but also a point of comparison for the increasing number of state maintained 'independent' schools.

Conclusion to Literature Survey

There is a limited body of academic literature relating to many aspects of the independent sector. The texts reviewed here impacted on the research in several ways, although not necessarily in chronological sequence. Much of it was contextual and helped to deepen my understanding of the antecedents of the current position of ISC schools, and undoubtedly heightened my theoretical sensitivity as outlined by Glaser (1992). Work on the history of private education related to my own exploration of these schools' declared goals. However, I identified a gap in the history of independent schools' aims after the 1944 Education Act had introduced secondary schooling for all pupils, with all subsequent literature focussing on the maintained sector. I hope that the present study will help to address this lacuna.

Several commentators highlight the view that many independent schools have their origins in religious belief. I therefore included religious affiliation amongst the factors considered in the analysis of the results from the aims survey. Awareness of the strong commitment to the common good, found to be characteristic of particular faith groups, may have made me theoretically sensitive to this issue when analysing my data. Likewise, familiarity with the initial differences in the purposes of boys' and girls' education led to the inclusion of pupil gender as a potential factor influencing schools' declared aims. The question as to whether it is appropriate to speak of an independent sector at all or whether each school should be considered a unique entity was raised by Johnson (1987), an issue on which I hoped analysis of the aims in the survey schools would shed some light.

The studies of recent educational policy-making emphasized the major impact that the central government's actions have had on maintained sector schools. Policy decisions were shown to be no longer made in consultation with local and school representatives, but by the government in power. This was the case with both major political parties. It was argued that conformity was ensured through quality control measures such as inspection. It was asserted by some critics that there was the danger that such an approach might drive uniformity leading to a 'one size fits all' model of education. I sought to examine the possibility that the independent sector might be similarly affected through my exploration of ISI's relationship with the government agency Ofsted and through its own inspection processes. My findings would, I hoped, not only shed light on the effect of central government policy-making, but also relate to the question of institutional uniqueness, raised by Johnson (1987).

Historical accounts of private schools pinpoint a growing interest in private education by the middle classes, most notably in the nineteenth century, and a corresponding decrease in the number of poor pupils attending such schools, raising questions of privilege. This led to the conflict between the collective and individual perspectives on the purposes of schooling which prevailed in mid-twentieth century political debate. Allied to this argument is the allegation, frequently voiced by past Labour governments, and reiterated by Dorling (2014 b, c), that the economically selective nature of independent schools renders them elitist. By analysing the stated goals of ISC

schools and examining their inspection reports I hoped to establish whether such criticism appeared to be justified or whether there was any evidence that the commitment to social justice, evident in the original purposes of many of these schools, was still apparent.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Relevant Epistemological Issues

Epistemology concerns the question of what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Bryman, 2004; Robson, 2011). Allied to this concern is the issue of the appropriate methodology for studying a particular field - how can knowledge be acquired and communicated to others (Cohen et al., 2011), and what is the relationship between the knower and the known (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1997, cited in Teddlie and Tashakori, 2009)? These questions derive from concerns about the nature of social reality. Is social reality external to individuals, as are objects in the natural world, or the product of individual consciousness (Cohen et al., 2011)? A researcher's alignment in this debate will determine how s/he conducts a study of social behaviour. Therefore, in the social sciences the methodological debate has centred on the issue of whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles and procedures as the natural sciences.

Those who viewed the social world as an external, objective reality and consequently, considered scientific methodology, with its emphasis on quantitative data, as appropriate are said to belong to the epistemological position known as positivism. Bryman (2004) argues that the term positivism is used in different ways, but can be said to include the following characteristics: only phenomena confirmed by the senses can genuinely be considered knowledge; the purpose of theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested; science must be conducted in a way that is objective and value-free; the role of the researcher is to test theories and provide material for the development of laws.

In contrast stand those who view social reality as the product of the subjective experience of individuals. Such researchers are considered to be interpretivist, sometimes referred to as relativist. These terms subsume the views of those who have been critical of the application of the scientific model to the study the social world. Supporters of interpretivism hold that a research strategy is required that respects the difference between people and the objects of the natural sciences, and apprehends the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2004). They have tended to employ

qualitative research methods, described by Robson (2011) as any research procedure which uses flexible and non-numerical data collection. However, Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1992) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe qualitative research as the analysis of either textual or numerical data that produce findings that are not arrived at by statistical methods. In fact, Glaser and Strauss (1967) contend that, in many instances, both forms of data are necessary. I made use of both textual and numerical data in the first phase of my research where I employed only descriptive statistics, such as percentages of respondents giving a particular answer in my analysis, rather than the application of statistical tests to quantitative data. In the second and third phases only textual data were analysed with limited use made of numerical computation as regards frequency of usage of particular themes or forms of language, and length of sections of text, during analysis of inspection reports, using techniques associated with content analysis (Holsti, 1969). Therefore it is the wider concept of qualitative research that I have adopted rather than that proposed by Robson (2011). Thus, the procedures could be considered mixed methods (Creswell, 2003) in that both textual and numerical data were included.

Those who adhere to the interpretivist stance have developed a number of intellectual traditions, the most relevant of which to this research is constructivism. Andrews (2012) points out that the terms constructionism and constructivism tend to be used interchangeably. He argues that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes. Social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus. Constructionism assumes a relativist epistemology (Charmaz, 2009; Andrews, 2012) and challenges the notion that there is a reality in the data that the unbiased researcher can uncover. Analysis is seen as interpretative renderings rather than objective reporting. Charmaz (2009) argues that constructivists maintain that conducting and writing up research findings are not neutral acts. Charmaz (2000) argues that, when presenting a written account of their research authors choose evidence selectively and adopt value-laden metaphors, though these actions may be subliminal. This may be especially so when researchers belong to the field in which they are working. However, Evans (2013), Perryman (2009) and Brinchmann and Sollie (2014) argue that such research can be fruitful as it can facilitate access to research participants, and the provision by them of data which might not otherwise have been

forthcoming, since they feel the researcher can empathise with their position. This, I believe to be the case with my own research, and is likely to account for the high response rate to the questionnaire, and heads' openness in answering interview questions. It is possible that heads might have responded differently had the researcher not been a fellow headteacher.

As Stern (2009) argues, objectivity has no place in the constructivist approach as the researcher's view goes into the mix. Some constructivists advocate the inclusion of a reflexive statement on the part of the researcher to clarify their standpoint and that of their participants (Kolb, 2012; Evans, 2013). It is, however, debatable just how possible it is for an individual to articulate all the influences which might have a bearing on their research conduct and data analysis, as s/he may not be fully aware of them as they may be present at a subconscious level. Nevertheless I have acknowledged the need for reflexivity by including a statement of my background and values as these will have, doubtless, had an influence on aspects of the research such as the choice of topic, and made me theoretically sensitive to heads' comments concerning the constraining influence of government policy especially, as reflected in ISI inspections.

Both of the two major epistemological stances have been open to criticism: positivism for its assumptions concerning external reality and researcher objectivity; interpretivism for its frequent heavy reliance on the subjective experience and perceptions of research participants, which may be incomplete or misleading (Bernstein, 1974 cited in Cohen et al., 2011). In more recent years the divide between qualitative and quantitative researchers has been mitigated somewhat with the development of mixed methods research (Teddle, 2005; Teddle and Tashakori, 2009) and the adoption of a less confrontational approach between adherents of the two epistemological stances (Cohen et al., 2011). As Corbin (2009) argued, researchers choose the approach that makes most sense to them. Thus my own research, though principally adopting an interpretative stance, as reflected in the title which refers to an internal perspective thereby acknowledging that there could be other interpretations if undertaken by a different researcher and other participants, does include elements of positivism in that it is, to some extent, testing previous theories. These concerned firstly, the possible uniqueness of independent schools as suggested by Johnson (1987) and search for evidence supporting or refuting this hypothesis. Secondly, studies

examining self-evaluation and school effectiveness measures were used as a basis for comparison of evaluation procedures in schools studied in the second phase to identify whether ISI schools demonstrated independence in their approach to evaluation.

Ethical considerations

Robson (2011) distinguishes between ethics and morals. Ethics, he argues, is concerned with principles of what one ought to do, whereas morals determine whether a specific act is consistent with accepted notions of right or wrong. In his view ethical behaviour equates to proper conduct. Oliver (2003) argues that, as in all situations involving human interaction, research demands that other human beings be treated with respect and not harmed in any way, and that they should be fully informed about what is being done with them. Such considerations are ethical in nature. After discussion with my supervisor, the following aspects of ethical procedure were taken in to account throughout the conduct of this research, given that there was no ethical review procedure at the time. My principal concerns were that all participants should be voluntary and fully informed and reassured about the purpose and format of the research, and that no individual or institution could be specifically criticised, for example in traditional or social media, or otherwise harmed, as a result of the conclusions of my research, given that the existence of independent schools has implications for social justice, and is therefore contentious. Thus, I took steps to preserve the anonymity, both of the respondents, and the schools they represented. I have outlined below the relevant elements of ethical research conduct and the measures I took to address them.

Privacy

The principle of privacy applies to all information relating to a person's physical and mental condition or personal circumstances, and gives individuals the right to decide for themselves when, where, and in what circumstances, and to what extent, their personal attitudes, opinions, habits and eccentricities, doubts and fears are to be communicated or withheld from others (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1981, cited in Cohen et al., 2011). Its corollaries are anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. It requires that people have the right not to take

part in research, answer questions, or be interviewed. To do so against their wishes would be an intrusion into their privacy.

Anonymity

The principle of anonymity requires that the information published should in no way reveal the respondent's identity unless s/he considered it in their interests to do so, as would be the case, for example, when the respondent wanted to derive benefit from the publicity associated with the research project. This matter was addressed in two ways during the first phase of the research focussing on schools' aims and their definition and publication: firstly, by assigning numbers to all the schools as responses were received and using those numbers in all data analysis, and secondly, by aggregating the data so that no individual response was associated with a particular school. The second phase involved interviews, in this instance the number allocated to the school was used during the analysis and reporting. In the case of schools, contextual statements for inclusion in the thesis, which described the institutions involved, were sent to interview participants a week or two in advance of the interview with the request that they make any desired amendments. This was discussed at the outset of the interview and any necessary amendments made. Members of the inspectorate are described as representatives rather than by role. The data from this part of the research were also aggregated, for the most part. Where comments referring to individual schools or members of the inspectorate were included, these were sent to interviewees for approval before thesis completion.

The third phase involved a comparison of inspection reports from ISI and Ofsted. These were assigned a roman numeral in the case of the ISI reports, and the letters A-F in the case of the Ofsted reports. All references to the reports in the thesis, for the purposes of exemplification, were made using these designations.

Confidentiality

This principle is allied to the concept of anonymity and involves not disclosing information that might enable the individual to be traced. Oliver (2003) points out that when respondents are heads, it is almost certainly necessary to mention this in the

account of the research, hence problems could arise if the identity of the respondent could be recognised through the researcher, particularly if they work in the same institution. In some cases, where the date of the interview is given, it might be possible, with considerable effort, to identify the participant. Thus, he argues, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Consequently, it is essential to point out the limits of confidentiality. In this case, all of the heads and inspectors worked in different institutions from me, although some of the respondents were known to me professionally. Since the independent sector is comparatively small, contact between heads, many of whom also act as inspectors, is inevitable. I gave an undertaking not to use names when referring to schools. In fact, the original contextual statements, to which the heads involved agreed, contained their date of appointment, which might have assisted traceability. This has been removed before inclusion in the thesis.

Informed consent

Cohen et al. (2011) refer to the notion of informed consent which derives from a person's right to freedom and self-determination. Being free is a condition of living in a democracy, consequently, where restrictions are potentially placed on that freedom, as in a research situation, they must be justified and consented to. Self-determination requires that participants have the right to weigh up the risks and benefits of being involved in a piece of research and deciding for themselves whether to take part, or whether to refuse or withdraw. Diener and Crandall (1978), cited in Cohen et al. (2011), refer to four elements of informed consent: competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension. These were addressed in the following manner in my research:

- **Competence:** Oliver (2003) outlines several situations where concerns about competence with respect to informed consent might arise. These relate to those who may be prevented from fully understanding because they are: very young children; have had very little formal education; use a different mother tongue from that of the researcher; or, as Cohen et al. (2011) point out, are immature or psychologically impaired. Oliver also refers to participants who have been induced by reward to participate in the research. None of these characteristics applied to participants in my research as all were heads or inspectors, or fulfilled both roles,

as I did myself. Therefore, they could be considered to have had a high level of education. All interview participants had English as their native language. There is no way of determining, from the responses, the mother tongue of those who completed the questionnaire, but all verbal responses to open-ended questions were fluently expressed. No inducements, financial or otherwise, were made. Thus, all available evidence suggests that research participants had a high level of competence in deciding whether or not to take part and were not persuaded to participate by promises of a reward.

- **Voluntarism:** All participants in the research did so voluntarily. In Phase 1 all respondents had been invited by letter, sent to them at their school address, to complete a questionnaire and submit a statement of their school's aims. Those invited could, therefore, choose whether to respond, using the stamped-addressed envelope, or not. At the end of the questionnaire participants were asked whether they would be willing to participate in further research. A number of those who answered in the affirmative were asked, in a later letter, whether they wished to assist further by being interviewed in order to explore the research topic in greater depth. If so, they were invited to indicate their preferred location and timing. All those interviewed were, as heads, equal in status to me or, in the case of the inspectorate, my superiors when I was acting as a team inspector. There was, therefore, no element of coercion or obligation, which might have been the case had I occupied a senior position to my respondents.
- **Full information:** The letter which accompanied the questionnaire and request for an aims statement explained that the research project was part of my doctoral studies at the Institute of Education, University of London (as it then was). It was stated that the research focus, at this stage, was the aims of independent schools and the extent to which they were generic or unique to individual institutions. I added that, at a later stage, I intended to look at how schools evaluated success in meeting their aims. It was made clear that no institution would be identified by name in any part of the study. The letter was produced on headed paper with my school's address. This was to establish my credentials as an independent school head, and thus help allay any fears respondents might have that this research might be inspired by antipathy to the independent sector.

Those heads who took part in the second part of the research, and the representatives of the inspectorate, were asked by letter, and in one case personally in private, after a committee meeting at her place of work, whether they would be willing to explore further issues relating to independent schools' aims and the ways in which success in meeting them was judged. I offered the option of conducting the interview with a member of the senior management, if this seemed preferable to them. In every instance the head chose to be interviewed in person. In all but the pilot interview, with the first school head involved in Phase 2, an outline of the issues to be explored in discussion was sent a week or two in advance of the interview to enable participants to feel fully prepared and reduce any sense of pressure or uncertainty that they might feel as to the scope of the discussion. This was particularly important in the case of the members of the inspectorate as inspection can be a contentious issue. Included was a contextual statement about their school, where applicable, which, with their consent, was to be included in the thesis.

- Comprehension: All participants had a sufficient level of education and mastery of the English language to be able to comprehend the research project.

Access

There were no issues concerning access to appropriate respondents and possible consequent feelings of insecurity (Cohen et al., 2011) as, in every instance, the person approached was a person with seniority in the organisation, by virtue of their position as a head or senior member of the inspectorate.

Values

Robson (2011) argues that the position of values in social research is open to dispute, but that even positivist researchers acknowledge that the choice of research topic involves value judgements. In this instance, the decision to research certain aspects of independence in ISC schools reflected an implicit acceptance of these schools' right to exist, a right that is not universally agreed, and of the value of conducting research in the independent sector. This judgement derives from my belief in the appropriateness of a form of democracy which allows its citizens freedom from government interference in certain aspects of their lives, including education, as a guard against the

type of political indoctrination that took place in China during the Cultural Revolution (Chang, 1993; Salisbury, 1993), or Spain in the era of Franco (Domke, 2011), of which I had personal experience.

What is more contentious, Robson argues, is the position of values in the conduct, analysis, and interpretation of the results. Robson (2011) contends that some researchers argue that one should seek to make explicit when value-judgements are being made, whereas others see the attempt to separate out values as misconceived. In the case of this research, although an in-depth analysis of every value judgement would be extremely lengthy, it is possible to make explicit the dominant value positions which will have informed my theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1992) to the data, propositions made, and conclusions drawn as follows:

- The conclusion that the emphasis on individuality in independent schools and breadth of opportunity raises questions of social justice implies that I consider the pursuit of social justice a worthwhile aim.
- The suggestion that a higher level of democracy in evaluation processes appeared desirable stems from the value I assign to the democratic process.
- My personal stance that the desirable aims of secondary school education extend beyond examination requirements, to encompass a breadth of experience which does not always lend itself to measurement and assessment, will have informed my conduct of the research project.
- My view that an individual's needs and interests, as well as the state's, should serve as a basis for decision-making about the content of schooling will doubtless have influenced my approach to the whole project.

Publication

Some of the participants in the interviews expressed particular interest in the research and its possible findings. The abstract was sent to all interview participants before completion of the thesis with the option of receiving further information if desired.

The Research Study

The purpose of the current study was initially to examine the nature of English ISC secondary schools' aims and the means used to evaluate success in achieving them. I

have understood the term 'aim' to equate to the general purposes of schooling as defined by Cigman, 2007. As a result of the analysis of the first tranche of data, the focus shifted to an exploration of the nature and extent of the independence enjoyed by ISC schools as reflected in their aims and evaluation procedures to answer the following research questions:

- What were the aims of ISC secondary schools at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Were they unique to individual schools or characteristic of the sector as a whole?
- In what ways did ISC schools evaluate their success in meeting their declared goals?
- What light do the aims and evaluation processes shed on how ISC schools independence was constituted?
- What were the constraints which limited their autonomy?

During the period of the research, successive governments, of the three major political persuasions in England, showed an increasing interest in establishing 'independent' schools within the state maintained sector, details of which are given in Appendix 10. Thus, the question of what is understood by the term 'independent' amongst the group of schools which label themselves as such, became pertinent, not only to those schools, but to English secondary education as a whole. It was hoped that the research findings might serve as a point of comparison with those schools maintained by the state but deemed independent by the government of the day, as well as being of potential interest to the ISC schools themselves.

Due to work commitments on the part of both myself and of those heads who took part in the study, the research took place over an extended period from 2003-2011. The research was undertaken in three phases. Firstly, a small pilot survey was carried out to examine the feasibility of analysing schools' aims from the documentation they provided. Following this a wider sample of schools was contacted with a short questionnaire investigating perceptions of the purpose of school aims, the influences on their definition, and the use to which they were put. This was accompanied by a request for their aims statements. The questionnaire was piloted informally with

colleagues and also sent to those schools which had taken part in the pilot study. Following a preliminary analysis of the responses received, I undertook the second phase consisting of a small number of interviews with representatives from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), and a selection of ISC schools which were chosen partly for practical reasons such as ease of access or the head's willingness and availability to be interviewed, and partly because they differed from each other in some way, such as by the provision of day or boarding education, pupil gender, religious affiliation or location. The aims statements data were subject to a second analysis and comparison with the aims of the National Curriculum, to clarify further the nature of ISC schools' independence in this respect. Finally I undertook a scrutiny of these schools' inspection reports and compared their format and content with those of a similar-sized selection of maintained sector reports, produced by Ofsted over the same period of time, in order to understand further the degree of independence exercised in the area of evaluation. This constituted the third phase.

The Pilot Survey

Before embarking on the major study of the aims of ISC secondary and all-age schools I decided to conduct a small pilot study to assess the suitability of the chosen research method and to identify potential issues which might need further exploration and explanation. At this stage the study was designed to cover all stages including preparatory schools. Twelve schools were selected, all of which were accredited by the associations of the Independent Schools Council. All ISC schools are accredited in the same way, using as a basis the report of the Independent Schools Inspectorate resulting from an inspection carried out using a common framework, and thus they can be considered part of a wider group of schools generally referred to by its members as the *"independent sector"*.

The twelve schools involved in the pilot study were chosen to ensure that all the ISC associations were represented. In addition, because the heads of these schools were known personally to me, I hoped that the response rate would be higher than if an approach were made by an unknown researcher. I selected head teachers as key informants as I considered them to be the most likely people to have helpful insights into the research topics, and thus able to provide detailed information (Richardson

cited in Wellington, 2000). The twelve schools were situated in the Midlands or the South-East of England as these were the regions where I had recently worked or was currently working.

A letter was sent to heads explaining the nature of the research and requesting a copy of the school's aims. All twelve schools responded positively. Eleven sets of aims were sent and the twelfth school promised on several occasions to "*put something together*". However, in the latter case, no written statement was ever received and it seems reasonable to deduce that no formal statement of aims existed, and that one would have had to be created for the purpose of this research. It is important to note that, at this stage, (2003) there was no formal requirement to provide a formal set of aims when the school was inspected by ISI.

Approach to analysis

Once a reply was received, each school was assigned a number by which they would be identified rather than by name. Numbers were allocated in the order in which the responses were received in order to preserve anonymity. The aims statements from the eleven schools which responded were analysed using the constant comparative approach to coding as elaborated by Glaser (1992). Written data were analysed in a line by line manner and incidents compared with each other for similarities or differences (Hernandez, 2009). I began with no codes and gradually built up a list of codes from the data each representing a different concept. This approach was adopted as I believed it would provide a rigorous method of interpreting data and generating theory from the data provided. The analysis focused on an examination of aims, mission statements, statements of values, or ethos. The texts were examined to identify all the different concepts which emerged from the eleven sets of statements of purpose. Each concept represented a distinct goal which the school claimed to be aiming to achieve. The texts were combed until saturation point was reached and no new goal concepts emerged. The results were mapped on a series of grids with the school numbers listed vertically and the concept names horizontally in order to facilitate visual comparison of the different schools' definitions of purpose.

Results of analysis

The analysis identified one hundred and seven different goal concepts each of which represented my interpretation of the meaning expressed in the words of the different aims statements (Corbin, 2015). These were then grouped into six categories.

Once the overall analysis of the schools' aims was complete, I then analysed the findings by category of school. I was interested to see whether my findings applied to all types of ISC schools and could, therefore, be said to characterise independent schools in general or whether certain aims were only found in groups of schools sharing particular characteristics. At this stage of the analysis schools were allocated one of each of the following characteristics:

- Association membership: HMC, GSA, IAPS, ISA, and SHMIS;
- Boarding or day
- Gender: boys only, girls only, co-educational
- Religious affiliation: denominational, other religious affiliation including inter-denominational, non-denominational, unknown

These characteristics were chosen as they were considered to be the ones most likely to have influenced the aims of individual schools.

The following points emerged from the data analysis at this stage:

- No two schools had an identical set of aims or goals.
- No individual school's aims embraced all of the goal-concepts identified in the pilot group study.
- The number of goal-concepts contained within each individual school's aims or mission, value or ethos statement ranged from fourteen to thirty-one. Thus, there was little common ground in the way schools presented their schools' declared purposes.
- The majority of schools in the study (eight out of the eleven) had more than twenty different goals.
- Seven goals were present within the aims of at least half of the eleven schools
- Just over half the goals were only mentioned by one school.

- No major pattern of responses was identified within the different categories of schools, but certain goals were only mentioned in the aims of schools with some shared characteristics such as pupil gender or religious affiliation.

The above analysis suggested that certain goals appeared to be characteristic of most ISC schools in the study and thus possible indicators of the existence of an 'independent sector' with common features. However, each school had used its freedom to set its own aims in a different way, choosing to emphasize particular purposes rather than others, thus rendering themselves to some extent unique. Moreover, it seemed that certain goals might be linked with specific characteristics of the school. A more in-depth exploration of these findings was to form a major focus of the later stages of the research.

Suitability of pilot research method for the initial phase of the main research project

- The pilot study enabled me to assess the feasibility of using a similar approach to data collection and analysis during the early stages of the research. I decided to continue to collect aims statements as they had proved an effective way of determining the official purposes of ISC schools.
- The grounded theory approach to coding and category generation had provided a systematic way of analysing qualitative data from various different sources presented in different formats. Moreover, the analytical process enabled a large number of concepts, referred to here as distinct goals, to emerge from a limited dataset which could then be grouped into categories and used as a basis for analysing a larger sample in the main study.
- The mapping exercise allowed some quantitative analysis to be undertaken, albeit of a very limited kind, given the small size of the sample of schools in the pilot study, but provided a means by which a larger sample could be analysed in a quantifiable manner to identify any patterns of response.
- The concepts generated, each representing a distinct goal, served as a starting point for the analysis of data from the larger sample in the main study to which

additional concepts could be added, if found, and new categories created, if this seemed appropriate.

- The mapping process was extendable to include further data and provided a means of identifying whether there were patterns amongst the responses from different types of school.
- Not all schools had formally stated their aims since at that point ISC schools were under no obligation to do so. If there were a significant number of schools in this category, then any analysis of aims would, inevitably, be very limited and the picture presented incomplete.
- The format in which aims were stated varied considerably: in one school they were contained in the Head's letter in the prospectus, and in others they formed a separate document. This made identification of what counted as aims more difficult in some cases.
- The detail in which schools presented their aims varied considerably. Some statements were very brief whereas others were lengthy or further subdivided into objectives. This presented problems as regards the amount of detail to consider in the analysis.
- A school's aims are not fixed; they evolve and develop in response to changing circumstances. One school, which had just changed head, was about to reformulate its aims. Another, having sent a set of aims for analysis, was prompted to re-examine and rewrite its aims which were sent later. Consequently, any analysis of aims and conclusions drawn could never be said to be definitive and can only represent a snapshot at a given moment in time.
- Informal comments, made by some heads who supplied information, indicated that markedly different use was made of these aims statements, ranging from informing policy, to having them available for inspection, but not making active use of them. This highlighted the importance of gleaning information from sources other than those which are formally published to shed greater light on the relevance to a school of its aims.
- Similarly, informal comments made in letters or verbally during the data gathering process revealed that responsibility for drawing up a school's aims varied from one institution to another. In some the head alone appeared to be responsible, in

others staff and governors were involved. This raised questions of whose aims are represented in any formal statement. Consequently a questionnaire seeking additional information about the process and purposes of aims definition and dissemination was devised to accompany the request for aims statements for the main study.

- Preliminary analysis indicated that no two schools had precisely the same goals. However, the sample of schools included in the pilot study was too small for any significant conclusions to be drawn from the data. Analysis of a more extended sample was intended to confirm or refute the finding.

Main survey of aims documents

The purpose of this part of the study was to examine the aims of a larger sample of ISC schools in the light of the findings of the pilot, focussing on those schools which were either free-standing secondary schools, or offered secondary schooling as part of cross-phase provision. I chose to concentrate on the secondary phase as this was the stage of education with which I was most familiar, thus access to heads would be facilitated; a focus on one age-range would make the study more manageable; the potential impact of external examinations on a school's aims and evaluation might be greater. My sampling strategy was to create a clustered sample. The sample was achieved by taking every fifth school in England with a secondary element included in the *ISC Guide to accredited independent schools* (2003a). The schools in the guide were listed alphabetically by counties, unitary authorities, or groups of unitary authorities. Thus, the sample included schools from across the country but, no attempt was made to stratify the sample or to deliberately include schools of a specific type, such as the most well-known of the traditional independent schools. The decision to limit the survey to English schools was made because of the differences between the English education system and those of the other countries in the United Kingdom (Ball, 2013; Chitty, 2009). For example, there is no National Curriculum in Scotland and a different system of external examinations; both Scotland and Wales have abandoned national testing and abolished performance tables; Northern Ireland has its own National Curriculum; all three countries run their own inspectorates.

By adopting the sampling procedures detailed above I hoped to produce a sample which was unbiased as regards school selection, sufficiently large to produce meaningful data, and yet small enough to be manageable. This yielded a potential sample of 119 schools in addition to those in the pilot. A letter was sent with a stamped addressed envelope to each of these schools explaining the nature of the research, requesting a copy of the school's aims, together with completion of the enclosed questionnaire exploring issues relating to aims definition and publication. Schools were promised anonymity in the reporting of the findings. At this stage of the research not all schools had websites with aims published in the public domain, hence the decision to ask schools individually to supply a statement of their aims. Moreover, by formally requesting a copy of the school's aims I was requesting consent for their use for research purposes. A follow-up letter was sent a month later to those who had not replied or had only sent questionnaire responses. No further follow-up letters were sent due to the cost involved.

Of the 119 schools contacted, 73 sent copies of an aims document and responded to the questionnaire, although a further 27 returned the questionnaire without an aims statement. The discrepancy between the levels of response could be partially explained by the fact that not all schools had a formal record of their aims although they may have had an informal version. This was specifically stated in some cases. In other instances time pressures may have caused this aspect of the request to be overlooked as several heads referred to lack of time to help with future research when completing the questionnaire. In one case the head was unhappy about supplying the aims as he voiced concerns about the potential misuse of data in educational research.

The response rate to the survey (61%) was as might have been expected after one follow-up letter, and the return rate of the questionnaire (84%) was considerably higher than the 60% which Cohen et al. (2011) claim to be typical. The composition of the final sample of 84 schools (11 from the pilot plus 73 in main survey) which took part in both survey and questionnaire is illustrated below.

Figure 3.1 Composition of aims survey sample

Type of school	Number of schools	Percentage of sample
Day	48	57
Boarding	36	43
Co-educational	37	44
Boys	10	12
Girls	37	44
Denominational	53	63
Christian/multi-faith	15	18
Non-denominational	14	17
Unknown	2	2

Appendix 1 contains a summary of the principal characteristics of the schools which responded to the survey.

Categorisation of religious affiliation presented some difficulties. Firstly, because even where schools were affiliated to the Church of England, the degree of affiliation was, in some cases, tenuous, as emerged later in discussion during interviews. Secondly, where schools were not associated with a specific denomination, it was not always clear whether terms such as “*Christian*” and “*non-denominational*” were synonymous, or whether multi-faith was equivalent to inter-denominational or referred to different world religions. In assigning schools to a religious category I was guided by their entry in the Independent Schools Yearbook (2008), or if this contained no relevant information, their website, but in many cases the categorisation can act as a guide to the school’s religious position only, rather than a definitive statement. There were no specifically Jewish or Islamic schools in the sample as none of these schools belonged to the ISC at the time.

The original sampling method meant that only one of the well-known public schools (a former boys’ school which is now co-educational) featured in the survey, although several of the most prestigious girls’ schools did. Hence the data obtained and views expressed may not represent those of the most prestigious and expensive boys’ schools, which are probably those best known to the general public. However, such schools do not, in fact, constitute the majority of independent schools. The sample may be unrepresentative of ISC as a whole as there was a very high response rate from

girls' schools, possibly because, as a member of the Girls' Schools Association (GSA), I was known, if only in name, by many of these heads. There were no statistics in the ISC *Census (2003b)* which would enable me to compare schools by pupil gender. Thus, it was not possible to determine whether the sample was representative in this respect.

The boarding sector may also be over-represented. According to the 2003 ISC *Census*, 86% of ISC pupils were day pupils and 14% were boarders. However, these figures include preparatory schools which cater mainly for younger day pupils, and pupil numbers may not reflect the number of schools, since institutions vary enormously in size. Hence, it is not possible to determine, from the *Census*, how many schools had boarding facilities. The *Census* did not contain details of religious affiliation. This was one of the reasons for undertaking comparisons of aims by category of school, once the initial overall mapping had been undertaken, in order to establish whether there was a major bias in the data obtained which would prevent any theoretical proposal from being applicable to the sector as a whole, regardless of school type.

Analysis of the aims documents

The analysis of the aims statements took place in two distinct stages. The first involved the use of both textual analysis of the aims documents and descriptive statistics. The second was purely textual analysis. Initially, the aims documents were subject to a similar analytic process to that used in the pilot study. Schools were allocated a number starting from the last number in the pilot study, in the order in which they were received, thus creating a total sample of 84 schools as data from the pilot were included in the analysis. From this point on, all schools were only referred to by their number, thus preserving anonymity. The aims documents were analysed using a grounded theory approach to coding to identify the concepts they contained. These were then mapped within the six categories already identified during the pilot, using the same grid format. As new concepts emerged, they were examined to see if they helped saturate the existing categories, or constituted an additional category. In the second phase of the research, the heads of the schools studied were asked to review the analysis of goal concepts I had drawn up for their school, and to check for any omissions or errors. In this way, there was a degree of triangulation for the data analysis, albeit a somewhat limited one. The mapping exercise enabled visual

comparison of the goals of the 84 schools in order to establish whether there was any justification for the claim that these schools were all in some way unique, and also facilitated numerical computation to identify any recurrent goals which might be said to characterise the independent sector or groups of schools within it.

The second stage of the survey analysis focussed more closely on an examination of the nature of independence as evidenced by the aims data in general, rather than on that of individual institutions or groups of schools with shared characteristics. At this stage the open-coding and categorisation, designed principally as an aid to visual comparison and computation, was refined to create two overarching categories. The concepts generated from the first analysis were then regrouped into one of two categories and each category was sub-divided into a number of sub-categories. From this second analysis it was hoped to reach a deeper understanding of the ways in which ISC schools aimed to provide education, and of the nature of that provision, given that there was no national framework such as the National Curriculum, which directed their aims and educational processes. This final analysis produced one overall core category which gave rise to the final theoretical proposition of the thesis concerning the nature of independence in ISC schools.

Finally, using the results of the survey analysis, I undertook a very brief general overview of the points of similarity or difference in scope and emphasis between the ISC aims which were most frequently found amongst the survey data, and those of the National Curriculum, as stated in the National Curriculum Handbook (DfEE, 1999). The comparison exercise did not lend itself to systematic in-depth analysis given that the National Curriculum (NC) Aims were a formal statement of intent, published as a directive to all schools within the maintained sector, and no comparable document exists for independent schools, since they are all free to devise their own purposes. Moreover, as the name implies, the NC aims are concerned principally with the curriculum and not with a definition of many of the constituent aspects of education such as the ethos, or learning environment, which many independent schools chose to stress in their aims documents. Any conclusions drawn from the comparison could, therefore, only be indicators of possible differences between the two sectors, and would need to be investigated further using a sample of individual state schools' aims

rather than a collective overview such as that published in the NC Handbook. The results of this comparison were intended to support or refute the findings from earlier analysis concerning the concept of independence in ISC schools.

The questionnaire

Informal comments made by several of the headteachers who took part in the pilot survey, all of whom were known personally to me, caused me to reflect on the processes and purposes of aims definition in ISC schools and led me to explore not only the aims, but also matters relating to their elaboration and publication. I chose to do this by means of a questionnaire. The use of questionnaires is potentially problematic as outlined by Robson (2011) and Dowling and Brown (2010). The value of a particular questionnaire is dependent on various factors. Firstly, the degree of technical proficiency of the questionnaire designer in devising questions which avoid ambiguity, and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, is significant. Secondly, the information given by respondents may not always be accurate as they may wish to show themselves in a good light. In addition, the personal characteristics of those responding, such as memory, knowledge, experience, personality and motivation, may affect their responses. Thirdly, answers may be incomplete or omitted, and there is no opportunity to pursue this with follow-up probes. Finally, there is the possibility of a low response rate to a postal questionnaire and the answers of non-respondents might have been significant, resulting in a misleading set of results. In addition, I would add that there is no guarantee that the person the researcher thought was responding was actually the respondent; completion of the questionnaire may have been delegated.

However, as a head myself, I was aware of the time constraints caused by the role's workload, hence in order to explore these issues and obtain a higher possible rate of response than might have been the case with alternative methods such as interviews, I opted for devising a short questionnaire with pre-coded answers, together with the option to include additions or comment if desired. This format was intended to facilitate response in the minimum amount of time required to obtain the desired information, as such questionnaires are quick to complete and easy to code (Cohen et al. 2011), but allow respondents the freedom to make comments at the end, if they

wish. The use of pre-defined answers also enabled numerical calculation to determine the dominant patterns of response. However, the use of a principally closed questionnaire format inevitably limited the richness of the data that could be obtained. The areas explored were: the choice of title for the school's statements of purpose; the impetus for aims definition and redefinition; involvement in the authorship; the audience for which the document was written; publication; frequency of review; evaluation of the school's success in achieving its goals.

Finally, respondents were asked to add any additional information they wished concerning their school's aims and whether they would be willing to take part in follow-up research. A copy of the questionnaire is to be found at Appendix 2. The responses to those questions with pre-set responses to choose from were analysed numerically to provide an overall picture of the proportion of respondents for each alternative. The two questions where responses were open were analysed as follows: firstly to identify the key methods schools used to evaluate their effectiveness in achieving their goals, which were then listed to produce a summary of the instruments used by schools in their evaluation processes, secondly, using a loosely grounded theory approach, to identify any other information relevant to understanding these schools' approach to aims definition and dissemination.

Interviews

Analysis of the aims statements and questionnaires gave rise to questions concerning the ways in which schools judged whether they were successful in achieving the goals they set themselves, particularly with regards to those aims of a more abstract or long-term nature, which the majority of schools sought to promote. These issues appeared to merit further investigation into schools' evaluation procedures and processes. I considered that the most suitable instrument to explore these matters would be by conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with the headteachers of a sample of ISC schools who had indicated their willingness to help with further research.

Interviews can yield high amounts of data at relatively low cost (Robson 2011; Dowling and Brown, 2010). Moreover, they enable the researcher to gain a greater depth of understanding and allow for a greater degree of clarification and exploration than is possible with a questionnaire, due to the interactive relationship between the

interviewer and interviewee (Gillham, 2005). The value of the interview as a research instrument is to some extent dependent on the skill and personality of the interviewer, as well as that of the interviewee, and the degree of rapport established between them. A further advantage to the interview, in my case, was the possibility it afforded for me to gain a degree of triangulation for the findings of my grounded theory analysis, by discussing with heads my analysis of the concepts I had deduced from their schools' aims statement.

The semi-structured format has several advantages which made it suitable for my purposes. Robson (2011) defines as semi-structured an interview where the interviewer has a guide that serves as a checklist of topics to be covered and a default wording and order of questions which can be modified in the course of the interview. Such a format allows for more open-ended questions to be posed (Oppenheim, 1992), or the use of probes to follow up or develop the interviewee's responses in greater depth, and is consequently less limiting than a postal questionnaire. Drever (1995) highlights as an advantage the opportunity for the interviewee to answer in their own words, rather than using pre-worded responses, as is the case in interviews where interviewees are asked to choose from a list of pre-prepared answers.

Given the increasing profile of ISI, which had been established in 2000, I chose, during the course of the research, to explore not only the views of heads but also the perspective of two representatives of those overseeing the inspection of ISC schools. In the first interviewee's case, in view of the busy schedule of the person involved, once I had obtained a verbal promise of assistance, I offered, in a letter, a choice of methods of addressing my areas of interest by means of a written or recorded response or an interview. The letter outlined the issues in which I was interested. In the event, he chose an interview based on the topics I had listed in my letter. The interview format appeared to work well in this case and yielded considerable data, and hence I asked the second representative, whom I knew as a result of my work with the GSA inspections committee, whether she too would be willing to be interviewed, and outlined the areas to be discussed. She gave her consent to this request.

Interviews with representatives from ISI

During the period in which this research was undertaken ISC schools were subject to inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) using a series of different frameworks (2000, 2006, 2010), each of which had been approved by the government agency Ofsted, which had responsibility for monitoring ISI's work. The first of these frameworks closely mirrored that used by Ofsted at the time. Hence it offered limited scope for recognising the ways in which individual schools asserted their independence. However, the second framework departed considerably from the Ofsted model in that judgement against each of the criteria was linked to the fulfilment of the school's aims, and the overall conclusion assessed the school's success in achieving its goals.

It seemed pertinent to the research topic, therefore, to seek the views of representatives of ISI on the impressions they had formed of the aims of independent education and the means devised by both schools and ISI to evaluate school effectiveness. This inevitably involved an examination of the relationship between ISI and Ofsted. The first interview took place in October 2005 at the end of the first inspection cycle at the point when outline details for the second cycle, to be introduced the following year, had been made public. The ISI representative interviewed had worked for ISI throughout the first cycle, having previously taught in the independent sector and then worked as an HMI. He had worked on devising the final format of the second cycle and thus was in a position to reflect on its conception and purpose. The second representative, who was involved in the implementation of the second cycle, and later in negotiations with Ofsted over later cycles, was interviewed in June 2007. She had experience of teaching in the maintained sector and inspecting in both the maintained and independent sectors.

Both interviews took place at ISI headquarters: the first in Bicester, the second in London. Interviewees were sent copies of the interview topics in advance (Appendix 4a; 4b). This was for several reasons: firstly to inform the interviewees of the basis of the interview and provide reassurance as to its purpose since inspection is potentially a controversial topic; secondly, to give the interviewees time to reflect on their answers, and prepare the points they wished to make thus maximising the use of the

time available for discussion. In the event, both interviewees were very generous with their time, with the first interview lasting about an hour and a half and the second slightly less. Permission was sought to record the interviews so as to produce a transcript to facilitate accurate analysis. This was granted in the first instance, but not in the second, where I took notes as a basis for analysis. The transcript and notes were then analysed, using open coding, for concepts pertaining to the nature of independence in ISC schools with particular reference to their aims, the evaluation of schools' effectiveness, and any evidence they had found of factors constraining the exercise of autonomy in these areas.

Interviews with Headteachers

The mapping of the survey data and questionnaire analysis produced several areas for further investigation: the need to provide some form of triangulation for the survey analysis; the nature of the distinctiveness that was apparent in the concept mapping; the means used to judge schools' effectiveness in achieving their declared purposes, by both internal and external agents, as noted in the questionnaire responses; perceptions of school quality. Heads were asked to indicate on the questionnaire whether they were willing to take part in further research. Just over a quarter indicated that they would, although a small number of these specified that, due to time restrictions, they would not be willing to be interviewed, but would happy to complete a further questionnaire. However, semi-structured interviews had proved effective in the case of the ISI representatives as a means of probing issues in greater depth, and seemed a less restrictive method than the use of an additional questionnaire. I opted for the means which I believed would give greater depth of response rather than for a larger quantity of feedback which was likely to be of more limited value in enriching the data already received. Lack of time was to prove a restricting factor in arranging interviews as synchronising the diaries of two headteachers proved problematic in most cases. I selected seven schools from amongst those whose heads had agreed to be interviewed, each of which appeared to have some obvious characteristic which distinguished it from the other six. Cost of travel and accessibility were also limiting factors in the choice of school. I attempted to include schools from at least three different regions: the North-West, the South-East,

and the Midlands, so as to avoid restricting the interviews to those who knew me personally. Permission to interview these heads was sought by letter which referred back to the offer of assistance made by them on the earlier questionnaire. Six of the seven heads agreed to be interviewed and arrangements were made by phone. The seventh head did not reply, despite a follow-up letter, possibly because the school was relatively close to my own and therefore, to some extent, a competitor. He may have been concerned about revealing further information about the school in case it was used to inform our marketing activities. All but one of the interviews (school number 1) took place during the working day at the school where the head was employed. The head of school number 1 preferred to be interviewed in the evening in a domestic setting. This resulted in a longer, more in-depth interview than was the case on the other occasions. A summary of the main characteristics of the schools whose heads were interviewed is contained in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Schools involved in interviews

School No	Gender	Day/Boarding	Location	Religious affiliation
1	girls	day	East Midlands urban	Church of England
10	boys	mainly day (a few boarders)	West Midlands urban	Church of England
13	girls	boarding	South Midlands rural	Christian
26	co-educational	boarding	South-east rural	none
42	co-educational	boarding	North rural	Roman Catholic
72	co-educational	day	West Midlands urban	none

The first interview (school number 13) served, to some extent, as a pilot for the following interviews in that it was conducted without the head having prior sight of the interview schedule (Appendix 3). In the following interviews I sent a copy of the topic areas I wished to explore about ten days in advance so as to allow the head more time to reflect on their answers. At the outset of each of the six interviews I sought permission to record the discussion, and in each case this was granted.

Prior to each interview I prepared a contextual statement based principally on information that the school had submitted to the Independent Schools Yearbook for the current year. Schools have a fair degree of flexibility over the contents of their entry in this publication. Consequently, the contextual statements vary in scope and length. I also consulted the school's prospectus, where this had been made available. In addition, schools' websites were used to prepare for the later interviews since by this stage the majority of schools had produced one for marketing purposes. The contextual statement was sent to each head for approval before inclusion in any written account of the research. Heads were asked if they would like to think of a pseudonym for their school or preferred to be referred to by the number I had allocated to them. Only school, number 10 chose a name: "*opportunity knocks*". All the

rest preferred the use of numbers. The agreed details of the schools involved in this part of the research are given in Appendix 8.

Analysis of interview data

The transcripts of the interviews were analysed using grounded theory coding methods as outlined above in order to enrich and saturate the categories and subcategories which had emerged during the aims analysis. In addition, analysis at this stage produced two new categories. The questionnaire responses and aims statements were also revisited at this point to establish whether any data related to these new categories.

The other major area of focus during the interviews was the ways in which schools evaluated their success in meeting their aims and the quality criteria, sometimes referred to as performance indicators, which enabled them to make judgements. These were grouped in a category labelled evaluation criteria, and, in the final stage of the research, compared with those I found in reports produced by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Comparison of ISI and Ofsted inspection reports

Analysis of the later interviews with headteachers revealed a perception that ISI's role was changing to one of government agent, concerned largely with regulatory compliance and conformity rather than reflecting diversity. This was perceived as a potential constraint on the degree of independence enjoyed by ISC schools. If this were the case, one would expect ISI and Ofsted inspection reports to be similar in format and content, reflecting the government agenda for education as set out in *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003), the *Children Act* (2004) and the various Acts concerned with education or inspection (1988, 1992, 1993, 1996, 2002, 2006, 2008). In order to explore this further, I compared the inspection reports of the schools whose heads I had interviewed with those of an equally sized sample of Ofsted secondary school reports for the maintained sector. As no direct comparison of the schools was to be made, the choice of particular state schools was not significant. I therefore selected maintained schools for comparison from a list on the Ofsted website for the regions in which I lived or worked, focussing on schools that had been inspected over

the same period of time as those in the ISC group (2006-2010). The maintained sector sample included one Church of England school and one Roman Catholic school. Several of the schools had a particular specialist status: the Performing Arts, Modern Foreign Languages, Technology, The Arts and Technology. This was significant as, theoretically, this should have enabled maintained schools to differentiate themselves and exert a degree of autonomy over their goals as independent schools could. If this were the case, one would expect this to be reflected in the reports.

Inspection reports, like the aims statements analysed initially, were not produced for research purposes. They are both texts which had particular purposes such as school improvement, and accountability in the former case, and marketing or the direction of the school's work, in the latter. They cannot be considered as objective statements of fact (Charmaz, 2006), although those who read them, such as parents, may believe them to mirror reality. Charmaz suggests a series of questions concerning the production, purpose, context, language and claims of a document, which served as useful guidelines for analysis for both sets of reports, in addition to the use of basic content analysis techniques such as counting word length of sections of text. The initial comparison of the two sets of reports included the following elements: the inspection framework and inspection procedures; the format of the report; areas covered by the report; the language of compliance; the use of comparators with contextual data. In this way I hoped to establish areas of similarity or difference between the two inspectorates, and the extent to which inspection reports reflect a requirement for conformity with a given model of education or the freedom to offer a diverse approach.

Scrutiny of the ISI inspection reports served several additional purposes. Firstly, I sought evidence that supported or refuted the theoretical propositions that resulted from analysis of the data received in the earlier phases of the research. Secondly, by comparing the claims made by the heads I interviewed concerning the unique features of the school with judgements made under the inspection framework headings, I was able to establish whether these claims appeared to be substantiated by the comments the inspectors made. In this way, I would be able to support or refute any emerging proposition concerning the distinctiveness of the characteristics of individual ISI

schools. In addition, I examined the reports for evidence of coverage of the school quality criteria articulated by the heads interviewed. Finally, the initial aims analysis had suggested that there might be a difference between certain categories of school as regards certain of their aims. The inspection reports were examined in the light of the possible distinctions that had been indicated for evidence supporting or refuting these differences in order to identify any goals which were only found in specific groups of schools rather than in the sector as a whole, and thus not general characteristics of independent schools.

Chapter 4 The Research Phase 1: The aims of ISC Schools

Introduction

Although Reiss and White (2013:51) argue that the curricular aims of the National Curriculum should apply to all schools, whether private or maintained, at the time of this study (2003-11), one of the freedoms enjoyed by ISC schools was exemption from the requirement to conform to the aims and content of the National Curriculum much of which was a legal obligation for the maintained sector (Dunford, 2002). The first part of my research focussed on the use made by English ISC secondary schools of this form of independence when defining their own purposes. The study was conducted by questionnaire, addressed to heads of a sample of ISC secondary schools, exploring a school's approach to the definition of its aims, a survey of these schools' aims, and discussion during interviews with a number of headteachers and senior representatives of ISI. Full details of the methodology used are given in the previous chapter.

The data obtained were intended to enable me to pursue various goals. Firstly, to examine the way in which the schools studied drew up and disseminated their aims, since they were not imposed by any external agent, nor published in manuals which were publicly available, such as those concerning the National Curriculum. Secondly, to investigate the nature of these aims and subsequently to explore further the claim made by the headteachers in Johnson's study (1987) that individual independent schools are unique. Linked to this was the issue of whether there were common aims which justified general reference to an independent 'sector'. Thirdly, to look for indications as to whether a school's freedom to set its own aims appeared to be affected by certain characteristics, in particular pupil gender, religious affiliation, and provision of boarding or day education. In comparing my findings with the aims statement of the National Curriculum I hoped to elucidate further the nature and extent of independence enjoyed by these schools. Finally I sought to identify those influences which might have constrained these schools' autonomy in defining their aims.

Part 1 – Questionnaire analysis - The definition and dissemination of aims in English ISC secondary schools

Choice of aims statement title

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) and survey of aims were conducted in 2003 when there was no requirement from either central government or the Independent Schools Inspectorate to produce a formal statement of a school's purposes or ethos.

Nevertheless, of the one hundred and eleven schools which responded to the questionnaire all but three claimed that they had produced some form of statement, with most schools preferring to use the title 'aims' rather than an alternative title such as 'mission statement'. It may be significant that, when discussing their goals, the majority of schools chose the terminology used at the time in academic literature and by central government and its agencies, rather than that which predominated in the business world. This may have been a deliberate attempt by these schools to distance themselves from the increasing use of business language in education noted by the *Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training* (2008). Asked whether all their aims were of equal significance, almost three quarters of respondents said they were, implying that there was no hierarchy of purpose in these schools. However, in almost all the remaining schools there was one aim which was of principal importance to which all others were subsidiary. In two cases the respondents were not sure as to the relative importance of the school's different aims.

The impetus for aims definition or redefinition

Various factors may have contributed to a school's decision to formally define or redefine its aims. The questionnaire suggested the following: a forthcoming inspection, part of the development planning process, the appointment of a new head. The opportunity for respondents to list others was included. More than half the responses stated that the main impetus for the definition or review of their school's aims was that it formed part of the development planning process. This would suggest that, despite the majority of schools' avoidance of the language of business in choosing a title for their aims statement, they were in fact influenced by business practice in deciding to draw them up. Cuban (2004), in his study of the relationship between business and schools in the USA, charts an increasing adoption of business strategies in

schools over recent decades with goal definition, planning and target setting, being regarded as essential tasks of management. Ball (1990), Pring (2012b), and Gunter and McGinity (2014) note a similar influence from the corporate world on UK schools as part of the government's 'modernisation' policy.

Just over a third of respondents cited the appointment of a new head as a major stimulus to aims definition, illustrating the significant impact an individual leader can have on shaping a school's goals. A small proportion of schools (seventeen of the one hundred and eleven respondents) mentioned the imminence of an inspection, which implies that, for some schools, there was a perceived external expectation that they should have aims, even though in the first cycle of ISI inspections there was no direct link between the inspection framework and a school's aims.

A variety of other reasons were given for goal definition relating to the following areas: the provision of information for parents and prospective parents; the building of ethos or a sense of community within the school; historical tradition reflecting the founder's original purposes. One respondent stressed the importance of clarifying the school's aims for "*first time buyers*", an expression frequently used by independent schools to refer to those parents who have had no previous experience of private education, having been educated themselves in the maintained sector. Walford (1990), citing his own research and that of Fox, based on interviews with parents of privately educated pupils, stated that about half of these parents had been educated in the maintained sector.

Although this research was conducted some years before the present study, given the increase in anxiety amongst middle class parents concerning their children's life chances and their perception of education as an insurance policy noted by Ball and Vincent (2001), it was likely that "*first time buyers*" still constituted a sizeable group. The choice of language by this respondent reflected a belief that there exists a difference in the aims of the two types of school and that there is such a concept as an independent education. The remark also carried with it the implication that aims definition plays a role in marketing the school.

Interviewed in 2005, at the end of the first inspection cycle, a senior spokesperson for ISI expressed the view that several external factors had resulted in aims redefinition in

ISC schools. GCSE and A-level specifications, together with the introduction by central government of Performance Tables, often referred to as league tables, had, he believed, constrained these schools and shaped the definition of their aims so that there was greater uniformity amongst all schools and conformity to a particular model, which was externally defined. His point would seem to be confirmed by the increase in entries for alternative examinations such as the International General Certificate of Secondary (IGCSE) by ISC schools once these were included in the Performance tables (Stewart, 2014). He also referred to the *Every Child Matters* agenda which emanated from the *Children Act* (2004), and the requirement that ISI report to local authorities on a school's performance with respect to the five outcomes outlined therein. This legislation, he believed, may have caused schools to redefine their aims to ensure compliance, resulting in less differentiation between individual schools. In addition he alluded to the indirect influence of the educational press which reflected educational fashion and frequently affected the views of inspectors and, as a consequence, those working in schools. None of the above factors were mentioned by the respondents to the questionnaire, hence schools may have been responding to external pressure more or less automatically without attributing significance to the potential effect on their schools' aims and the extent of their independence in defining them

Involvement in aims definition

Given that just over a third of questionnaire respondents cited the appointment of a new head as the main impetus for defining a school's aims, it is pertinent to the issue of independence to consider whose aims were reflected in the formal statements.

Donnelly (2000) refers to the "*formal*" expression of the authorities' aims and objectives as a means of conditioning people to behave in the desired manner. Did these aims statements, therefore, merely mirror the views of the headteachers in order to ensure conformity with their wishes or was there some form of consultation with other members of the school community when aims were defined?

A large majority of respondents claimed that they involved the senior management team and most asserted that they consulted the staff in general. Over half alleged that they involved governors. Given their overall responsibility for the schools and their obligation to ensure legal conformity, as reflected in the ISI frameworks, one might

have expected a higher level of governor involvement. There may be several explanations for this: where the governors were trustees, they may have seen their role as administering the charity rather than defining it, and may have delegated aims definition to the school's leadership; the school's management may have excluded governors from the process of aims definition seeing it as the remit of those more closely involved with the school on a day to day basis; the school may have a charter such as a set of Articles of Association which sets out the fundamental purposes of the school, and hence the governors may view the basic aims as largely immutable so that any changes made by management could be fairly minor. A closer examination of the role of governance as it relates to a school's purposes would be necessary to clarify this.

Slightly fewer than one in five schools consulted pupils, and very few (thirteen out of one hundred and eleven) involved parents. A very small number of schools referred to another participant such as the school council or a trust to which the school belonged. The act of aims definition in ISC secondary schools would, therefore, appear to be a mainly internal affair with those in positions of authority playing the dominant role. The extent to which other employees or governors were, in fact, involved could only be ascertained by further research. In most cases, pupils and parents were relegated to a position of acceptance.

The audience for which the aims were written

The view that parents were receivers of a school's aims rather than active participants in their definition was further reflected in questionnaire responses on audience.

Almost all the schools cited parents as an audience. However, almost as many responses named staff members, viewed, it would seem, as both agents of aims definition and recipients of the fruits of this act. This raises questions concerning the purposes of aims definition and the use made of an ISC school's goals once they are defined. Do they serve not only to inform prospective parents about the school, in a marketing context, but also to direct the work of its employees and governors? Moreover, a further question arises concerning their purpose vis à vis a school's pupils. Most schools (eighty-four of the hundred who responded) also viewed pupils as an audience. Do the aims merely inform pupils so that they understand the nature of their

education or do they serve to direct their behaviour? Further research would be needed, soliciting staff and pupil views, in order to explore their perceptions of the schools' aims and their definition. Although inspection was not considered a major impetus to aims definition, nevertheless, just over a third of respondents viewed inspectors as an audience. In this case presumably, the aims were considered a means to inform inspectors and aid their understanding of the character of the school. Fourteen schools named other audiences comprised of visitors, the local community, or the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). It would seem from the above responses that, in ISC schools, aims served a range of different purposes and audiences both internal and external, informing them about the school's purposes, and directing those pupils, staff and governors who work there.

Publication of aims

The staff handbook was the principal location for the publication of a school's aims, highlighting the significance of staff as an audience. This was reinforced by the fact that just over a third of schools also published the aims in departmental handbooks thus emphasising their role in informing and directing the work of the school's employees. The majority of schools included their aims in their prospectus, thereby underlining their significance in marketing a school. This point is supported by the fact that less than half the schools used parent handbooks as a means of disseminating their aims, significantly fewer than published them in their prospectus, suggesting that schools were more anxious to inform parents who were considering sending their child to the school than those whose children actually attended it. Presumably, having been made aware of the school's aims in the prospectus, they were deemed to have accepted them in choosing to send their child there. An issue then arises for parents, and possibly pupils, once a place has been accepted, if a school radically changes its aims, for example, by renouncing its religious affiliation. Do parents have to accept the change, the only alternative being to remove their child from the school where they may be very happy and progressing well? A more democratic approach could pre-empt this possibility.

Similarly, although most schools claimed that pupils were one of the audiences for their aims only a third published them in pupil handbooks. It is possible that not all

schools had parent or pupil handbooks and chose another forum for publication. More than a third of schools did in fact state that they used another location namely classrooms, Houses, the school reception area, the website, information for job applicants, and policy documents. The responses to this question reinforced the proposition that an ISC school's aims were directed at a range of internal and external audiences and served a variety of different purposes, principally to inform about the purposes of the school, to market the school to prospective parents and pupils, and to direct the work of its staff, governors and pupils.

Frequency of review

Over a quarter of respondents did not answer this question. One possible explanation may be that aims review is something they did not undertake, but considered they should, and thus felt unwilling to state this as it might reflect badly on them. Of those who did respond, all but five stated that they did review their aims. Just over a third said they did so annually, but in other cases the frequency of review varied considerably, ranging from ongoing to occasionally or rarely, with many schools preferring to conduct a review at regular intervals whose length covered a range of between two and seven years. One or two schools gave responses such as *"if I have time"*, *"whenever I reflect on them"* or *"it depends on the head"*. These last two responses reinforce the point made earlier about the significant role played by the head in aims definition.

Hence there would seem to be considerable variation in practice in ISC secondary schools with respect to aims review, suggesting that for some schools, review is continuous or regular, this may possibly be in response to external pressure, and for others, whose aims are viewed as unchanging, who may be less subject to external influence, or who feel impeded by time constraints, it is not an essential activity. Lack of time was raised as an issue at a later stage of the research, during interview discussions on the topic of self-evaluation.

Evaluation of a school's effectiveness in meeting its aims

Over two thirds of respondents stated that they did evaluate their school's success in relation to their aims. Although, at this stage, there was no requirement to undertake any such evaluation as part of the inspection process, it would seem that the majority of schools chose to do so. This seemed to be one area in which they were able to exercise independence, for not only were they not subject to self-evaluation as determined by the Ofsted inspection regime, as was the case in the maintained sector, but they were also free to judge themselves in the light of their own declared purposes in any manner which seemed appropriate to them. The way in which schools conducted their evaluations and their perceptions of the role of ISI in judging their success formed a major focus for the later part of my research.

Conclusion to Part 1

The responses to the questionnaire were assumed to have been given by the headteacher to whom they were addressed, although in one case it was the deputy head who responded. Hence they were made by the person invested with the greatest authority within the school and may reflect their perceptions only. In this instance, the concept of authority invested in the head is bureaucratic. In most ISC schools, the position of head has a longstanding history carrying with it powers defined by the institution itself, or even by the individual postholder, rather than by legislation, or government guidance such as that produced by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). Moreover appointment to this position carries with it the notion of the person with what Handy (1993) refers to as a "*helicopter view*", a quality which he sees as a definitive quality of organisational leadership ability, enabling the head to have an overview of the entire organisation which few, if any, other employees have. Certainly, many heads saw themselves as catalysts to aims definition and review, reflecting a belief that they were empowered to question the very purposes of the institution of which they were in charge. However, as the ISI representative pointed out, in setting aims, these heads may have been responding to a number of external influences which constrain the degree of independence they are able to exert during the process of goal definition.

Summary of questionnaire findings

Given exemption from the requirements of the National Curriculum most schools had indeed chosen to signify their independence by producing their own formal written statement of their intents, entitled, in the majority of cases “*aims*”. The definition and content of these aims appears to have been influenced by various external factors including the need to conform to legislation, the requirements of the examination boards, the expectations of the inspectorate, the educational press, the publication of league tables both in government documents and in the general press, and the need to market the school. It is possible that some of these external pressures may have led to greater uniformity of purpose amongst ISC schools than was the case at the time of Johnson’s study, referred to earlier, and that there was more justification for the use of the term “*independent sector*” than at the time of her research. The existence or otherwise of aims which could be said to characterise the sector is examined in the second part of this chapter. Nevertheless, the fact that most schools in the survey chose to publish their aims in their prospectus suggests they had a sense of their uniqueness and individuality to the extent that they wished to make it public, albeit most probably in a marketing context.

An ISC school’s aims appeared to serve a variety of purposes, most notably to direct the work of governors, staff and pupils; to inform others including the inspectorate about the work of the school; to market the school to prospective parents and pupils and to serve as a basis for evaluating success in a manner of the school’s own choosing. The link between aims definition and marketing is particularly pertinent to the research question. Bagley (2006) argues that since the 1990s schools have become more “*customer orientated*”, altering their nature to make themselves more attractive to parents, a view also expressed by Ball (2003). If this is the case for the maintained sector, it is likely that the need to compete in the wider educational market has impacted on the way ISC schools present their aims. It may be that schools viewed themselves not only as part of a different form of educational provision but also as unique institutions. Thus, they may have seen their aims as a reflection of this individuality, which they believed to be attractive to potential customers.

In most cases the respondents claimed that aims definition or review had been undertaken by senior management in consultation with members of staff, and, in many instances, governors. However, confirmation of this would need to be sought from those alleged to have been involved before this could be stated with certainty. Despite this apparent involvement of individuals other than those traditionally vested with authority, the process could not be considered fully democratic since, in all but a few schools, the pupils and parents had been excluded from an active role, being assigned only the more passive role of audience. The question therefore arises as to exactly whose aims are adopted when there are none imposed centrally by legislation. Can the act of aims definition in ISC secondary schools be considered largely an enactment of bureaucratic authority, as defined by Dowling (2009), on the part of those who run them?

Even if this is the case, the research findings suggest that this authority is, in turn, constrained by the bureaucratic authority, exercised by central government both directly through legislation such as the Children Act (2004) and, more indirectly, through the production of Performance Tables. By comparing the overall findings of the aims survey of ISC schools with the stated aims of the National Curriculum, discussed in the third part of this chapter, I hoped to identify any areas of overlap which might be considered evidence of the exercise of governmental authority. Conversely, in pinpointing any differences between the two sectors' aims, I sought evidence of the independence of ISC schools from such external authority.

Part 2 – The aims of English ISC secondary schools

Introduction

This section of the research explored the views of ISI spokespersons concerning the goals of ISC schools, and examined the aims of a sample of ISC secondary schools, all of which had responded to the questionnaire analysed in Part 1, with a view to establishing:

- Any evidence supporting or refuting the claim that individual independent schools were unique, by examining whether different individual schools appeared to have different sets of aims.

- The concepts which these aims incorporated and those concepts, if any, which appeared to be characteristic of ISC schools in general, thus supporting or refuting the claim that it is not appropriate to speak of an independent sector.
- Whether schools with particular characteristics such as boarding provision or religious affiliation shared common aims.
- Whether these concepts differed or were similar to those which comprised the National Curriculum thus seeking evidence of any possible influence of the bureaucratic authority of government over the more traditional internal authority in the determination of an ISC school's current aims.

The views of the ISI representatives

The first spokesperson from ISI was interviewed in 2005, at the end of the first inspection cycle based on the inspection framework, drawn up in 2000, which closely resembled that in use at the time by Ofsted. In Part 1 of this chapter I referred to this interviewee's opinion that there was, at the time, greater uniformity between maintained and independent schools due to a number of external drivers, including legislation. Asked about whether he believed there to be any aims which characterised ISC schools, he replied by defining those aims which he considered to be characteristic of all schools, whether state maintained or independent, and then outlined what he believed to be the distinguishing features of independent schools. All schools, he asserted, had a common core of aims, namely: to achieve success, to provide supportive pastoral care, and to promote personal development. However, he referred to four "*legs*" which underpinned independent education: the intellectual or academic, the spiritual, the physical, and the aesthetic. Consequently, there were several features which, despite external pressures to conform to a more uniform model, distinguished the two sectors. These centred largely on what he called the "*broader aspects of education*" which, he claimed, were given greater emphasis in independent schools. In particular, he singled out the provision of a wider range of extra-curricular activities, greater importance attributed to physical education and games, and more effective promotion of the aesthetic areas of education. He concluded that ISC schools were "*slightly less dominated by the government agenda*" in what they saw as their purpose.

Interviewed in 2007 about the aims of independent schools, the second ISI respondent, who had extensive experience in both the maintained and independent sectors, expressed the view that there was huge variation between ISC schools to the extent that there was no typical independent school. Nevertheless, she did consider that independence in practice was typical of ISC schools, with institutions seeking innovative and varied approaches to education rather than being heavily influenced by the inspection framework. This contrasts with Perryman's (2009) description of the impact of inspection on the maintained sector. She also considered emphasis on the individual pupil's needs to be characteristic of independent schools.

The other defining aspect of the independent sector was, she stated, the creation of a sense of community often embodied in the school's ethos. There was, she considered, great variation in ethos between individual independent schools, frequently resulting from the circumstances of their foundation, for example many ISC schools were originally set up to help disadvantaged groups such as members of the poorer classes, or girls, who otherwise would have had no access to education. She alluded to the important role played by a school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education programme in promoting its aims and ethos. The significance of SMSC in the education provided by ISC schools is examined further, both in the analysis of the aims survey data, and in Chapter 6, when the content of the different sectors' inspection reports is examined.

The aims survey

This part of the research was intended to look in greater detail at the aims of ISC secondary schools in England by analysing the statements of purpose of a sample of 84 schools using a broadly grounded theory approach. Details of the sample can be found in Appendix 1. The analysis was undertaken in two stages. The first, which entailed mapping against each of the individual schools the concepts contained in the aims statements, enabled a visual comparison which would identify firstly whether any two schools had an identical set of concepts, which would militate against any claim of uniqueness, and secondly whether there were any recurrent concepts which could be said to characterise ISC schools in general, or particular categories of school. The findings of this initial analysis suggested that there were certain types of aim which

were to be found amongst a significant number of ISC schools. A second more focused analysis was then undertaken to examine the aims more closely.

Results of the initial concept mapping

The initial analysis of the 84 aims statements generated more than 300 concepts which were assigned to six categories *provision, skills, personal qualities, approach, broad aims, religious dimension* which were then mapped in a grid format against each individual school. Visual comparison of the schools on the concept maps showed that no two schools had aims statements with an identical set of concepts. Hence there would seem to be some justification for the claims made by Johnson (1987), and supported by the ISI representative interviewed in 2007, that individual ISC schools are in some respects unique, if only in the language with which they express their purpose.

Numerical computation identified those concepts which occurred most frequently in aims statements. Over half the schools in the survey included references to the provision of a supportive environment, and a similar number referred to the development of individual potential. This finding is particularly significant when compared to the stated aims of the National Curriculum, analysed later in the chapter. Little mention was made in the National Curriculum of the desired school environment or of pupils as individuals. Hence these two aims did seem to characterise the independent sector to some extent.

A further twenty concepts were found in at least one in five schools' statements. These are listed in Figure 4.1 showing the most frequently cited aims. A degree of caution is needed in interpreting these results as the omission of a particular concept from a school's list may not necessarily imply that the school did not pursue this aim. It may have been subsumed under a more overarching aim but not stated explicitly in the aims statement, or may have been deemed self-evident, or could simply have been overlooked when the statement was drawn up. Moreover, the limitations of the grounded theory approach, which is dependent on the individual researcher's interpretation of data, could also play a part, as my conclusions may not be exactly as intended by the aims' authors. The occurrence could therefore be more frequent than the data showed. This needs to be borne in mind in the next section which compares frequency of occurrence with certain categories of ISC schools in order to determine

whether there was any indication that certain aims might be more characteristic of particular groups of schools which might merit future research. The schools were grouped as follows: boarding or day provision; pupil gender; religious affiliation. The tables below list the most common concepts and summarise the findings from these comparisons.

Figure 4.1 Most recurrent aims

Most recurrent aims	Number of schools out of 84 respondents referring to aim	Percentage of schools in sample referring to aim
Supportive environment	49	58
Development of individual potential	48	56
Development of confidence	37	44
Fostering skills for the future	34	40
Development of sporting ability	32	38
Broad curriculum	30	35
Development of responsibility	29	35
Excellence	29	34
Concern for the community	28	33
Development of moral values	25	29
High standards	28	33
Nurturing talent	25	30
Partnership with parents	24	28
Development of spirituality	24	28
Development of a social conscience	22	26
Treating pupils as individuals	22	26
Christian ethos	21	25
Encouragement of self-discipline	20	24
Provision of a range of extra-curricular activities	20	24
Provision of a secure environment	19	22
Development of respect	19	22
Development of creativity	17	20

a) Boarding or Day provision

There were 36 boarding schools in the sample which represented 43% of the total and 48 day schools representing 57%. The 2003 ISC *Census* data reported on the number of pupils in boarding or day education, rather than the number of schools offering the different types of provision. Although day pupils outnumbered boarding pupils (who were, in the main, male), by a ratio of 6 to 1, this included all age groups and the majority of younger children are day pupils, hence it is difficult to establish the extent to which the research sample is representative in this respect.

Each separate reference to each of the twenty-two most recurrent aims, listed in Figure 4.1, was analysed in terms of whether the individual school had boarding or day provision. These were then added together to give a total for boarding and one for day schools. The areas where there did seem to be the biggest difference between the two groups of schools were: the development of confidence, the development of social conscience, partnership with parents, and the development of moral values, which were all more present amongst the aims of day schools. Whereas parents of boarders may not be as available as those of day pupils, thus explaining the difference in emphasis on partnership, there appeared to be no obvious explanation linked to the type of provision for the other apparent differences. Analysis of a sample of inspection reports in the later stage of my research was intended to enable me to examine apparent differences further and determine whether there did indeed appear to be a distinct approach with respect to these aims, which would merit further investigation in the future, or whether the differences found resulted from the choice of language which emphasised certain aims more than others.

Figure 4.2 References to aim according to type of provision

Most recurrent aims	No of references	Boarding (36 schools)	Day (48 schools)
Provision of a supportive environment	49	22	27
Development of individual potential	48	21	27
Development of confidence	37	11	26
Fostering skills for the future	34	16	18
Development of sporting ability	32	17	15
Provision of a broad curriculum	30	13	17
Excellence	29	11	18
Development of responsibility	29	11	18
Concern for the community	28	11	17
Development of moral values	25	7	18
High standards	28	11	17
Nurturing talent	25	10	15
Partnership with parents	24	8	16
Development of spirituality	24	10	14
Development of a social conscience	22	7	15
Treating pupils as individuals	22	11	11
Christian ethos	21	8	13
Encouragement of self-discipline	20	9	11
Provision of a secure environment	19	7	12
Provision of a range of extra-curricular activities	20	9	11
Development of respect	19	8	11
Development of creativity	17	7	10

b) Gender of pupils

The 84 schools were categorised according to whether they were boys' schools, girls' schools, or co-educational. Where schools had pupils of both genders in the junior school, but were single sex in the senior school they were classified according to the sex of senior pupils, as secondary education was the focus of the study. Boys' schools with girls in the sixth-form were categorised as co-educational. There were no girls' schools with boys in the sixth-form in the sample. The gender type distribution was as follows: 37 (44%) were co-educational, 10 (12%) were for boys only and 37 (44%) were for girls only. It should be noted that there are now very few ISC schools for boys as the majority of boys' schools have become co-educational (Walford, 1990). Whereas there has been a decline in the number of girls' schools, this has not been nearly as noticeable as the reduction in the number of boys' schools. As explained in the methodology chapter (pages 69-70), girls' schools may be more heavily represented in the sample, proportionate to their numbers, than the other two categories. The 2003 *ISC Census* did not include details of schools by pupil gender, only by Association membership, which did not enable a distinction to be made between co-educational and all-boys' schools.

A similar process of analysis to that used with the previous two categories of schools was adopted. Analysis by pupil gender did produce a number of apparent differences. The most striking of these was the provision of a secure environment and emphasis on the development of confidence in girls' schools. An explanation for this may lie in a traditional perception of girls as lacking in confidence, and in need of more protection than boys, if they are to flourish. The stated intention to address this issue may seem appealing to particular sectors of the market. Single-sex schools' responses indicated an apparent greater preoccupation with the development of moral values and spirituality than co-educational schools. Boys' schools stressed partnership with parents more than other groups. Co-educational schools, however, seemed to accentuate the treatment of pupils as individuals more, and extra-curricular activities less, than their single-sex counterparts.

Figure 4.3 References to aim according to composition of pupil gender

Most recurrent aims	No. of references	Co-educational (37 schools)	Boys only (10 schools)	Girls only (37 schools)
Provision of a supportive environment	49	20	7	22
Development of individual potential	48	20	5	23
Development of confidence	37	12	4	21
Fostering skills for the future	34	12	6	16
Development of sporting activity	32	13	5	14
Provision of a broad curriculum	30	12	6	12
Excellence	29	10	5	14
Development of responsibility	29	11	3	15
Concern for the community	28	12	3	13
Development of moral values	25	6	5	14
High standards	28	9	6	13
Nurturing talent	25	11	3	11
Partnership with parents	24	9	6	9
Development of spirituality	24	6	5	13
Development of a social conscience	22	10	1	11
Treating pupils as individuals	22	13	2	7
Christian ethos	21	11	1	9
Encouragement of self-discipline	20	9	2	9
Provision of a secure environment	19	6	1	12
Provision of a range of extra-curricular activities	20	6	4	10
Development of respect	19	10	1	8
Development of creativity	17	6	2	9

c) Religious affiliation

Information about the sample schools' religious affiliation was drawn from their individual entries in *The Independent Schools Yearbook* (2008) and school websites. The religious affiliation of the schools in the sample was as follows: 53 (63%) were linked to a particular denomination, in the majority of cases, the Church of England; 15 (18%) schools described themselves as having a less specific religious affiliation such as Christian, inter-denominational or multi-faith, 14 (17%) schools referred to themselves as non-denominational, and 2 (2%) of the schools gave no information concerning religious affiliation and have been categorised as unknown. The term 'non-denominational' presents difficulties as it can be interpreted as having no religious ethos at all, or as having a religious (normally Christian) ethos without having any particular denominational connection. Given the very small number of schools in the sample with no apparent religious affiliation, only the most tentative of conclusions can be drawn from these schools' data. A much larger sample would be needed to confirm any findings. The process of comparing the twenty-two most common aims concepts to the religious category of school was undertaken in the same manner as for day and boarding schools.

The greatest differences were found as regards Christian ethos, the development of respect, and provision of a secure environment, all of which were more apparent in the aims of denominational schools than in other categories. References to the development of creativity were more frequent in non-denominational schools. As stated earlier, a larger sample would be needed to confirm these conclusions. However it is possible to see a link between the schools' religious orientation and the emphasis on a Christian ethos. Promotion of respect for others and the treatment of pupils as individuals may also derive from a religious standpoint, being an interpretation of the Christian exhortation to "*love one's neighbour*", expressed in more secular language. There is less obvious a link between an emphasis on fostering creativity and the absence of religious commitment, unless it is perceived as being congruent with independence of thought.

Figure 4.4 References to aim according to religious affiliation

Most recurrent aims	No. of references	Denominational (53 schools)	Other religious affiliation (15 schools)	Non-denominational (17 schools)	Unknown (2 schools)
Supportive environment	49	30	9	9	1
Development of individual potential	48	30	8	9	1
Development of confidence	37	25	8	3	1
Fostering skills for the future	34	23	4	6	1
Development of sporting ability	32	23	4	5	0
Broad curriculum	30	19	4	6	1
Excellence	29	20	5	4	0
Development of responsibility	29	18	4	6	1
Concern for the community	28	15	5	7	1
Development of moral values	25	16	4	5	0
High standards	28	18	6	4	0
Nurturing talent	25	15	3	6	1
Partnership with parents	24	14	5	4	1
Development of spirituality	24	17	3	4	0
Development of a social conscience	22	14	2	6	0
Treating pupils as individuals	22	16	1	5	0
Christian ethos	21	18	3	0	0
Encouragement of self-discipline	20	13	4	2	1
Provision of a secure environment	19	14	2	2	1
Provision of a range of extra-curricular activities	20	14	3	3	0
Development of respect	19	14	1	4	0
Development of creativity	17	9	2	6	0

Comparison of the three tables showed that, regardless of the category of school, the provision of a supportive environment and the development of individual potential were the most commonly occurring aims of the schools in the survey, and confirms the earlier finding that these two goals appear to be characteristic of the majority of ISC schools. More focussed analysis of the survey data allowed for a detailed examination of the findings.

Aims survey – final analysis – the institution and the individual

In the second stage of the survey data analysis the aims concepts were re-categorised into smaller groups and sub-categories. This enabled a closer look at those aspects of ISC schools' aims which were most characteristic in order to better understand the use made by these schools of their independence.

Figure 4.5 represents the outcome of the final coding of the data from the survey of a sample of English ISC secondary schools' aims. The data were analysed at two broad overall levels, that of the *institution* embracing the school and the context and content of its educational provision, and that of the *individual* concerned with the school's intentions as regards the desirable personal qualities which the individual pupil should develop and the specific competencies or skills which the educational programme sought to enable pupils to acquire.

Figure 4.5 Final aims coding outcome

	Level of Analysis	
Focus	Institution	Individual
context	<i>climate</i>	<i>dispositions</i>
content	<i>offering</i>	<i>competencies</i>

The institution category encompassed those instruments by means of which the school sought to promote the development of the individual pupil, namely *climate*, more often referred to by schools as *ethos*, which in some cases included a religious dimension, and the school's *offering*, frequently referred to as *provision*. The climate sub-category was divided into three further sub-divisions; *approach to pupils*, *orientation*, and *social engagement*. The offering sub-category was analysed into four additional sub-groups; *the learning programme*, *the learning environment*, *the pupil support system*, and *the staff characteristics*. The category labelled individual refers,

firstly, to the desired educational experience which schools aimed to foster for each pupil comprising the qualities of character or dispositions, which the school considered it desirable to promote. These were found to have both an *internal orientation*, often understood as spirituality, and an *external orientation*, frequently equating to moral values. Secondly, it comprises the skills or competencies which were cultivated.

I. THE INSTITUTION

a) *Climate (ethos)*

Donnelly (2000) describes ethos as the term frequently used to refer to the distinctive range of values and beliefs which define the philosophy or atmosphere of an organisation. She distinguishes between the formal ethos published in school documentation, and the informal ethos, which emerges from social interaction. She argues that the two may not necessarily be congruent. As this stage of the research focuses on schools' declared intentions with regard to school climate, only the former interpretation of ethos is considered.

Three components of climate were identified: *the approach to pupils which the school sought to adopt, the orientation of the learning process, and social engagement*. In addition, those schools with a strong religious affiliation sought to promote religious knowledge and commitment. Where schools described their approach to pupils they used positive terms such as '*praise*', '*encouragement*', and '*respect*'. Pupils were to be allowed '*to be themselves*', '*valued*', and enabled to '*experience success*'. Several schools mentioned making education '*enjoyable*'. Over half the schools referred, in some way, to a commitment to the development or fulfilment of pupils' individual potential, specifying, in some cases, the nurturing of talent as well as academic ability. Over a third of schools alluded to a forward-looking orientation in their aims statements, with most referring to an intention to develop the skills pupils would require at a later stage in life. Specific mention was made by some schools of an effective careers education programme, citizenship preparation, and education for leisure. However, a small number of schools emphasized links with tradition, for example, by reference to an intention to impart traditional values.

The other prominent element of climate, in the aims statements analysed, was that of social engagement, with a third of the schools referring to an ethos which promoted a

concern for the community. Community was understood to have both internal and external dimensions. Reference was made by some schools to integration into the life of the school, participation in extra-curricular activities, or team membership. The development of a social conscience was referred to by just over a quarter of schools in the survey, with specific mention made in some cases to service to the wider community. Examples of the type of service undertaken were found both during the interviews with headteachers, in the second phase of the research, and also in the inspection reports analysed during the third phase, and showed the notion of community involvement to extend beyond the immediate locality to involvement with developing countries, especially in the field of education, with schools supporting overseas initiatives both financially and through personal service.

Finally, schools with a religious affiliation or commitment made reference to this in their aims statement. Just over a quarter of schools in the survey alluded to a Christian ethos or environment as a characteristic of their school. A small number of these schools specifically stated their intention to promote the cognitive aspects of religion such as knowledge of the Gospels or of the '*nature of God*', whereas others stressed the more affective aspects of religion such as '*love of God*', '*Christian faith*', or values and attitudes such as '*love of one's neighbour*'.

b) Offering (provision)

Four major sub-categories of offering emerged from the coding: *the learning programme, the learning environment, the pupil support system, and the characteristics of staff members* who were to provide the former three categories. In portraying the nature of their offering many schools qualified their statements with descriptors such as '*excellent*', of a '*high standard*', '*effective*', or '*ambitious*'. This emphasis on high quality would seem to be a reflection of the use of an ISC school's aims as a marketing tool, reference to which was evident in some responses to the questionnaire which accompanied the survey.

b) i. The learning programme

Three distinct aspects of the learning programme were noted in the analysis; *the extent of the learning experiences, relevance to contemporary life, and specific opportunities offered*. Most frequent were statements about the breadth of the

curriculum, mentioned by over a third of schools. Scrutiny of a selection of the schools' websites and inspection reports showed this to refer to provision beyond that specified in the National Curriculum so as to include subjects such as the classics, several modern foreign languages, drama and photography. In addition, almost a quarter made reference to the range and variety of extra-curricular activities available. A commitment to educating *'the whole person'*, or fostering *'all-round development'* or to *'an education which is more than passing exams'* were amongst the phrases used to convey the diversity of the school's offering. The responsiveness of the learning programme to contemporary life was specifically alluded to in a small number of statements through references to a curriculum which was *'coherent and modern'* or *'relevant to the twenty-first century'*.

A few schools presented their offering in the form of opportunities given to pupils. The nature of these opportunities varied and could be interpreted as a reflection of the school's perception of its distinctive character. Hence, a school which recruited pupils from many parts of the world referred to *'a curriculum which reflects the international nature of the school'* and offered the chance to undertake *'language enrichment'*. Another school, situated in the capital city, mentioned the chance to *'take full advantage of London's cultural riches'*. In another case reference was made to *'special help'* on offer, in line with the school's commitment to *'education for all'*. In this instance, the reference is presumably to all abilities rather than to socioeconomic status, since the school in question is fee-paying.

Less specific opportunities were amongst those cited, such as for *'personal growth'*, the achievement of *'personal fulfilment'*, and *'mixing with other students from a range of backgrounds'*. The latter could be interpreted as an attempt to deflect accusations of social elitism, often levelled at independent schools. Significantly, there were no specific references by any of the schools to the opportunity to meet people or form networks of connections which might be potentially useful in future life, especially in the professional field, defined by Bourdieu (Moore, in Grenfell (ed.), 2008) as the acquisition of social capital.

b) ii. The learning environment

A range of descriptors was used to portray the learning environment, referring to both the physical setting, and, more frequently, to the atmosphere which was said to characterise the school. Reference to small class size, '*high quality*' or '*the best affordable*' facilities and resources, or a commitment to the development and improvement of the school's physical environment were found amongst descriptions of the schools' offering. When considering a school's atmosphere there is, inevitably, some potential overlap between statements about the environment it seeks to create, and those which refer to its ethos or climate. In this instance, included under provision, are those characteristics which schools appeared actively to promote, and under climate those which were portrayed as defining elements of the school's nature, such as a '*Christian ethos*'. Descriptors of the learning environment within institutions were allocated to three principal groups: those which were likely to have a direct appeal to the emotions, those which created an impression of dynamism, and those which emphasized discipline and order.

An appeal to the emotions of parents and pupils was evident in the majority of aims statements. Almost 60% of schools in the survey made reference to a supportive environment, such as that advocated by Macmurray (Fielding, 2012). In some cases this was qualified by additional allusions to a '*welcoming atmosphere*', or '*family*' or '*home-like*' ambiance in the case of boarding provision. The choice of adjectives such as '*secure*', '*happy*', '*friendly*', and '*caring*' served to reinforce the notion of supportiveness. The importance to parents of such an environment was examined in Coldron and Boulton's study of the constituent elements of happiness as a school choice criterion (1991).

A sense of energy and dynamism was conveyed by descriptors such as '*lively*', and '*stimulating*' to describe the atmosphere in lessons, or the school as a whole. In a small number of instances the object of stimulation was indicated, such as: '*curiosity*', '*imagination*', '*enthusiasm*' or '*enjoyment*'. Emphasis on an environment conducive to effective learning was conveyed through adjectives implying a sense of order and purpose, for example '*disciplined*', '*constructive*', '*well-ordered*', and '*purposeful*'.

b) iii. Pupil support system

Despite the emphasis placed by most schools on providing a supportive atmosphere, little detail of its proposed enactment was found in the aims statements apart from general references to '*excellent pastoral care*' and a concern for '*pupil welfare*'.

Nevertheless, descriptions of the characteristics of members of staff employed at the school did include, in some instances, adjectives such as '*caring*' which relate to the creation of a supportive environment.

Kristjansson (2016) argues that wellbeing or flourishing has recently re-emerged as an educational ideal. However, problems arise when using terms such as '*welfare*', '*wellbeing*' and '*happiness*' in that there is no agreed definition of what these words imply. This has clear implications if any attempt at evaluating a school's success in this area is to be made. Even if there were agreement as to what these terms entail, they do not lend themselves to quantification or metric assessment. White (2002) and de Ruyter (2004) in their discussions of concepts such as those of '*wellbeing*' and a '*flourishing life*' point out that there are two possible approaches. Firstly, the objective approach which attempts to elaborate the constituent elements of these concepts, and secondly, the subjective interpretation whereby the individual determines whether their experiences equate to a sense of wellbeing or fulfilment. Although none of the documents seen sought specifically to clarify their understanding of terms such as welfare, many included amongst their aims goals such as the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, learning to be independent, fostering an appreciation of beauty, and moral goodness, all of which, White (2002) argues, contribute to a concept of wellbeing derived from centuries of philosophical debate.

b) iv. Staff characteristics

A small number of schools sought to convey the qualities of their personnel in their aims statements and did so in a strongly positive light. References to a high level of qualifications or '*a diversity*' of talents were found alongside personal attributes such as '*enthusiasm*', '*drive*' or '*commitment*'. The ability to provide '*lively, effective teaching*' was said to be characteristic of those employed in one of the schools. In a few instances characteristics of employees which related to the school's specific ethos were stated. The school which boasted a strong democratic tradition emphasized the

'collegial staffing structure' and membership of a staff *'team'*. Another stressed the recruitment of staff with a strong identification with *'the school's core purpose'*.

II. THE INDIVIDUAL

A strong commitment to the personal development of the individual in ISC schools was manifest not only in the multiplicity of references to a wide range of knowledge and skills to be acquired by pupils, and dispositions which schools sought to foster, but also in the emphasis placed by over half the survey schools on the fulfilment of individual potential, reflecting the philosophy Schiro refers to as learner-centred (Moore, 2015). The nature of the potential to be fulfilled is rarely stated and such lack of definition could prove problematic since, as the Nuffield 14-19 review (2008:2) points out, *"people have as much potential for evil as for good"* and the potential to be developed depends on the values underlying the school's aims. In certain contexts, for example, the development of the potential to generate conflict might be seen as preferable to promoting co-operation. In some cases schools referred separately to nurturing talent with the implication that the fulfilment of potential extended beyond academic achievement to include areas such as sport, music, drama and art.

a) Dispositions

A wide variety of dispositions was evident amongst those personal qualities which schools sought to develop. The majority of these could be equated with Goleman's social or emotional intelligences (Goleman, 1996, 2006), or the aspects of spiritual, moral and social education outlined by Ofsted (2004), although the distinction between the categories is not always clear-cut, and there is a certain degree of overlap between them. In my analysis I have grouped them under those qualities which have a principally *internal orientation* towards the self, and those which are largely externally directed, although some of the dispositions are arguably orientated in both directions.

a) i. Internal orientation

The quality with the greatest internal dimension in evidence amongst the survey schools was *'spirituality'*. Over a quarter referred to their pupils' spiritual development. The use of this term is potentially problematic as there is no agreed definition of what it is intended to convey (Souper, 1985), a difficulty acknowledged by

Best (2000), and Ofsted (2004). For some, spiritual development is understood as the formation of character or personality, for others the concept of a soul is integral to the formation of a person's spiritual being. However, it is generally accepted that spirituality does not, necessarily, equate with religion (Zohar and Marshall, 2000; Ofsted, 2004; West-Burnham and Huws Jones, 2007).

Zohar and Marshall (2000) develop the concept of spiritual intelligence, which they label SQ, defining it as the ability with which the individual addresses and solves problems of meaning and values, the intelligence with which actions can be located in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context and decisions taken as to which course of action is more meaningful than another. Although he does not use the term 'spirituality', Pring (2012b) argues that such capacities are fundamental attributes of *"being a person"*, and, consequently, their development should form an essential element of education. West-Burnham et al. (2007) characterise spirituality as a search for self, truth, social justice, and community. They also see it as embracing creativity, a response to beauty such as that found in the natural world, and the giving and acceptance of love and friendship. Goleman's (1996) emotional intelligence encompasses self-knowledge and empathy and his social intelligence (2006) extends these to include self-presentation and the capacity for effective social interactions. Two aspects of Gardener's multiple intelligence theory, in its refined form, (2006) also relate to spirituality. Intra-personal intelligence refers to the development of a sense and understanding of self, and existential intelligence, which Gardener refers to as *"the intelligence of big questions"*, many of which correspond to Zohar and Marshall's concept of SQ. Self-knowledge, a search for meaning and purpose, feelings of transcendence, a sense of awe and wonder, creativity, emotion, and relationships were salient features of the definitions adopted by the National Curriculum Council (in Ofsted 2004). It is with these varying definitions in view that the following analysis of schools' use of the term was made.

Central to the notion of spirituality is the individual's concept of their 'self'. Schools chose to emphasise different aspects of the self which they sought to promote. Several dimensions of self-development were found in the data. These were labelled: *self-knowledge*, often referred to as self-awareness, *self-belief*, and *self-control*. Self-

knowledge, as described by Zohar and Marshall (2000), entails knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses, it can also be understood rather more broadly as responses to questions such as "*what is it that makes 'me' me?*" (West-Burnham et al., 2007). Allusions to self-awareness were made by one in ten schools in the survey.

Far more frequent were references to self-belief. Over half the schools in the survey mentioned the development of either '*confidence*', or '*self-esteem*', and one in ten referred to '*self-respect*', which could be said to derive from a sense of self-belief. Likewise '*integrity*', '*flexibility*', '*independence*', '*resourcefulness*' and '*a willingness to take risks*' were qualities cited, which all have their origins in a concept of self-worth. Almost a quarter of schools made reference to the promotion of self-control, invariably described as '*self-discipline*'. Given the descriptions in some aims statements of a '*well-ordered*' or '*disciplined*' learning environment, the encouragement of such a characteristic might be viewed as concomitant with seeking to achieve the desired atmosphere within the school.

a) ii. External orientation

Despite the internal orientation of many aspects of spirituality, there were some indications of a more external focus either towards an individual 'other' or a collective one. Self-discipline could be directed inwardly, for example, by the maintenance of focus on work rather than undertaking pursuits that may seem more attractive, but can also have an impact on one or more 'others', for instance enabling them to concentrate on their work by refraining from distracting them from the task in hand. The importance of forming positive relationships with others was stressed by some schools, with references to fostering '*the ability to form, retain and value friendship*', or to establish '*strong and enduring relationships*'. Furthermore, the ability to appreciate external sources of beauty, and self-expression through creative activity, indicated a desire to encourage the outward manifestation of imagination, emotion and feeling.

Many of the externally directed dispositions which schools sought to promote could be categorised as aspects of moral development. Most of the qualities which would generally be understood as moral values, that is those which guide our behaviour and our treatment of others, are abstract in nature (Haydon, 2006) and hence, as was the

case with spirituality, not susceptible to ease of definition, nor to quantification, and its development cannot be regarded in the same way as academic progress. Fostering '*honesty*', for example, may be understood as encouraging pupils to 'tell the truth', but individual perceptions of reality vary, and 'the truth' may be construed differently by diverse groups, an issue which is most evident in the differing religious interpretations. This has implications for the evaluation of the effectiveness of personal development, for as Arthur (2005) argues, moral values do not constitute a fixed set which is easily measurable. Moreover, Wilson (2000) points out that progress in moral or values development does not entail a steady build-up of a corpus of knowledge. The evaluation of moral development is discussed in Chapter 6 (page 195).

Nevertheless, a third of schools in the survey referred to the school's intention to develop '*moral values*' reflecting Lickona's view (1992) that the transmission of society's prevailing morality is an essential component of the school's role. Prominent amongst the values listed were references to '*respect*'. In some cases, the nature of what was to be respected was not specified. In other instances, it was qualified with an explanation such as for '*diversity*', '*multiculturalism*' or, simply, '*other people*'. In a few instances '*respect for the environment*' was cited. Allied to the concept of respect, in a number of instances, was that of '*tolerance*'. Like honesty, tolerance is a disposition which is potentially problematic. If tolerance is to be interpreted as acceptance of difference, a dilemma occurs when the individual is presented with behaviour by others that they consider morally wrong. Haydon (2006) argues that in a liberal state, tolerance, as a value to be taught, should be understood as tolerance of a variety of beliefs, practices and values. It is in this light that I have interpreted it. Thus, tolerance can be seen as associated logically in these cases with respect. Other evidence of schools' concern to promote qualities derived from the concept of respect was found in references to '*courtesy*', '*good manners*' or '*consideration*'.

Equally debatable is the interpretation to be given to the many allusions to developing '*responsibility*'. This could be understood in a multiplicity of ways. It could be viewed as responsibility *to oneself*, *to others*, or *to both*, or, as responsibility *for* something or someone. The teaching of health education, for example, might encourage the individual to behave responsibly towards him or herself by eating a balanced diet and

undertaking exercise, thus being able to lead a more healthy and active life, but it also potentially affects society as a whole, in terms of savings in the healthcare costs associated with diseases related to an unhealthy lifestyle. Hence, such teaching also fosters responsibility towards society as a whole. The notion of responsibility for something or someone may be allied to the quality of leadership which several schools sought to promote, or to a sense of social responsibility, referred to by a number of schools as '*social conscience*' or '*concern for the community*' with allusions, in some statements, to the active encouragement of involvement in community projects both locally and abroad.

b. Competencies (skills)

References to the skills to be acquired were both generic and specific. Over a third of schools made reference to skills for the future. In some instances the future was envisaged as immediate, at the end of a pupil's school career, with references made to preparation for examinations, presumably an allusion to the teaching of 'exam technique', or to the skills needed in higher education. In other cases '*the world of work*' or '*adulthood*' implied a more long term value for the competencies to be acquired. Preparation for the social roles which pupils might occupy was also envisaged in some cases, with one school referring to preparing pupils to be '*change agents*', reflecting Nelson Mandela's view that education is the most powerful means of preparing individuals to effect social or political change (Grailey, 2013), reflecting what Schiro refers to as the social reconstruction philosophy (Moore, 2015).

More specific skills were also alluded to. However, these were also fairly general in nature. Communication, decision-making, problem-solving, technical, teamwork including cooperation, and leadership were amongst those cited. Thinking skills, clarified in some instances as the skills of critical analysis, or in other cases, the capacity for logical or independent thought, constituted the principal academic skill area identified. Creativity was mentioned by one in five schools, sometimes in terms of the skills required in a variety of creative contexts, but also in terms of a disposition equating to imagination or self-expression through music, art, drama or creative writing. Prominent amongst the physical skills mentioned was the development of

sporting ability which featured in the aims statements of a third of the schools in the survey, reflecting a high priority given to sporting achievement.

CONCLUSION TO FINAL AIMS ANALYSIS

The final analysis of the aims of 84 ISC schools revealed a strong emphasis on individuation both of the institutions themselves and of their pupils. The principal elements of institutional distinctiveness were the climate or ethos which each school sought to convey and the school's offering to its pupils. In describing their ethos, schools tended to stress their positive approach to pupils, the forward-looking nature of the school's programme and their commitment to the wider community. Where there existed a strong religious affiliation, commitment to both the affective and cognitive aspects of religion was in evidence. The most prominent aspects of provision described were found to be: the facilities or resources available to provide the context for learning; the prevailing atmosphere; the learning programme comprising both curricular and extra-curricular experiences, with a particular emphasis on breadth and contemporary relevance; the pupil support system, frequently referred to as pastoral care; the desirable characteristics of the staff employed.

The majority of schools in the survey alluded to their intention to develop fully pupils' individual potential, and aspects of personal development featured strongly in the aims statements equating to what Schiro's called a learner-centred philosophy (Moore, 2015). This was found to have two facets: firstly, the acquisition of certain competencies, usually referred to by schools as skills, and knowledge; secondly, the promotion of personal dispositions. These were both internally and externally oriented and corresponded largely to current conceptions of spirituality and moral values. The emphasis placed on individual personal development is potentially problematic, since many of the associated concepts are abstract in nature. There is no agreed definition of dispositions such as tolerance and honesty, and competencies such as leadership are subject to differing interpretations. Even the very notion of fulfilling potential is contentious since not all potentials are to the benefit of either the individual or society.

These issues have serious implications when attempts are made to judge a school's success in the light of its aims. Given the multiple interpretations that might result from the use of so many abstract terms, whose view, if any, predominates when determining the criteria for an evaluation of a school's activities: the head's, the teachers', the parents', the pupils', the inspectorate's, the employers', the government's? In order to examine the similarities and differences between a system designed to evaluate schools which claimed institutional uniqueness and a focus on pupils as individuals, and one whose purpose was to judge schools as part of a system designed for pupils collectively, I decided to pursue such questions further in the later phases of the research in two ways. Firstly, I explored the practice of self-evaluation and issues relating to inspection in interviews with a small number of heads and representatives from ISI and secondly, I scrutinised a selection of reports produced by ISI for ISC schools, and Ofsted for maintained sector schools.

The final exercise I undertook during this first stage of my research was a brief overview of the similarities and differences between the National Curriculum aims, which might be expected to reflect collective aims for schooling, and my findings concerning ISC schools' aims which appeared to indicate a more individualistic stance.

Comparison between the aims of the National Curriculum and those of ISC schools

The National Curriculum (NC) was first introduced, by the Conservative government, in 1988. Hence, the requirement for maintained schools to conform to a centrally defined set of aims and highly prescribed curriculum specifications had been in place for fifteen years when the survey of ISC schools' aims was undertaken. Although the programmes of study which constituted the curriculum had statutory force, the aims did not (White, 2007). They were, however, declarations of intent by the government for its educational system. Prior to that, under the terms of the 1944 *Education Act*, maintained secondary schools had been free to determine their own purposes and curricular programmes (White 2011). ISC schools, like other independent schools, however, were exempt from the requirements of the National Curriculum and

continued to enjoy independence from government control with respect to aims and the curriculum.

However, the situation was modified by the 2002 *Education Act*, passed by a Labour Government, which considerably expanded the regulations applying to independent schools (Appendix 6c). Section 153 gave the Secretary of State the power to set minimum standards for the curriculum. These are reflected in the *Independent Schools Standards Regulations* (ISSR) (DfEE, 2003), the first category of which prescribes the curricular areas which all independent schools must cover. The ISSR also made the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (SMSC) a legal requirement. Nevertheless, there was still no legal obligation for independent schools to adopt fully, either the aims, or the curricular programmes, of the National Curriculum.

The original NC aims, the subject of considerable criticism by White (2004a; 2007 and 2011), for their unsubstantial nature and lack of congruency with the compulsory curricular programmes, were reformed in 2000 by the Labour Government. Hailed as revolutionary by White (2007) despite their continued lack of cohesion with the statutory curriculum, the new aims were more detailed than their predecessors and articulated more clearly a definition of the kind of pupil who was intended to emerge from the national maintained system of secondary education. These were the aims in place at the time of my ISC survey and those which served as a basis for my comparison. The first aim focussed on “*providing opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve*” and the second on promoting pupils’ “*spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*” (SMSC) and preparing them for “*the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life*” (The National Curriculum handbook for teachers in England Key Stages 3 and 4, DfEE and QCA, 1999). Each aim was accompanied by a lengthy description of the associated concepts.

In undertaking any comparison between the concepts contained within the two sets of aims, several factors should be borne in mind. Foremost of these is the fact that the National Curriculum aims were designed to cover a whole sector and not individual institutions, as was the case with the ISC schools. It is likely that individual maintained sector schools, such as those with a religious affiliation, had additional aims which were not included in the NC handbook but, given the government regulations

restricting prospectus content, they could not be easily obtained. A survey similar to the one undertaken in ISC schools would have been needed to establish whether this were the case. Furthermore the format for the presentation of the aims was distinct. The NC aims were published in an extensive handbook to be used in all English secondary schools. They were accompanied by prescribed programmes of study for each of the subjects that the curriculum was to cover. The audience was, principally, therefore the teaching profession. Part 1 of my research showed that ISC schools, however, directed their aims at a variety of audiences, and published them in a range of different forums in addition to staff handbooks, including prospectuses, classrooms, and pupil handbooks. Consequently, they tended to be much more succinct, often comprising a brief list of short statements. It was, therefore, not to be expected that all the concepts in the NC aims would be present in each individual school's statement. Schools were much more likely to have been selective in what they included, and to have given their aims statement a particular slant or emphasis to reflect their claims to individuality and appeal to a particular market, rather than attempt to be all-embracing as was the case with the National Curriculum.

Despite these distinctions, a brief overview of the principal similarities and differences between the findings of the ISC aims survey and the National Curriculum *Aims for the Curriculum* does highlight further some of the characteristics distinguishing ISC schools from their maintained counterparts. There were many similarities between the aims concepts of the NC and those most characteristic of the ISC schools, especially with regard to breadth of learning experience, SMSC, and the development of skills for the future. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, the ISSR covered these aspects of education and therefore ISC schools were legally obliged to pursue such aims, but these regulations were only introduced in 2003, and evidence from the questionnaire responses would suggest that many of these aims were in place long before the ISSR were introduced. Secondly, they may derive from, and largely reflect, a shared sense of values generally held in England at the time. The opening section of the NC handbook, in fact, contains a statement of values derived from the *National Forum for Values in Education and the Community* (May 1997) which is listed in full at the end of the publication. Moreover, there may have been cross-fertilisation of ideas between the

two sectors through in-service training, inspection, the educational press, or public opinion, as suggested by the first spokesperson from ISI.

Where then did the differences, if any, lie? Had ISC schools used their independence from the requirements of the National Curriculum to set any different aims or to interpret or deliver them in an alternative way? Theoretically, differences could exist in the way in which those aims were enacted. In fact, White (2007) claimed that many NC aims were never enacted at all, as teachers were too preoccupied with meeting the statutory demands of the curriculum itself. One example of a difference of approach in interpreting the aims would be the provision of the “*rich and varied contexts*” for learning, referred to in the first aim of the NC. No specific reference is made to extra-curricular activities as a learning experience, whereas this was mentioned by a number of ISC schools, with several making particular reference to opportunities for developing sporting ability. Whether ISC schools’ aims were enacted, and whether distinctions were to be found in emphasis between the two types of school was explored during the later stages of the research by examining the content of a sample of inspection reports from both sectors.

Another major difference reflected in the types of aims statement produced, either nationally for maintained schools, or individually for ISC schools, was the range of concepts included. The NC aims refer only to the curriculum as the vehicle for achieving the defined educational goals, although, as White (2007) points out, there was no clear rationale linking the two. No reference is made in the NC aims to the desired type of climate or ethos, or the quality of the relationships within the school, whereas over half the ISC schools referred to the provision of a supportive environment, often qualified by such adjectives as ‘*friendly*’, ‘*happy*’ or ‘*secure*’.

A further distinction lies in the use of language. Whereas the NC uses collective language, referring in both aims to “*all pupils*”, perhaps in an attempt to stress the provision of equality of opportunity, over half the ISC schools, who by their very existence as fee-paying schools, may be considered less committed to notions of equality, emphasised the development of individual potential, with others focussing on the nurturing of talent, which presumably varies from one pupil to another, thus creating the overall impression that each pupil was to be considered as unique rather

than as part of a group. (The more recent 2014 NC statutory guidance, did, however, refer to recognition of individual needs.) This echoes the view from ISI's spokesperson, referred to earlier, that the treatment of pupils as individuals was particularly characteristic of ISC schools. Reference to the standpoint that ISC schools place greater emphasis on the individual than maintained sector schools was made in a letter from the Girls Schools' Association president to members (8th October 2013).

The specific emphasis on creating a "*Christian ethos*", found in a number of ISC schools, but absent from the NC, is not surprising, given that many of the ISC schools were found to have a religious affiliation, whereas the NC aims were devised to fit a national system serving a pluralistic society. Nevertheless, it is an example of an ISC school's freedom to accentuate specific features of its provision in its aims statements.

An important illustration of the link between government and its aims for the education system is articulated in the statement of "*values and purposes underpinning the school curriculum*" which precedes the 1999 version of NC aims. References to education not only as a route to pupils' wellbeing but also as a vehicle for maintaining "*a healthy and just democracy*" and a "*productive economy*", the latter reinforced by the aim to give pupils the opportunity of becoming "*enterprising*", reflect a specific view of society and the individual's role within it and the philosophy which Schiro refers to as one of social efficiency (Moore, 2015). In contrast, there is less emphasis on a specific political and economic context in the aims of ISC schools.

When considering this point, it is worth remembering that the NC aims were drawn up for pupils living in England, albeit from a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds, who were being prepared to live and work in this country. Many ISC schools, especially boarding schools, cater for overseas students whose numbers have increased steadily in recent years. The *ISC Census 2003* shows that in the preceding twelve months alone there had been a 4.4% increase in the number of new overseas pupils joining ISC schools. Hence, such schools may view the education they provide as being more universal than rooted in a particular set of political and economic circumstances. They may not consider it their mission to prepare pupils to contribute specifically to the British economy, but rather to educate "*new generations of ...foreigners who will occupy influential*

positions in their own countries” (ISC, 2003b:4). Internationalism may be one of the dimensions of independence in such schools.

Chapter summary

The original aims of the National Curriculum (1988) were centrally defined by government and published in the NC handbooks, intended principally for teachers. These were reviewed in 1999, following a change of government, reflecting the close link between party politics and perceptions of the purposes of education. ISC schools were exempted from any requirement to adhere to the NC. My research findings indicated that individual ISC schools used this independence to define their own aims, and for the most part, reviewed them regularly during the development planning process, rather than in direct response to a change in government. Hence, theoretically they were free from government authority in this respect, responding mainly to the authority of the founder, head, or senior managers. Nevertheless, the possible impact of legislation on aims definition in ISC schools was identified by ISI representatives, and more indirect influence by central government was suggested, reflecting the exercise of bureaucratic authority over schools which were nominally independent.

In general the independent schools’ aims were found to be published in a greater variety of forums, were addressed to a wider range of audiences, and appeared to serve a more extensive set of intents than those of the NC. Not only were ISC aims intended to direct the work of governors, teachers, and pupils, but they also served to distinguish individual ISC schools for marketing purposes. Mapping of the concepts encapsulated within the aims statements of 84 schools appeared to support the claim that each ISC school is, in some respects, unique (a view supported by the representatives from ISI), and identified those concepts which occurred most frequently and were recurrent in aims statements regardless of schools’ characteristics such as pupil gender, religious affiliation, or day or boarding provision.

The dominant aims which emerged at this stage of the analysis were the provision of a supportive environment and the realisation of individual potential. These were present regardless of the category of school. Some differences of emphasis within the

categories of school were found, particularly in relation to the development of confidence which was emphasized most by day schools and those which catered for girls, and the development of moral values which was more evident in day, and single-sex, schools than co-educational schools, and those with boarding provision. The treatment of pupils as individuals was most apparent in co-educational schools whereas the achievement of high standards or excellence was most evident as an aim of single-sex schools.

A more focussed analysis of the survey schools' aims probed the ways in which schools used their aims to achieve individuation both at the institutional and individual pupil level. Schools sought to distinguish themselves through the climate they aimed to establish, in some cases with a religious dimension, and by the nature of the offering made to pupils, with frequent emphasis on extra-curricular or other opportunities. Statements about the personal development of individual pupils comprised the competencies and dispositions which the schools sought to foster, many of which were abstract in nature, and subject to varying interpretations. Similarly, ethos or climate can be perceived differently by individual actors within a particular environment. Such issues make any attempt to judge a school's success in relation to its aims potentially problematic, and yet these abstract concepts appeared to be an important feature of ISC schools' aims, as pointed out by one of ISI's representatives and confirmed by my analysis.

The following phases of my research focussed on how, in the light of these findings, the schools themselves, and the inspectorate, approached evaluation within a context which purported to focus principally on individuation rather than conformity to a system-wide model. How was the assessment of concepts which were susceptible to multiple interpretations and not easily quantifiable implemented, if at all? How and by whom were success criteria defined and what instruments were employed? Such issues would illuminate further the nature and extent of these schools' independence. These were prominent amongst the issues addressed in the second phase of my research, based on interviews with a number of ISC school headteachers, and in the third stage focussing on an examination of a selection of inspection reports from both ISI and Ofsted.

Chapter 5 The Research Phase 2: Interviews with Headteachers

Introduction

The second phase of the research was intended to serve four main purposes. Initially, I wished to perform a check on the current relevance and validity of my analysis of the aims survey by inviting the heads of a small number of different schools to comment on the accuracy of my analysis of the constituent concepts of their schools' aims. In addition, these heads were asked to make any alterations or additions they thought necessary, and subsequently to update, where necessary, their original questionnaire responses. Secondly, to examine further, through discussion, Johnson's claim, referred to in previous chapters, that heads of independent schools perceive their school to be in some way unique. The third principal focus was an exploration of the ways in which ISC schools evaluated success in achieving their aims, as an enactment of their independence, given that, unlike maintained sector schools, such schools were not required to follow a prescribed form of self-evaluation. The interviews included a discussion of the role of external agents in such evaluation, in particular that of the Church and the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Finally, I sought heads' perceptions of the characteristics of a good school with the intention of comparing their views with the findings of the third stage of my research. This final phase focussed on a comparison of inspection in ISC schools and in the maintained sector, to determine whether independence was concomitant with a different approach to education and generated distinct criteria for judging quality. The heads involved in this phase of the research were, to some extent, self-selected, in that they, or their predecessors, had all indicated a willingness to take part in further research when completing the questionnaire. Ease of access to the school, regional distribution of locations, limitations on the heads' availability, and the wish to include schools whose characteristics were in some way distinct from one another, such as by the provision of day or boarding education, pupil gender or religious affiliation, were all factors in the final choice of interviewees. The table below summarises these characteristics of the schools involved.

Figure 5.1 Characteristics of Schools Involved in Interviews

School No	Gender	Day/Boarding	Location	Religious affiliation	Roll (Source Independent Schools Yearbook 2008-9)
1	girls	day	East Midlands urban	Church of England	425
10	boys	mainly day (a few boarders)	West Midlands urban	Church of England	1000
13	girls	boarding	South Midlands rural	Church of England	291
26	co-educational	boarding	South-east rural	none	520
42	co-educational	boarding	North rural	Roman Catholic	470
72	co-educational	day	West Midlands urban	none	673 (2007 data)

Verification of findings from the aims survey and questionnaire analysis

Each of the heads interviewed was shown my analysis of the concepts encapsulated in their aims statement together with their responses to the accompanying questionnaire, and asked if they wished to alter or add anything. They were also invited to comment on any review or change to the school's aims that had taken place since my survey was undertaken, as this could potentially reflect the nexus of authority within the school as regards aims definition, the degree of independence enjoyed, and the transitory or permanent nature of the school's goals.

Five of the six schools accepted my analysis of their aims without alteration. The sixth school (number 13) had reviewed and formally documented its aims following the appointment of a new head and several additions concerning extra-curricular provision and personal development had been made. The use of the word community had been clarified to include "*the school and the world beyond*". The aims were now directed at a wider audience and disseminated in a greater range of publications. Thus, during the course of the interviews no evidence emerged which would contradict my earlier findings as regards aims definition and dissemination.

Prior to analysing in depth the responses to the specific interview questions I shall examine briefly, in turn, the general comments made by each head, which afford additional insight into the research questions. There follows a brief account of each of these conversations ending with a summary of the salient points.

School Number 1

Of the six interviews with heads this was by far the lengthiest discussion. The Head explained that a revised aims statement had, in fact, been produced to coincide with the school's centenary and as part of the development planning cycle. The influence of business practice was, therefore, apparent in this undertaking. The basic concepts had not changed with the review. She believed that the previous aims had been altered from time to time but not systematically reviewed to form a coherent whole. She had felt that the wording of the earlier aims needed updating to be more "*modern*" and more "*generic*" and less specific. By way of an example she cited the replacement of a phrase such as "*kindness to animals*" with a reference to "*responsible global citizens*". She voiced the opinion that the wording of the previous set of aims had been heavily influenced by one or two strong-minded individuals in the school. In the recent review they had tried to work by consensus.

She described the process by which the new wording was adopted. All the teaching and many support staff had been involved in a study day. Working in groups they had produced a list of suggestions which were then analysed and synthesised by the leadership group. Reaching agreement on the new wording presented a considerable challenge and occupied a substantial amount of senior management's time. The resulting draft statement was presented at a staff meeting with one or two consequent amendments made. The main area of contention had been the Junior School staff's wish to have an alternative set of aims or aims expressed in "*kindergarten language*". Whilst sympathising with this viewpoint, the Head believed there could be the danger of promoting two ideas of the school, which she did not consider desirable. The link with marketing is implicit in this statement. She referred the matter to the governors who decided that, as the concepts within the aims statement were equally applicable to a three year old as to an eighteen year old, there should be a single set of aims. They conceded that simpler language could be used in

discussion with the youngest pupils, but considered that the school should have one formal published statement.

This supports the findings from the questionnaire that the principal audiences for the aims were parents and staff rather than pupils. It would seem from these remarks that, although the essential nature of a school's aims may not change, the language in which they are expressed may vary at different points in time, and can be influenced by those exerting authority, who may, or may not, be those officially invested with such authority. In this instance, when the authority of the governors, was invoked, to arbitrate in the case of disagreement, their decision was accepted as legitimate. As such the authority exercised was bureaucratic (Dowling, 2009) in that whoever holds the relevant office may speak in respect of their remit.

Several common themes had emerged during the aims review such as *"promoting more personalised learning"* and *"encouraging a greater degree of independence amongst learners"* and these were incorporated in the school development plan. Subject departments also chose one or two additional aspects of the aims on which to focus. The task of aims review could not be considered complete and would need further discussion in the future.

School Number 10

The Head, interviewed in 2008, five years after the aims survey, believed that little had changed about the school's aims in that time as they could be encapsulated in the phrase *"to be one of the foremost all-round boys' schools in the country"*. He clarified his understanding of the phrase *"all-round"* as implying a school which does not specialise in a particular area such as music or sport, but one which aims for excellence without being elitist, and gives the widest possible opportunity for all pupils in as many fields as possible. If he were to choose a pseudonym for the school it would be *"opportunity knocks"*. The Head's perception of the school's offering, in terms of opportunities made available, reflects one of the perspectives on school provision noted in the aims survey analysis. Moreover, the use of the term *"all-round"* embodies the notion of breadth which was found to be a recurrent dimension of many ISC schools' aims.

School Number 13

This school had changed head since the aims survey and a review had been instigated following her appointment, a further illustration of the role of the head in aims definition. Several additions had been made to the list of aims as detailed above (page 123). The previous head had distinguished between values, which she saw as unchanging from one generation to the next, and aims and ethos, which she considered “*a living thing that adapts to new generations*”. Thus, the notion of underlying goals and a more dynamic element to a school’s goals, articulated by the Head of School Number 1, was reiterated here. The current Head referred to changes since the questionnaire had been completed by her predecessor. Formerly, the audience for the aims was defined as parents and governors, but this had been extended to include pupils, staff and inspectors. The aims had previously only been published in a letter which accompanied the prospectus, but they were now printed in staff, departmental, and parent handbooks and pupil diaries. Hence their purpose would appear to extend beyond that of marketing to include the direction of those involved in the school’s work, mirroring the overall findings of the questionnaire analysis in Phase 1.

School Number 26

This school had also changed heads since the aims survey. However, the new Head believed that the aims and their publication had remained much the same. He described a recent strategic planning exercise undertaken by senior management and the governors which had produced a statement of a desired “*end-state*” and a management plan to achieve it, illustrating further the link between the act of aims definition and the behaviour of commercial organisations. The overall aims and constituent concepts were to remain, and the distinctive character or ethos of the school was to be preserved. The Head described a process by which he had tried to encapsulate the school’s ethos in a statement which was distributed to parents, staff and pupils. This document attempted to synthesise aspects of the school’s character described in speeches or statements produced by previous heads, thus emphasizing the traditional aspect of the school’s climate based on the founders’ principles, and perpetuated by successive headteachers. The final statement also encompassed the

views of pupils and parents. He believed that the ethos and personality of a school was essential to the promotion of the school and he had therefore tried to reinforce it by “teaching” it to pupils. He emphasised the liberal nature of the school which differentiated it from other schools, and felt it was something that had to be cherished to ensure the school continued to flourish. He remarked, however, that on appointment, some heads might feel that they needed to change a school’s ethos in order for the school to survive.

School Number 42

There had been a change of head since 2003 and a new Mission Statement had been produced. However, the concepts from the previous statement had been retained and no new ones added. The new Head believed that his appointment had been the impetus for a re-examination of the format and expression of the school’s aims, which remained strongly rooted in the educational principles and teachings of the religious order to which the school belonged. These placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of respect for the individual pupil, regardless of their ability or religious belief. Consequently there was a commitment to meeting individual as opposed to collective needs, and to the recognition of achievement in the light of the pupils’ capabilities rather than in comparison with external standards. Induction procedures for new staff stressed the school’s values and principles and were conducted, in part, by members of the Order. This was the clearest expression to date of the concept of individuation, identified in the aims survey analysis, both institutionally, and as regards the pupils. However, it should be pointed out that two members of the small group of secondary schools in England, to which the school belonged, were voluntary-aided, and thus, despite having control over their buildings, staff appointments and religious education, were none the less maintained by state funds (Ball, 2013). Hence, the strength of the belief in the worth of each pupil as an individual may owe more to a particular religious stance than to independence.

School Number 72

When describing the school’s aims, the Head emphasised scholarship, challenge, high achievement, and being people and community-centred, of which he considered scholarship to be the most significant. For him, the words “democratic” and “relaxed”

best captured the “*spirit of the school*”. Pupils from another school had visited and had commented on their surprise at how “*at ease*” the school seemed. However, this style of language was not used in the formal written statement of the school’s mission, which had been produced by the staff sixteen years ago, and had not been changed since, as it was still considered appropriate.

Summary of aims discussion

Several relevant themes emerged during these discussions. Firstly, there is the question of who has ownership of the school’s aims, which is closely linked to the issue of authority. Secondly, the significance of the language used to express a school’s official aims statement was emphasized. Finally, the importance of clarity and singularity of purpose or ethos as a marketing strategy, indicated earlier in the research, was reinforced. In addition, certain aspects of these schools’ aims supported further the conclusions from the earlier phase of my research concerning the ways in which aims were defined and the influence of the business world in the linkage between aims definition and development planning. The influence of religious affiliation on a school’s attitude to its pupils was further highlighted.

It is significant that the three schools which had experienced a change of head had all undertaken some form of aims review, indicating the likelihood of a strong link between the tenure of the position of head and the definition or articulation of purpose, with authority derived from the powers traditionally invested in this post. This reflects Donnelly’s (2000) argument that the aims and objectives, which are formally expressed within school documentation, are those of the authorities, presumably because, as Peters (1973) argues, one of the principal functions of an organisation’s aims is to focus its members’ efforts in a specific direction.

In the case of the school which had attempted a more democratic redefinition of its aims, and where conflict had arisen, bureaucratic authority was also invoked. In this instance the governors were the final arbiters thus exercising their role as guardians of the school’s purpose. It is indicative of staff’s acceptance of the legitimacy of their jurisdiction that their ruling did not appear to have been challenged by those whose views were over-ruled, reflecting acceptance of their authority to make such decisions.

The importance of authority derived from tradition was also evident in the comments made by different heads about the unchanging nature of their respective school's values, concepts or character. The reference to "*cherishing*" the ethos portrayed the centrality of the head's role in ensuring the continuation of the school's traditions, unless market conditions dictated otherwise.

Where attempts were made to devolve authority beyond the head and senior management, employees were included, with little reference being made, in several cases, to parents or pupils. Thus, the authority exercised was still bureaucratic in nature, deriving, perhaps, from a perceived educational expertise which has traditionally endowed teachers and other educational professionals in the independent sector with decision-making responsibilities. However, the comment about the effect of dominant individuals in swaying discussion, and affecting decisions, hints at a form of influence which derives from strength of personality. In Dowling's (2009) authority schema this would be classed as charismatic authority whereby only the (self)-nominated may speak. However, Blau (1964) and Parkin (1982) argue that where there is an element of coercion, for example, if people are afraid to speak out in opposition, then the authority is not legitimate. Thus my research findings showed that the exercise of bureaucratic authority, as defined by Dowling (2009), and the influence of individual personalities, or external expertise, may all have a bearing on the definition of a school's aims and consequently, on the institution's autonomy.

The significance of language in aims definition was apparent in the discussions with heads. It would seem that even if the underlying concepts did not change the language used to describe them did. The reference made to modernising the aims reflected this. Moreover, in some cases, there was a distinction between the language used in the formal written statement and that used in discussions within the school. The use of a lower level of language to address young pupils or more informal language amongst colleagues suggests that, though the concepts remained the same, whatever the language used, they were internalised in different ways. The use of formal language for the published statement, and in particular phrases such as "*responsible global citizenship*", may reflect a perceived notion of what was acceptable practice, suggesting the influence of those considered experts in the field of education.

Moreover, evidence of the influence of expertise deriving, in this instance, from the business world, was also found during these discussions not only in the link with development planning but also in the language used. Two of the six schools had chosen the title “*mission statement*” for the document containing their schools’ aims, a term deriving from current management practice. The choice of certain language was considered by some heads to be particularly significant in conveying the distinctive character of their school and supports Johnson’s (1987) proposition that heads consider their schools unique. In the case of the school described as having a liberal ethos, the head made the direct link between defining a school’s ethos and marketing the school. In School Number 1 language was seen as a significant element in promoting a single image of the school.

Thus, evidence from this section of the interviews further suggests that, in the absence of centrally defined aims such as those of the National Curriculum, ISC schools demonstrate their independence by producing individual statements of purpose which extend beyond the formal curriculum and purport to reflect certain distinctive characteristics such as democracy or liberalism. However, the language in which they are expressed frequently reflected external influences suggesting that independence is constrained not only by the exercise of authority by those with senior positions within the school who defined the school’s aims, but also by external agents.

Uniqueness

Each of the six heads was asked what they considered special or unique about their school. The heads’ responses fell into three categories: the climate or ambiance, frequently referred to as ethos; the offering, usually described as provision, with a particular emphasis on extra-curricular activities; the outcomes expressed in terms of pupil behaviour and achievement. The first two of these corresponded to aspects of institutional individuation found in the aims survey analysis.

Climate or ambiance

All six heads made some comment relating to the climate or atmosphere in the school as constituting a special feature. This reinforces the theory which emerged from the first stage of the research concerning the significance of school climate as a marker of

institutional individuality, an apparent hallmark of independence. Three of them singled out happiness as a defining characteristic of the atmosphere. The term '*happiness*' is, as Coldron and Boulton (1991) point out, unspecific, and could potentially mean a variety of things. Their research based on a survey of parental views suggests that security, often linked to the presence of friends or siblings, and friendly relations between staff and pupils were considered important constituents of a child's happiness at school. The responses of the heads interviewed reflected similar perceptions. In one case, happiness was attributed to the small size of the school which enabled pupils to feel known as individuals, and in another to a relaxed approach. In the third case, where the provision was for boys only, which in itself was an unusual feature, the head remarked that parents commented on how happy their sons were to return to school after the holidays, which he believed to be generally uncharacteristic of adolescent boys, and therefore a distinctive aspect of their provision.

Pupils' attitude towards other people was cited as a contributory factor in creating a school's distinct atmosphere. In three of the schools, kindness or a caring disposition was emphasised, manifesting itself not only in the way pupils treated each other, but also in their concern for those less fortunate in the wider community. One head described at length the school's links with two schools for the disabled and involvement in joint activities such as a pantomime, where the able-bodied assisted the disabled pupils in their performance. Another interviewee cited the continuation of the school's ethos, with its commitment to service to others, through the alumni association at university, as a distinctive feature emphasising an ongoing involvement in community schemes. A third invoked the school motto which encouraged generosity to others and referred to involvement with local primary schools and a school in India where the English pupils and staff visited to run and fund an arts week. These remarks reflect the earlier finding that social commitment is a key constituent of institutional climate in ISC schools, in keeping, perhaps with the Christian values articulated by some of these schools. Alternatively, it may be the result of the philanthropic tradition amongst the middle and upper classes which developed after the dissolution of the monasteries when charity was no longer under the direct tutelage of the Church (Gray,

1905). As Ostrower (1995) points out, albeit in reference to American society, philanthropy is a defining element of elite culture.

All of the above comments portray school climate as that which emerges from social interaction, the lived reality of life in school, a view of ethos which Donnelly (2000) refers to as anti-positivist, as opposed to the positivist concept of ethos, which equates climate with the formal statements of purpose made by the school authorities with the intention of directing the behaviour of staff and pupils. As Donnelly points out, there is often a mismatch between these two ways of conceptualising school climate. Reality is not always an enactment of declared intent nor is it perceived identically by all school members (Ramsey et al., 2016). However, in this instance, the heads interviewed were able to exemplify the school's social engagement.

Nevertheless, given that my research findings concerning aims definition suggested that the heads had played a key role in defining their school's aims, there was the potential for their perceptions of the enactment of the school's ethos or climate to be distorted by their desire to see the school's aims fulfilled. In order to gain a more objective picture of an individual school's ethos it would be necessary to explore other perceptions. This point is partially addressed through the examination of inspection reports in the final phase of the research, but the views of a wider spectrum of members of the school community would be required to confirm this finding fully. Moreover, any claim of uniqueness based on a school's climate as it is experienced, rather than as a set of aspirations, would require regular re-examination. As Bourke (2001) remarks, the personality of pupils can be expected to shape the collective ethos. Consequently, ethos is not a static phenomenon, but rather dependent on the behaviour, values and attitudes of the individuals who comprise the school at any given moment Donnelly (2000).

Offering or provision

Four of the six heads commented that certain features of their provision were distinctive. In each case the comments related to extra-curricular opportunities. This supports the claim made by the ISI representative that a broad spectrum of activities was one of the defining characteristics of the independent sector. One head referred to the high level of participation in music, sport, debating, school trips and other

activities. Another stressed the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities available and the breadth of education offered. This school had commissioned independent research focussing on a comparative study of its provision in relation to other independent or maintained schools which were considered “*great*”. Though principally a day school, the programme it offered was found to compare favourably with the most famous boarding schools. Another head declared that he felt passionate about breadth of offering “*outside the classroom*”. Finally, in another of the schools, a high level of commitment to the creative and performing arts in terms of time, resources and activities, was considered special.

Provision, like ethos, is protean. Changes in personnel are apt to bring variation in a school’s offering. Moreover, the degree of uniqueness based on provision is dependent not only on an individual institution’s own offering as distinct from that of others, but on maintenance of that distinction in the light of changes in provision elsewhere, often stimulated by perceived competition. In a competitive market, what is a unique offering one year may be commonplace the next. No specific comment was made by any of the interviewees with reference to the need to monitor their uniqueness.

Outcomes

Two specific outcomes were referred to by several heads: pupil behaviour and achievement. Three of the six heads referred to positive aspects of pupil behaviour as being distinctive characteristics of their school. Kindness, courtesy, empathy, respect, and patience were among the qualities mentioned, which were considered to be both contributory to, and a consequence of, the school’s particular ethos. These references to outcomes reflect both a positivist view of ethos as the distinctive range of values and beliefs which define the philosophy or atmosphere of an organisation and the anti-positivist viewpoint where school climate emanates from the behaviour of those individuals who comprise the membership of the institution at any one time (Donnelly, 2000). As discussed above, these qualities are not necessarily a constant since they may vary according to the personal characteristics of the individuals at the school.

Four of the six heads also made reference to high achievement. In one case the head stressed that what mattered was high achievement for the individual rather than in

relation to a particular academic or sporting standard. He cited the case of a boy whose Midyis (Middle Years Information Service) baseline tests predicted that he would gain a grade D at GCSE in French, but who in fact gained a B. This he considered excellent achievement even though the boy did not reach one of the top grades. Another head commented that it was the school's policy to praise all success, in whatever field, rather than focussing purely on the academic. Recognition of the achievement of disabled pupils was considered important by another of the schools in the study. The differing references to excellence of performance and high achievement illustrate further the point made earlier as regards the multiple interpretations that the use of such terms elicits and the consequent difficulty in reaching consensus about criteria for judgement.

In summary, when asked what made their school special, heads commented on aspects of their schools' ethos, breadth of provision, positive pupil behaviour and high achievement in a range of areas. Some heads commented on the difficulty of defining or measuring uniqueness, though none commented on the fluctuating nature of a school's distinctiveness due to changes in its membership or in competitors' offering, nor on the possible need for multiple perceptions of ethos before any claim to uniqueness based on school climate could be made. Uniqueness in schools may, therefore, be a relative and variable quality, rather than something fixed and susceptible to ease of definition.

These problems have implications for evaluation schemes, particularly those which purport to judge schools in the light of their aims and special characteristics, as the second and subsequent ISI frameworks have done (ISI, 2006, 2010). However, before discussing the role of external agents in evaluating a school's success, I explored the approach to evaluation these schools chose to adopt themselves and the heads' perceptions of the constituents of school quality.

Criteria for judging school quality

Before analysing the responses, given by the heads I interviewed, to the question concerning what they believed to be the characteristics of a good school, it is pertinent to examine briefly the context against which these responses may have been framed

as this could have influenced the school's approach to evaluation. In the years immediately preceding my research, several studies attempted to define the hallmarks of an effective school. Both Ofsted and the National Union of Teachers (NUT) commissioned research in this area; the former for external evaluation purposes, the latter motivated by a concern for a democratic form of self-evaluation. The *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools* (1995) report, which surveyed the recent literature on school effectiveness, was prepared by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore for Ofsted. The research identified eleven characteristics which were associated with an effective school. These are listed in Appendix 9.

Each of these criteria was accompanied by between one and four sub-categories which purported to define the meaning of each of the key characteristics. Despite the many criticisms made of school effectiveness research, discussed in the initial literature review (Appendix 5), Davies and Rudd's (2001) survey of self-evaluation practice in the maintained schools in five local education authorities (LEAs) found significant evidence of the influence of the work by Sammons et al. in the self-evaluation frameworks adopted by schools. These had invariably been drawn up externally, usually by the LEA itself.

In contrast, the framework devised for the NUT was the result of a joint project between the University of Strathclyde's Department of Education and a group of local schools, who together aimed to adopt a "*school friendly but robust approach to self-evaluation*" (Macbeath, 1999:21). They surveyed teachers, governors, pupils and parents and found that a strong consensus emerged over the key elements of a good school:

- The staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and show initiative.

A number of other factors were rated as significant such as relationships, school climate, effective organisation and communication, use of time and resources, and recognition of achievement across a wide range of activities.

However, there were noticeable differences of emphasis from group to group within schools, reflecting the observation made in Sammons et al. (1997) that individuals'

views of what constitutes a good school reflect their values and cultural preferences. Pupils, parents, governors, and teachers were found to emphasise different aspects of the school. For example, pupils were concerned with the physical state of the building and the extent to which they were helped to learn. This point was later reinforced by Ruddock and Flutter (2000), who explored the pupil perspective on conditions favourable to learning, and found that they extended beyond the classroom to include such factors as relationships, friendships, and perceptions of fairness. Moreover, See and Arthur (2011), who examined pupils' views on moral development and education, found that the pupils they surveyed felt that interaction with their peers, or adults other than teachers, was more influential than formal structured lessons or assemblies.

Teachers in Macbeath's survey emphasised resources, teamwork, job satisfaction and feeling valued. Parents and governors were concerned with matters such as pupil behaviour, safety, communications, and links with the community. Despite these differences, Boyd, Macbeath and Rand (1995) considered it possible to produce a common framework which could be modified to suit individual schools. They developed a set of ten indicators, listed in Appendix 9, each with five associated features, together with guidance on data collection and use of the framework.

Though there are some similarities between these two approaches to evaluation for, example the emphasis on home school links, there are major differences, particularly as regards teaching and learning. The emphasis in the Strathclyde scheme is not confined to their quality, but also encompasses the extent to which these are facilitated by the allocation of resources or level of support given. A positive ethos or 'climate', and recognition of varying types of achievement also feature more prominently in this scheme, which purports to be democratic in its approach to self-evaluation. Although this work was commissioned by the NUT, a major teacher union, the evidence from the Davies and Rudd survey (2001) would suggest that it had not impacted greatly on practice within the maintained sector in England, where frameworks devised by those who exerted authority over those schools were found to predominate.

It was against this background that I sought to explore the approach adopted by ISC schools to evaluation, in particular, self-evaluation. In the absence of an LEA, had schools followed the maintained sector in adopting a set framework, devised externally, or had they devised their own schemes for judging their success? If so, how had this been achieved and who had been involved? Given theoretical freedom from a pre-defined list of criteria how would the heads of such schools themselves characterise a good school?

In framing my question about heads' views of school quality, the choice of the word 'good' as opposed to 'effective' was considered more appropriate. As MacAllister (2016) points out, the terms are not synonymous. The two definitions of effectiveness which predominated in school-effectiveness research seemed too narrow. Levine and Lezotte defined effectiveness as the production of a desired outcome or result (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Mortimore describes an effective school as one in which pupils progressed further than might be expected from consideration of its intake (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1995). Both of these definitions focussed on measurable outcomes such as test and examination scores and did not take account of those aspects of education which were less measurable or long term (Barber and White, 1997; Saunders, 1999; Biesta, 2015).

Yet research suggests that many parents consider aims such as happiness, a warm, welcoming atmosphere, civic-mindedness, and moral goodness to be equally, if not more, important (Barber and White, 1997; Macbeath, 1999). In fact, the RSAcademics *Parents Profile Survey* (2003), commissioned by the ISC, found that parents of pupils in ISC schools rated academic success less highly than good behaviour, respect, courtesy, and developing independent thinking. Hence, it would seem that parents in independent schools were more concerned with those aspects of schooling which were less susceptible to measurement. Moreover, the aims survey, undertaken in the first part of my research indicated that much of what ISC schools sought to achieve extended beyond the purely academic. Consequently, in selecting the word 'good' I sought to facilitate a broader definition of quality than might have been the case had I used the word 'effective'.

The success criteria defined by the ISC heads interviewed fell into four main categories:

- Enjoyment
- Personal growth
- Orientation towards the future
- Positive outcomes

Four of the six heads cited pupil enjoyment of their school life and learning, with the opportunity to form friendships and positive relationships, as denoting a good school. The emphasis appeared to be on the value of these relationships during a pupil's school career, rather than on the acquisition of social capital which would be advantageous to the pupil at some stage in the future through networks of contacts as suggested by Bourdieu (Jenkins, 1992). This finding reflects Ruddock and Flutter's (2000) argument that pupils believed that the quality of relationships and friendships at school is a significant factor in promoting learning. Three of the interviewees suggested that the staff also should feel happy and fulfilled. The need for a team spirit amongst staff members, who enjoyed a network of support, was identified by one head, whereas another highlighted the need for democratic, humble leadership. Low staff turnover was suggested by another as evidence of staff happiness. Pupils were considered to benefit from having teachers who found their work challenging, stimulating and enjoyable. This emphasis on staff happiness mirrors the priority Macbeath found to be a characteristic indicator of school quality amongst teachers.

The development of personal qualities which prepared pupils for life after school such as confidence, open-mindedness, the ability to form and defend one's own opinions, and personal organisation was considered an essential characteristic of a good school. In the words of one head a school should offer "*education for life not just for exam qualifications*". This emphasis on competencies and character development further supported the findings of the aims analysis concerning their importance to ISC schools. Thus these schools could be said to be contributing to the development of what Bourdieu termed a pupil's "*habitus*", that is a collection of dispositions that allow individuals, in the appropriate context, to engage with and make meaningful contributions to practice (Rawolle and Lingard, 2008). Maton (2008) argues that one context in which habitus comes into play is the determination of individuals'

ambitions. Hence one might expect that the development of confidence and personal skills would enable pupils to be more ambitious in their expectations. Allied to the idea of education for life is the notion of developing pupils' interests through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which could contribute to the acquisition of cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu (Moore, 2008). One head remarked that this wider vision of education was a major distinguishing factor between the independent and maintained sectors.

Positive outcomes for each individual pupil regardless of his or her ability or skill level were also considered an indicator of a successful school with several heads making reference to fulfilling or exceeding potential. One head stressed that high achievement should not be confined to academic work but should also encompass success in music, sport, drama and club activities. An emphasis on individualism was also reflected in remarks about school climate. Three of the heads referred to aspects of a school's ethos which they believed characterised good schools. These were variously described as *"supportive of individuals, especially at times of crisis"*, *"egalitarian, democratic, based on respect"* and *"generous and inclusive"*, all of which could be said to reflect a positive attitude towards individuality rather than an expectation of conformity to a type.

Finally, clarity of purpose was considered essential by one head if a school wished to be successful. This comment implies the need for clearly articulated aims, which can direct the work of the school to positive ends, and reflects the findings from the questionnaire responses as regards the role of statements of intent in guiding the educational process. Though as Donnelly (2000) points out, there may be a considerable gap between stated intention and lived reality. Only one head referred to external indicators of a good school such as a positive reputation, presumably created through word of mouth, and a high demand for places, thereby linking quality with success in the marketplace. Thus, the responses from most of the heads interviewed focussed on the development and experience of the individual pupil rather than the school's position in the educational market. Inevitably, the one affects the other as pupils who are known to be unhappy or unsuccessful may have a negative effect on the school's ability to attract future pupils and, ultimately to survive. This is especially

the case at times of economic crisis and negative demographic trends when competition to attract pupils can be intense resulting in school mergers or closures as evident in the reduction in the number of ISC schools recorded in the ISC *Censuses* between 2003 and 2013. (The 2015 *Census (ISC, 2015a)*, however, showed an increase in the number of member schools, reversing this trend.)

The criteria for success defined by these ISC heads had little in common with those listed by Sammons et al. and mirror more closely those which emerged from the Strathclyde study. It may be that some of the “*key characteristics*” in the Sammons study were taken as read by ISC heads and hence they chose to focus more on a broader and less tangible set of criteria of school quality, such as pupil happiness. It is possible also that the differences are to some extent due to the choice of the word ‘good’ in the question posed, as opposed to ‘effective’, which may have invited a broader range of responses. Given that the Sammons study was commissioned by Ofsted, and was presumably pragmatic in intent, designed to inform the approach inspectors adopted to their work, it seemed appropriate to examine whether ISI’s school evaluation practice reflected that of Ofsted or whether it coincided more closely with ISC heads’ views of the characteristics of quality. Moreover, given that all the heads interviewed believed that their schools were unique, it was germane to the research question to assess whether the second ISI framework (ISI2) current at the time of the interviews, allowed for the recognition of individual schools’ characteristics and aims. A brief analysis is given below. This is followed by a more detailed comparison of the Ofsted and ISI frameworks in the next chapter.

The first criterion of the framework required the inspectorate to judge whether the education as a whole was consistent with the school’s declared aims and philosophy. This allowed for recognition of individuality, but left it to the inspectors to judge, presumably from the evidence gleaned under the other categories of the framework, whether the school fulfilled its stated mission. Given the constraints of a predetermined framework, there was no scope in the inspection process, or resulting report, for a detailed examination of the extent to which the school meets its aims framed in the light of these rather than under pre-determined headings.

Of the four criteria for quality which featured in the heads' responses two were referred to directly in the second ISI framework (2006) under the heading "*The Quality of Education*", namely future orientation and positive outcomes. Future orientation was one of six criteria describing the "*Educational Experience Provided*", and required the judgement "*due attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of education, training, employment and for adult life*". Aspects of positive pupil outcomes were evaluated in the section entitled "*Pupils' learning and achievements*" which judged the level of knowledge, understanding and skills acquired together with standards of performance in public examinations and significant, individual, group or team achievements in extra-curricular activities. It is arguable that aspects of behaviour such as courtesy were encompassed within the section on *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development* which also included aspects of personal growth. Less specific mention is made in the framework of pupil happiness and enjoyment of school life, although one of the criteria for effective teaching was that it encouraged an enjoyment of learning. Reference was also made in a later section on pupil welfare to a criterion concerning positive relationships between staff and pupils and pupils themselves, which the pupils in the Ruddock and Flutter survey (2000) considered an important factor in their ability to learn. However, happiness in itself did not feature as a specific criterion and there was no reference to the evaluation of staff happiness despite this featuring prominently in several heads' responses.

Hence, with the exception of staff happiness, the ISI2 framework did appear to endow the inspection process with the potential to be flexible in its response to individual schools' aims and to encompass those indicators of quality which heads considered important. Thus, it seemed to be less dependent on tightly defined success criteria, which were derived from an external authority, than the maintained sector. A strong influence from school effectiveness literature was not apparent either in the heads' responses on school quality or in the inspection framework although there may have been an indirect influence through the requirement for ISI's work to meet with Ofsted's approval. The remainder of the interviews with the six ISC heads was devoted to examining the practice of self-evaluation in these schools in the light of their individual aims. I had a specific interest in those aspects of personal development

highlighted in the aims survey which were not easily measurable. Allied to this was the question of heads' perceptions of the role of the inspectorate in the evaluation of ISC schools.

Self-evaluation in ISC schools

Self-evaluation is defined by Vanhoof et al. (2011:277) as “*a procedure initiated and carried out by schools in order to describe and evaluate their own functioning*”. It is a process normally performed by at least some of a school's stakeholders: management, staff, or parents, as opposed to evaluation by an external evaluator (Meuret and Morlaix, 2003). It is alleged by policy-makers to increase levels of teacher and school autonomy (Brady, 2016). Self-evaluation originated in the maintained sector in the 1970s, with teacher involvement in action research focussing on teaching programmes or classroom practice. However, by the time of my research the emphasis had shifted to school improvement and public accountability (Reed and Street, 2002). Alvik (1996a) and Brady (2016) attributed this shift to economic factors and increased international competition. This resulted in less investment in the public sector and the need for more value for money (Alvik, 1996a). Consequently, Alvik, and Reed and Street (2002) argued, self-evaluation had become undemocratic or, according to Brady, debased. Alvik's response, like that of Macbeath and his colleagues, was to develop a model of self-evaluation which drew on a variety of standpoints and multiple sets of findings, and was conducted internally, assisted by a critical friend. However, the survey undertaken by Davies and Rudd (2001), would suggest that little use of this approach has been made by LEA schools whose approach was, in this respect, less democratic.

In the absence of studies relating specifically to self-evaluation in the independent sector, I sought to examine the nature of self-evaluation in ISC schools. Given that issues relating to the national economy and public sector funding impact less on these schools, which are financed principally from fees, I aimed to determine whether the criticisms made of evaluation in the maintained sector also applied to practice in ISC schools, or whether greater independence was in evidence in the scope and process of self-evaluation. The relationship between ISI inspection and self-evaluation was also

explored, since in principle, these two were separate at the time of the interviews, whereas in the maintained sector the format of self-evaluation was determined by Ofsted, and was intended as a precursor to inspection (Jones, 2006; Plowright, 2007). The link is reflected in the production by the DfES and Ofsted of guidance (2004) on how to undertake school self-evaluation using the Ofsted self-evaluation form (SEF). This had the potential effect of shaping a school's activities to make them coincide with the priorities determined by the inspectorate, and easily auditable in terms of the externally imposed self-evaluation criteria (Hargreaves, 1995). The time required to complete, and to regularly update, the SEF (Bubb and Earley, 2008) may have left little scope for maintained schools to undertake self-evaluation of the type advocated by Alvik.

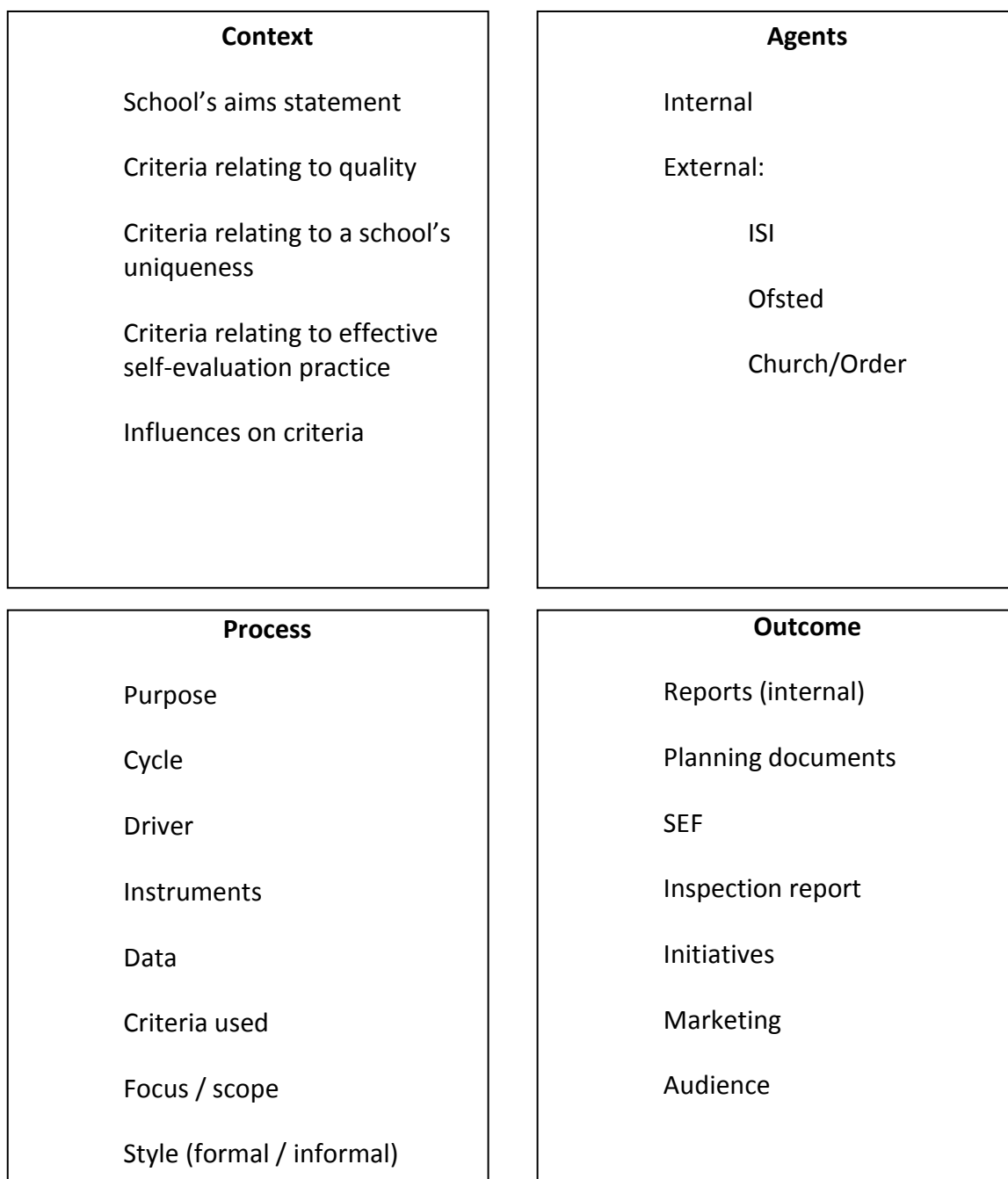
I was therefore concerned to explore whether ISC schools, which were less restricted, had truly developed their own means of self-evaluation or, whether like maintained schools, they were heavily influenced in their practice by the inspectorate's priorities. The findings from the first part of my research suggested that many ISC schools' aims were comprised of abstract concepts which do not lend themselves to agreed definitions and hence any attempt to evaluate success in relation to these aims was potentially problematic. In my interviews I hoped to discover any ways in which the schools had addressed these issues.

Given that there was no requirement for ISC schools to undertake self-evaluation my first question was to ascertain whether any took place in the school, and if so, the extent to which it was embedded. All of the schools visited undertook some form of self-evaluation. The responses revealed a spectrum of practice ranging from the emergent to the established. Despite the optional nature of self-evaluation within the ISI inspection regime, there appeared to be a connection between the introduction of self-evaluation and the establishment of ISI inspections. All the heads interviewed referred to a link between self-evaluation and their school's inspection with the four schools recently inspected having all made use of the optional ISI self-evaluation form (SEF). Hence, from the outset there was evidence of at least some aspects of self-evaluation emanating from the exercise of authority external to the school rather than arising internally.

In order to conceptualise the responses given during discussion of self-evaluation in the ISC schools visited I devised the model in Figure 5.2 comprising four main categories. Firstly, the *context* within which self-evaluation is framed. This comprises: the individual school's aims as expressed in a formal statement or document such as a prospectus; the school's provision in terms of the curricular and extra-curricular activities, care, and facilities offered; and beliefs about the relative value of criteria relating to quality and to effectiveness in self-evaluation practice, derived from both internal and external sources. Secondly, the *agents* of self-evaluation both internal (staff, parents, pupils, governors) and external (ISI, Ofsted, the Church) were examined.

The *process* of self-evaluation itself was a wide-ranging category, including: the drivers for self-evaluation, both internal and external; the purpose of the evaluation, whether formative or summative as defined by Hamilton, (1976); the cycle or frequency with which self-evaluation was undertaken; the instruments used and the data collected; the criteria chosen used for judging quality; and the style adopted, whether formal or informal. Finally, the *outcome* comprises the use made, if any, of the self-evaluation findings. In the case of formative evaluation this might include reports for internal consumption; documents such as the SEF, for external use in informing a school inspection culminating in an inspection report; planning documents; or specific initiatives. The audience for each of the above might potentially be internal, external, or a combination of both. Both summative and formative evaluation results could potentially be utilised as part of a marketing strategy directed at influencing parental choice.

Figure 5.2 Self-evaluation mode



Context

Details of the aims of the schools studied in this phase of the research: their distinguishing qualities, and salient aspects of their provision, are given in Appendix 8. As discussed earlier, the heads interviewed believed their schools to be unique in one or more of the following areas: climate; provision, most notably of extra-curricular activities; and outcomes in terms of behaviour or achievement. Hence, in any self-evaluation relating to the specific character of the individual school, one would expect to find criteria appropriate to these areas. However, when asked to describe how they evaluated their success with respect to each of their specific aims, with the exception of citing the use of examination results to assess the achievement of academic aims, the heads interviewed frequently experienced some difficulty. There was a tendency to describe provision to meet the aim rather than ways in which the impact that provision had was being assessed. For example one head described at length the programme of *“thinking skills”* lessons which had been put in place at various stages of the school to meet the aim *“Developthe ability to think critically and creatively”*, but did not refer to any means devised of judging the effect of these lessons in promoting creativity or critical thought. Another head stated that the aims informed discussion amongst senior leaders but that their achievement was not explicitly evaluated.

One school had managed to address the evaluation of several aspects of its aims without reference to the inspection framework. Creative development, for example, was evaluated with reference to comments made on a remotely hosted website as part of an international art scheme. Internally devised questionnaires were used to assess emotional development, particularly in a boarding context. In addition, a system of criteria was employed to evaluate pupils' behaviour, their contribution to the school and to the wider community, in order to assess the school's success in enacting its mission of benevolence. In this respect this school had attempted to evaluate abstract concepts such as pupil happiness with pupils deciding for themselves what the terms meant to them, reflecting the subjective interpretation of wellbeing described by White (2002) and de Ruyter (2004).

The evaluation of those aims which were more long term had also proved problematic. Aims such as *“to form young men and women for others”* would presumably require

enquiry into the occupations and lifestyles of former pupils to be evaluated effectively. The school concerned stated that they had not yet managed to develop a means of doing this. Finding a means of judging the extent to which the school had encouraged its pupils *“to develop and use their talents as fully as possible for the greater glory of God”* was even more challenging. The head did refer to some of the occupations and activities undertaken by some former pupils, but no formal audit had been undertaken.

One school, however, had started to formally record the views of former pupils who returned to visit the school. These comments were, of necessity, largely retrospective, expressing opinions on what they had learned from their school experiences and their perceptions of the school’s *“culture”* at some point in the past. Moreover, it is not likely that pupils whose school experiences had been negative would have made a return visit. Hence these comments were potentially biased in favour of the school. These schools’ difficulties echo the point made by White (Barber and White, 1997), concerning the evaluation of a school’s performance with reference to less measurable goals, an issue which is particularly relevant to evaluation in the independent sector where there is often an emphasis on the broader aspects of education.

When questioned about their beliefs concerning general indicators of school quality, heads focussed on four main areas: enjoyment; personal growth; orientation towards the future; and positive outcomes. As previously noted, these criteria differed somewhat from those which influenced Ofsted’s judgements, derived from school-effectiveness research, but did coincide largely with those adopted by ISI. This similarity may not be coincidental. The heads whose schools had recently been inspected had all made use of the inspectorate’s optional SEF to frame their self-evaluation prior to inspection, and one had acknowledged continued use of the SEF as a self-evaluation tool. It may be that ISI, through its consultation with the ISC associations, had genuinely developed a SEF which reflected those areas and indicators of quality which heads considered to be the hallmarks of a good school, or it could be that schools had adopted the ISI model, either consciously or sub-consciously, as being an appropriate tool to judge quality.

One of the attractions of the ISI2 SEF may have been that the school was free to define its own criteria for quality within the ISI framework, (this freedom was withdrawn under the third cycle (ISI3) where definitions of each of the judgement criteria were prescribed by ISI). The popularity of the optional SEF was remarked upon by the spokesperson from ISI who stated that, since its introduction the previous year, it had been used by 98% of schools inspected by ISI. Her predecessor, involved in devising the SEF, stressed that it was not intended to shape the self-evaluation but rather to be “*a summary of your considered views about your school*”. In his view, it was for the school to decide its own approach to self-evaluation. He referred, however, to the influence of Ofsted on early self-evaluation by ISC schools, reflected in the belief that a large quantity of documentation needed to be accumulated during the process. However, there was a more direct link between Ofsted’s practice and self-evaluation in one of the boarding schools, which referred to its care inspections as a source of performance indicators. The other external source of criteria referred to was the Arts Council, whose Artsmark criteria were utilised as a benchmark by the school specialising in the visual and performing Arts.

Agents

The heads interviewed signalled both internal and external agents of evaluation. The external agents mentioned were ISI and the Church or religious order, where appropriate. There was a definite shift in heads’ perceptions of ISI’s role between those interviewed early in the second cycle and those questioned when the details of the forthcoming third cycle were emerging. Earlier interviewees saw ISI’s role as largely positive. However, the establishment of a third inspection cycle, three years earlier than expected, in response to government pressure, and the nature of the proposed amendments to the inspection regime, elicited a negative reaction from those interviewed later.

Initial interviewees referred to ISI’s role in confirming the accuracy of the school’s own self-evaluation through the use of national benchmarks and the conduct of a more objective, professional appraisal of the school’s work in relation to its aims. One referred to the extensive scope of an ISI inspection which he considered more wide-ranging than any evaluation undertaken by the school itself. Affirmation and praise

were seen as offshoots of the inspection process with one head referring to a resulting “*feel good*” factor. However, given that the costs of an inspection were seen as placing a heavy financial burden on schools, (figures of between £10,000 for a day school and £25,000 for a boarding school were quoted in 2008 and 2009 respectively) two of the heads questioned whether the benefit of having external validation of their self-evaluation justified the cost incurred, especially if the inspectorate did not identify any areas for improvement which the school was not already attempting to address. In the words of one of the heads: the inspection was “*pleasant but very expensive*”. ISI inspections were also seen as a stimulant for change, either before an inspection, as in the case where a head used a forthcoming inspection to justify the introduction of self-evaluation, or in implementing improvements to resolve issues raised during an inspection. Two of the heads did, however, call into question the degree of objectivity shown by ISI inspectors with one head referring to an “*excessively positive spin*” given to findings during an inspection in which she had participated as a team member. This may be accounted for by awareness of the marketing implications of inspection reports (Hargreaves, 1995).

With the introduction of the third cycle (ISI3), use of the ISI SEF became compulsory. This included completion of a checklist covering all of the *Independent Schools Standards Regulations*. This change was imminent at the time of the final two interviews and elicited a strong response from both heads, one of whom had just been inspected under the second cycle, and the other for whom inspection was impending. They both saw the proposed changes as detracting from what they believed to be the purposes of the second cycle, summed up by one of them as “*to celebrate the good, identify room for improvement, and support school improvement*”. They both referred to shared concern amongst heads in HMC in their respective regions about the new regime, demonstrating a continuation of HMC’s founding mission to resist government interference, discussed in Chapter 2 (page 48).

Their anxieties focussed on two aspects of the new system both of which are directly relevant to this research study. Firstly, the fear that the reduction in time spent by members of the inspectorate in school, and the heavier reliance on data, might prevent inspectors from fully appreciating an individual school’s character and could

result in a focus on conformity rather than distinctiveness. This was thought inappropriate in a sector which was described by one interviewee as seeking to have “*flavours, colours and patchwork*”. The difficulty in apprehending a school’s ethos in a short space of time had been pointed out by Sabben-Clare (1994), Chair of the HMC Inspections Working Party, and reiterated in an ISI committee paper in the run up to the second cycle of inspections (2005). Secondly, there was perceived to be a shift in ISI’s role, from external evaluator in the light of the school’s aims to agent of government control, through the adoption of a “*tick-box approach*”, which focussed, above all else, on regulatory compliance.

One respondent stated that, in his view, the government considered fulfilment of child protection duties as of greater importance than all other aspects of education. This, he argued, was reflected in the ultimate penalty of the loss of a “*licence to operate*” where a regulatory failing in this area occurred. Thus ISI’s agency was viewed ambivalently. It provided confirmation of the school’s own evaluation findings through external assessment, and affirmation of a school’s success. In addition, the inspectorate acted as a facilitator for change and improvement. On the other hand, heads expressed some doubts about objectivity and perceived a shift from what they considered a positive role to one of control agent mandated by central government. This, they believed, might result in greater conformity to government priorities and a loss of individual distinctiveness.

This indication of an increase in the legislative control over the independent sector, highlighted by Tapper (2003) as part of New Labour’s approach to private education, and consequent threat to individuality, echoed the opinion expressed by the first representative of ISI that the aims of ISC schools were becoming more uniform as a result of government initiatives and legislation. The final phase of this research, comparing a sample of ISI inspection reports during the second and third cycles with those produced by Ofsted, over a similar time frame, examined this issue and the extent to which these heads’ fears over regulation were justified.

Discussion of the internal agents of self-evaluation pinpointed the exercise of bureaucratic authority, referred to by Wrong (1970) as managerial authority, in self-evaluation activities in all of the schools studied. In every case line managers at varying

levels directed at least some of the aspects of self-evaluation either through appraisal schemes or departmental or sectional reviews. Headteachers together with those with senior responsibility for academic, pastoral or boarding provision had final oversight of self-evaluation processes or outcomes and invariably devised the criteria and format of self-evaluation, although in most cases consultation with teaching staff was alleged to have taken place. This mirrors the top-down approach to accountability which currently characterises educational policy (Baroutsis, 2016). With the exception of the chaplain in two schools, and the bursar in another, support staff did not appear to be involved. In a few instances, most notably where academic achievement was concerned, evaluations were conducted by committees. In two schools these committees were sub-committees of the governing body, highlighting once more their traditional role as final arbiters, in this case of quality. In one school, however, the marketing committee was involved in identifying areas for improvement emphasising the link between a school's activities and its position in the marketplace.

As was the case with the formulation of a school's aims, parents and pupils seemed to play a less significant role than staff in a school's self-evaluation. Parental involvement consisted mainly of the completion of questionnaires devised either by the school or by ISI, although one school did run focus groups and also consulted prospective parents who had declined a place at the school, providing further evidence of a link in some schools not only between evaluation and marketing to prospective parents, but also its role in meeting customer satisfaction. No mention was made by any school of parental intervention in devising criteria or the format for self-evaluation. In the three schools where pupil contributions were mentioned, these were all either through the administration of a questionnaire or through meetings of the school council or equivalent body, whose deliberations were brought to the attention of senior staff. As in the Macbeath (1999) study, pupils had raised issues of importance to them which did not necessarily reflect the priorities of the school staff. Concerns such as the provision of toilets, sports opportunities, school uniform, or coursework arrangements were all cited as examples. In these instances the pupil discussions did not form part of a formal self-evaluation process but did prompt action or a response on the part of those in authority. Externally devised pupil questionnaires were also available as part

of the ISI inspection procedures. In one instance regular use was made of the school's own questionnaires to ascertain pupil views on boarding or induction procedures.

In the case of the school affiliated to a religious order, self-evaluation was also subject to external examination by the Order's representative, who visited annually to ensure the fulfilment of the school's mission with respect to the Order's philosophy of education. In this instance, a separate SEF was required to be completed which formed the basis of discussion between the Order's delegate and various members of the school, including pupils. Authority in this instance clearly rested with the Order, which judged the school in the light of its own particular standpoint. In evaluating the school it was, in fact, also evaluating its own success. The 'self' here was not only the school, but also the Order itself. Consequently, the school's independence in determining its purposes, and in appraising the fulfilment of its aims, was necessarily constrained by its very designation as a school with a specific religious objective.

Process

In addition to being an aid to marketing, a variety of purposes in undertaking self-evaluation was evident during my discussions. In most cases, preparation for inspection was seen as one of the principal motives, at least in the first instance. The other major driver was a wish to develop or improve some aspect of the school's provision, with self-evaluation seen as an aid to strategic or development planning at school or sectional level. The influence of business practice, noted in the reasons given for aims definition, was also in evidence when undertaking self-evaluation.

The drivers for self-evaluation were found to operate both externally and internally through hierarchical structures of accountability. Even in the school which purported to be democratic in style, some degree of hierarchical authority was evident. Internally, bureaucratic authority was exercised in a hierarchical way by line managers. Members of staff in all the schools were considered ultimately responsible to the head and governors. Externally, schools were held accountable through the inspectorate acting as agents of government. Where a school was affiliated to a religious order, accountability to that body also drove self-evaluation, reflecting the exercise of a different form of bureaucratic authority through the offices of the Order's representative. The scope of self-evaluation activities varied from school to school

encompassing: aspects of provision including teaching; facilities; pastoral care; extra-curricular opportunities; levels of achievement; pupil behaviour; parental satisfaction. In one case the evaluation of new initiatives was cited. In only one instance was there a specific reference to a desire to evaluate the school's success in meeting its aims.

All six schools undertook some form of self-evaluation annually, although in most cases there was a change in the format or process from year to year. A variety of instruments was used as detailed in Appendix 7, often in different combinations. Most schools used three or four of the tools identified in any one year. The variety of self-evaluation instruments used by ISC schools stands in contrast to the more uniform approach adopted in the maintained sector, closely tied to externally devised frameworks or datasets such as those provided in the Autumn Package and the school's Performance and Assessment reports (PANDA), supplied to each state school by the DfES (Reed and Street, 2002), and later by RAISEonline (Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through school Self-Evaluation).

The ensuing data fell into the following categories:

- Numerical data such as examination results; statistics derived from questionnaire responses or percentages indicating participation rates in activities; number of detentions or suspensions; rate of parental complaint
- Documents such as reports, summaries, completed pro-formas
- Minutes of discussions, meetings
- Comments made through interactive media

Outcome

The outcome from self-evaluation in all six schools was a formal document produced either internally or externally. Those schools which had experienced a second cycle inspection had used self-evaluation as an aid to completion of a SEF, which, in turn, formed a basis for inspection culminating in a written report. Each written report included a number of recommendations for improvement. The report was subsequently distributed to all parents and made available for public scrutiny on ISI's website. Schools were required to produce an action plan in response to the report's findings. In the case of the school inspected by a religious body, the report ensuing from the SEF, and official visitation and discussion, resulted in an externally produced

report destined solely for an internal audience. In addition to any response to the recommendations from the inspectorate, the schools in the study had used their self-evaluation findings to inform their own development planning and had produced improvement plans at varying levels, from the departmental to the whole school strategic. Such plans served as the basis for future evaluations, in the words of one interviewee, checking against a written plan was a means of knowing they were “*going in the right direction*”. Hence evaluation in all these schools was essentially formative, designed to promote further development or improvement (Baert et al., 1997).

However, there was some evidence of a summative perspective (Baert et al. 1997), both in the reflections of former pupils, and in the presentation of some of the findings of self-evaluation for marketing purposes. Copies of the most recent inspection report detailing the school’s strengths and weaknesses, as evaluated against the inspection framework, or details of external examination results, were available on most of the schools’ websites. The information published was, arguably, not the direct product of self-evaluation, the results of which appeared to have been only disseminated internally. In fact, even internal communication of findings was not without problems. One head commented on the difficulty she had experienced in deciding the extent to which negative comments on teaching within particular departments should be shared with the staff as a whole.

Benefits and drawbacks of self-evaluation

Given that self-evaluation was an optional process, I asked heads for their views on the benefits and drawbacks as this could have a bearing on their evaluation practice and the extent to which this was self-determined. In general the advantages were thought to outweigh the disadvantages. The principal benefits identified were as follows:

- The development of a less complacent attitude and a more analytical, questioning approach to all aspects of school life, thus moving away from the danger of being a “*cruising school*” as identified by Stoll and Fink (1998).
- The sense of teamwork and synergy generated amongst staff during self-evaluation activities.
- The provision of evidence of both successes and weaknesses for both internal and external audiences.

- A stimulus to planning for development and improvement.
- Preparation for inspection.

The following drawbacks were also articulated:

- The demands on resources, especially time, echoing those identified by Bubb and Earley (2008) and Alvik, (1996b).
- Limited expertise in evaluation techniques, especially on the part of governors, substantiating Vanhoof et al.'s (2011) claim that it cannot be assumed that schools have the professional competencies required to implement an effective self-evaluation.
- Misinterpretation of questionnaire responses resulting from a misunderstanding of questions on the part of respondents.
- The obligation, under ISI3, to evaluate the school in the light of externally devised criteria which reflected government priorities rather than those of the school.
- Lack of suitable instruments to evaluate less tangible aspects of a school such as ethos.
- The potential negative impact on self-esteem when areas of weakness are identified, which was a concern of the two female heads, who seemed particularly sensitive to the issue.

The future

Finally, heads were asked how they envisaged the future of self-evaluation in their schools. All six heads intended to continue some form of self-evaluation regardless of whether they were facing an inspection or not, an indication that they believed self-evaluation to be a beneficial process per se. In most cases the process was evolutionary with schools amending their approach from year to year. Four of the heads identified specific aspects of their evaluative practice which they wished to improve. These included the refinement of performance indicators, a review of evaluation instruments, and the need for questionnaire administration over subsequent years to establish a more accurate pattern of results than from a one-off survey. The imminence of the introduction of ISI3 and the compulsory SEF, which would require constant updating, prompted comments from the later interviewees on

the need for ongoing self-evaluation and the requirement to work to a prescribed format.

The concept of independence

These interviews shed further light on the concept of independence as it was constructed in ISC secondary schools between 2007 and 2009. Each of the schools had set its own aims without apparent reference to those set out in the National Curriculum for the maintained sector, although one cannot rule out the possibility of indirect influence. Institutional uniqueness was considered a characteristic of their schools by all the heads interviewed, thus supporting the conclusions drawn from the aims survey analysis as regards the significance of distinctiveness between schools. The need for survival in the market-place, by creating a distinct niche, may have been a motivation for this as much as any belief in the desirability for freedom expressed by individuality.

The nature of this uniqueness can be said to lie in certain aspects of pupil behaviour and achievement. In the individual schools, in addition to climate, breadth of provision, with particular reference to extra-curricular programmes, was viewed by heads as a distinguishing feature of independence, further supporting the survey findings. Individuality was valued not only as a characteristic of the schools themselves, but also emphasized in their approach to pupils. The latter was portrayed as client-centred, responsive to particular needs, respectful of difference, and appreciative of varying levels of achievement in a range of spheres. Such an image was likely to strengthen the school's marketing position given its potential to appeal to parents who see educational decision-making as a means of maximising their child's life chances (Davey, 2012). The susceptibility to change of the language in which aims were expressed, even when the underlying principles remained immutable, also emerged as a key indicator of the responsiveness of ISC schools' goals to external influences.

Another facet of independence was revealed in approaches to self-evaluation. Unlike their maintained sector counterparts in the Davies and Rudd (2001) study, who had, for the most part, adopted ready-made toolkits for self-evaluation, individual ISC schools appeared to prefer to devise their own instruments to suit their chosen

emphases rather than those of external agents. They thus expressed their independence from the mainstream. Indicators of quality also differed from those which dominated evaluation in the maintained sector, with value placed on those aspects of education which were less susceptible to measurement, such as personal development and enjoyment. However, evaluation of the success of such priorities was potentially problematic, given the lack of suitable tools to measure the long-term impact of the educational experience offered, and the difficulties resulting from the abstract nature of some of the concepts involved.

Moreover, as Hargreaves (1995) in his discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of inspection *vis-à-vis* self-evaluation points out, teachers are not trained in matters relating to school audits and lack the wider perspective that comes from working across a wide spectrum of schools. Consequently, they tend to be parochial. Their judgements, therefore, may not be sufficiently detached and the conclusions drawn from their self-evaluation activities may be open to question. It should be noted, nevertheless, that, at the time of the research, unlike Ofsted inspectors in the maintained sector, the ISI inspectors were, for the most part, serving heads and senior teachers. Thus, it could be argued that many had the opportunity to develop a wider perspective than that of their own institution, although not necessarily as wide as that of those involved in inspection on a full-time basis.

The fear of increasing uniformity, and consequent loss of distinctiveness resulting from additional regulation and control of the independent sector through inspection was seen as a threat to ISC schools' independence. This echoes Hargreaves' argument (1995) that inspection promotes a particular model of a good school which militates against diversity. Non-conformity to the model is seen as reprehensible deviance which requires suppression. The protracted battle between Summerhill and Ofsted over the school's right to remain open would seem to illustrate this point (Stronach, 2006). Moreover, a potential change in the role of ISI was envisaged by some heads as resulting in a diminution of the inspectorate's agency in stimulating school improvement and providing affirmation of the appropriateness of the education offered.

The ISI was viewed as supportive of the sector's independence, but the possibility of it becoming increasingly an instrument of government control, working to an external agenda, was anticipated by later respondents. The bureaucratic authority of the head and governors was accepted in these schools, as demonstrated in the definition of aims and the conduct of evaluation, but the legitimacy of the increasingly bureaucratic authority of government, enacted through the inspectorate, was called into question. The heads interviewed all spoke with passion and commitment. Their belief in the value and individuality of their schools' purposes and offering was clearly apparent in all cases. Later respondents expressed the desire for independent schools, in the words of Macbeath (1999:1), to "*speak for themselves*" rather than be judged according to a set model, which they viewed as externally determined for political motives.

It must be stressed that the dimensions of independence analysed above were very much the expression of views held internally within ISC schools, analysed by someone who, by virtue of her position as head of an independent school, could be said to have a positive approach to these institutions. Nevertheless, some of these views are not confined to those working in the independent sector. Support for the claims made by the heads interviewed about the strengths of their schools can be found in the Children's Commissioner, Maggie Atkinson's contribution to the 'great education debate' (2014), conducted online by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), entitled: "*What is education for?*"

Though appointed by a Labour Government, and educated in the maintained sector, she expresses approval of the concept of education she considers to be promoted in independent schools. She highlights the identification and nurturing of individual strengths, the development of young people with a sense of self and self-worth and the skills and motivation to continue learning throughout their lives, as admirable characteristics of the independent sector which she believes should be adopted by all schools, not just those that are independent. She is critical of a view which values only academic knowledge and qualifications and seeks to elucidate other indicators of a 'good' education. Pring (2012b) voices a similar criticism of the narrow concept of learning currently dominant in political thinking about education in his attack on the

English Baccalaureate (EBacc) performance measure. He deplores its neglect of the arts or practical subjects in favour of subjects considered academic, although he makes no comparison between the two sectors as regards its potential impact.

There would seem to be a contradiction between such initiatives in assessment and the vision articulated by Michael Gove (2014), the former Secretary of State for Education. He argued for greater breadth in maintained sector education to mirror that found in independent schools. He referred to the availability of extra-curricular activities as “*par for the course in the private sector*”, a situation he wished to see replicated for all children. Furthermore he expressed the wish that the educational experience in the two sectors should become indistinguishable. Educated at one of England’s most elite schools, it is not surprising that he should laud provision from which he himself has benefited.

Failure to address the financial implications and the need for the resources necessary to implement this ideal make it highly unlikely that such a vision will become reality. The ability to charge fees and disburse to parents the costs of activities such as school visits or instrumental tuition in music is what makes such extra-curricular programmes feasible in the independent sector and more difficult, if not impossible, to implement in maintained schools unless heavily supported by government funding. Dorling (2014c) estimated that the per capita expenditure in independent schools was three times that in state schools. Moreover, he claimed that, at the most expensive boarding schools, once school visits are included, costs in fees to parents could reach £50,000 per year, per child (2014b). Wilby (2014) analysed the implications of Gove’s vision in terms of the facilities which typify one of the better known independent schools. Were all maintained schools to be endowed with similar plant, they would occupy 33 million acres, more than half the English countryside. Gove’s vision for two indistinguishable educational sectors is unlikely, therefore, to be fully implemented, thus leaving ISC schools, as they are currently constituted, still open to charges of elitism.

Despite recent increases in bursaries towards school fees documented in the *Census* (ISC, 2014b), which stated that 33.4% of pupils in ISC schools are in receipt of financial assistance, 85% of which was supplied by schools themselves, (all of the interviewee’s schools did have means-tested bursary schemes) the very activities which make up the

breadth of extra-curricular programmes, such as music, sport, visits and excursions, all carry an additional expense which many would perceive as beyond the reach of a large sector of society. It may be that assistance was offered towards the costs of these activities, but with the exception of one school's free instrumental music tuition, this was not immediately evident. This may be all the more significant if we accept Berliner's (2011) view that the emphasis on high-stakes testing and qualifications which characterises British education has marginalised the teaching of the visual and performing arts and humanities in the maintained sector thus making such subject areas almost inaccessible to the poor. This inequality of opportunity represents a challenge for those schools whose aims embrace a commitment to the wider community as it is potentially in conflict with their original charitable purposes.

Chapter summary

This stage of the research explored, by means of semi-structured interviews, the views of a small number of ISC heads on issues pertaining to their aims and their distinctive characteristics, notions of quality in schools, and their own school's approach to self-evaluation including any role played by external agents. The initial stages of the interview sought the heads' confirmation of the validity of my analysis of the concepts encompassed within their schools' aims. I hoped, thereby, to address any problems which may have arisen due to researcher subjectivity which can occur in analysis using grounded theory methodology (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In all six cases there was agreement with my conceptual summary of their schools' purposes, with the occasional addition where aims had been redefined and expanded. Thus, any subjective bias on my part as researcher was not apparent to these heads. This does not rule out, however, the possibility of all our interpretations being skewed as a result of our participation in the work of the independent sector. Some of the heads commented on the significance of the language used to express their aims such that the same underlying concept might be expressed in different ways to separate audiences. The significant role of the head in framing a school's aims, which was apparent in the questionnaire responses, was reinforced by comments made during these interviews, as was the link between aims definition and marketing.

All the heads interviewed believed their schools to have certain unique features. These centred on school climate, often referred to as ethos; offering, described as provision, with particular reference to extra-curricular activities; and outcomes, most noticeably achievement in a range of spheres not merely the academic, and behaviour. The difficulty in defining or measuring uniqueness was emphasized by some of those interviewed. However no mention was made of the potential transience of many of the constituents of distinctiveness.

Heads were asked how they would characterise a 'good' school. The term 'good' was chosen in preference to 'effective' because of the restricted definition of effectiveness in current evaluation practice, with its emphasis on those aspects of schooling most susceptible to measurement (Pring, 2012b; Stoll and Mortimore, 1997). In the opinion of those interviewed, a good school promoted personal growth, provided an educational experience which was enjoyable, orientated towards the future, and resulted in positive outcomes of varying types. The importance of staff happiness and its consequent positive impact on pupils was raised by several heads.

A model for examining self-evaluation practice was devised comprising four elements: context, agents, process and outcome. The context of individual schools varied according to their aims and provision. Despite the range of self-evaluation instruments which had recently been developed in the maintained sector, all the schools studied had preferred to devise their own approaches. This may have been deliberate because these heads preferred different indicators of quality, or due to ignorance of the existence of such toolkits. However, those inspected during the second ISI cycle made use of the optional self-evaluation framework, theoretically linked to the aims of the individual school, which provided a conceptual structure for self-evaluation but not the means by which such self-evaluation should take place. The very existence of this framework could be construed as a limitation on an individual school's independence since, as Hargreaves (1995) points out, organisations need to structure themselves in order to become auditable. However, none of the heads expressed concerns about the restrictiveness of the framework. In general, the heads questioned were able to describe provision to meet different aspects of their aims, but had not always developed means of assessing its efficacy in achieving the school's goals. There was

evidence, in some cases, of the imminence of inspection being the impetus for initiating self-evaluation.

The involvement in the self-evaluation process of a number of different groups internal to the school was identified. Teachers, governors, pupils and parents were all consulted to varying extents. However, the format and content of self-evaluation was determined by those with greatest authority within the school hierarchy, namely the governors, head and senior staff. The role of external agents such as ISI inspectors was viewed as currently positive, resulting in both praise and affirmation of the school's success on the one hand, and school development and improvement on the other, although some reservations were expressed as to the value of such outcomes relative to inspection costs. Moreover, in response to forthcoming changes in the inspection regime, concern was expressed that these characteristics might be lost if ISI became an instrument of government control whose principal purpose was to ensure conformity to regulation. Thus heads feared the potential transfer of authority to determine the purposes and practices of individual independent schools from its traditional locus within the school, or religious group to which it was affiliated, to those in political power at any given time. The nature of self-evaluation would no longer reflect the school's own priorities but those of agents external to the school. This could result in greater uniformity rather than the individuality which those interviewed clearly valued.

A variety of tools were used to undertake an annual evaluation process ranging from analysis of academic results to questionnaires on pastoral issues. Some heads commented on the developmental nature of the self-evaluation process, with new instruments regularly being devised to explore different aspects of the school's work. However, no systematic tool for the examination of the long-term effect of a pupil's education on his or her career choice and progression, or value system was mentioned, yet success in meeting some of the schools' aims could only be effectively judged by some form of longitudinal study. Moreover, only one school mentioned a scheme to evaluate the effectiveness of the promotion of more abstract aims such as respect or courtesy. The outcome of self-evaluation generally took the form of documentation generated both internally and externally, whose use was both summative and formative. The audiences for the results of the evaluation process

ranged from those entirely internal to the school to the public at large, depending on the nature of the evaluation undertaken. There appeared to be a more tenuous link between self-evaluation and inspection than in the maintained sector. In general, heads were very positive about the benefits of self-evaluation, although demands on time and resources, and problems associated with evaluation tools and processes, were seen as drawbacks.

The interviews shed further light on the concept of independence held within ISC schools. This was entirely positive and made no reference to the social implications of the existence of the independent sector. Individuality of purpose, expressed through the schools' aims was considered an important factor lending an institution a sense of its uniqueness. Distinctiveness was considered essential for survival in the market-place. There was a high level of congruence between the findings of the aims survey as regards the importance attributed by ISC schools to individuation, both of the institution and the pupils, and the views expressed during my interviews with heads concerning their school's unique characteristics. Breadth of provision, especially in the extra-curricular sphere, and a supportive, client-centred environment responsive to individual pupils' needs, appeared to be characteristics of independence.

Nevertheless, the diversity of ISC schools was perceived as under threat from government regulation and emerging models of inspection, more closely tied to government priorities. Therefore, the final phase of my research focussed on inspection by comparing the frameworks of Ofsted and ISI, and examining a sample of reports, produced over the period of the interviews, by both inspectorates, to establish whether heads' fears over government interference were justified, identify aspects of similarity and areas of difference in order to elucidate further the dimensions of independence as experienced by ISC schools, and to investigate the evaluation of the more abstract aspects of ISC schools' aims, identified in the first stage of the research, and accorded significance by the heads interviewed in the second phase.

Chapter 6 The Research Phase 3: Inspection Reports

Introduction

The third phase of my research focussed on the role of inspection in evaluating an ISC school's success, as reflected in a small sample of inspection reports. A brief outline of the origins and purposes of the ISI and Ofsted inspection regimes should serve to set the context for this stage of the research. Matthews and Smith (1995), both employees of Ofsted, describe the origins of Ofsted and the present national inspection system, which replaced the previous system of visits from Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or representatives of the Local education Authority (LEA) following the *Education (Schools) Act 1992*. In fact, Courtney (2016) argues that it was specifically set up to replace these bodies. Ofsted's remit was to report to the Secretary of State for Education on the quality of education provided by schools; the standards achieved by pupils; their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development; and the efficiency with which resources were deployed. The inspectorate's role was to evaluate the work of individual schools, reporting on strengths and weaknesses, and whether the school met its targets in terms of learning outcomes, and pupil experiences. Inspection, they argue, served four principal purposes: a means of accountability to parents, pupils and the taxpayer; a check on compliance with statutory requirements; an aid to consumer choice through the publication of reports; a stimulus to improvement by highlighting priorities for development and targets for improvement.

Thomas (1998) traces the origins of Ofsted, firstly, to the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 and the government's belief that schools should be inspected regularly to check its implementation, and secondly to the *Citizen's Charter* (1991) with its emphasis on standards. The National Curriculum programmes of study were highly prescriptive as regards expected learning outcomes. Such a degree of specification may provide a means of external accountability by setting out clear, fixed, learning guidelines, but it does render more qualitative aspects of education such as pupil/teacher relationships, curricular inventiveness, original forms of assessment and creative ways of knowing, subsidiary (Brancaleone and O'Brien, 2011) or causes schools to neglect areas such as pupil health or engagement with the community

(Courtney, 2016). This argument is particularly pertinent to my research since independent schools are not obliged to follow the National Curriculum and hence are, theoretically in a position to be more open to the more qualitative aspects of education such as pupil/teacher relationships and creative approaches to curriculum, design, learning and assessment. In fact, one of the representatives from ISI, whom I had interviewed, suggested that a more innovative and experimental approach was one of the characteristics which distinguished the independent from the maintained sector. My examination of ISC inspection reports was intended to show if they appeared to reflect greater school independence than those produced by Ofsted.

The ISI was established in 2000 and replaced the separate inspection schemes run by the ISC associations. At the time of this research, inspection of ISC schools was required under the terms of the *Education Act 2002*, and *Education and Skills Act 2008*. ISI inspections are monitored by Ofsted, which produces a brief annual report on the standard of ISI's work. The requirement that the inspectorate be monitored by what is, in effect, a branch of government raises questions as to the extent to which it is truly autonomous. My comparison of Ofsted and ISI reports was intended to explore this issue. The inspection handbook (ISI 2003b) stated that the prime purposes of inspection were to check legal compliance and to aid the improvement of the quality of education provided. There was no reference to the goals of accountability (other than to government) and assisting consumer choice, described by Matthews and Smith (1995). The publication of ISI reports on the organisation's website, and the required distribution to parents of pupils at the school inspected, suggest that such purposes were also served, if not explicitly.

The third research phase

I undertook a brief analysis of the most recent inspection report of each of the six schools, which were the focus of the second part of my research, as a means of obtaining an additional perspective on those aspects of independence highlighted in the first two research stages, namely: the individuation of both the institution in terms of climate, offering and social commitment, and of the pupil in terms of the dispositions and competencies developed by the school and the concern expressed by

the heads interviewed that their independence was being constrained by ISI acting as the agent of government. Furthermore, I examined the reports with a view to establishing whether the indicators of quality highlighted by the heads I interviewed were included in ISI reports. I also searched the reports for any reference to those unique characteristics of their schools which the heads interviewed had singled out, as this would support the proposal that individuation was one of the defining aspects of the independence enjoyed by ISC schools. Finally, the inspection reports were examined in the light of the possible differences in aims, between certain categories of schools, found during the aims survey analysis. These reports were ultimately considered as an indicator of the extent of any constraints on independence derived from an inspection regime which, though theoretically autonomous, was monitored by, and answerable to, Ofsted, a government agency, thus potentially rendering it an agent of bureaucratic authority rather than of the authority traditionally derived from the ISC schools' aims and philosophy.

Details of the six schools whose reports were examined are given in Appendix 8. Reference to individual reports is made by using the Roman numerals (i) to (vi) rather than the school's original number, to distance the reports from the interviewees. My examination of the reports was undertaken in three stages. Firstly, I briefly compared these reports with a sample of six Ofsted reports from schools in the south-east and the Midlands (two of the areas where the ISC schools studied were located), produced over the same period of time as the ISI reports, so as to highlight major areas of similarity or difference between the two inspectorates. These schools were labelled with the letters A to F. In this way, I hoped to determine whether ISI inspections followed the same pattern as those of Ofsted, and reflected the same view of educational quality and purpose. A more in-depth analysis would be required if a detailed comparison between the two inspectorates' approach were to be undertaken. Secondly, I examined the ISI reports with reference to those distinguishing features of independence which had emerged during the aims survey, namely climate or ethos, the school's offering or provision, personal development of the individual pupil, especially in terms of spirituality and moral values, to establish whether they were also features of the reports. Their inclusion would justify ISI's claims that, although

following a set framework, their inspections were conducted in the light of schools' aims, which would distinguish them from maintained sector inspections. Moreover, I hoped to determine whether the inspection reports made reference to some of the more abstract aims identified in the survey, and how these concepts had been interpreted. In addition, I sought to establish whether those indicators of quality and distinguishing characteristics which heads had identified during interviews were recognised by the inspectorate. If this were the case, then ISI could be said to have a role in the process of institutional individuation, identified in earlier parts of the research as an essential component of ISC schools' independence. Moreover, their remit would be broader, and the authority exerted would extend further, than was the case with their maintained sector counterparts, who were acting on behalf of the government.

The maintained sector sample of schools in the first stage of the analysis included one Church of England School and one Roman Catholic school. Several of the maintained schools had a particular specialist status. Individual schools specialised in the Performing Arts, Modern Foreign Languages, Technology, The Arts and Technology. I considered these features to be significant as they gave those maintained schools the scope to differentiate themselves from other schools, as independent schools can, and I was interested to establish whether these opportunities to assert uniqueness within the maintained sector were evident in their inspection reports, and constituted criteria for judgement.

All the inspection reports reviewed were produced during the period 2006-2010. In the academic year 2009-2010 both ISI and Ofsted changed their inspection frameworks, hence five of the reports in each category followed the earlier framework, but the most recent report in both reviews followed a modified framework. The inspection frameworks are summarised in Appendix 6. A change in reporting style was most evident in the later Ofsted report where there were more instances of exemplification to illustrate a judgement than in earlier reports. An additional section entitled "*Views of parents and carers*" had been inserted, containing a short paragraph, and table of responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The main difference in the most recent

ISI report was in the length. It was shorter overall than earlier reports, and, hence, individual sections were briefer.

The frameworks and inspection procedures

The general areas covered by the two earlier frameworks were similar with the exception of *spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, links with parents and the community* and *governance*, which were separate elements of the ISI framework, rather than being part of a wider area as in the Ofsted framework. The juxtaposition of achievement with learning in the ISI framework, and with standards in that of Ofsted, reflects a difference in perspective which is analysed further below.

Several differences between the conduct of Ofsted and ISI inspections were immediately apparent, which are relevant to the focus of my research. Firstly, ISI inspections were longer than those of Ofsted. All the Ofsted inspections took place over two days with the exception of the reduced tariff inspection, which was completed within the space of one day. Those ISI inspections which took place during the second cycle lasted four days, with the one undertaken during the third cycle lasting a total of five days, spread over two visits. Thus, ISI inspectors were able to spend longer in the school itself than their Ofsted counterparts, and had, therefore, greater scope to base their judgements, not only on documentation produced by the school in addition to nationally comparative data, but also to a larger extent on evidence gained through personal experience during activities such as pupil and staff interviews, lesson observations, work scrutinies, and visits to extra-curricular activities. Thus, there was a greater opportunity to familiarise themselves with any distinctive features.

The reports – format and content

Throughout the period under review, both inspectorates used a four point scale for each of their judgements. However, Ofsted inspectors made use of numerical grades 1-4, (the meaning of which is explained at the beginning of each report), and explicitly stated the numerical grade for each judgement both in the main body of the report and in summary tabular form at the end, whereas the ISI inspectorate expressed their

judgements in words only (excellent, good, satisfactory, poor) and provided no summary table. The use of a tabular summary appears to emphasise the authority and weight of the inspectors' judgements and creates the impression of a more top-down approach as there is no scope for different shades of judgement to be expressed. Nor can judgements be qualified or mitigated as in the following examples from ISI reports:

"The quality of teaching is usually good and sometimes excellent." (i)

"The quality of teaching is good overall, and in some lessons the teaching was outstanding." (iii)

Both types of report included a section which summarised the inspection findings and contained recommendations for improvement, although the language used by each inspectorate differed. Ofsted's summary was entitled *"The overall effectiveness of the school"* which was graded, followed by the main findings, with recommendations entitled *"What the school should do to improve further"*. In the last report examined, the title had been amended to *"Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?"* This was graded. In addition, in the later report, a grade indicating the school's capacity for sustained improvement was included before the text, which concluded with a section entitled *"What the school needs to do to improve further"*. Both the summary and the recommendations for improvement were placed immediately after the description of the school and before the judgements and commentaries on specific aspects of the school's work.

ISI's summary was entitled *"Conclusions and Next Steps"* for second cycle inspections, and *"The success of the school and action points"* for the third cycle inspection. In the second cycle reports, the summary was positioned at the end of the whole report, a position which could be said to justify the choice of title. However, in the third cycle report the summary was given a more prominent position at the start of the report, mirroring Ofsted's practice. Neither cycle of ISI reports contained an overall scalar judgement, but second cycle reports opened with a statement judging the school's success in meeting its aims, establishing a link between the inspection process and the particular purposes of an individual school. The difference in language used by the two inspectorates was marked. Ofsted's use of words such as *"effectiveness"* *"needs"* and *"should"*, and of numerical grades, implied a more managerial approach than that of ISI, where the language used was softer and more positive. This possibly accounts for

the comments made by two heads at interview regarding the possible bias towards the sector on the part of ISI, which may be attributable to the fact that peer review is a feature of their inspection process. Ofsted's use of grades, to judge effectiveness, in the overall summary, contrasts with ISI's judgements relating to the school's achievement of its aims. The former reflects an approach which is normative. This was particularly evident in the most recent report seen where data concerning the grades given to schools nationally were also included.

The greater emphasis on the individuality of each school is most apparent in the differences between the opening sections of the two different types of report. Ofsted's initial section is entitled "*Description of the school*", which is a more neutral heading than ISI's "*Characteristics of the school*", which appears to allow for greater distinctiveness. The difference in length of these introductory paragraphs is noticeable, with Ofsted's ranging from 74 words to 137 words, whereas the ISI reports had introductory sections of 414 to 670 words for second cycle reports, and 340 for the third cycle report. Clearly, the greater length provided the opportunity for an approach more tailored to the individual school. Statements in this section of both sets of reports were factual.

Ofsted's reports included statements about the size of the school, the school's religious affiliation, where appropriate, the pupils' ethnic and socio-economic background, and factors considered indicators of disadvantage such as the number of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), or learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), or those entitled to free school meals, in relation to national averages (Gorard et al. 2003). Where the school had specialist status this was stated alongside any nationally recognised award which the school had achieved, such as the Artsmark Gold Award. Where there had been recent major changes in the nature of the school or its buildings these were briefly described.

ISI reports started with a brief outline of the individual school's history, which in some cases dated back several hundred years, and a statement of the school's aims or philosophy. These descriptions serve to emphasise the uniqueness of each individual school or the traditional aspect of its provision. Precise details are given of the size of the roll and the number of pupils with EAL or LDD, accompanied by a general

description of pupils' ethnic and socio-economic background. No national comparators are included for these characteristics, thereby distancing the school from the national system. However, such comparators are used to describe the ability profile of the school's pupils and their expected level of achievement e.g.

"The results of nationally standardised tests across the school indicate that pupils' average ability is well above average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results will be well above the average for all maintained secondary schools." (i)

Any major changes or developments since the last inspection are noted in this section of the report. Some of the reports contained a description of the school's buildings or facilities. These statements also serve to personalise the report to the individual school and reinforce the impression of independence.

As noted above, the content of the two types of report also differs considerably with reference to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC), links with parents, and also to governance. In the case of SMSC, which emerged in the aims survey as a key constituent of ISC schools' goals, commentaries are brief in the Ofsted reports, ranging from one to four short sentences contained within the section on personal development and well-being, e.g.

"Good social and moral awareness is evident in the way most students behave around the school. However, in a small minority of lessons disruptive behaviour affects learning. Spiritual and cultural development is well supported by good assemblies and vibrant displays, much of it the students' own work." (A)

In the ISI reports, however, a whole section of the report is dedicated to this aspect, with an introductory paragraph containing the overall judgement, followed by a separate paragraph and judgement for each constituent element of SMSC. The length of this section is typically between 700 and 900 words, for second cycle reports, with the third cycle report being just under 500. The contrast between the emphasis given to this aspect of education in the two inspectorates' reports is striking, and may reflect the independent sector's freedom to give greater recognition to aspects of education such as personal development for which there is no nationally recognised measure such as Key Stage test results, or examinations such as GCSE or A-level and, hence, no easily available means of generating comparative data for use in evaluation.

Governance was given much greater prominence in the ISI reports, where it was the subject of a subsection of typically some 300-450 words, although the third cycle's subsection was shorter (244 words). The effectiveness of governance is judged in relation to the school's achievement of its aims, strategic planning, financial management, and the oversight of areas such as welfare, health and safety, staff recruitment and key policies. Some of the reports contained comments relating to the committee structures or the areas of expertise or background of members of the governing body, which served to personalise the descriptions of individual schools. The Ofsted reports did not contain a separate subsection focussing on governance; commentaries on governance were subsumed under the heading "*leadership and management*", and ranged between 25 and 70 words in length for two-day inspections, with the reduced tariff comment consisting of 18 words. They comprised brief statements which, nevertheless, contained several judgements such as:

"Governors provide excellent support and challenge to the senior team and the headteacher. They understand the school well by making regular visits to lessons and through their highly effective committees." (B)

The greater emphasis on governance in independent schools is a further reflection of autonomy, given that individual governing bodies have direct responsibility for their school, in the absence of a local authority or agent of government, to whom the school is directly accountable.

The section on links with parents in the ISI reports covers responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and the degree of parental satisfaction with the school, the various means of communication between the school and parents including opportunities to attend meetings or be involved in the life of the school, newsletters, the website, and reports on pupil progress. The school's approach to handling parental complaints is also evaluated. Given that a significant proportion of ISC secondary schools have a boarding element, with pupils whose parents may live at a considerable distance or overseas, there may be a perceived need for greater emphasis on the school's links with its parents than would be the case for a school serving a local area. It is also unsurprising that, as the parents are paying fees for their children's education, reference to parental involvement features more strongly. In fact, the omission from

the inspection report of a letter to pupils, which was a feature of the Ofsted reports, emphasises the adult nature of the perceived audience for ISI reports.

Other less striking areas of difference were found in the sections on curricular and extra-curricular provision. Since maintained sector schools are legally obliged to follow the National Curriculum, it appeared to be taken as read that teaching in those subjects was provided, as no specific reference was made to the legal requirements. However, ISI reports did reflect the legal requirements which govern the curriculum in independent schools (ISSR Standard 1), either by direct reference to the obligation such as “.....all required areas of experience are covered.” (ii), or by referring specifically to those areas as in:

“...the school is successful in promoting linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, aesthetic and creative development and pupils’ acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy.” (i)

The importance accorded to activities beyond the formal curriculum in the two types of report also differed. Vocabulary such as: “enriched”, “enrichment”, “opportunities” occurred in every ISI report seen and presented this aspect of provision in a very positive light. There were references in some reports to an:

“exceptional range of excellent extra-curricular activities” (v),

“a rich and diverse extra-curricular programme” (ii),

which strengthened this impression. Detailed examples were given of the activities on offer including sports, music, drama, outdoor activities, fieldwork, residential and overseas visits, cultural visits, links with schools overseas, links with a local university, fundraising, voluntary and community work, participation in national programmes such as Young Enterprise, the Duke of Edinburgh’s or CREST award schemes and, in the case of schools with a religious affiliation, activities associated with their beliefs, such as retreats. Specific exemplification of the activities on offer was frequently given to illustrate the variety available and the more unusual nature of some of the offerings e.g. “plumbing”, “circus skills”, “canoe-building”, “medics club”, “climbing” and “karate”. These statements support the earlier finding that breadth of offering beyond the taught curriculum was a hallmark of independence.

Ofsted reports contained a brief commentary on the non-curricular aspects of provision. These were also presented positively using similar language to ISI:

"The school provides an excellent range of after school clubs and visits to enrich the curriculum." (C)

"A significant strength is extra-curricular provision that involves almost all the students in the school and contributes to enjoyment and achievement." (B)

However, the degree of exemplification evident in the ISI reports was not found in most of those produced by Ofsted. (School B being the exception). Furthermore, no reference was made by Ofsted inspectors to levels of achievement in these activities, whereas in the section entitled *"Pupils' learning and achievements"* all the ISI reports contained examples of pupil achievement outside the formal curriculum, and judgements on the level of success achieved:

"Extra-curricular success is exceptional. Pupils achieve outstanding individual and team success in drama, music and sport, but their major achievement is in service to others." (ii)

"The school has a strong list of individual and team achievements." (i)

"Boys are outstandingly successful individually and corporately in a wide range of academic and extra-curricular activities." (v).

Reference was made to success in national competitions in areas such as mathematics, engineering, science Olympiads, debating, public speaking, or to individual success such as gaining a place in the National Youth Orchestra or National Youth Choir. In contrast, in the corresponding Ofsted report section, entitled *"Achievement and standards"*, or, in the case of the most recent report, *"Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils"*, no reference to achievement in extra-curricular activities was made, with achievement being reported solely in terms of success in the GCSE examinations, and in earlier reports, in Key Stage 3 tests. These findings are, perhaps, a reflection of the narrowness of focus which, Berliner (2011) argues, has occurred with the increasing significance accorded to high-stakes testing, in recent years, in both the United States of America and Great Britain, with conceptions of a 'good' school based on measurable, standardised outcomes (Courtney, 2016).

The distinctions in emphasis indicate a different perspective between the two sectors as to what is recognised as achievement. In the maintained sector, only those achievements which are measured in terms of national standards, such as GCSE, are accorded significance. Such achievements produce data which are used to make direct comparisons between schools (Harris, 2007) and serve as a basis for many of Ofsted's

judgements. In ISC schools, achievement is not only considered in terms of measures which produce comparative data for particular cohorts of pupils, in a narrow range of curricular areas, but in much broader terms, which may encompass group or individual success, in widely varying fields.

The difference in perspective on what constitutes achievement in the two sectors reflects a dissimilar view of the purposes of education, lending support to the argument that an emphasis on data-yielding testing was putting pressure on maintained schools to focus on certain curricular areas leaving little scope for individual approaches or new initiatives (Perryman, 2009) or time for children to pursue their own interests or develop particular areas of strength (Berliner, 2011). In the case of the independent sector, schools and the inspectorate appear to accord greater significance to personal development and achievement at an individual level in a range of areas. In the maintained sector the focus is on standards achieved by cohorts of pupils in academic work. The evidence in inspection reports supports further the notion that the concepts of excellence and high standards found in the aims survey and heads' interviews referred to a broad spectrum of activities.

In addition to comparing the overall content and length of the two types of report, I also examined the language used in two areas of the reports which are relevant to the issue of independence or individuality in the schools concerned. Firstly, I looked at the requirement to comply with legal obligations, or to conform to expected norms or standards which was a particular concern of the heads I interviewed. I have called this category *compliance*. Secondly, I analysed those areas where reference was made to national comparisons as a means of describing individual schools initially, and later in the report, judging their performance. I have called this category *comparison*.

Compliance

The language of compliance is characterised in the ISI reports by the use of a variety of nouns, which, in this context, refer to specific requirements of the ISSR, such as *"policies", "procedures", "practices", "regulatory requirements", "legal obligations", "legal compliance", "risk assessments", "training", "measures", "record", "register"*, which are qualified by a wide range of adjectives or adverbial phrases implying judgement such as: *"robust", "implemented successfully", "accurately maintained"*,

“correctly kept”, “in place”, “appropriate”, “necessary”, “relevant”, “effective”, “efficiently”, “thorough”, “comprehensive”, “rigorous”, “suitable”, “discharged very diligently”, “fully compliant”, “in order”, “regularly evaluated”, “monitored”, “checked and reviewed”.

In the Ofsted reports a much more limited range of vocabulary is used. Nouns such as *“arrangements”* (e.g. arrangements for safeguarding), *“systems”, “training”, “legislation”, “statutory requirements”, “vetting”, “risk assessments”* were used, qualified by phrases such as *“rigorously implemented”, “well documented”, “diligently managed”, “secure”, “strong”, “good”, “securely met”* or just simply *“met”*.

There was a marked difference too in the frequency with which the language of compliance was used. ISI reports contained far more references to meeting statutory obligations than those produced by Ofsted. (This may account for the greater range of different vocabulary used). The concluding sentence of each section of all the second cycle reports contained a reference to compliance to the Independent Schools Standards Regulations relevant to that aspect e.g.

“The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation (Standards 4 and 5). (i)

“The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.” (i)

In addition, the very final sentence of the *Conclusions and Next Steps* section stated whether any action was required in respect of the regulatory requirements.

The areas where compliance was specifically alluded to, in the main body of the text in each report, were as follows: (the language of compliance is underlined and the judgement is in bold)

- The curriculum e.g. reference to *“an **appropriate** written curriculum policy”* (vi)
- Care of pupils – the requirements deriving from *Every Child Matters* (ECM) and the consequent *Children Act* (2004) are mainly relevant to this section. Hence, a substantial proportion of the text in this part of each report used the language of compliance. The areas of compliance covered in each of the reports seen were as follows; anti-bullying policies; child protection and safeguarding procedures and training; risk assessment including for school visits; first aid policies and procedures; admission and attendance registers. In addition, schools were required

to conform to the *Special Needs and Disability Act* (SENDA), 2001. Every reference to a legal requirement was accompanied by a judgement on the suitability of the school's response. The following examples illustrate the principal requisite areas of legal compliance and the language used in respect of these regulations:

*"An **effective** anti-bullying policy operates."* (vi)

*"The school's child protection policy is **comprehensive.**"* (vi)

*"The safeguarding policy and procedures **are compliant** with regulations and implemented successfully."* (ii)

*"The designated child protection officer has undergone **appropriate** training."* (i)

*"The school has an **appropriate** assessment of risk."* (vi)

*"Admissions and attendance registers are **well maintained.**"* (v)

*"**All necessary** measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards." (ii & iii)*

*"The school has an **appropriate** plan for improving its accessibility to boys with physical disabilities and **conforms** to the Special Needs and Disabilities Act."* (v)

*"Arrangements to ensure health and safety are **effective**, as is the first aid policy."* (i)

- Links with parents – reference was made to the statutory requirement for a written complaints procedure e.g.

*"A **very clear** procedure is in place for the handling of all complaints." (i)*

- Governance and management – a judgement was given with respect to the extent to which governors exercised oversight, in particular, of safe recruitment procedures and the maintenance of the Single Central Register listing details of all checks made before appointing staff, supply staff or governors, and ensured compliance with legal obligations e.g.

*"In those areas where they have legal obligations, including welfare, health and safety, staff recruitment, child protection and other aspects of pupils' welfare, governors now exercise **appropriate** oversight." (vi)*

*"Arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors are **robust.**" (vi)*

"Key policies are checked, reviewed and evaluated by nominated governors." (v)

*"All checks are applied **fully and correctly** and the centralised record is **well maintained.**" (iv)*

*"The safeguarding policy and procedures are **compliant with regulations.**" (ii)*

The language of compliance was much less evident in the sample of Ofsted reports. There were no summary statements referring to regulatory requirements in the individual sections, nor at the conclusion of the report. References to safeguarding in the section on care, guidance and support were found in four of the six reports, e.g.

*“Students feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding them are **strong and up-to-date**.”* (C)

*“Procedures to ensure child protection and health and safety are **robust**.”* (F)

One report referred to:

*“**effective** systems in place to deal with a few incidents of racism or bullying.”* (A)

In the section on the curriculum, another stated that:

“All statutory requirements are met” (B)

These were the only acknowledgements of legal obligations to be found in the 5 reports produced prior to the 2010 framework.

Thus, there was a very sharp contrast between the use of language by the Independent Schools Inspectorate and Ofsted in the earlier reports prior to 2010. The 2010 frameworks brought some changes; ISI reports no longer included a statement referring to regulatory requirements at the end of each section, merely an overall statement at the end of the report, hence there appeared to be less emphasis in the report on compliance. This reflects the ISI representative’s comments, at interview, that they were committed to minimising the impact of regulatory compliance checks on the inspection of educational quality. However, the Ofsted report, dating from 2010, whose framework followed more closely the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*, contained a greater number of references to legal obligations as follows:

*“School trips are **diligently managed**.”*

“The school upholds equalities legislation.”

*“The safe vetting of the workforce is **secure** and staff receive **effective** child protection training.”*

*“Risk assessments for trips are **rigorously implemented** and **well documented**.”* (E)

Hence, it would seem that compliance with equality, safety and safeguarding legislation had begun to feature more prominently in Ofsted’s reporting suggesting that both sectors were subject to increasing legislation, particularly with regard to health and safety and safeguarding. Thus, the comments made by the ISI representative, and one of the heads interviewed, as regards the impact of ECM and

the *Children Act* on schools, would appear to be justified. Further examination of reports undertaken under this framework would be required in order to establish whether there had been a real shift in emphasis, and whether this has been maintained under more recent frameworks.

Comparison

The language of comparison was found in all reports in both sets. This was characterised in Ofsted reports by expressions making reference to national averages such as:

“...an above average size comprehensive school” (D)

“The proportions of students with learning difficulties, who are learning English as an additional language and who are eligible for free school meals are well below the national average.” (F)

These expressions occurred in the section entitled “*Description of the school*”. In these instances references to national averages served to contextualise the school within the maintained sector as a whole.

The second use of national comparators by Ofsted was in judging the performance of students in GCSE, and, where there was a sixth-form, ‘A’ level examinations. Earlier reports also contained references to the Key Stage 3 tests, in use at the time. In this context, the examinations or assessments served as a measure of pupils’ learning which enabled comparisons and standardisation to take place (Hargreaves, 2005) and thus be reported upon. The section entitled “*Attainment and standards*” opened in most, but not all, instances with a description of the pupils’ attainment standards on entry to the school, in relation to those found nationally. The following examples serve to illustrate the way such language was used to contextualise pupil performance:

“The college has a lower proportion of higher attaining students than many schools.” (A)

“Students enter the school with standards that are above average.” (B)

These are followed by statements concerning the standards of achievement and judgements about the extent of progress made. Reference was made to the proportion of students gaining “*5 or more good GCSEs*” (A) or “*five A* to C grades*” (D), frequently in relation to the targets for achievement set for the school e.g.

“Standards....are well above national averages at the end of Year 11.....The school has exceeded its targets year-on-year and is now setting its targets against the top 25% of all schools nationally.” (B)

Such statements were reiterated in the summary of the inspection findings. Where the school had a sixth-form, comment on achievement was made in the section entitled *“effectiveness of the sixth-form”*. In these cases there was no comparator equivalent to the 5 GCSE grades quoted above, and judgements were related to standards defined simply by national averages e.g.

“Standards have improved steadily over the last two years and are in line with national averages overall.” (B)

This reliance on examination performance as an indicator of school quality views learning as the attainment of pre-specified objectives, a perspective which is implicit in the National Curriculum, but fails to take account of a wider conception of knowledge as fluid, rather than structured hierarchically, and constructed by the learner (Hargreaves, 2005). Macbeath (2008), in his account of interviews with headteachers, describes a similar perception of learning as linear progress towards externally prescribed pre-defined targets which are then monitored by Ofsted. Such a conception of education inevitably limits the scope of what is included in an inspection report. The third area of reference to national norms was attendance where, in some of the reports seen, phrases such as *“at the national average”* or *“slightly above the national average”* were used.

The use of comparators when describing the standards achieved or levels of attendance no longer served purely to contextualise the school, but provided the basis for judgements on the effectiveness of the school inspected, in relation to other schools in the maintained sector. This had the effect of emphasizing the fact that the individual school was part of a national system where measurement, statistical analysis of data, and its use for comparison between schools was a significant feature. References to *“standards”*, *“targets”*, and *“data”* were characteristic of the sections on leadership and management. In one report, with an opening paragraph on leadership of 118 words, for example, the word *“data”* was used three times, *“targets”* twice and *“standards”* once.

Thus, the criteria for judging a school were externally derived with reference to national norms, and the comments on a school's effectiveness in self-evaluation, which was taken as an indicator of the degree of success, achieved by leaders and governors, were made in relation to these criteria and not those devised by the school itself. This appears to confirm the argument expressed by Macbeath (2006) that self-evaluation in maintained schools follows a top-down form of review with criteria externally defined. Self-evaluation, in this context, meant evaluation with reference to targets derived from national norms. The focus of such targets was those aspects of the school which were susceptible to statistical analysis, such as attainment in national examinations, and levels of attendance. Other aspects of the school's role such as fostering personal development did not feature. This finding supports Moore and Clarke's (2016) claim that education policy has been driven by concerns for performativity rather than personal enrichment. Moreover self-evaluation, in this context, may present an unrealistic picture; Perryman (2009) refers to completion of the SEF as a game or exercise in impression management to satisfy the inspectorate, rather than an honest appraisal of strengths and weaknesses.

The use of comparators was less frequent in ISI reports. The *Characteristics of the School* section in all the reports seen contained a description of the pupils' ability profile with reference to the national average e.g.

"Nationally standardized tests indicate that the ability profile of pupils in Years 9 to 11 is just above the national average, with a broad ability range."(ii)

In most reports this was followed by a comment relating the level of ability to an expected level of performance in comparison with that achieved by pupils in maintained schools e.g.:

"If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in public examinations would be above the average for all maintained schools." (vi)

No use was made of national contextual data on aspects such as the size of the school (presumably because of the huge range within the independent sector), or the proportion of pupils with LDD or EAL. These characteristics were defined in terms of numbers of pupils concerned. There was no reference made to entitlement to free school meals, although it is probable that, where there were pupils on full bursaries, their socio-economic background would justify such entitlement. Bourke (2001) stated

that, according to ISIS (Independent Schools Information Service) statistics, 24% of pupils at independent schools came from social classes C, D, and E.

Such a presentation of contextual information served to individualise the school rather than relate it to a system, thus highlighting its independence. Comparison with national standards was used as the basis for judgements on the level of pupil achievement and progress in academic work. In some instances reference was made not only to “*all maintained schools*”, but also to “*maintained selective schools*” as in the example below:

“Pupils’ attainment at GCSE is good in relation to their abilities. Their results over the last three years for which comparative data is available have been far above the national average for all maintained schools. They are above the average for selective maintained schools. Nationally standardised measures of progress show pupils’ progress to GCSE to be above national norms.” (vi)

In all the ISI reports seen academic achievement was above or well above the national average. Thus, the inclusion of comparative data may have had several consequences. Firstly, it located achievement in the independent sector within the national framework, since all reports contained reference to the national system of examinations. This could be said to be evidence of a constraint on the sector’s independence since, although other assessment systems such as the international baccalaureate exist, an alternative examination system with national credibility was not widely in use. However, comparison with national standards of attainment, may have served to distinguish the independent sector from the maintained sector by emphasizing a higher standard of achievement, rather than to act as a basis for urging schools to improve pupil performance.

The difference in achievement levels between the two sectors is examined by de Waal (2006) who questions the relevance of Ofsted style inspections to the independent sector. Given this lesser emphasis on improvement, references to “*targets*”, “*data*” and improving “*standards*” did not feature highly, if at all, in ISI reports. This left greater scope for comment on aspects such as personal development and judgements relating to the individual schools’ success in meeting their aims. Consequently, self-evaluation in the independent sector, could potentially be broader in scope, and less driven by a need to meet targets, set in relation to national averages, thus demonstrating freedom from a government-led agenda. The use made of self-

evaluation by those schools whose inspection reports were examined is analysed in the previous chapter.

The terms '*self-evaluation*', '*evaluation*' or awareness of '*strengths and weaknesses*', were specifically used in several of the Ofsted reports, with judgements made as to the inspectors' view of the effectiveness of the school's approach, for example:

"The school has an accurate, if at times too modest, evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses." (F)

"Self-evaluation is in places too generous." (E)

Given that Ofsted inspectors had a very limited amount of time observing school activities, the use of the school's self-evaluation data was, doubtless, crucial in helping to form their judgements. ISI second cycle reports made no reference to self-evaluation, possibly because it was optional at that stage. However the report produced during the third cycle, when self-evaluation was mandatory, did contain a more oblique reference:

"An emphasis on self-evaluation is raising pastoral and academic standards." (ii)

In this case the judgement was implied rather than stated. Examination of a further four ISI third cycle reports revealed only one specific reference to self-evaluation, in this instance judged to be "*successful*". In one report, however, there was reference to "*ambitious target-setting and rigorous monitoring*" and in another to "*rigorous analysis of performance*", and "*carefully elaborated strategies to ensure the delivery of objectives*" reflecting an increased adoption of the language and practice of business in defining quality in the independent sector. This difference in approach is significant in that it suggests a different concept of self-evaluation. Words such as "*accurate*" and "*too generous*" imply externally defined criteria as to what counts as evidence and quality in self-evaluation. This, Hargreaves (1995) argues, militates against diversity and towards conformity, which was in direct contradiction to the government's claim to promote diversity and choice amongst schools. The criteria by which Ofsted judged schools were, he asserts, contestable, and their model of what constituted a good school open to dispute. The concept of self-evaluation appeared much less specifically defined in the ISI reports, although those processes involved which derived from the commercial world, appear to have been viewed favourably by the inspectorate,

suggesting a possible move towards greater uniformity of expectations concerning the format of self-evaluation in ISC schools.

Summary of comparison between ISI and Ofsted reports

Although ISI and Ofsted used broadly similar frameworks, comparison of two samples of reports, produced over a similar period in time, revealed several major differences. These indicate that the ISC schools were treated on a more individual and personal level, with teams of inspectors spending longer on the individual schools' premises, interacting with staff and pupils, than their maintained sector counterparts, whose inspections were brief and heavily reliant on documentation, data, and national comparisons. Moreover, the reports reflected a greater freedom on the part of independent schools to define their own purposes and be judged in the light of these. This is evident in the differences between the contextual sections at the inception of each of the reports in the samples. Ofsted reports focus on a comparison of various aspects of the school with those of other schools within the national system, whereas ISI reports comment on the individual school's aims and describes features which are unique to it.

In Ofsted reports there was an emphasis on numerical data and scalar judgements, whereas in ISI reports verbal judgements were prominent. The language of the two sets of reports also differed with ISI's being more positive and less directive. Ofsted's use of summary tables containing the numerical values of each judgement appears authoritarian, with little room for doubt or question about the validity of the judgements reached by the inspectors.

A different view of education is reflected in the two samples of reports. ISI reports acknowledged in detail personal development, and a broad spectrum of provision and achievement, whereas Ofsted reports devoted little attention to extra-curricular activities and personal development and focussed more on achievement in national tests and examinations. Even in those schools accorded specialist status, achievement in those areas was not given prominence.

Self-evaluation appeared to have a different significance in the two types of report. In Ofsted reports, successful self-evaluation linked to analysis of data and target-setting,

and resultant action taken, were considered an indicator of effective leadership and management confirming Pring's claim (2012b) about the influence of business practice on maintained schools. The format and focus of self-evaluation, it would seem, was externally defined with quality determined in relation to national norms. In ISI reports little reference was made to self-evaluation, with effectiveness of leadership and management being linked to success in the achievement of the individual school's aims.

The one area where ISC schools appeared to be subject to greater external control than maintained sector schools, at least until 2009, concerned compliance with legal requirements. ISI reports contained far more references to regulation and used a wider range of vocabulary to judge conformity than was found in Ofsted reports. This aspect of inspection does emphasize the fact that, however unique or individual an independent school may seek to be, and however distinct it may consider itself to be from other schools, in its offering and concept of pupil development, it is located within a national context and is obliged to operate within an externally defined legal framework (*Education Act, 2002*). Non-compliance is noted in an inspection report and schools are required to rectify any regulatory failure. The penalty for failure to do so is withdrawal by the ministerial department responsible for education of a school's licence to operate, resulting ultimately in the closure of the school.

Thus, in the final analysis all schools, maintained and independent are subject, to a greater or lesser extent, to government control. Thus the concerns expressed by the heads interviewed about government constraining independence would, in this respect, be justified. This control was clearly evident in the ISI reports with regards to the Independent Schools Standards Regulations, and in Ofsted reports with the widespread use of national data as a basis for comparison and judgement, and the concern with targets to meet externally defined standards of achievement in examinations.

ISI inspection reports and the defining characteristics of ISC schools

The analysis of the aims survey undertaken in the first stage of the research identified certain concepts which appeared to characterise the nature of the independence

experienced by ISC schools. These institutions enjoyed the freedom to set their own aims, distinct from those of the National Curriculum, which, in theory, directed the work of maintained sector schools. Despite the claims of institutional uniqueness made by the six heads I interviewed, these aims appeared to fall into certain categories which could be said to characterise the sector. However, individual schools distinguished themselves from others by the ways in which these categories were interpreted. These centred on the individuation both of the institution and the pupil. Institutional distinctiveness was achieved through the climate created, usually referred to as ethos, and the offering made by the school to its pupils, normally described as provision.

Pupils' personal development focussed on the competencies, and the dispositions, largely equating to the spiritual and moral spheres, which the school sought to foster in each individual. If, indeed, these categories were characteristic of independent schools, one would expect to see them referred to in the ISI inspection reports which purported to be related to schools' aims. Moreover, if these were the areas in which schools sought distinctiveness, one would anticipate finding exemplification specific to each individual institution. The next analysis, therefore, would serve not only to comment on the degree of independence from the Ofsted model exercised by ISI, but also on the validity of the findings from my earlier research. Moreover, it would substantiate or repudiate the claims concerning uniqueness made during interview by the heads of the schools whose reports were examined.

Five different reporting inspectors, all male, were responsible for managing the inspection process and ensuing reports in the six schools which I considered, hence there was the possibility of slightly different interpretations of the frameworks in terms of judgement exemplification, given that these were less tightly linked to national datasets than their maintained sector counterparts. Nevertheless, all six reports did make reference to the individual school's aims when making judgements, and did cover those aspects of a school's aims which I had identified as markers of uniqueness. These are examined below.

The Institution

Climate

The climate category described the overall philosophy or ethos of the school and comprised three elements: the school's approach to its pupils, future orientation and social engagement. All six reports made some reference to the school's aims in the opening section of the report. Several made direct reference to the guiding ethos or philosophy of the school. The following examples from different reports serve to illustrate this point:

"The central educational principles of the founders have been enhanced over the years, but still underpin the philosophy of the school today." (iii) (These are then elaborated in some detail.)

"The college's philosophy is very much in the (name of the order's) tradition. Its distinctive mission statement provides for a caring, supportive and prayerful community....." (ii) (Details are then given of the school's specific aims.)

"The philosophy of (name of school) places scholarship at the heart of a challenging education." (i) (There then follow details of the specific goals of this educational experience.)

Comments on the school's approach to pupils were principally made with reference to the relationships enjoyed between pupils and staff, and the treatment of pupils as individuals. The following examples from different reports serve to demonstrate this:

"Staff know each pupil extremely well and form strong supportive relationships with them." (iv)

"The nurturing of positive relationships, respect for individualityare central to the (name of school) ethos." (iii)

"Relations between all in the school community are excellent." (i)

Observations on the quality of careers guidance and advice on higher education, or judgements such as:

"Excellent attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of education, training or employment and for adult life." (i)

reflect the claim schools made concerning their future orientation. Such references were found in all six reports. All of the reports contained comment on the schools' social commitment to the community both at home and abroad. Examples of voluntary service included involvement with local schools, centres for the disabled, elderly or homeless, running holidays for disabled children, involvement with a local hospice and volunteering in charity shops. All the schools were involved with fundraising for local,

national or international charities, with financial support given by individual schools to schools in Uganda, India, Ethiopia and Mozambique. In some instances pupils and staff visited these schools to assist with their activities.

Offering

Most schools referred to their offering in terms of provision. This consisted of various dimensions: the learning environment, the learning programme, the pupil support system and the school's staff. Whole sub-sections of each inspection report were specifically devoted to the quality of the learning programme and to the pupil support system entitled *"The Educational Experience provided"* and *"The Quality of Pastoral Care and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils"* respectively. Comments about the learning environment and the staff characteristics were found principally, but not exclusively in the sub-sections devoted to teaching, and where applicable, to boarding.

The learning programme

The ISSR Standard 1 required certain curricular areas to be covered by independent schools and specific skills such as numeracy, communication and ICT to be developed. Reference to these was made in all the reports, but comment was also included on additional curricular offerings such as several modern languages, the classics, dance, drama and music, separate sciences, or a wide range of A-level subjects. Comments on curricular provision emphasised breadth and balance as the following examples from individual schools illustrate:

"The well-balanced and diverse curriculum offers pupils of all ages good, and frequently excellent, opportunities to develop skills in" (vi)

"A broad curriculum, flexibly adapted to enable pupils to achieve their full potential, makes an excellent contribution to pupils' achievements." (ii)

"The curriculum is full and broad, significantly so for a school of this size. It provides well for the full range of ability within the school, including those identified as gifted and talented and those recognised as having a learning difficulty or disability." (iv)

References to both the curricular and extra-curricular offering were often expressed in terms of opportunities, reflecting the findings of the aims survey, as the examples below demonstrate:

"The school provides an outstanding range of opportunities, very well suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils." (i)

“Pupils have manifold opportunities to develop skills throughout the curriculum.....The opportunities provided, especially in music, art, and drama, valuably support pupils’ aesthetic development.” (v)

“The school provides numerous opportunities for pupil involvement in extra-curricular activities.” (iv)

Comments and judgements relating to aspects of the educational programme outside the taught curriculum stressed the range of activities available with extensive use of exemplification as supporting evidence for the judgement made. Although there were elements in common, none of the six schools appeared to offer identical extra-curricular opportunities, nor to have interpreted curricular breadth in exactly the same way, lending support to the theory that the learning programme on offer is one way in which ISC schools can exert their independence and be distinctive both from the maintained sector and from each other.

The learning environment

The learning environment was another means of attaining uniqueness, especially with regard to the setting and physical plant and resources. Distinctive features of these were highlighted in the inspection reports. References were made to an *“extensive parkland site”* (iv), a *“beautiful campus”* (iii) or to specific distinctive facilities:

“The school has excellent accommodation.....the use of oak and cherry in design technology and the well designed laboratories and generous resources in the science department constitute just a few examples.” (v)

“Provision for ICT is plentiful.” (vi)

Where schools provided boarding facilities these were the subject of comment with some comments relating to specific aspects of provision for boarders:

“Both the decor and the facilities are of the highest standard in all the houses “homely” typifies the quality of boarding provision, a shining example being the boys’ lounge in (name of House).” (iii)

“Meals are generally taken in the new dining hallPupils have access to the attractive gardens.” (iv)

“All boarding accommodation reaches a very high standard; washrooms and toilets are well appointed and allow appropriate privacy.” (ii)

Not all comments on distinctive features were positive. Where facilities would benefit from improvement this was stated, as in the following comment:

“Some fixtures and fittings are antiquated and the school is aware of the need to refurbish them.” (v)

All of the reports also included reference to the over-riding atmosphere of the learning environment with an emphasis on positive aspects of supportiveness, order and dynamism, mirroring those found in the aims survey analysis. Statements with emotive appeal were frequent such as:

"..... a friendly, supportive environment" (v)

"The small classes create a warm, caring atmosphere in which to learn." (iv)

Likewise, comments on the well-ordered atmosphere in lessons and around the school were common. The latter were generally expressed with respect to pupil behaviour and their approach to learning:

"Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they display great enthusiasm for their work and activities and show evident enjoyment." (i)

"Boys settle to their work quickly, apply themselves industriously and persevere." (v)

A sense of dynamism was conveyed in some of the comments on teaching:

"A lively buzz permeates the class." (iv)

"well-paced, sympathetic teaching...." (iii)

"Teaching is both varied and challenging.....at its best, it captures pupils' imagination and involves them actively." (ii)

Pupil support system

The aims analysis indicated that schools placed a heavy emphasis on pupil support, although they gave little indication of how this was to be achieved. However, the inspection reports devoted a whole section to pupil care and welfare, looking in detail at individual schools' pastoral and boarding structures, peer support and buddy systems, and the quality of care and degree of safety these afforded. Where schools had a chaplain, counsellor or school nurse, this was referred to together with a comment on the contribution they made to pupil welfare. Distinctive features of peer support were also included:

"Trained pupils are always freely available to give advice to other pupils on such matters as bullying." (i)

"Mentoring of younger pupils by trained older pupils fosters friendship, mutual respect and ambition." (ii)

"Pupils are adept at using the "buddy" system." (iii)

Evidence for the effectiveness of these systems was derived from interviews with the staff involved, a sample of pupils and pupil questionnaires. As discussed earlier, the

use of terms such as 'welfare' and 'wellbeing' is potentially problematic as there is no agreed definition and they do not lend themselves easily to metric assessment. The ISI framework did not attempt to adumbrate in detail the concept but left it open to subjective interpretation by inclusion in the pupil questionnaire of statements such as *"I like being at this school"*, *"Teachers show concern for me as a person"*, and *"There is an adult or senior pupil I can turn to if I have a personal difficulty"* with which pupils were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. Statistical analysis of the responses enabled inspectors to form an impression of the pupils' view of the care they received. Much of this section of the report was, however, devoted to comment on the school's response to health and safety regulations, which in cases of full compliance would, presumably have had the effect of reassuring parents that their children were in the safe, secure environment advertised in many ISC schools' aims.

Staff Characteristics

The aims analysis indicated that some schools declared in their aims the characteristics which they sought in the staff they employed. No specific section of the inspection reports related to the qualities of staff other than of those in leadership or management positions, who were responsible for selecting staff members. In several cases reference was made to the quality of staff recruited, for example:

"The school secures well-qualified teachers, together with a good range of support staff." (vi)

"Staff recruitment procedures are secure and effective in attracting well-qualified and committed teachers and support staff." (iv)

An analysis of the section on leadership and management is discussed below.

However, comments on teaching, pastoral care, and educational provision did highlight some of the personal qualities found amongst a school's employees, in particular subject expertise, referred to in all the reports. The following examples illustrate this:

"The teachershave a very secure subject knowledge and their energy and enthusiasm for their subjects permeate the lesson." (iv)

"All teaching displays good subject knowledge." (vi)

"Teachers are well-qualified and have excellent in-depth knowledge and understanding of the subject matter they teach." (v)

In addition, dedication and commitment were also the subject of comment in one or two cases:

"The staff's highly professional, dedicated approach is an integral factor in pupils' excellent achievements." (ii)

"...they generously give of their time beyond their teaching commitments." (vi)

The qualities and effectiveness of the schools' leaders and managers were discussed in a separate section devoted to all aspects of leadership and management within the school. All of the comments relating to the heads, the only individual to be singled out, were positive. Descriptions fell into four categories. The use of adjectives such as *"strong"*, *"purposeful"*, *"decisive"*, *"confident"*, *"highly effective"* to describe the head's leadership convey a sense of direction, whereas terms such as *"passionate"*, *"enthusiastic"*, *"committed"* evoke engagement. A feeling of dynamism was conveyed by words such as *"inspirational"*, *"challenging"*, *"innovative"*, and *"motivating"*. Finally, references to a *"caring"* or *"supportive"* leadership style imply a benevolent approach to the role. These qualities reflect the desirable staff characteristics some schools listed in their aims. Comment was made in all the reports as to the extent to which leaders operated safe recruitment procedures in line with safeguarding regulations, emphasising the legal constraints under which they operated.

The Individual Pupil

The expression of a strong commitment to the individual pupil's development was found during the aims survey analysis, often expressed in terms of the fulfilment of potential. This appeared to take two forms: firstly, the acquisition of competencies or skills, and secondly, the promotion of dispositions which the school considered desirable. These dispositions were found to have an internal and an external focus and equated approximately to the concepts of spirituality and morality as defined by Ofsted (2004). Consequently, the inspection reports were examined for evidence that this commitment had been enacted and recognised by the inspectorate.

Competencies

All six inspection reports contained references to the development of skills and wider competencies, such as independence of mind, in the sections entitled *"The Educational Experience Provided"* and *"Pupils' Learning and Achievements"*. The emphasis was

principally placed on literacy, numeracy, communication, reasoning ability, creativity, and ICT skills, as in the examples below:

“The school is successful in promotingpupils’ acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy.pupils make effective use of ICT.Most pupils reason and argue logically, and think for themselves.....” (i)

“Across the age range pupils are creative thinkers who are highly innovative and able to work independently.” (iii)

“Pupils’ ability to think critically, logically and independently is highly developed.” (vi)

Such statements were frequently illustrated by examples of the ways in which inspectors observed the skills being applied.

Dispositions

These were found to have both an internal and an external orientation.

Internal orientation

Those personal qualities which were internally focussed corresponded to elements of spirituality as defined by West-Burnham et al. (2007), Zohar and Marshall (2000) and Ofsted (2004). Central to these definitions was the concept of ‘self’. The aims survey analysis indicated three sub-categories: self-knowledge, self-belief and self-control. The aspect most commonly referred to in inspection reports was self-belief with comments such as:

“They are very confident and assured, open and courteous young adults.” (iv)

“The many opportunities which exist for performance.....enable pupils to develop high levels of self-confidence.” (vi)

“Weekly assemblies promote self-esteem as a driving force within the school with shared appreciation of the success of others.” (iv)

In the case of those schools with a strong religious affiliation, references to the development of self-knowledge were made with respect to the spiritual opportunities offered in the form of religious observance:

“Pupils’ strong self-awareness and their moral fibre are nourished by extensive opportunities for prayer.” (ii)

“Opportunities are provided through weekly chapel services for pupils to develop spiritually.” (v)

In other schools, comments related to the development of a sense of pupils’ own individuality:

“Pupils gain an outstanding sense of their own identity and self-worth coupled with a deep understanding of their own values and those of others.” (iii)

“Pupils develop well spiritually, acquiring a sense of identity, self-worth and self-knowledge.” (i)

In one instance reference was made to the way in which pupils addressed questions related to the deeper meaning in life:

“Pupils....discussed with clarity the issue of the existence of God.” (vi)

It is arguable, however, that the deeper aspects of spirituality, concerned with the less tangible and measurable aspects of personal insights, are not encompassed within such judgements, and it is difficult to see how they might be evaluated within the inspection time-frame (Saunders, 1999). No specific references were found in the reports to the development of self-control, but remarks on standards of behaviour observed during the inspection, with comments on levels of concentration, attentiveness, and perseverance all relate to the exercise of self-control within the school environment as illustrated in the following observation:

“In lessons they (the pupils) settle quickly and apply themselves with great enthusiasm and diligence. They retain focus on the task in hand and, if they do not succeed initially, try again without fear of failure.” (vi)

External orientation

In the aims survey these dispositions were found to relate to the ability to form positive relationships, the development of creativity, and especially, of moral values. Whereas it may be possible to develop criteria for judging the development of the first of these two characteristics, the assessment of moral development is more contentious as there may be no commonly accepted definition of some of the terms used. Wilson (2000) argues that it is necessary to clarify the distinction between moral education and indoctrination or brainwashing. An assertion which seems all the more relevant in view of the recent confirmation of the veracity of many of the *“Trojan Horse”* allegations in Birmingham (Clarke, 2014), illustrating the potential for specific ideologies to be promoted in schools, either maintained or independent. The particular understanding of moral concepts, whose interpretation is by no means universally accepted, needs to be clearly articulated in any inspection criteria, and definitions of the constituents of pupil progress stated, if they are to be evaluated (Wilson, 2000).

Nevertheless, the inspection of SMSC included explicit judgement on pupils' moral development. The ISI produced a paper for the guidance of inspectors of SMSC (ISC 2003a) which outlined possible characteristics of schools where moral development was promoted, but did not clarify the success criteria by which pupil achievement in this area might be judged. Given the importance that ISC schools attached to moral concepts in their aims, examination of inspection reports was a means by which it might be possible to deduce how these concepts were construed in such schools, and the resulting manifestations of moral precepts in pupil attitudes and behaviour. However, this method is not entirely reliable since any inspection judgement will also have resulted from the particular standpoint of the observer (Wilcox and Gray, 1996) as to what constitutes desirable moral behaviour, which may not have coincided with that of the school or particular individuals within it.

All reports contained a paragraph dedicated to this aspect of SMSC. Frequent references were found to observable aspects of pupil behaviour such as courtesy or respect for each other, or for diverse cultures and backgrounds, manifested in the way pupils related to one another, both in lessons, and in a residential context. In some instances respect for the school premises or wider environment was commented upon. Allusions to the exercise of responsibility by pupils were made particularly in respect of leadership and positions of responsibility or social responsibility, not only to the school community, but also in a wider sphere through participation in voluntary service and charity fundraising, examples of which are to be found on page 131. Responsibility, therefore, was interpreted as responsibility towards others.

Reference to concepts such as *"tolerance"* was not treated as problematic. It would seem from the usage of the term in the inspection reports that tolerance was seen to equate with respect for the cultures, and views of others as illustrated in the following examples:

"Tolerance and respect for their own and other cultures are displayed by all pupils.....cultural diversity is the accepted norm." (i)

"Pupils celebrate the school's cultural diversity and readily expand their horizons learning from each other, particularly in the boarding houses, in an atmosphere of tolerance and harmony." (ii)

However, not all interpretations of moral concepts were found to be that clear-cut. More contentious are statements, found in all reports, concerning pupils' development of a moral basis for their behaviour or their ability to determine right from wrong. No definitive indication was given as to how such concepts were to be interpreted. In some cases it would appear to be the individual pupil who determined them, as implied by the comment:

"Pupils develop a strong moral code and act upon it." (ii),

In this case, presumably informed by the strong religious orientation of the school, whereas in other instances the moral determinants appeared to be defined with reference to the legal framework or school's code of conduct as suggested by the statements:

"Pupils have a strong moral sense. They recognise right from wrong and respect the law." (i)

"The pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and they believe that the school's rules are reasonable and sound." (iv)

This reflects two fundamentally different, and potentially conflicting, approaches to defining what is right: the individual and the institutional. Neither the aims statements nor the inspection framework and reports appeared to address this issue. Statements such as: *"Moral issues are at the heart of the school's ethos"* (iii) appeared to simplify a very complex issue.

All the reports contained comments on the relationships not merely between pupils and teachers, but also between pupils themselves, these were principally found in the social development section of the parts of the report which focussed on SMSC, and on the *Quality of Care and Relationships*, but also, where applicable in the boarding report, and in descriptions of pupils' approach to learning, where this involved co-operation and teamwork. The following examples serve as an illustration:

"Pupils.....establish strong, supportive relationships with each other and with adults." (vi)

"Boys work well and co-operatively with others and in teams." (v)

"Relationships between boarders are positive....The majority of pupils enjoy boarding and feel they get on well together." (ii)

"Pupils of all ages show a high degree of care and respect for each other." (iv)

"Both boarders and their parents....agreed thatrelationships with their peers and members of staff are open, positive and long lasting." (iii)

The external manifestations of pupil creativity were referred to principally in relation to artistic or musical expression observed during the inspection:

“Music is enjoyed in a variety of ways, with a national award winning concert band displaying flair and high standards.” (v)

“In art in the sixth-form, pupils show excellent perception of the stylistic traits of notable artists, and are able to reproduce them in an original way in their own work.” (vi)

“Much outstanding art work is displayed throughout the school and pupil portfolios show a rich and developing aesthetic sensibility.” (iii)

Conclusion to comparison of ISI reports and the characteristics of independence

Comparison of a sample of six inspection reports with the findings from the aims survey did indicate that there was a strong relationship between those indicators of independence found in the aims analysis and judgements made in the ISI inspection reports. All the characteristics found: climate, offering, the development of individual skills, competencies and dispositions, and their constituent elements, were alluded to in the inspection reports, lending support to the earlier proposition that these were the shared characteristics of ISC schools. Furthermore, although working to a prescribed framework approved by Ofsted, the extensive use of exemplification by reporting inspectors, served to individualise the inspection reports to reflect the nuances of the school in question’s aims. However, as can be deduced from the examples quoted above, the vast majority of these comments were made without reference to comparators, a practice which, while serving to treat each school as a distinct entity, did depend ultimately on the professional judgement, expertise and communication skills of the inspectorate, in particular the reporting inspector, despite the quality control measures in place to monitor both inspections and reports. In this respect ISI inspectors appeared to have been making judgements in the same way as HMIs did in the past, basing them on an in-built sense of quality, derived from experience, which were then moderated by colleagues taking part in the same inspection (Smith, 2000).

Moreover, the overwhelming majority of comments and judgements, made in these reports, were positive. Although it could be the case that only schools with favourable

inspection reports took part in the research, my experience reviewing all GSA inspection reports as a member of the Inspections Committee leads me to believe that those analysed are not atypical. There may be several other explanations: firstly, they may be a true reflection of a high quality educational experience; secondly the very fact of being observed might have led pupils and staff to 'perform' to meet the inspectorate's expectations (Perryman, 2006, 2009); thirdly the ISI inspectorate is based on a system of peer review hence it is arguable that it is favourable to the independent sector as most of the inspectorate were current or former employees of independent schools; finally, as many of the inspectors themselves were serving or previous heads they were aware of the potential of an inspection report to attract or deter prospective pupils (Hargreaves, 1995), hence erred on the side of discretion when making negative comments, and emphasised the positive aspects of a school, as alleged by some of the interviewees. However, a similar emphasis on the positive aspects of schools was found by Field et al. (1998) in their analysis of the language of a sample of Ofsted reports of maintained schools, suggesting that this was a feature of inspection generally. In both sectors, the consequences which ensue from a poor inspection report are severe, resulting potentially in institutional closure.

Finally, the problem of the interpretation of some of the more abstract concepts encompassed within ISC schools' aims was only partially addressed in the inspection process. Responsibility, respect and tolerance did appear to have a shared understanding relating to the way pupils reacted towards each other and their attitudes to multiculturalism, and hence some observable means of judging their development, but terms such as "*right and wrong*" needed greater clarification, consequently judgements concerning pupil awareness of such concepts relied heavily on the value positions of the individual inspectors.

Comparison between Heads' criteria for judging quality and those found in inspection reports

During my interviews with the heads of the six schools whose reports were analysed I asked them to define the characteristics of a good school. The term 'good' was chosen in preference to 'effective' as it was potentially wider in scope. Moreover, it was one of

the levels of judgement used by the inspectorate. Their responses fell into four main categories: enjoyment, personal growth, orientation towards the future, positive outcomes. Examination of the sample of inspection reports was made in the light of these criteria. My earlier comparison of these categories with the inspection framework indicated that it provided scope for coverage of these quality indicators and I wished to establish whether, in fact, they were included in the inspection report. Two of these criteria, personal growth and future orientation, were discussed earlier in the chapter when examining school climate and the development of the individual. The following comments relate to the remaining two.

Enjoyment

References to pupil's enjoyment of school life were found in all the reports. Some were made with respect to attitudes to lessons and learning, others to extra-curricular activities, and two reports referred specifically to a happy boarding experience. Comments relating to pupils' learning focussed on levels of pupil enthusiasm:

"They show great enthusiasm for their work and activities and show evident enjoyment." (i)

"Pupils participate eagerly in lessons." (ii)

"Pupils apply themselves with great enthusiasm." (vi)

Similar observations were made in respect of the extra-curricular programmes:

"Pupils report how much they enjoy their interesting activities, and this was clear in the observation during the inspection of, for instance, photography, canoe-building and cookery." (iii)

"A similar quality of engagement was observed in the wide range of sporting, musical and dramatic activities, which boys pursue with relish and conviction." (v)

Fewer comments were made relating to teacher enjoyment, possibly because although both pupils and parents completed pre-inspection questionnaires, and a selection of pupils were interviewed about their experiences, members of staff had fewer opportunities to express their feelings since there was no staff questionnaire. Only staff with responsibilities, or those who belonged to special categories, such as newly qualified teachers (NQTs), were interviewed. The schedule of suggested questions did not include enjoyment. Enjoyment was implied in statements relating to enthusiastic teaching such as:

"....energy and enthusiasm for their subjects permeate the lessons." (iv)

“Teachers.....show a great enthusiasm.” (i)

However, no specific criteria or judgement related to staff enjoyment, yet this was one of the indicators of a good school, in the view of several of the heads interviewed.

Positive outcomes

Comments on a range of different positive outcomes were found in all six reports. These related to behaviour, skills development, academic achievement and achievement in other spheres. There were references to *“excellent behaviour”*, *“high standards of behaviour”* and to pupils behaving responsibly. Each report contained a number of references to pupils’ skill levels in a number of different areas such as numeracy, communication, ICT, reasoning, personal organisation and research. A paragraph of each section on pupils’ learning and achievements was dedicated to the degree of success at GCSE and A-level in which judgements were made based on comparison with national standards achieved in maintained schools. Finally, pupils’ awards and accomplishments in extra-curricular activities also featured as a significant element of this section of the report with references to success in local and national competitions in sport, music, drama, science, engineering, technology, public speaking and debating, together with gains in national award schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, the Artsmark, or CREST.

Thus, it would seem that, as the earlier analysis of the ISI inspection framework suggested, the ISI inspection process did cover those indicators of quality which the heads interviewed outlined, with the exception of staff happiness and enjoyment of their work. This might, therefore, be an area for future development in the evolution of the inspection of ISC schools. Thus there is less evidence of government influence over those aspects of inspection which lie outside the ISSR.

Uniqueness

Each of the heads interviewed believed their school to be unique. My next analysis of the inspection reports sought to establish whether in each of the schools’ reports reference was made to those distinguishing characteristics which individual heads had described. Hence, I hoped to establish whether the institutional individuation which appeared from the aims survey and interviews to be a marker of independence was recognised by the independent inspectorate. Each of the schools is examined briefly

below in relation to the head's claims about its principal distinctive characteristics and any specific reference to these in the school's inspection report, as opposed to inferences which might be made from comments relating more directly to aspects of the framework.

Comparison of Heads' comments on their schools' uniqueness and their

ISI reports

School Number 1

Distinguishing characteristics	Inspection report references
Well-mannered pupils	Notably high levels of good manners
Pupil participation in a wide range of activities	Excellent range of extra-curricular activities
Motivated pupils	Pupils apply themselves with enthusiasm and diligence
A warm happy atmosphere	A supportive ethos

School Number 10

Distinguishing characteristics	Inspection report references
All-round education for boys	Provision of a fine, broad education for young men
An unusually wide range of activities / Breadth of opportunity	An exceptional range of extra-curricular activities

School Number 13

Distinguishing characteristics	Inspection report references
Pupil behaviour very empathetic, caring	A buddy system supports those who find boarding life less easy
Pupils respect each other	Pupils of all ages show a high degree of care and respect for each other New pupils are looked after by pupil guardians
Recognition of each others' behaviour	Weekly assemblies with shared appreciation of the success of others

School Number 26

Distinguishing characteristics	Inspection report references
Ethos combining strong sense of community with encouragement of individuality	Ethos shines through the life of the school with encouragement of individuality. Emphasis firmly on nurturing individuality and freedom combined with recognition of the need for self-discipline and personal and social responsibility; Respect for individuality and sense of responsibility central to ethos which is lived out in every aspect of school life. From an early age pupils develop a strong sense of their own identity
Atmosphere of patience and kindness	Patently supportive atmosphere; Pupils support each other in every aspect of their lives at school
Links with homes and schools for the disabled	Joint performance with residents of local Cheshire Home observed by inspectors
Low level of pressure yet high achievement	Pupils have a lot of freedom; Good achievement in the academic and wider sphere; The atmosphere in the houses is relaxed

School Number 42

Distinguishing characteristics	Inspection report references
Strong religious ethos derived from affiliation with a religious Order	All pervasive spirituality
Belief in value and potential of each individual; Recognition of excellence related to individual rather than to norms	Shared vision based on Order's ethos of care for each individual; Curriculum focussed on the individual pupil's needs in line with Order's aims

School Number 72

Distinguishing characteristics	Inspection report references
Democratic rather than managerial	A coherent and collegial management team; The school very much succeeds in being an open, transparent and supportive community
Extra-curricular activities strongly valued	A comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities is available
All achievement is recognised	The school has a strong list of individual and team achievements
Relaxed atmosphere where pupils achieve success	Pupils achieve good levels of knowledge, skills and critical and creative understanding of their subjects and activities
People know where they belong in the school and feel good	Pupils are well known to staff and mutual respect is very apparent

From the above comparison of heads' indicators of their schools' unique characteristics and their inspection reports, it would seem that the ISI inspection process did have the flexibility to respond to individual schools' assertions about their institution's distinctiveness, and to comment on these in the final report. In this respect it differs from the Ofsted inspection of maintained schools where, even in the case of schools with specialist status, little attention was found to have been given to individuality. There is less evidence of the "*check list driven approach*", commented on by some heads at interview and referred to by Baxter and Clarke (2013), which was said to characterise Ofsted inspections.

Given the less restrictive approach to reporting, and greater freedom of expression ISI inspectors appeared to enjoy compared to their Ofsted counterparts, they had more scope to recognise the characteristics of individual schools and hence helped to reinforce the notion of institutional uniqueness amongst ISC schools. The ISI, therefore, despite being answerable to Ofsted, and acting as a government agent in its capacity as monitor of legal compliance, did appear to play a role in reinforcing the individuation of those institutions it inspected. The authority it exerted was, consequently, not purely bureaucratic as a tool of government, conducting regulatory checks, but also served to fortify that exerted by members of the school hierarchy in

determining the school's purpose. ISI, therefore, could be argued to be acting on behalf of the sector, in addition to being an agent of government.

Comparison of reports with aims analysis by category of school

My analysis of the most recurrent ISC schools' aims by category of school, undertaken during the first phase of my research, revealed some possible differences between the different groups. For example, references to the development of confidence were more evident in the aims of girls' and day schools. Boys' schools stressed links with parents more than the other groups. More frequent reference was made to moral development in single-sex schools, and a social conscience was given greater emphasis in day schools. Reference to high standards and excellence was most manifest in day schools, whereas co-educational schools appeared to lay less emphasis on extra-curricular activities and more on the treatment of pupils as individuals. The six inspection reports were, therefore, finally examined to establish whether there was any further evidence to suggest a difference between the categories of school in terms of educational processes and outcomes.

All of the reports were found to contain references to high levels of pupil confidence or self-esteem. Likewise each report contained allusions to high standards of achievement and behaviour, broad extra-curricular provision, and excellent or outstanding links with parents. Instances of excellence in other aspects of the schools, for example teaching, or leadership, were also commented upon. Pupils' moral development was judged excellent in five of the schools and good in the sixth, suggesting that all of these schools succeeded in fostering a high degree of moral development, in the view of the inspectorate. Moreover, there was evidence of the development of a social conscience through commitment to community service and charity work in all six schools. Two of the three co-educational schools did seem to contain particular references to the treatment of pupils as individuals, in both instances the practice was said to derive from the particular school's philosophy, whereas the other reports did not report on this characteristic. It would be necessary to research this possible distinction further, using a wider sample of schools' reports,

to establish whether there is, in fact, a difference between the types of school as regards pupil treatment.

It would seem, therefore, that the differences I found, when analysing the aims by categories of school, owed more to the emphasis placed on them in the schools' statements of purpose, and the language chosen, than to actual practice. With the one possible exception, the most common aims would seem to be characteristic of the sector as a whole, regardless of the type of provision offered. Choice of language and emphasis on specific aspects of a school's purpose may be the result of the wish to reflect traditional views of those such as the founder, or to appeal to a particular segment of the education market, rather than of fundamental differences between the types of school. These inspection reports, therefore, could be considered to a certain extent, a reflection of the independent sector as a whole, as well as contributing to institutional individuation. This dual aspect to the inspectorate's role would need to be examined in greater detail with reference to a greater number of reports before it could be stated with certainty to be the case.

Chapter summary

The final phase of the research was based on scrutiny of the documentation associated with the ISI inspections of six ISC schools, and for general comparison, a brief overview of six Ofsted maintained sector schools' reports. My examination of the reports was conducted in several distinct stages. Firstly, the framework, overall content, and certain aspects of the language of ISI and Ofsted reports were analysed. Secondly the ISI reports were searched for evidence supporting or rejecting the theory, proposed at the end of the earlier phases of the research, that the hallmarks of independence related to individuation, both of the institution and the pupil. This took the form of the particular climate and offering which characterised the school, and the development of knowledge, competencies, and personal dispositions, principally in the spiritual, social and moral spheres, of the individual pupil. The proposal from earlier analysis that, with the exception of staff enjoyment, those indicators of school quality, advanced by the headteachers interviewed, could be encompassed within the ISI framework was confirmed.

The reports were, therefore, examined to establish whether this did, in fact, happen in practice. Taking as a point of reference the responses of each of the six heads, when asked what was unique about their schools, their ISI reports were combed for comments which reflected their opinions. If such comments were found, this would imply that ISI played a role in reinforcing the distinctiveness of individual ISC schools. Finally, the reports were searched for evidence supporting the proposal that certain aims were actually fostered more in particular categories of school, as suggested by the aims survey analysis, but little difference was found.

Comparison with a selection of Ofsted reports conducted during the same period of time revealed many similarities as regards the frameworks. ISI reports, however, differed in the way several of the components were interpreted. The introductory section, factual in nature in both types of report, was lengthier and more detailed in ISI reports, emphasising individual characteristics of the school rather than relating it to a national system. With the exception of academic achievement, judgements were based on the experience of the inspectorate rather than on comparisons with national datasets, whereas Ofsted reports placed heavy reliance on comparative data. Achievement was confined to performance in tests and external examinations in Ofsted inspections, whereas it was wider-ranging in those conducted by ISI, and included individual and team achievements in extra-curricular areas. Such activities were given prominence in ISI reports, but barely featured in those conducted by Ofsted. Similarly, SMSC, and other aspects of the school's offering relating to personal development, formed a major focus in ISI reports but was a subsidiary element of those produced by Ofsted. These differences reflected diverse perspectives on the purposes of education, with breadth of opportunity, and achievement in its widest sense, given greater acknowledgement by ISI than by Ofsted.

These distinctions were also evident in the approach to self-evaluation, which was an essential component of the Ofsted inspection process. Ofsted reports contained a judgement on the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation process in relation to targets set in the light of the school's examination results, compared with those achieved nationally. Most ISI reports, on the other hand, did not refer to self-evaluation even though interviews with these headteachers confirmed that self-

evaluation did take place in all these schools, not limited to academic achievement, but relating to a range of different areas. Comparison with national datasets was used extensively in Ofsted reports, not only in relation to achievement, and served to locate the school within the system. ISI, however, only made reference to national data when judging pupil performance in external examinations. However, Field et al. (1998) point out that despite the drawbacks of employing national datasets when judging a school, dependence on professional judgement is also unreliable as it involves the use of value judgements. The only valid way of understanding the interrelationships between contributory factors within a school, they argue, would require the skills of an ethnographic researcher. Neither Ofsted nor ISI used such an approach.

Several differences in the use of language and presentation of judgements were also noted. Ofsted reports were more managerial in tone, and used numerical judgements, whereas ISI's judgements were expressed verbally using softer language. However, the language of compliance was more evident in ISI's reports where an emphasis on conformity with regulation was apparent, illustrating ISI's exercise of bureaucratic authority on behalf of the government. This also served, no doubt, to allay parental anxiety concerning the health, safety and welfare of their children, particularly in a boarding context. In this respect ISI inspectors' government agency in checking regulatory matters, equated to Ofsted's in monitoring standards in the light of the government's standards-raising agenda.

Nevertheless, despite adherence to a set framework with certain specified criteria, there was strong evidence that ISI's reports contributed to the individuation of each school by commenting on each school's, climate, offering and levels of pupils' personal development, judging each of these in the light of the school's declared aims rather than to datasets. There was, therefore, greater scope for reliance on the inspectors' in-built sense of quality rather than externally defined points of reference. This approach is potentially problematic where judgements on abstract concepts such as those involved in moral development are concerned, as there may be no agreed definition of the disposition under scrutiny, and hence no accepted indicators of quality.

When questioned about school success criteria, headteachers had pinpointed four areas: future orientation, personal development, positive outcomes, and enjoyment.

Comment on all of these aspects was found in each of the ISI reports. However, observations about enjoyment referred only to pupil's experience despite the stress placed by several heads on the need for happiness amongst the staff a school employed. It appeared, from the analysis of the six ISI reports that most of the recurrent goals were enacted in all types of ISC schools, not merely those which included them in their aims statements.

Nevertheless, claims made by individual heads about the unique features of their school did appear to have been substantiated by the inspection process, with reports referring explicitly to them. Together with the linkage between judgements and a school's specific aims, and the relationship between the markers of independence, derived from the aims survey, and the content of the inspection reports, this finding suggests that ISI inspections did, in fact, extend beyond the generally understood purposes of inspection. Matthews and Smith (1995) defined these as accountability, compliance checks, school improvement, and an aid to consumer choice. ISI inspectors appeared to make a positive contribution towards the individuation of the schools inspected by relating their judgements not only to the inspection framework, but also to a school's specific aims and unique characteristics, as elaborated by those traditionally invested with authority. In so doing, they reinforced the notion of independence from the maintained sector, and freedom to be distinctive rather than part of a system. Such an approach, however, lays ISI open to the criticism of possible bias towards the sector. A bias, which if it exists, could be accounted for by an awareness of the significant role an inspection report can play in promoting a school to prospective parents or, in the case of a negative report, deterring interest leading to a reduction in pupil roll (Hargreaves, 1995), maintenance of which is crucial for an independent school's survival.

This raises questions as to the intended purpose and audience for inspection reports and their reliability as a reflection of reality. If the agenda had been solely improvement, then the readership would have been principally internal and the reports could potentially have been more critical, given that there would be no external implications (Field et al. 1998). In her study of Ofsted inspection, Perryman (2009) found that too much was at stake for a totally honest appraisal. If the purpose

were accountability to current parents, to determine whether they were getting good value for the fees they were paying, then the readership would have been wider, and the survival of the school, would depend on their being satisfied with the inspection findings and thus continuing to contribute financially. If, however, the readership extended to prospective parents, then inspection was not only a driver for improvement, a means of providing accountability to both government and parents, but also, as Sutton (1994) argued, a marketing tool. It is questionable whether all three purposes could be fully reconcilable.

Finally, it appeared that ISI's role extends beyond judgement of the quality of education provided by the schools inspected, to the individuation of particular institutions, and of the sector as a whole, as distinct from the maintained sector. Given that so few recommendations for improvement in educational provision were made either by Ofsted for maintained schools (Field et al. 1988), or by ISI for ISC schools, which would justify the great expense of an inspection, (an issue raised by some of the heads I interviewed), it is, perhaps, this less overt aspect of ISI's role which was, and continues to be, of most importance to ISC schools, and the sector to which they belong. Indirect marketing of the independent sector and its constituent members may be the principal benefit to be derived from the inspection process.

Chapter 7 Summary and Discussion

Introduction

Over the last thirty years there has been an increasing interest on the part of successive governments of both main political persuasions in extending the degree of autonomy experienced by certain maintained sector schools (Wright, 2012). This has expressed itself in several forms, from the delegation of budgetary powers to grant-maintained schools in the 1980s to the creation of different forms of school, culminating in the establishment of the Academies programme under Labour in 2002 and the creation of Free Schools under the Coalition from 2010 onwards. These last two types of school are considered by the current government to be independent despite their heavy dependence on central government for funding, and the requirement that they be inspected by Ofsted, a government agency. In contrast, schools belonging to an association affiliated to the ISC, almost all of which are charities, are principally funded from fees or, in some cases, charitable endowments. Although, owing to their charitable status they do derive some tax benefit from government, (Walford, 1987). Moreover, these schools are not subject to inspection by Ofsted, but by ISI, which, although monitored by Ofsted, and thus indirectly answerable to government, is a separate organisation, which enjoys greater autonomy.

At the time of the first two phases of this research, between 2003 and 2009, the academies programme had experienced limited success, as the anticipated private sector funding, which was to complement government spending, had not been forthcoming (West and Bailey, 2013), and far fewer academies had been established than had been planned. Consequently, the term ‘independent school’ was usually used, in general parlance, to refer to those which were privately funded, such as schools in membership of the ISC associations. Rae (1981) attributes the widespread adoption of the word independent to describe private schools to a desire to promote a notion of liberty as opposed to that of elitism and privilege associated with the term public school, which was used formerly.

I hoped that my research might serve as a basis of comparison for future research into concepts of independence not only in those private schools which lie outside the ambit

of the ISC, but also with the recently formed state-funded 'independent schools'. Furthermore, the definition of independence proposed, could be applied to other private organisations.

To date literature devoted to the private sector in education in England has focussed principally on historical studies, especially of individual schools, various aspects of relationships between the sector and successive governments, ethnographic studies, and individual aspects of private schooling such as the experience of girls in former boys' public schools. There has been little, if any, attention given to exploring the nature of the independence enjoyed by private schools other than that relating to financial autonomy examined in Walford's edited collection (2003). This research sought therefore, to determine how independence was constructed in the early twenty-first century by ISC affiliated schools offering secondary education in England with respect to the aims they set, the ways in which their work is evaluated, and the constraints under which they operate.

ISC schools share certain characteristics with other private schools and those schools deemed independent maintained schools. They are all free to set their own terms and conditions of employment, term dates and hours of schooling. ISC and other private schools are exempt from following the exact requirements of the National Curriculum and state-funded independent schools also enjoy certain exemptions. However, this latter group, and non-ISC private schools, being subject to inspection by Ofsted, are more directly answerable to government as regards the nature and purposes of the education they provide than their ISC counterparts. Given ISC schools' apparent freedom to determine their own goals, the nature of their provision, and their own approach to self-evaluation and be judged by inspectors from within the independent sector, rather than by a fully external agency, my research focussed, in particular on these aspects of their independence to address the following issues:

- What are the aims of ISC schools and what can be deduced from them, and the way in which these schools' effectiveness is judged, about the characteristics of the independence which they enjoy?

- Is institutional uniqueness a defining feature of ISC schools, and if this is the case, is it at all meaningful to speak of a “sector” made up of such independent schools? (Johnson, 1987))
- What are the constraints which may limit the degree of independence which schools enjoy?
- What types of authority or influence are exerted over such schools which may constrain their aims and their enactment?

The characteristics of independence in ISC schools

The principal characteristic of independence to emerge from the survey of 84 ISC schools’ aims and the interviews with six ISC school heads and two representatives from ISI was that of individuation, both at the level of the institution and also of the individual pupil. ISC schools appeared to use their aims as a means of signalling a distinctive identity. The significance of the language chosen in which to define a school’s purposes was accentuated by some of the heads interviewed, with considerable amounts of time in some cases, having been devoted to the exact choice of words to convey the school’s particular intent and priorities. This contrasts sharply with the position of maintained schools which had their aims pre-defined by government and expressed for them as part of the National Curriculum, although they doubtless had devised additional ones of their own, but these were not easily accessible at the time of my study. Various constituent elements of individuation were apparent; climate and offering were found to be the principal defining components of the school’s identity, and the development of pupils’ competencies and dispositions, the means by which schools sought to enable the fulfilment of individual potential. These features of ISC schools appeared to contrast strongly with the emphasis on pupils as a collective group, found in the National Curriculum aims statement for maintained sector schools; although the 2014 NC does now make reference to individual needs and schools are now able to publish the institution’s individual aims on their website. Likewise in Ofsted inspection reports, schools were only judged on the performance of cohorts in academic work compared to national averages. Whereas the achievement of individuals or groups, in a range of areas, in addition to

that of year groups in external examinations, was the focus of ISI inspections. The drivers for the collective approach could include: a concern for equality of curricular access; a perceived need to drive up standards of achievement so as to produce citizens who can serve the nation's economic needs; an accountability system which is relatively easy to implement given the large number of schools involved, a particular conception of learning as linear and incremental with little scope for the individual learner to construct, develop and deploy their own knowledge. These concerns were not so evident in ISC schools where learning and achievement were more widely conceived, the pupil body included many international students destined to work overseas, there were fewer schools to hold accountable, and equality of access was not a concern given that the schools were fee-paying.

Each of the constituent elements of individuation in these schools could be further subdivided into a number of categories, all of which provided a means whereby individual schools could distinguish themselves from others.

Institutional Individuation

Climate

Many of the schools studied used the term ethos to describe this aspect of their school's identity. Reference to a school's defining philosophy or ethos was also found in the ISI inspection reports seen, signalling a difference with the maintained sector since neither the Ofsted inspection reports examined, nor the National Curriculum aims statement, contained references to climate or ethos, but focussed rather on curricular provision and outcomes. Three aspects of school climate were identified during the research analysis: the approach to pupils which the school sought to adopt, the orientation of the learning process, and social engagement. There was an additional element relating to religious knowledge and commitment apparent amongst those schools with a strong religious connection. An emphasis on adopting a positive attitude towards pupils, on preparing them for the future, and on involving them in community activities and service both at school and beyond, were ways in which schools sought to embody their particular ethos.

Offering

Four principal aspects of a school's offering were evident amongst the aims statements, comments made during interviews and inspection reports viewed: the learning programme; the learning environment; the pupil support system; and the particular characteristics of the staff employed. Breadth of curricular and extra-curricular offering, and an emphasis on opportunity, characterised the learning programme in the schools studied. The inspection reports showed how each school had interpreted the notion of breadth in a slightly different way. In some schools a strong international emphasis was evident amongst the school's offering in contrast to the overt "*Britishness*" found in current educational policy (Keddie, 2014). This could doubtless be accounted for by the presence of increasing numbers of overseas students in ISC schools. However, the inclusion in the ISSR, (DfE, 2013) of a requirement for schools to teach "*British values*" may pose a threat to this international dimension.

Both the aims statements and the inspection reports alluded to the learning environment as a key element of individual institutional provision. Emphasis was placed on high quality facilities and resources. The atmosphere was presented as ordered and positive, characterised by enjoyment and enthusiasm, with pupils feeling secure and supported. The pastoral care system, designed to ensure pupil wellbeing and happiness, was portrayed by schools as an important element in their provision for individual pupils' needs. Finally, the employment of dedicated, caring, and well-qualified staff was conveyed as an essential aspect of many schools' specific offering.

Pupil Individuation

Competencies

Frequent reference was found, in aims statements and inspection reports, to both generic and specific competencies which would contribute to the development of pupils' abilities and talents. Many of the generic skills were related to potential future use in the world of work or other aspects of adulthood. More specific allusions were made to particular intellectual skills such as critical analysis or the capacity for logical thought, or to particular capabilities such as the ability to communicate effectively, work co-operatively, lead others, solve problems and make decisions. The fostering of

sporting ability, and creativity, both in thought, and in artistic, literary, and musical endeavour, was a frequent element of a school's intent amongst those institutions studied.

Dispositions

Schools aimed to develop a wide variety of personal qualities, many of which corresponded to aspects of spiritual, moral and social education (SMSC) as defined by Ofsted (2004). These dispositions concerned both the individual him or herself, and their attitude towards others. Those characteristics with an internal orientation centred on self-knowledge, self-belief and self-control. Those which were more externally directed related to the formation of positive relationships, and to moral development. In some instances, the concepts referred to could be subject to multiple interpretations, which is potentially problematic when judgements as to the effectiveness of a school's moral education are at issue.

Evaluation in ISC schools

Self-evaluation as a reflection of the individuation and independence of ISC schools

Individuation was also evident in the ways in which evaluation was undertaken in ISC schools, which was one of the main focuses of the second and third stages of my research. Unlike schools in the maintained sector, which were required to undertake self-evaluation in order to complete a mandatory self-evaluation form (SEF), schools inspected by ISI were, for the majority of the period covered by the research, free to make use of the optional SEF, if they wished, and to undertake self-evaluation in any form they chose. Questionnaire responses indicated that most of the schools in the survey did undertake some form of self-evaluation, even though there was no requirement to do so. Interviews with six headteachers confirmed that self-evaluation was undertaken in their schools, although the extent to which this practice was embedded varied from one school to another. However, questioned about how they judged their success in relation to the school's specific aims, all but one head experienced some difficulty, especially where the judgment of success in achieving long term goals, or those less susceptible to measurement, was concerned. Moreover,

whereas all the heads interviewed had been able to articulate the ways in which they considered their school unique as regards climate, provision or outcomes, limited evidence was offered of evaluation specifically linked to the school's unique characteristics and context.

During the interviews I had asked heads what they believed to be the hallmarks of a good school. Their responses focussed on enjoyment, on the part of both staff and pupils, personal growth, future orientation and positive outcomes. However, these indicators did not appear to relate closely to the self-evaluation activities described by heads, which seemed to focus principally on positive outcomes in the form of achievement and, in one case, behaviour, or the processes that contributed to these such as teaching and pastoral care, but did not appear to cover the other criteria mentioned. This suggests that the drivers for self-evaluation lay outside a wish to judge the school in relation to internally held views of quality and were, possibly, subject to forces outside the school such as perceptions of good practice promulgated by in-service training, the media, or the inspectorate.

Schools did, however, demonstrate their independence in their choice of evaluation instruments. None of the heads interviewed had used ready-made tool-kits, preferring to devise their own, tailored to their particular focus. In this, they differed from the maintained schools in the Davies and Rudd (2001) study, which had made use of externally devised instruments, closely linked to Ofsted requirements. The use made of the outcomes of the ISC schools' evaluations varied. In some cases, for example, the information derived from the scrutiny of academic achievement, was used in a summative way to promote the school in publications and on websites. In others evaluation was formative, linked to development planning for improvement of teaching, pastoral care, extra-curricular provision or physical plant, and in one case to appraise a new initiative. The perceived need to plan strategically and developmentally illustrates the influence of business practice on these schools' conduct. The pressure to constantly strive to improve, resulting from the need to market the school is reflected in one school's involvement not only of present, but also prospective parents, in their evaluation procedures, lending support to Hammersley-Fletcher's (2015) claim that "customer satisfaction" is currently viewed as a measure of a school's success.

The field of commerce and market pressures were not the only constraints on a school's freedom to determine its evaluation procedures. Allied to these were the expectations of the inspectorate, whose reports reflected acceptance of the business model of management as appropriate to schools, in line with recent government policy, and whose operation was subject to scrutiny by the government through the offices of Ofsted. Questionnaire and interview responses revealed regular review linked to ongoing development planning, the effectiveness of which contributed to inspection judgements on the quality of school leadership, as evident in the reports analysed.

The ISI framework covered pre-defined areas, as did the SEF. All the heads interviewed acknowledged a link between self-evaluation and inspection, with all of them making use of the SEF, even when optional. Indeed one head said he was continuing to use it after the inspection although, at that stage, there was no obligation to do so. Hence, the theoretical freedom to evaluate in the manner of a school's choosing may have been, to some extent, restricted by the practices and expectations of the Independent Schools Inspectorate. However, self-evaluation was used more flexibly by the ISC schools studied than the schools in the Davies and Rudd study cited above.

The role of ISI inspection reports in reinforcing individuation

Scrutiny of a sample of inspection reports produced by ISI found that the inspectorate, through the format and style of its reports, made a positive contribution to institutional individuation. Unlike Ofsted, ISI was free to report without frequent reference to national norms, which in itself resulted in each school being regarded individually, and a broader range of educational activities being considered. Moreover, the initial contextual statement served to establish the unique identity of each school. Judgements, although they referred to pre-defined categories, were related to the fulfilment of a school's aims, thus reinforcing the notion that each school's goals were distinctive in some way. The extensive use of exemplification to illustrate judgements enabled the inspectorate to distinguish between different schools' climate, offering, and outcomes, which analysis of research data had shown to be the characteristics of individuation. Most significant was the finding that those attributes of institutional

uniqueness articulated by heads at interview were recognised and remarked upon by the inspectorate. Thus, despite their role as agents of government in the inspection of regulatory compliance, it would seem that ISI did play a role in asserting the uniqueness of each school it inspected, thus contributing to its individuation. Consequently, the resulting reports, reflecting this distinctiveness, were observed on school websites, presumably as a marketing device.

Is it appropriate to speak of an Independent Sector?

Visual scrutiny of the aims-concept maps in the first phase of the research, interviews with heads in the second phase, and examination of a number of ISI reports in the third phase, all supported the claim that each ISC school has certain distinctive characteristics. Indeed, the Donnison Report (1970) on the independent sector, written well before the establishment of Academies or Free Schools, commented on the variety of institutions which constitute the body of schools labelled independent, a view reiterated by Walford (2006). In fact, Johnson (1987) had raised the question as to whether, if every school was so different as to be unique, it was appropriate to speak of an independent 'sector' at all. The research findings suggest that, despite the strong emphasis found on institutional individuation, there are certain concepts which are commonly found amongst the aims of ISC independent schools which might serve to characterise the sector in general.

The first of these concerns pupil individuation. Over half the schools in the aims survey referred to the development of individual potential. The second related to the provision of a supportive environment, likewise a feature of the aims of more than half the schools surveyed. These two characteristics are particularly significant since the National Curriculum aims (DfEE & QCA, 1999) made no reference to the creation of a desirable school climate, nor alluded to pupils as individuals. Thus, they would seem to be the defining principles of independent education in ISC schools. Although these schools may each seek a distinctive approach to the enactment of these two aims, they appear to share them with the majority of other institutions affiliated to the ISC associations. A further twenty characteristics were identified as common features of

many ISC schools. With the exception of fostering partnership with parents, these all related to aspects of individuation discussed above.

There were, however, certain aims which appeared to be more characteristic of particular categories of school. Schools with a religious affiliation laid stress on the promotion of a particular standpoint, most frequently referred to as Christian, and the dissemination of religious knowledge and practices. This reached its strongest expression in the school affiliated to a religious order where the school's mission was interpreted in the light of the Order's teaching (Donohue, 1963; Society of Jesus British Province, 2002). Examination of the inspection report confirmed the overtly religious dimension of the education offered.

However, other potential differences between school types, which were suggested during the aims analysis, were not confirmed by scrutiny of the inspection reports. For example, although greater emphasis on the development of confidence was found in the aims statements of day schools and those which catered only for girls, inspection reports showed this to be an important outcome in all the schools whose reports were seen, whether co-educational or single-sex, day or boarding. Similarly, accentuation on moral education, which the aims analysis suggested might be heavier in single-sex and day schools, was judged to be a strong feature of all the schools whose ISI reports were viewed. Partnership with parents' was universally strong, not just in boys' schools.

Similarly, no evidence was found in the inspection reports of differences in the importance attributed to excellence by some categories of school, despite the omission of any mention of excellence or high standards in their statements of purpose. Apart from the inclusion of a particular religious standpoint amongst a school's aims, the only other possible distinction identified, was in the degree of importance attributed by some co-educational schools to the treatment of pupils as individuals. Given, that only a small number of ISI reports were studied, a larger sample of reports and aims statements would need to be analysed before this proposition could be justified. Hence it is most probable that the distinctions between the different types of school were due to a wish to emphasise particular characteristics

of the school to appeal to a particular audience, such as a focus on confidence-building in girls' schools, rather than to differences in aspiration.

Thus, it would seem, from the evidence gleaned during this research, that ISC schools share certain characteristics, regardless of the type of school. These comprise a concern with individual pupils' spiritual and moral growth; the development of talents, skills and academic potential within a happy, supportive environment; an emphasis on breadth of offering; the pursuit of excellence, both in provision and a range of outcomes; and commitment to the community in its widest sense. It is, therefore, feasible to speak of an independent sector composed of those schools which, though distinct from each other, share these features. The declared intent of maintained sector schools, as reflected in the 1999 version of the National Curriculum aims, whilst sharing many goals with ISC schools, did not focus to the same extent on ethos, the individual, breadth of provision both curricular and extra-curricular, or personal development.

Since this research was undertaken the ISC (2015b) published a Manifesto as a prelude to the general election. Accompanying this was a Statement of Values and Attributes of ISC Schools (ISC, 2014a). ISC claimed, on its website, that all publications were fully researched, but no indication was given as to exactly how, or by whom, this document was produced, nor was there any reference to the evidence on which it was based. The Statement highlights five categories of attribute which characterise ISC schools: independence; excellence; contribution; social mobility and access; and international reach. Each of these categories is further explained as follows:

- Independence is equated with the following features: diversity of provision, approach and philosophy thus providing freedom of choice to parents, pupils and teachers; focus on the individual child; innovation; accountability to parents; freedom from political interference; ability to allocate resources to best suit needs of pupils.
- Excellence is equated with the development of every child's potential regardless of special need or extraordinary talent; outstanding pastoral care; small class sizes facilitating individual attention and excellent relationships.

- Contribution includes not only the savings to the taxpayer by educating children outside the state sector, but also contribution to the community in a variety of ways.
- Social mobility and access refer to the provision of financial support for less well-off families and the provision of education for the increasing number of pupils of parents who were not independently educated.
- International reach encompasses the provision of education to overseas students and the establishment of a global reputation for excellence.

The findings of my research would seem to largely support the contents of this statement, although questions such as the extent of the sector's global reputation, social mobility and savings to the taxpayer were not addressed during my examination of ISC schools' aims and evaluation during the period 2003 -2011. It is possible that some of these issues would be more evident if the research were to be conducted now, as the impact of the economic crash of 2008 has become more apparent resulting, possibly, in some schools marketing themselves more overseas. Moreover, there has been an increased commitment to aiding social mobility as reflected in recent ISC *Censuses*. The question of freedom from government interference is less clear-cut. The research indicated that ISC schools do enjoy greater freedom as regards curricular provision, the ability to set and enact their own aims and to be judged in a different light by their own inspectorate, than their maintained sector counterparts, which are under greater government control. However, this freedom is not absolute, as discussed below.

Constraints on the degree of independence experienced by ISC schools

Despite the apparent independence enjoyed by the ISC schools in this study, as regards the freedom to create their own individual climate and identity; define goals and purposes which embody them; enact them in their chosen manner; and be externally evaluated according to a format which relates to them as unique institutions, analysis of the research data, from all the sources used, indicated that there are also a number

of factors which acted as constraints on a school's independence. These limitations were both internally and externally derived.

Internal constraints

A number of constraining elements were identified, emanating from within the individual school, which impacted upon the degree of freedom exercised. Firstly, those associated with any affiliation which the school might have to a religious body or particular group of schools with shared characteristics, such as the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), which inevitably shaped, to some extent, the direction taken by the school. Secondly, those which derived from the foundation of the school, which in some cases were associated with religious belief or practice, but in others related to the wishes or philosophy of the individual founder or benefactor. Thirdly, those emanating from the school's personnel, at any particular time, whose own views could steer the school along a particular path, either through the goals articulated, or the manner of their enactment. This was found to be particularly the case with headteachers, who played a significant role in the definition of schools' purposes, but also applied, in some cases, to individual members of staff whose views were influential. The distinction made by Donnelly (2000) between the positivist view of ethos which purports to direct the school's work, and the anti-positivist view which regards ethos as emanating from social interaction is particularly relevant to this finding.

Questionnaire responses highlighted the perceived role of aims in guiding the work of a school's teachers and pupils. However, ultimately, their enactment is dependent on the actions of individuals who may not necessarily fully understand or engage with them. Donnelly's (2000) study of two schools in Northern Ireland which purported to have either, in one case a Catholic ethos, and in the other to integrate both Catholic and Protestant religious traditions, illustrates this. Ramsey et al.'s (2016) study highlights perceptual differences of school climate between students, parents and school staff. The need to promote a common understanding of a school's climate was particularly evident in School Number 26, where the head referred to the need to "*teach*" the school's ethos. Likewise in School Number 42, where the religious Order conducted part of the staff induction process in an attempt to ensure greater

congruence between the ethos, as defined by the Order, and its enactment by the school's employees. Moreover, a school's freedom to fulfil its aims may also be limited by the particular knowledge, skills and dispositions of its employees, and to some extent pupils, at any given time. The composition of these groups is in a constant state of flux as people join and leave the organisation. Hence freedom as regards aims fulfilment varies continuously.

Limitations deriving from the abilities of personnel were also apparent as regards self-evaluation, despite the freedom schools enjoyed to devise their own means and criteria for the process. Problems had occurred in two schools as regards comprehension of the evaluation questions by those who were completing the responses. In one case the respondents were pupils, and in the other governors. These difficulties could have originated from the questionnaire design, or from problems in interpretation, but, in any case, derived from personal limitations. Furthermore, some heads remarked on the difficulty they experienced in devising suitable instruments to measure ethos, or success in fulfilling their aims in the long term.

External constraints

Several types of external constraint or influence were identified. These emanated from four principal sources: the government through legislation or regulation; perceived expertise in good practice; market forces; and political ideology. Two of the heads interviewed and one of the spokespeople for ISI remarked on a sense of increased regulation on the part of government, which potentially threatened the autonomy of ISC schools, driving them towards greater uniformity. Scrutiny of a sample of ISI inspection reports revealed that concern with conformity with the *Independent Schools Standards Regulations (ISSR) (2003)*; *The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS) (Department of Health, 2002)*; *the Children Act (2004)*; and *the Special Needs and Disabilities Act (2001) (SENDA)*, were amongst the legal requirements which had a bearing on the conduct of independent schools. These were in addition to more general legislation covering issues such as race or gender equality, data protection, the operation of charities. Thus government policy, particularly under the New Labour governments, between 1997 and 2010, can be considered to have had

an increasingly constraining influence on independent schools' freedom reflecting the view that abolition was replaced by regulation, as argued by Tapper (2003).

Nevertheless, these obligations, and the requirement that compliance be reported, did not appear to have prevented the inspectorate from recognising and acknowledging distinctive characteristics of the schools inspected. In this they differed from their Ofsted counterparts who described schools in relation to the national system.

Government acts as a constraining influence on schools' independence in a less overt way through its control of external examinations and qualifications. Although these are administered by examination boards they are indirectly controlled by non-ministerial departments. The *Education (Schools) Act* 1997 established the role of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) granting it the right to regulate all external examinations in England. This body was replaced by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) under the terms of the *Education and Skills Act* (2008). The Performance Tables, often referred to as league tables, established by the Conservative Government in 1992 as part of John Major's *Citizens' Charter*, also act as an instrument of control. At interview, one of the spokespeople for ISI referred to the constraints on independence exerted by the control of the examination system which acted as a pressure for greater uniformity of provision. For example, until 2010 only pupil performance in GCSE and A level examinations was reported, to the exclusion of the International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) or International Baccalaureate (IB). This acted as a disincentive to independent schools to exercise freedom in the choice of qualification for their pupils. Although some of the schools in phase two of the study entered pupils for the IGCSE in a limited number of subjects, none prepared candidates for the IB. However, the increase in entries for alternative examinations from independent schools once these were included in the Performance Tables (Stewart, 2014; Barker, 2016) suggests a link between government policy and independent schools' practice.

One of the ISI spokespeople remarked upon the power of the educational press and the media to influence directly the work of the schools themselves through the dissemination of notions of effectiveness, but also indirectly, by shaping the views of inspectors and parents who consequently formed certain expectations of schools. The

close link between the government and the media is examined by Gewirtz et al. (2004), and Baroutsis (2016). Mansell (2013), in his examination of the media's presentation of data relating to schooling, points out the deliberately political nature of the way such information is often presented. Thus, journalists and broadcasters may be a vehicle by which government indirectly constrains the independent sector. This would not have been the case to such an extent in previous eras when schools worked in greater isolation with less impact from mass media. It is therefore, possible to conclude that educational policy-making as regards maintained schools, examined in the literature review in Chapter 2, could also apply to independent schools.

Another powerful constraint on an ISC school's independence derives from the need to meet market expectations in order to survive. Questionnaire responses suggested that although a school's current parents played little role in the definition of a school's aims, there was a strong link between aims definition and the desire to provide information for prospective parents, in the hope of influencing their choice. The fact that the majority of questionnaire respondents published their aims in the school prospectus would seem to support this proposition. As Angus (2015) remarks, schools cannot allow themselves to be perceived as "ordinary" so must represent themselves as especially successful, distinctive and desirable. Copeland (2001) goes so far as to assert that the independent school prospectus presents the school in line with parents' wishes.

Questionnaire and interview responses revealed a strong connection between aims definition or regular review and development planning for improvement. This reflects Hallinger and Lu's findings (2013), and illustrates the link between the business world and that of schooling, where business practice is perceived as an exemplary model to be followed by schools, reflecting the style of management promoted by advocates of neoliberalism (Ball, 2013). It is possible that the whole development planning process itself was, in fact, driven by a need to survive in an increasingly competitive field where schools feel obliged to keep up with competitors. Was the focus on individuality of both the child and the school, which appeared to characterise early twenty-first century ISC schools, in some cases, at least, driven less by educational ideals, and more by survival instincts in response to parental concepts of what is required to enable

their children to become happy and successful adults? Further research on the past aims of these schools, prior to the emergence of neoliberal ideology, with its emphasis on choice and the market, would be needed to establish whether this was a recent or longstanding phenomenon.

Moreover, has the independence of ISC schools become increasingly constrained by government legislation informed by current ideology, as some of the heads interviewed asserted? Historical research, possibly encompassing the views of earlier heads on the degree of independence they enjoyed prior to the introduction of ISI inspections, and later the Independent Schools Standards Regulations (2003), might illuminate this further. Alternatively, was the use of the term 'independent', from the 1970s onwards, never really appropriate, and hence, little more than a ploy to deflect allegations of elitism as Rae (1981) claimed?

The constraining influence of political ideology on the independence of private schools has long been a feature of their operation. Several of the contributors to Walford's collection (2003) examined the fluctuations in levels of support or antagonism towards the independent sector from a historical point of view. These were examined in Chapter 2. Constraints on the freedom of independent schools have varied according to the political persuasion of the government in power, with Conservative administrations tending to be more supportive of the private educational sector, and Labour governments less so. The relaxation of some of the more prescriptive ISSR, introduced under a Labour Government, and the inclusion of a wider range of qualifications in the Performance tables following the formation of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat government in 2010 reflect this.

Nevertheless, neoliberal ideology, has come to dominate the political thinking of both major parties (Courtney, 2015) and the attitude of many British citizens (Reay, 2012) in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Crozier (2015) argues that neoliberalism is now so firmly entrenched in education that it may prove difficult to eliminate. This has rendered the Labour Party less hostile to the independent sector and, consequently, the abolition of private schools is no longer high on the party agenda (Walford, 2006), leaving questions of social justice unanswered. Consequently,

the commitment to the wider community, evident in the aims statements of many ISC schools, is all the more significant.

Types of authority and influence exerted over schools in membership of the ISC associations

The research findings indicate that several sources of authority or influence have a bearing on the provision of education in ISC schools, in terms of the aims which they set themselves, but also the way in which those aims are enacted, and success is judged. Bureaucratic authority (Dowling, 2009) is exerted in several different ways. Firstly it was in evidence in the role played by representatives of religious bodies, founders, or heads as their successors, in defining the ethos and aims of individual schools. Moreover, those invested with authority by virtue of their occupation of a particular role in the school such as governors, and senior and middle management, were also shown to exert a bureaucratic form of authority not only in the definition of purpose, but also in the conduct of evaluation and appraisal schemes. In one instance governors were viewed as final arbiters when a dispute had arisen over the wording of a school's aims and their decision had been accepted without question, illustrating the acceptance of their authority to act in this way as legitimate.

Bureaucratic authority was exerted by government in several ways. ISC schools were affected by legislation relating to areas such as employment, data protection and discrimination, which applied to all organisations. Successive Education Acts concerning inspection, and the *Children Act* 2004, focussing on child welfare, affected all schools, whether maintained or independent. However, the exercise of bureaucratic authority over the independent sector was most evident in the *Independent Schools Standards Regulations* (2003), *The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* (2002), and the requirement that all private schools meet the relevant standards in order to remain registered with the government department responsible for education and, therefore, permitted to operate (DfE, 2013). Despite discharging a role in reinforcing the individuation of ISC schools through the content and style of its inspection reports, which was apparent during my report analysis, the Independent Schools Inspectorate, under the scrutiny of Ofsted, a government agency, was also

charged with the role of inspecting compliance (*Education Acts, 2002; 2005; Education and Skills Act, 2008*). As such, it was the principal overt agent of the government's authority identified in this research. Thus it played the dual, and potentially conflicting, role of enhancing, yet constraining, independence.

The impact of the government's Performance Tables is reflected in the publication on schools' websites of public examination results, and the regular review of examination performance, referred to by heads interviewed as a recurrent element of their self-evaluation processes. In one instance this was undertaken by the marketing committee, in others by governors or senior staff. Seldon (2010) argues that maintained schools have become examination factories. However, my research findings suggest that, although there may be greater emphasis on examinations in ISC schools than in the past, there is still breadth of offering, and considerable differentiation between schools.

Evidence of personal influence was less explicit in the research findings. Nevertheless, the significant role of the head in the redefinition of many schools' aims, apparent in questionnaire responses, suggests that the personality of the individual occupying the post would have had a bearing on the acceptance and implementation by staff and pupils of these goals. It is unlikely that bureaucratic authority alone would have assured the degree of aims enactment reflected in the inspection reports. Although it is often difficult to determine retrospectively the personal characteristics of a school's founder, one must assume that they exerted sufficient charismatic authority, as defined by Dowling (2009) to establish the school and its initial goals in the first place.

Personal influence of a different nature was in evidence in the school where one or two individuals were said to have persuaded others to adopt their preferred wording of a previous set of aims. In this instance, their influence may not, necessarily, have equated with charismatic authority, since there may have been an element of fear in colleagues' acceptance (Blau, 1970). In addition, Blau points out that, on occasion, it is, in fact, the dependence of subordinates on their managers for their wellbeing that leads them to fall in line with their wishes. This might be the case, for example, when a subject teacher was afraid to oppose the views of their head of department.

The influence and acceptance of expertise from the commercial sphere, examined above as a constraining influence on independent schools' management style, was also apparent in the research data analysed. This was most notable in the responses to the questionnaires and judgements on leadership and management in the ISI inspection reports. These all contained explicit judgements as to the effectiveness of development planning, with the most recent reports adopting the language of business through references to target-setting and monitoring. The appropriateness of business practice as a suitable model for educational institutions appeared to go unquestioned by both schools and inspectors.

Similarly, other bodies were also seen to be endowed with a degree of expertise which was widely accepted as legitimate. One of the interviewees referred to the way in which the media, and especially the educational press, were regarded as authoritative by many concerned with education, including teachers, teacher trainers, inspectors and parents, when they published particular educational viewpoints or highlighted certain practices. They were invested by their readers with the authority of an expert despite their frequently misleading use of data as illustrated by Mansell (2013).

Finally, the impact of the market economy on the behaviour of schools in the independent sector, which is heavily dependent on acceptance by the market in order to continue its existence is reflected in one Head's comments about the need now to involve parents in discussion as customers, and consult with prospective parents in order to remain successful, and the creation of posts such as marketing manager or development director in several of the schools studied. This suggests a form of expert influence derived from the theories of certain economists. In the past, different ideologies have competed for political control and each has exerted power differently over educational institutions, including those within the independent sector as described in Walford's edited collection, 2003. This was principally dependent on whether their standpoint was largely collective or individualist. However, as Allais (2012) argues, since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism, there has been no real alternative to capitalism, which in its current form equates with neoliberalism, an ideology which is almost universally accepted by governments

throughout the developed world (Harris, 2007; Torres, 2009; Mc Gregor, 2009) and is pervasive in British society (Reay, 2012).

The adoption by both major British political parties of the basic tenets of neoliberalism (Wright, 2012), and many citizens' view that education is a product to be consumed (Harris, 2007) reflect its embedded position in current economic and political thought and practice in this country. The expertise of economists such as Friedman and Hayek, the architects of neoliberalism, has been largely accepted by governments (Ball, 2012a) as they have embraced this ideology as authoritative, to the extent that it now permeates the workings of multiple aspects of society including independent schools, not merely commercial enterprise. The different forms of authority can all be instruments for the enactment of this dominant ideology which has been widely accepted as legitimate and has had an increasing impact on educational practice in recent decades (Mc Gregor, 2009).

Conclusion

My research findings suggest that the principal characteristic of independence in ISC schools is individuation, both of the institution and of its pupils. However the extent to which uniqueness may be embraced is subject to certain constraints which derive not only from external sources such as the government or parental expectations, but also from sources connected with the school. The founder, the current governors, head and staff all appeared to influence the ways in which the schools' purposes are defined and enacted. They, in turn, are likely to have been subject to contemporary external influences through in-service training, the media including the educational press, the commercial world, and contact with the inspectorate, in addition to those deriving from tradition and custom. Moreover, where a school had a particular internal characteristic such as religious affiliation, or provision for boarding or single-sex education, this was seen to impact to some extent on the school's declared aims.

ISC schools' independence, would, thus seem to be restricted by constraints, many of which, at the time of this research, emanated from the dominant ideology affecting government policy and legislation, enforced by agents such as the inspectorates. True independence for a school to determine its purposes and be judged purely in the light

of these would seem to be an illusory concept. Such freedom as could be said to have existed appeared to lie not in the individual schools' aims, but in the way in which they were enacted through each school's climate, offering, and ensuing outcomes. The individuality of the institution might be the most defining characteristic of the independence enjoyed by ISC schools. Herein may be the solution to Johnson's query as to whether we can, in fact, speak of an independent sector. It would appear, from my research, that it is possible to refer collectively to a group of schools which have some common aims, different to those defined by government for maintained schools, but interpreted in distinct ways, through the individual school's ethos and provision, and resulting in a variety of outcomes. Diversity, as opposed to uniformity, may be the key to understanding the nature of independence in ISC schools; a distinctiveness which could be enhanced further by an inspection system, which was less tied to a set framework, and pre-determined notions of quality, and more responsive to individual schools.

However, it must be recognised that, in acknowledging institutional uniqueness and diversity, one could be said to be contributing to the notion of choice between schools, and hence subscribing to the neoliberal belief in the precedence of the market. Thus, there would appear to be no escape from the dominant ideology. The degree of autonomy and individuality enjoyed by many of the original founders of independent schools may not be attainable in the early twenty-first century. Summerhill's battle to preserve the school along the lines envisaged by its founder, A S Neill, in the face of Ofsted's opposition, was a clear illustration of the challenges faced by those who seek an alternative approach to education (de Waal, 2006). Despite the rhetoric of choice which characterises the market economy, there would appear to be limits to the degree of diversity which is permissible. Conformity, which may vary in extent, with the dominant political, ideological, social and religious norms and values, is still required.

In conclusion, it would appear from this research study that, even for those schools which appeared to enjoy the greatest freedom, namely the ISC schools, real independence from personal, political, ideological or social pressures was unattainable. Independence in these schools is best understood as a '*constrained*

freedom’ to differ from other schools by setting aims which diverge in emphasis and can be enacted in varying ways, and by being judged against a broader set of criteria than maintained schools, by a separate inspectorate, albeit one which is answerable to a government agency and responsive to neoliberal concepts of the effectiveness of management and leadership. Figure 7.1 sets out the main components of my proposition that independence can be understood as the constrained freedom to individuate.

Figure 7.1

Independence as the constrained freedom to individuate in early 21 st Century ISC schools				
Individuation				
<i>Institution</i>	Climate	Offering	Outcomes	
<i>Individual Pupil</i>	Dispositions - SMSC		Competencies -Skills	
Constraint – External				
<i>Ideology</i>	Collective or Individual Focus Commitment to social justice or privilege			
<i>Neoliberalism</i>	Market forces	Individual Choice Performativity/Accountability		
<i>Government</i>	Legislation/regulation		Policy	Ofsted Examinations/Performance Tables
<i>Media</i>	Policy reinforcement/Concepts of best practice			
<i>Business world</i>	Notions of best organisational practice			
<i>Inspectorate</i>	Regulatory checks		Quality definition	
Constraint – Internal				
<i>History</i>	Founder’s wishes		Tradition	
<i>Religious Link</i>	Beliefs and practices		Philosophy	
<i>Personnel</i>	Governors	Leaders	Staff	Pupils Parents

Chapter 8 Conclusion

The following chapter is divided into four sections: the achievements of the research; the limitations of the research; the implications for future research; the implications for practice.

Achievements of the research

Both Lucas (2002) and Walford (2006) highlight the limited body of academic literature relating to the independent sector. This was confirmed by my own literature search which identified no serious examination of the aims of independent schools after the 1944 *Education Act*, nor any in-depth examination of evaluation or inspection in ISC schools. Recent academic discussion of aims in English schools has focussed mainly on the National Curriculum, especially on its drawbacks, but has made no mention of alternative provision outside the maintained sector. This research has helped to fill that void. Moreover, as Dooley et al. (2003) and Walford (2006) point out, such research as has been undertaken in the independent sector has generally concentrated on a small number of well-known prestigious schools, and has tended to represent the fee-paying sector as a homogeneously privileged enclave (Davey, 2012). However, Walford (2006) argues that those schools which serve the most economically privileged, and are highly selective academically and financially, represent only a very small part of the English private sector, which is, in reality, highly diverse with fees that are wide-ranging. Yet the small group of prestigious schools are the institutions which are best known to the general public who may, therefore, form a distorted impression of private education (Davey, 2012) which, in fact, encompasses a wide variety of provision (Peel, 2015).

By including a broader range of schools in my initial survey, (only one of the 'great' schools, listed in Power et al., (2003), was included in the aims analysis) I have attempted to redress the balance and present a more representative picture of ISC schools overall. The most famous elite schools are often viewed by the public as vehicles for the acquisition of social capital which may be advantageous to them in their future careers. However, my research shows that, in the majority of ISC schools,

enjoyment of school, encompassing not only learning experiences, but also positive relationships and friendships in the present, is what is accorded significance by the schools.

Historical analysis of the purposes of independent schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth century highlighted the link between the education they provided and the role their pupils were expected to play in society with a strong divergence between boys' and girls' provision (Aldrich, 1982; Walford, 2006). My analysis of a range of schools' aims has shown how current aims no longer reflect an expectation of a subsidiary role for women. Those aims most characteristic of ISC schools were found in all types of school, regardless of their pupils' sex. However, religion continues to have a noticeable impact on the purposes of some schools. The influence of religious belief signalled by White (2007; 2011), was shown still to exert a considerable influence on the goals of those schools with a religious foundation.

Comparison of the National Curriculum aims and Ofsted inspection reports with the aims of ISC schools and inspections by ISI revealed a strong link between the education provided by the state and the perceived need to prepare pupils for their contribution to the nation's economy and to become a particular type of citizen as indicated by McGregor (2009), Dorling (2012), and Ball (2013). However, these functions were shown to be less in evidence in independent schools, which concentrated more on the development of the individual in a range of areas, in some cases from an international perspective. The emphasis is principally on the development of the individual's intellectual, social, emotional and physical attributes rather than on the needs of the economy, and thus largely reflects what Schiro refers to as a learner-centred ideology (Moore, 2015). Thus, the maintained secondary sector, rather than the private sector, can be seen to have assumed the principal role of shaping young people according to the government's wishes with a view, in this instance, to their forming part of a workforce which can enable the country to compete successfully in the global economy, described by Schiro as a social efficiency ideology (Moore, 2015).

My analysis of both ISC schools' aims, and a selection of ISI inspection reports, provides an alternative vision of education, recognising the value of a broader spectrum of learning and achievement, than that which appears to predominate in

maintained schools. My research findings demonstrate that de Waal's (2006) criticism that the inspection of independent schools by Ofsted is driving uniformity does not apply to the same extent to those inspected by ISI.

Historically there has been tension between Labour governments and the private sector in education (Griggs, 2003). Tapper (2003) outlined the ways in which the relationship changed under New Labour with regulation replacing abolition as the main political vehicle for relating to independent schools. My research was largely completed during a period when Labour was in power. The interview and inspection report data analysis demonstrated the impact of a perceived increase in regulation on the freedom enjoyed by ISC schools. Roach (1991) and Tapper (2003) both described the origins of HMC attributing its foundation to opposition to state interference in independent schools. The interview data suggest that this is still a strong characteristic of HMC, with references made by two HMC heads to discontent in their respective regions about increased regulation by government. Other constraints which have their origin in educational policy-making devices were evident in the research data. The influence of the media in propagating perceptions of best practice, often based on a political agenda as argued by Mansell (2013), was said by one of the ISI representatives to be apparent in ISC schools. Moreover, the inclusion in self-evaluation and inspection processes of analysis of external examination results, revealed in this research, suggests that successive governments' concern with academic standards had impacted on the independent sector, and may have exerted a constraining influence on their chosen purposes and priorities. Thus the research has demonstrated the relevance of education policy-making to schools other than those for whom the government is directly responsible.

Analysts of educational policy-making have accentuated the increasing control exercised by central government by the use of various technologies (Helgoy et al., 2007; Lingard and Ozga, 2007; Ball, 2008). One of the control devices has been inspection by Ofsted, an agent of government. Thus authority exerted in maintained schools has become increasingly bureaucratic. My findings show that a similar pattern of authority obtains in the independent sector. The bureaucratic authority traditionally exercised by the head and senior leaders has been augmented by that of ISI,

monitored by Ofsted, and acting on the government's behalf. Neither aims definition, nor evaluation, were shown to be wholly democratic in execution.

Literature dedicated to examining school evaluation procedures and processes makes little or no reference to the independent sector. All the major studies have been conducted in maintained schools. My research has initiated an examination of evaluation as it is construed in ISC schools, in particular, self-evaluation. A model has been devised whereby evaluation can be examined comprising, context, agents, process and outcomes. This model could be used in any school, and potentially in other environments.

In addition, the research data provide a possible model for use in marketing. It would seem from the research that many schools use their aims statement as a means of conveying a distinct identity, which is advantageous to their marketing strategies. The research identified various constituent elements of this individuality which could provide an outline for schools to use in analysing and promoting their unique identity, namely: climate, comprising the school's approach to pupils, the orientation of the learning process, and social engagement; the school's offering or provision comprising all aspects of the learning programme; the learning environment; the pupil support system, and staff characteristics.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of this research is the insight provided into the way independence was construed by heads working in ISC schools at the inception of the twenty-first century. This has not been the focus of contemporary academic study. Taking the claim to institutional uniqueness made by the heads in Johnson's study (1987), and the questions this raised as to whether independent schools had enough in common to constitute a sector, as the initial basis for my first aims data analysis, I have established that there is sufficient evidence to support both a claim to individuality and reference to an independent sector.

Each of the 84 schools in my survey was shown to be distinct in some way, but there were two basic components to this individuality which were found in the schools considered: climate or ethos, and offering, usually referred to as provision. By their diverse interpretations of these characteristics schools sought institutional differentiation. Moreover, individuation was not confined to the institution, but

extended to the pupils whose dispositions and competencies were to be developed according to their individual abilities, interests, and talents. However, references to fulfilling individual potential within a supportive setting were shown to be the most frequently cited school goals, whatever the characteristics of the school in terms of pupil gender, religious affiliation or type of provision. Thus, in addition to supporting the claims to individuality, referred to by Johnson (1987), my data analysis provides justification for claims that there is a sector composed of schools which are privately funded, but united by these overarching goals. Nevertheless, interpretation of all the research data examined suggests that alongside shared goals there lies diversity of implementation. Thus, the research findings imply that there is no contradiction between the concept of individuality and uniqueness and that of similarity of purpose. None of my findings appear to contradict the claims frequently made by ISC about the nature of its member schools, as exemplified in the Statement of Shared Values and Attributes of ISC schools (2014a), but they do provide an evidence base for these assertions, and more detailed insight into some of the components of autonomy. Moreover, by establishing the nature of independence in those secondary schools in England which appear to enjoy the greatest freedom, I have provided a comparative basis for the examination of the extent and characteristics of independence in the increasing number of state-financed Academies and Free Schools (McInerney, 2013; West and Bailey, 2013). Finally, the proposal that independence can be construed as the constrained freedom to individuate provides the basis for future research in non-educational settings and thus could contribute to the development of substantive theory.

Thus, the research findings have implications for future research and for practice in ISC schools, ISI, and possibly beyond the independent sector. These are centred on the concept of independence, clarity of aims definition, especially where abstract dispositions are to be fostered; the possibility of adopting a more democratic approach to aims definition and evaluation to mitigate the currently bureaucratic stance; and an increase in the social commitment reflected in many ISC schools' aims. These implications are examined in the final section of this chapter.

Limitations of the research

A number of limitations characterise this research. Firstly, the scope of the research into the nature of independence in private schools was confined to two aspects only: the use made of the schools' freedom to set their own aims and the means used to evaluate their success in achieving their declared intentions. Other aspects such as the freedom to set employment terms and conditions, and admission criteria for pupils, or charge fees were not considered. Consequently, constraints such as those of a financial nature were not discussed. Secondly, in order to make the study manageable only ISC secondary schools were involved rather than all private schools, thus presenting a partial view of the private sector. Moreover, the perspective examined is solely that of employees of some ISC secondary schools or ISI, and does not include external viewpoints. The data analysed (aims statements, questionnaires, interview notes or transcripts, inspection reports) were all presented by those with bureaucratic authority and does not represent the perspective of other stakeholders such as teachers, support staff, pupils and their parents, who may differ in their viewpoint.

The chosen research methodology imposed certain limitations on the research. Initially these were associated with the research instruments selected. Dowling and Brown (2010) and Robson (2011) highlight the issues associated with the use of questionnaires. The most significant for this research was the possibility that respondents may not have always answered accurately, either deliberately in order to show themselves in a good light, or as a result of personal characteristics such as memory, knowledge, personality or motivation. The unpredictability of the level of response to a postal questionnaire was also a factor, as the response rate was highest from those heads belonging to the same ISC association as me: the Girls' Schools Association (GSA). There was no way of knowing if the non-respondents would have answered differently and thus affected the ultimate analysis. The richness of the data derived from the questionnaire will have been constrained by the use of pre-coded answers to facilitate analysis and the inability to use probes.

The sampling technique for the aims survey was intended to produce a cluster sample. However, the use of stratification in the sample, with quotas from different types of school by characteristics such as gender, day or boarding provision, religious affiliation

or prestige, might have produced a different type of sample, although this would not have guaranteed a response rate representative of the stratification, and would not necessarily have prevented over-representation by one association. The comparison of the survey data findings with the aims of the National Curriculum can only be considered a general indicator of potential differences as it was not a like-for-like comparison involving similar datasets. It is likely that individual maintained schools had additional aims which were not considered alongside those of the National Curriculum but these were not easily accessible. This might have reduced the degree of contrast between the two sectors as regards aims definition, although not as regards those goals accorded significant value by the inspectorates.

The success of an interview in yielding relevant data is heavily dependent upon the interviewer's skills (Oppenheim, 1992). The ability to establish a rapport with the interviewee is crucial to the success of the interview as a research instrument and can be affected by factors such as the age, gender, or personality of both researcher and the person being interviewed. As with questionnaires, there is the possibility that interviewees may not have answered accurately. The amount of time available to both participants also affects the depth to which issues can be explored. I was conscious, on one occasion, that one of the heads had only a very limited amount of time for the conduct of the interview. The criteria used to select interview participants will also have affected the data obtained as they were, to a certain extent, self-selecting. Other choice factors included the cost of transport to the place of interview, and the desire to select schools which appeared to differ from each other in some obvious way such as pupil gender, religious affiliation, day or boarding provision. Alternative choice factors might have produced different data. A final limitation to the interview process was the use of a leading question concerning the ways in which an interviewee's school was considered to be unique, as it implied an assumption of uniqueness. With hindsight this question could have been posed using more neutral wording.

It is impossible to tell to what extent gender may have been an issue in the data presented, or my interpretation of it. Certainly, there was greater sensitivity to the potential impact of evaluation on self-esteem apparent in the two female heads' interview responses than in those of their male counterparts. All the ISI inspection

reports were produced by male reporting inspectors, thus there was no way of determining whether the interpretation of the framework by female inspectors might have differed slightly or the language used in reporting might have been differently nuanced.

The adoption of some of the analytical strategies associated with grounded theory as elaborated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978, 1992) will have imposed some limitations on this research, principally those associated with a researcher's theoretical sensitivity. My own reading of relevant literature, professional experience, and analytical skill will all have affected my interpretation of the research data, as will my values and the fact that I am also involved in the work of the independent sector. Moreover, independence only emerged as the main focus of the study during interview analysis, hence did not form part of the discussion schedule. Had it been included, additional data might have been produced, contributing to the final theory.

Finally, the research findings are representative of one particular point in time.

Questionnaire and interview responses indicated that some aspects of a school's aims are dynamic and responsive to both internal and external change. Likewise approaches to evaluation were found to be subject to constant refinement, and inspection frameworks and processes had altered in response to external mandate or internal review. The picture presented in this research should be considered a snapshot of independence as experienced by ISC schools in the first decade or so of the twenty-first century rather than a definitive statement on the permanent characteristics of these schools' autonomy.

Implications for future research

The possible topics for research which derive from my findings can be grouped into those relating to the following areas: the aims of secondary schooling; self-evaluation and inspection; the perspective of staff, parents and governors in ISC schools; the impact of educational policy-making and regulation on the independent sector; the role of the associations; cross-sector projects; and the concept of independence in private organisations.

Aims

There are several potential areas for comparative study drawing on the findings from my aims survey data. Firstly, a similar study involving non-ISC private schools could be undertaken to establish whether the defining characteristics of independence derived from my analysis are typical of a wider group than that studied. Moreover, using a sample of maintained sector schools' own documentation concerning their aims and purposes, rather than the National Curriculum aims, a more in-depth comparison between the private and state-funded sectors could be made than the one which formed part of this study. This would either refute or support the differences suggested by my analysis. Similarly, a survey of maintained sector 'independent' schools' aims such as those of Academies and Free Schools would serve as a basis for comparison with other maintained sector schools and ISC schools. If further research into the purposes of home schooling were also included, it would be possible to establish a wider picture of independence in goal-setting with respect to the education of school-aged children. This could be of value to parents making decisions about how their child is to be educated.

In addition, ethnographic research, in different types of schools, could provide a richer analysis of the ways in which school aims are interpreted and enacted in the distinct settings. My data analysis suggests that the choice of language was significant when defining an ISC school's aims, and was intended not only to direct the work of teachers and pupils, but also to market the school to prospective parents. Thus, the language adopted may be intended to persuade, by deliberately targeting those issues that research into parent choice has identified as paramount, such as security, happiness, (Coldron and Bolton, 1991; Gorard, 1999; Bagley, Woods and Glatton, 2001) and individuality (Ball, 2003). The various ways in which schools have responded to market forces, especially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, is a potential area for further research. Moreover, an examination of ISC schools' aims, prior to the advent of neoliberalism, would clarify further the extent to which their current aims have been influenced by this ideology and government responses to it.

One of the differences found between the NC aims for maintained schools and those of independent schools was the greater emphasis on goals linked to serving the

nation's economic needs in state schools. It was suggested that this could possibly be accounted for by the greater number of overseas students in ISC schools and the consequent need to educate in a more international context. The impact of the presence of international students on the aims and practices of schools could be explored further. Finally, the aims analysis indicated a possible difference between single-sex and co-educational institutions with respect to their approach to their pupils' individuality. This could be explored by means of a larger, more in-depth survey.

Self-evaluation and inspection

My analysis of this topic was limited to a small number of schools. Nevertheless, several possibilities for future research emerged from the findings. Problems concerning the evaluation of long-term or more abstract aims such as creativity, or elements of the school's ethos, were identified by some of those interviewed in respect of their self-evaluation processes. Moreover, this difficulty has implications for the inspection of areas such as spiritual and moral development. Research into the development of suitable models and instruments, including the feasibility of using ethnographic methods, could help to address this issue. The research findings suggested that ISI's role might be wider than that officially stated in its documentation and extend to that of actively promoting the individuation of the schools it inspects. However, this proposal is based on a limited number of inspection reports and interviews with heads and senior representatives from the inspectorate. Exploration of the views of a wider range of inspectors and heads could investigate in greater depth the nature of the inspectorate's role in supporting or even reinforcing independence. Furthermore, a more detailed comparison between the practices adopted by Ofsted and ISI would shed further light on the extent to which ISI is truly independent from government and make a further contribution to the wider debate concerning the nature and purposes of inspection. This is particularly relevant at the moment as there has been a change of government since this research was undertaken, with the party which has traditionally been supportive of private education currently in power (Walford, 2003). Independence from government interference, therefore, is currently potentially greater. Finally, major changes to ISI inspections have recently taken place,

and future research will be required to examine the relevance of my findings in the light of these.

The perspective of staff, governors, pupils, parents and team inspectors

All of the data sources in this research emanated from those holding positions of authority. As Donnelly (2000) points out there is often a mismatch between official statements of purpose and what actually happens in practice. Research into a wider range of perspectives into a school's aims and evaluation procedures, and the roles of participants in school or inspection processes, would indicate whether similar views of intent and implementation were expressed by practitioners to those contained in official documents. Analysis of the aims questionnaires suggested that parents and governors played only a peripheral role in both aims definition and evaluation. Moreover, parents seemed, in some cases, to be viewed principally as consumers. Unlike the maintained sector, there is no requirement for there to be parent governors in independent schools. Further research could be undertaken into the role of both parents and governors in independent schooling.

The effect of educational policy-making and regulation on independent schools

My research findings suggest that several aspects of recent government policy-making and regulation have acted as constraints on the degree of independence experienced by ISC schools. The academic literature on the impact of general educational policy has largely been confined to the maintained sector. This could be extended to include examination of the effect on all schools, not just those financed by the state.

The role of the associations

My research findings suggest that the original role of HMC in striving to preserve the sector's independence has continued. Little research has been undertaken into the role of the ISC and its associations, especially with regard to government policy. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2009) advocate the study of the headteacher associations in the maintained sector. This could be extended to embrace both sectors highlighting similarities and differences.

Cross-sector research

The impact of government policy is only one area which could be investigated across the sectors. The research analysis showed that, despite the differences between the two sectors, the two sets of schools have many common goals. It would be in the interests of both if issues relating to the implementation of these aims, and problems associated with evaluation of the more abstract concepts such as moral values or creativity, were to be investigated jointly. For example, Sanderse (2015) argues that there is a need to find more objective ways of assessing moral development than those which currently exist.

Independence

Finally, the proposal, that independence in private organisations can be understood as the constrained freedom to individuate, could be examined in contexts other than education.

Implications for practice

The implications of my research for educational practice can be grouped into three categories concerned with:

- Aims definition
- Democracy
- Social justice

Aims definition

The initial implication for practice derived from my analysis of ISC schools' aims concerns the potential variation in interpretation of some of the more abstract goals identified. This is especially the case where dispositions connected with spiritual and moral development are concerned, as there is no agreed definition of what this entails (Souper 1985; Best 2000; O'Donoghue and Grace, 2004). Consequently there are implications for any evaluation scheme which purports to judge the effectiveness of a school's SMSC provision, as the current inspection regime does. This lack of clear definition is also significant if a school is to be evaluated in the light of its aims. It is important, therefore, that schools articulate what they understand by the spiritual and

moral qualities which they seek to foster such as tolerance, respect, or the ability to distinguish right from wrong, and clarify the evidence they would use to justify their claims to promote such dispositions. This would help to remove some of the ambiguity which was found in this area in both aims statements and inspection reports.

Several of the heads interviewed cited staff happiness as an indicator of school quality yet aims statements did not usually include any reference to its promotion. If schools consider this an important factor influencing pupils' learning and wellbeing, it would seem advisable for them to declare a commitment to promoting the happiness of their employees amongst their statements of intent, and to consider how they would evaluate whether such a goal had been achieved.

Analysis of the aims questionnaire data indicated that a school's statement of purpose served to inform both internal and external audiences about the school's purposes, frequently in order to attract prospective parents. However, the responses suggested that, once their pupils attended the school, parents were less likely to be provided with such information. Martin et al. (1997) stress the importance of current parents being informed of the school's intentions, thus all schools need to ensure that they include their parent body in dissemination of information relating to changes in a school's goals or their interpretation.

In addition, the research findings have implications for the marketing of independent schools. In their aims statements, many of the schools studied emphasised the development of a pupil's competencies and dispositions, often expressed as nurturing talent, character formation, and the fulfilment of individual potential. This is significant as several research projects have found that a major parental choice factor is the extent to which a school is likely to meet the perceived needs of their individual child (West, 1992). Hence schools need to be able to demonstrate how the individuation of pupils takes place so that provision is targeted to assist in the development of unique personalities whose particular abilities and talents are enhanced.

My analysis of the National Curriculum aims showed that children were considered collectively in the goals set for the maintained sector. This has implications for state schools if they are to appeal to parents, especially those belonging to the middle classes, who may have the resources to choose between the private and maintained

sectors. Individual schools may need to find ways of demonstrating overtly how individual needs are met, and publish additional information to that required by law, to enable them to project a distinct character, and compete effectively for pupils with the independent sector.

The questionnaire responses indicated that most ISC schools published their aims in their prospectus, emphasising their role in marketing the school. This has obvious implications for impression management. The images and text need to reflect the priorities expressed in the aims. The prospectus can serve to reinforce the distinctive characteristics of an institution (Copeland, 2001). The model of institutional individuality derived from my data analysis could provide a framework for this. It would be advisable for ISC schools to exploit their freedom to the full, if they wish to reflect a unique institutional identity.

The research demonstrated that the information about a school conveyed by its aims statement is not only destined for parents or prospective parents, but also for staff, and to some extent pupils and governors, and is intended to direct their work. This has implications for in-service training, staff and pupil induction, planning and decision-making, as well as for the conduct of lessons and activities. In some of the interviews with heads it was suggested that a school's aims and ethos needed to be taught and schools could reflect on how this could best be done in their context.

Finally, the significance of the language used to express a school's goals was demonstrated, both in the interviews and in the comparison between certain groups of schools' aims and the content of the inspection reports examined. The choice of language was seen to create a particular image. It is recommended that schools ensure that their expressions of intent reflect the overall educational experience they aspire to provide, and the individual identity they seek to create and convey to others. This would entail ensuring that by accentuating certain aspects of their goals they do not neglect other important features, thus creating only a partial view of what they hope to achieve.

Democracy

Independent schools are required to teach pupils to respect the concept of democracy (ISI, 2015b) but, as Ruddock and Flutter (2000) argue, citizenship education implies that pupils should have experience of democratic processes not simply be taught about them. Drawing on the work of Stenhouse, they suggest that discussion of the aims and purposes of the school, and pupils' views of their learning experiences, could be included among the democratic activities in which pupils might expect to be involved. However, my research findings indicate that, in general, ISC schools are not democratic in their operation. In the areas of aims definition and evaluation a bureaucratic approach was evident, as was the case with ISI inspections. Collinson and Cook (2007) argue that this contrast, between the high value attributed to democratic principles and the bureaucratic model which predominates in many workplaces, is characteristic of the Western world. However, if ISC schools are to "*encouragesupport for participation in the democratic process*" (ISI, 2015b:13), it would be advisable for them to seek ways of exemplifying democracy in action for their pupils to a greater extent than that indicated by the research findings. This could be achieved in many areas, but I will concentrate on those relating to the research, namely, aims definition and evaluation and inspection processes.

The questionnaire responses and discussions with heads showed that support staff, parents and pupils played a limited role, if any, in the establishment or review of a school's goals. This is one area where wider consultation with all stakeholders could enhance democracy and help guard against a potential mismatch between the different perspectives about a school's purposes. The aims would no longer merely reflect the view of those in authority but rather constitute a collective outlook. Such a step could be encompassed within the approach to management developed by advocates of organisational learning, whereby a shared vision is created through dialogue. Hillman and Stoll (1994b) highlight the commitment which derives from as many people as possible being involved in building vision, which enables goals to be achieved. Consequently, an organisation's members carry out the aims because they want to rather than because they are told to (Senge, 2006).

Discussion with a number of heads of self-evaluation processes revealed a heavily bureaucratic approach, with reviews taking place within hierarchical structures. Success criteria were established by those in authority: heads, heads of department, other line managers, and evaluations were conducted by those with the most senior positions. Pupils and parents played little active part other than by completion of questionnaires or, on occasion, in discussion. This is an area where democracy could be increased by adopting a more collaborative approach. Argyris (1999) refers to the use of an organisational learning approach to the detection of error where error is understood as any mismatch between plan and intention and what actually happened. In the case of schools evaluating their success in fulfilling their stated aims, this would imply identifying any failure to meet a goal. This process of error detection is likely to be more accurate if as many viewpoints as possible are sought. Pickering (1997) highlights the crucial role pupils can play in providing evidence for judgements, and in devising the means by which pupil opinion can be sought. The involvement of pupils in any ensuing development plan would, he argues, be beneficial to the school. The model proposed by Alvik (1996a, 1996b) provides a format for greater involvement of all stakeholders to determine the evaluation focus, success criteria, appropriate evaluation instruments and agents, and use to which ensuing data would be put.

Perhaps the area which was found to be most bureaucratic and least democratic was that of inspections. Several of the heads interviewed referred to the perception amongst heads that ISI was acting increasingly on behalf of the government in ensuring compliance with legislation and regulation, to the extent that ISI's role in contributing to school improvement appeared to be overshadowed. The separation of compliance inspections and those relating to educational quality was suggested by one headteacher and the ISI representatives I interviewed. This has now taken place. However, there are a number of areas in which a more democratic approach to inspection might overcome some of the shortcomings of the present system, voiced during the research interviews. Firstly, there is the issue of inspections being an expensive means of informing schools of strengths and weaknesses of which they were already aware, hence not really contributing anything new to school development. Secondly, there is the issue of inspections driving greater uniformity as a common

framework and evaluation criteria are applied to all schools. Thirdly, there is the matter of the image of a school presented by an inspection report and the extent to which marketing pressures may prevent this from being too critical.

It is difficult to fully reconcile the present requirement that schools are inspected according to an identical framework with the need to judge their success in meeting their individual aims. Although there was evidence found in the inspection reports of ISI's role in emphasising institutional individuality this could be enhanced further with a different approach. Given the requirement for Ofsted to monitor the work of ISI, the single framework's existence would appear to derive from the twin agendas of accountability to parents and government and the need to provide information to assist parents with school choice, both of which, Ball (2013) suggests, are characteristic of the neoliberal attitude to education. If, as Reay (2012) argues, such an outlook is currently entrenched in society, it is unlikely that this aspect of inspection will be eliminated in the foreseeable future. However, it would be possible to reduce the common framework to the minimum required for accountability and comparability between schools, and devote the rest of the inspection time to exploring those areas which the school inspectors and members of the school jointly identify as aspects which would benefit from the involvement of an external perspective, and thus help eliminate any blindspots held by internal participants (Wrigley, 2003). These could be more tightly linked to the school's goals, purposes and priorities. Such an approach would equate more closely with the more democratic approach advocated by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and would differ from the current service offered by the ISI consultancy company.

In this context the inspectorate could assume the role of a critical friend working with the school, rather than judge, and thus help schools not only to "*celebrate success*", as one of the heads interviewed stated, but also to "*detect error*" (Argyris, 1999), and consequently drive improvement to a greater extent than at present. Thus, schools would not merely be subject to inspection, but actively involved in the whole evaluation process with external advisors. In this capacity ISI inspectors could help to develop an organisational learning approach to self-evaluation, as advocated by Pedder and Macbeath (2008), rather than one driven by the inspection SEF, which my

research indicated had influenced the approach adopted in the schools whose heads I interviewed. Wrigley (2003) remarks that an internally devised self-evaluation is very different from one linked to accountability, allowing for greater collegiality using a wide range of data in an ongoing process. The following brief examination of the notion of critical friendship illuminates some of the characteristics that could be adopted by ISI inspectors were such an approach to be taken.

MacKenzie (2011) states that the different definitions of the term “*critical friend*” all imply a position lying somewhere between the extremes of challenge and support. He stresses that the nature of the association is not hierarchical, but based upon trust, a point also made by Golby and Appleby (1995) when describing their relationship as former tutor advising a former student about classroom practice. Its intention is to be constructive and developmental. They define the desired relationship as professional, having as its aim the facilitation of change through reflection, discussion, challenge and support. The role of the critical friend is also examined by Costa and Kallick (1993) who see the remit as including the asking of provocative questions, the provision of another lens through which to view data, offering a critique of the work undertaken. Swaffield and Macbeath (2005) endorse this view of the role, and emphasise the need to depart from government policy agendas and political objectives when working with schools, so as to think more widely. By concentrating on an examination of the fulfilment of a school’s aims rather than simply on those areas which produce metric data, the limitations in the scope of the relationship with the critical friend, identified by Swaffield (2015) would be overcome.

Such a view was assumed by the NCSL (2005) in its examination of the critical friend’s role in schools, seeing their task as extending and questioning thinking and offering alternatives. The approach is one of friendly support rather than negative criticism. Macbeath and Jardine (1998) warn against the danger of the critical friend being seen as the friend of the manager and hence mistrusted by staff in general. This potential obstacle could be overcome by having a team of critical friends working on different aspects of the school mirroring the current inspection process where team inspectors assume responsibility for aspects of the inspection.

The adoption of a *modus operandi* also involving staff, parents, and pupils in determining the priorities for evaluation would enhance democracy. A joint decision could be taken as to which of the evaluation data produced should enter the public domain, possibly in report format, and which should remain confidential to the school. This is more likely to lead to an honest appraisal of any shortcomings and discussion of possible solutions, and could avoid the danger of schools failing to be totally open in their discussions, which Swaffield (2015) found characterised relationships with school improvement partners, who were obliged to report their findings beyond the confines of the school. Issues over the extent to which data, which might prove sensitive, should be published could be resolved through negotiation, thus addressing the concerns voiced by the female heads interviewed about potential harm to self-esteem. However, critical friendship does have practical implications, not least of which is its potentially time-consuming nature. Consideration would need to be given as to whether the present inspection model could be adapted to enable a series of visits to be made on separate occasions rather than one inspection lasting several days.

Finally, this approach could also avoid the creation of an unrealistic impression, in inspections, of the school's achievements, as Hargreaves (1995) claims happens, and some interviewees suggested. Moreover, such a process might prevent an excessive spin being applied to evaluation outcomes, which, as some interviewees indicated, is a possibility when inspection reports are considered as marketing tools. The use of a critical friend is likely to be more time-consuming and a more ongoing process than a one-off inspection taking place within a short space of time, but ultimately could contribute more effectively to school improvement. Moreover, ISI's role in contributing to the individuation of ISC schools, identified in the course of this research, could be enhanced by the adoption of such a practice.

Several difficulties with the conduct of self-evaluation were articulated during the research interviews which might benefit from the involvement of an alternative outside perspective. Most notable were the need to devise models for judging a school's success in achieving long term goals, and for assessing the extent to which the intended dispositions were fostered. These are areas where schools could usefully cooperate with each other to develop instruments which could be adapted to

particular contexts. This would be an opportunity to mitigate the competition between schools, fostered as a result of neoliberal attitudes, by enhancing cooperation for the mutual benefit of the respective schools and their pupils. The use of a critical friend in such an activity could be advantageous in clarifying and suggesting possible alternatives.

Social justice

One of the constraints on ISC schools' freedom to individuate derives from the conflict between the social commitment evident in their aims and the elitism which ensues from their very existence. Thus seeking ways of reducing privilege without compromising their individuality constitutes a major contemporary challenge.

The promotion of greater social justice in English society is an extensive topic encompassing many aspects of citizens' lives, of which education is but one (Dorling, 2012) and needs addressing on many fronts. As Bernstein (1970) stated, education cannot compensate for society. Power and Taylor (2013) argued that greater social justice will only be achieved if the wider economic, cultural and political inequalities are addressed. These points of view have implications that extend beyond education policy and process into a wider context that lies outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, given that the schools in the study, many of which were founded as charities, charge fees which currently range from around £13,000 to in excess of £35,000, it would seem appropriate, in conclusion, to address the question of social justice and the associated implications for practice, especially in ISC schools.

Drawing on the work of Nancy Fraser (2008), Power and Taylor (2013) describe social justice as having three facets: the economic; the cultural; the political. Each of these requires different strategies and interventions for redistribution. In the context of this research the most relevant are the economic facets, and to a lesser extent, the cultural. Power and Taylor claim that economic injustices in education arise from the unequal distribution of material resources with poorer pupils likely to attend resource-poor schools. There would, therefore, be a sharp contrast between the level of resourcing found in such schools and those described in the interview school's descriptions of themselves, and the ISI inspection reports examined during this research, which referred to extensive well-equipped facilities. Clearly the most

effective way of addressing this issue would be significantly more investment on the part of the government in state maintained schools, but given the recent tendency for governments of both major persuasions to seek financial input from external sponsors (Ball, 2013), this seems improbable. Moreover, as Wilby (2014) points out the disparities in facilities between the most prestigious independent schools and state schools are so enormous that matching them for all maintained schools would prove an impossible task.

An alternative solution would be for governments to follow the strategies adopted by countries such as Australia, and France where heavy government subsidies of private schools mean that independent schools' fees are low in these countries, making the schools much more accessible to most of the population. If bursaries were then available to the very poor, all who wished to chose an alternative to state education could do so, and independence in education could no longer be associated with privilege, but rather with freedom to provide an alternative to the state's offering. However this would have serious implications for taxation. The *ISC Manifesto* (2015) claimed that a study, undertaken by Oxford Economics in 2012, showed that its schools saved the tax-payer £ 3 billion a year by funding the costs of education for 7% of the nation's children. If independent schools' fees were heavily subsidised by government, then most of that £3 billion would have to be raised in additional taxes. Given that the level of expenditure per pupil is considerably higher in the independent sector than government spending on state funded pupils (Dorling, 2014c,) averaging three times that spent on maintained sector pupils (House of Lords, 2016), then unless the ISC schools funded the difference, the resultant burden on taxation would be significantly higher than £3 billion. An offer by ISC of subsidising 10,000 new places annually was made in December 2016 (ISC, 2016b). This would be a partial solution to the funding issue.

Cultural injustice can include cultural domination of the content of education, reflecting predominant values and sidelining those of minorities. Connell (2012) avers that a just education would respond to the "*deep diversity*" of the school population. Power and Taylor (2013) argue that the private sector in education can play a positive role in addressing cultural injustice as its institutions have greater freedom to

accommodate difference than is currently possible in maintained sector schools. Indeed the very origins of many of these schools lie in provision for those whose views differed from the mainstream (White, 2007, 2011). My aims survey data suggested that respect for difference was still a common aim in ISC schools. If these schools are to maintain their role in promoting the cultural aspect of social justice it will be necessary to interpret government directives, such as the recent requirement to promote British values (Arthur, 2015), in such a way as to maintain a breadth of perspective, and retain the international outlook which was found to be characteristic of several of the schools surveyed.

Given the unlikelihood of governments addressing the economic dimension of social justice in education in the near future, what contribution can ISC schools make to enable more equal access to educational resources and opportunities? At present poorer pupils are at a significant disadvantage as reflected in Power et al. (2003), Dorling (2012) and Boliver (2015), whose analyses of university entry patterns demonstrated a clear link between affluence and admission to elite universities and medical schools. This has become a more pressing issue if social and economic inequalities are increasing (Ball, 2013) and the gap between those who can afford independent education and those who cannot is widening, as argued by Dorling (2014a).

The research survey data revealed concern for the community, and the development amongst pupils of a social conscience, to be characteristic of ISC schools' aims, with examples of community service in action identified in the later stages of the research, including links with maintained sector schools, reflected in Peel (2015). Nevertheless, if ISC schools have a serious commitment to social justice in education, described by Nandy (2012) as giving the opportunity to all children to achieve their full potential, then more could be done. This point was raised in a recent debate in the House of Lords concerning whether charitable independent schools could share their facilities for sports, music and the arts more with schools in the maintained sector (Charity Commission, 2015). Although the proposed Charities Bill to make this a required public benefit was defeated, as it would be in contravention of current charity law, the ISC has responded by reiterating its commitment to breaking down barriers and increasing

social mobility, made evident in its 2015 *Manifesto* prior to the general election (ISC, 2015b). The *Census* (ISC, 2015a) outlines some of the ways in which schools are interpreting public benefit, including Academy sponsorship. However, Peel (2015) argues that Adonis's hope that a large number of independent schools would sponsor Academies has remained unfulfilled as Academies are not considered independent or committed to the pupil as an individual. This would not, therefore, be seen as a suitable means of contributing to greater social justice by many independent schools, unless the current status of Academies could be changed to allow them greater freedom to differ from state provision.

Various alternative proposals as to how else greater equity might be enacted can be derived from my research and the associated literature:

- Using data derived from the ISC *Census* Ryan and Sibieta (2010) state that about one third of pupils in ISC schools are in receipt of financial support. However Barker (2014) and the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2015) point out that only about one per cent receives full remission of fees. Consequently many of the very poor are excluded from independent education completely. An increase in the number of means-tested full bursaries offered would help address this issue. This would need to be funded by all ISC schools charging the wealthier parents higher fees, which might impact on the less prestigious schools' ability to attract pupils, or by ISC raising a levy, based on a school's assets, which was channelled into bursaries.
- The aims survey, interviews, and ISI inspection reports, all highlighted the importance of extra-curricular provision in ISC schools. However the research undertaken by the Sutton Trust (2014) found that participation in such activities was closely linked to parental income. Thus, poorer pupils are deprived of both enriching experiences and any future career advantage that such participation might bring. The introduction of a means-tested extra-curricular voucher scheme, either by the government, as suggested by Peter Lampl (Francis and Hutchings, 2013), or by the ISC schools themselves, would help to redress the balance of access to enrichment activities, and provide a means by which independent schools could contribute to fostering a broader educational experience to maintained

sector pupils than that reflected in my research findings. This could be enhanced further through more joint cultural or sporting events.

- The provision of excellent teaching, resources and facilities was referred to in both the aims survey data and the ISI reports examined during my research. Greater collaboration between schools in a locality, with resources and staff shared more widely amongst and between the sectors, as suggested by Nandy, (2012) might go some way towards bridging the huge difference in facilities between the wealthiest schools and the average state school as illustrated in Wilby's (2014) analysis. Joint in-service training for teachers with the opportunity for the exchange of ideas and good practice is of mutual benefit in ensuring excellent teaching for all pupils, whatever their socio-economic background, and could be more widely promoted.
- High academic achievement was referred to in all the ISI reports seen. This was not the case in some of those I examined which were produced by Ofsted. My interviews with heads in ISC schools revealed that individual institutions undertook activities such as workshops, symposiums, and summer schools of an academic nature to which they invited pupils from local state schools. Such activities could be extended, and more universally adopted.

Many of the above initiatives have been undertaken by individual ISC schools, especially as regards joint activities with state schools in sport and music (ISC, 2015a; Peel, 2015). Nevertheless, in the absence of major government funding, it will take a concerted effort on the part of all ISC schools, in as many spheres as possible, to reduce the degree of privilege enjoyed by their pupils. Thus, they might narrow the gap between those who can aspire to the fulfilment of their individual potential, as is the declared goal of the independent schools that took part in this research, and those who risk underachievement across a range of areas through lack of resources. For, at present, many pupils in maintained schools, even maintained 'independent' schools, do not appear to have the opportunity to develop their abilities and talents to the full, over as wide a spectrum of areas, as their peers in independent schools.

This is partially as a result of the narrowly conceived vision of education encapsulated in the National Curriculum aims, and reflected in the Ofsted inspection reports, reviewed in the course of this research and, more recently, in the E Bacc (Baker, 2016)

and the Progress 8 measure of school performance, focussing on a narrow range of subjects. These demonstrate, first and foremost, a concern for the needs of the economy rather than the development of each child's capacity for thought (Dorling, 2012). Little heed is paid to areas such as the visual and performing arts, creativity, and aesthetic awareness, since progress in these fields cannot be as easily measured as progress in mathematics, for example (Eisner, 1998), nor seen to contribute visibly to the nation's economy. However, lack of sufficient financial resources to seek alternative or additional provision is also a major factor in limiting many children's opportunity to maximise their chances of future success and personal fulfilment.

Therefore, perhaps the most significant implication of this research for practice involves all of those involved in the secondary education project, from policy-makers in government to individual schools and their stakeholders. If we are to address the issue of elitism and consequent social injustice, which is currently associated with the independent sector, then the problem needs tackling on two fronts. Firstly, by reviewing the offering of state-maintained schools, to ensure that the breadth of provision and enrichment opportunities which ISC schools offer, as reflected in the research findings, are available to all pupils, and valued in inspection processes. Reiss and White (2013) suggest the establishment of a commission on education to prevent party-politics from colouring decisions concerning the desirable elements of school aims, and the curricular experiences intended to achieve them. This would be one way forward.

Secondly, each individual ISC school could seek ways of making its particular offering available to as wide a sector of the school population as possible, so as to provide an alternative or supplement to the state's current provision. By these means, elitism could be reduced, and social justice increased, without destroying the institutional distinctiveness, diversity and breadth of offering, which derives from these schools' freedom to set their own aims and be evaluated against a broader set of criteria, than the research findings indicated to be the case in state controlled schools.

Appendix 1 Schools surveyed, Spring 2003

Survey section	School identity number	Day / Boarding D = day BG = boarding	Pupil genders b = boys g = girls c = co-educational	Religious orientation
Pilot survey	1	D	g	Church of England
	2	D	g	Church of England
	3	BG	c	Roman Catholic
	4	D	g	Church of England
	5	D	c	Church of England
	6	BG	c	Quaker
	7	D	g	Inter-denominational
	8	D	b	Non-denominational
	9	D	g	Inter-denominational
	10	BG	b	Church of England
	11	D	c	Non-denominational
Main survey (continued overleaf)	12	D	b	Christian
	13	BG	g	Church of England
	14	D	g	Non-denominational
	15	D	g	Church of England
	16	BG	c	Church of England
	17	D	g	Roman Catholic
	18	D	g	Church of England
	19	D	g	Church of England
	20	D	g	Non-denominational
	21	D	b	Church of England
	22	BG	c	Evangelical Christian
	23	D	c	Church of England
	24	D	g	Church of England
	25	D	g	Church of England
	26	BG	c	Non-denominational
	27	BG	g	Church of England
	28	BG	c	Inter-denominational
	29	D	c	Church of England
	30	D	g	Church of England
	31	BG	g	Methodist
	32	BG	g	Christian
	33	BG	c	Church of England
	34	BG	g	Non-denominational
	35	D	c	Non-denominational
	36	D	g	Non-denominational
	37	BG	c	Church of England
	38	BG	g	Inter-denominational
	39	BG	g	Non-denominational
	40	D	g	Church of England
	41	D	c	Non-denominational
	42	BG	c	Roman Catholic
	43	BG	g	Church of England

Main survey (continuation)	44	BG	c	Quaker
	45	BG	c	Church of England
	46	BG	c	Church of England
	47	BG	c	Church of England
	48	BG	c	Church of England
	49	D	g	Inter-denominational
	50	<i>not allocated</i>		
	51	D	g	Church of England
	52	D	g	Unitarian
	53	BG	c	Church of England
	54	BG	c	Church of England
	55	BG	c	Methodist
	56	BG	c	Church of England
	57	D	g	Inter-denominational
	58	D	b	Roman Catholic
	59	BG	b	Inter-denominational
	60	BG	c	<i>unknown</i>
	61	D	c	Church of England
	62	D	c	Inter-denominational
	63	D	b	Church of England
	64	BG	g	Church of England
	65	D	g	Church of England
	66	D	g	Non-denominational
	67	BG	g	Inter-denominational
	68	D	c	<i>unknown</i>
	69	D	c	Christian
	70	D	c	Non-denominational
	71	D	g	Church of England
	72	D	c	Non-denominational
	73	D	c	Non-denominational
	74	BG	c	Methodist
	75	BG	b	Church of England
	76	D	c	Inter-denominational
	77	BG	c	Church of England
	78	BG	c	Non-denominational
	79	D	b	Church of England
	80	D	g	Roman Catholic
	81	D	c	Roman Catholic
	82	D	g	Church of England
	83	BG	g	Church of England
	84	D	b	Roman Catholic
	85	D	g	all faiths

Appendix 2 Questionnaire format

Aims Questionnaire

Name of School

Please tick **all** appropriate responses:

Which of the following do you have?

Mission statement

Aims

Statement of Values

Statement of Ethos

For which audience were your aims written?

Parents

Staff

Pupils

Governors

Inspectors

Other

Where are your aims published?

Prospectus

Staff handbook

Parent handbook

Pupil handbook or diary

Departmental handbooks

Classrooms

Other

Who was involved in drawing up aims?

Governors

SMT

Staff

Pupils

Parents

Other

What was the main impetus which led to definition or redefinition of your aims?

Forthcoming inspection

Appointment of new Head

Part of development planning cycle

Other

PTO

Do all your aims have equal significance?

Yes

No

If No, which is the most significant aim?

.....
.....

Do you evaluate your effectiveness in meeting your aims?

Yes

No

If Yes, how do you evaluate them?

.....
.....

How often do you review your aims?

.....

Do you have any other comments which are relevant to an understanding of your aims or the use which is made of them?

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

Would you be prepared to take part in follow-up research (eg by interview or further survey?)

Yes

No

Thank you very much for your help

Appendix 3 School semi-structured interview questions

1. Can you think of a suitable pseudonym for your school which encapsulates its spirit?
2. Are the details in this brief contextual statement about your school correct? Is there anything missing? (For inclusion in the thesis)
3. This is my interpretation of the concepts encapsulated within your school's aims statement in 2003, have the aims been altered or reviewed since my study was undertaken?
4. Would you like to add or alter anything?
5. This is the questionnaire completed in 2003, has anything changed?
6. Is there a culture of self-evaluation in this school?
7. Taking each aim in turn could you tell me how you evaluate your success in achieving these aims:

What criteria do you use?

Who draws up these criteria?

Who is involved in the self-evaluation?

What data are included?

What use is made of the data which emerge from the self-evaluation?

Can you give examples of a self-evaluation that has been really successful?
8. Do you have any examples of documents you can show me relating to self-evaluation or minutes of meetings where self-evaluation was discussed?
9. What do you consider to be particularly special or unique about your school? What demonstrates this?

10. What do you see as the role of ISI in enabling you to know how successful you are in achieving your aims?
11. (Where applicable) What is the role of the Church in the evaluation of your aims?
12. Do you have any future plans to change your aims or the way you evaluate your achievement of them?
13. If self-evaluation takes place is it linked to your aims or to the inspection framework?
14. What do you consider to be the benefits and drawbacks of self-evaluation?
15. What do you see as the future of self-evaluation in this school?
16. What do you think are the characteristics of a good school?

**Appendix 4a) Schedule for semi-structured interview with the
first ISI representative**

Aims

1. Having inspected many independent schools, what would you consider the main aims of independent education to be?
2. Do you believe there is a difference between the Aims of maintained and independent schools?

ISI

3. What do you consider to be the main strengths and weaknesses of the first cycle of inspections?
4. What was the main impetus for change when planning the second cycle?
5. The second cycle of inspections intends to judge whether a school is fulfilling its aims. How do you envisage this happening in practice?

Self-evaluation

6. What role do you see for self-evaluation in ISI2? What evidence would you take into account?
7. Which approaches to self-evaluation do you consider most effective from a) the school's and b) the inspector's point of view?

The future

8. How do you see the inspection of independent schools developing in the future? Do you see self-evaluation playing a more significant role?
9. How would you describe ISI's relationship with OFSTED? Is this likely to change in the future?

Appendix 4b Schedule for semi-structured interview with the second ISI representative

Aims

1. How many second cycle inspections have been completed so far?
2. Do you have the impression that there are differences between independent and maintained sector aims?
3. How successful has ISI2 been in judging schools' effectiveness in meeting their aims?
4. What has been the effect of the loss of subject reporting?
5. Have you found any conflict between inspecting the Regulations and using the inspection framework?
6. Have there been any difficulties in finding suitable inspection evidence since many aims cannot easily be measured? Many schools' aims fall within the area of SMSC which ISI initially had difficulty in defining – how has this worked in practice?

Self-evaluation

7. To what extent have schools used the ISI SEF?
8. How useful has the SEF been for schools? For RIs? (Reporting Inspectors)
9. What self-evaluation methods have schools used? – toolkits, questionnaires?

Ofsted

10. How do you see ISI's relationship with Ofsted especially now there is a greater difference between the two systems of inspection with Ofsted's being shorter and based on Every Child Matters, and Ofsted monitoring ISI inspections and the inspection of the Regulations?
11. How do you envisage the future of ISI inspections?

Appendix 5 Original Literature Survey

This review is comprised of two sections: firstly, an overview of school effectiveness literature and its relevance to the independent sector; secondly, an examination of the aims of contemporary secondary schooling.

School Effectiveness

Introduction

School effectiveness research has traditionally been the preserve of the maintained sector to the almost total exclusion of the independent sector. Nevertheless, the concern to find ways of judging and improving schools is common to both sectors as reflected in the elaborate inspection processes found in both systems which are constantly evolving. Moreover, as Mortimore (1998) points out, all parents share a desire to find the best school for their child, whether in the private or maintained sector, and thus have an interest in the findings of attempts to measure effectiveness, and yet, school effectiveness research literature reveals an almost exclusive focus on state maintained schools catering for children from low socio-economic backgrounds. Joyce (1991) argues that this preoccupation with the disadvantaged may lead schools which serve families from other socio-economic groups to reject the findings. Reynolds (1997) endorses this view and suggests that because of the limited type of institutions studied by school effectiveness researchers their findings may not be universally relevant. He refers specifically to the omission of independent schools and religiously administered schools with intakes of probably above average achievement.

To some extent this exclusive focus on one type of school can be accounted for by the origins of school effectiveness research, which was initially undertaken to establish whether, and to what extent, schools made a difference to their students' progress or whether it was a student's social background which accounted for pupil development (Harris, Jamieson and Russ, 1996). In fact, Hamilton (1997) argues that school effectiveness research goes beyond educational research into the realms of social engineering.

Schools in the private sector were not selected as suitable objects for investigation, presumably because they were considered to cater for the more affluent student. This

exclusion of the private sector fails to take account of the wide range of independent schools, and the fact that some independent schools were specifically founded to educate children who have suffered considerable hardship. Their education is funded, not by financially well-off parents, but from charitable foundations.

It could be argued, therefore, that school effectiveness research has little or no relevance to the independent sector. Nevertheless, despite possible reservations about the universality of school effectiveness research findings, and the lack of involvement by the independent sector, some of the concepts which have emerged could be considered pertinent, particularly where evaluation of the quality of education provided by individual schools is concerned. My original literature survey was consequently divided into two sections: the first concerned school effectiveness research in general and the second focused on issues relating to evaluation, in particular self-evaluation, which is generally associated with school improvement research. An abbreviated version of the survey of evaluation literature was later included in Chapter 5 and thus this section has been omitted from the appendix.

Definition of school effectiveness

Firstly, it is important to examine what is understood by the term school effectiveness. Stoll and Fink (1996) argue that there is no universally agreed definition of the term. White (1997) points out that 'effectiveness' is not a value-neutral term, despite the fact that effectiveness is frequently assumed to be a good thing, per se, based on the supposition, that the ends of education are desirable, as are the means of achieving those ends efficiently. This argument is particularly relevant when examining issues relating to the evaluation and inspection of schools.

Two definitions predominate in school effectiveness research: firstly, that of Levine and Lezotte (Stoll and Fink, 1996) who consider effectiveness to be the production of a desired result or outcome, a view which is endorsed by Harris, Jamieson and Russ (1996), and, secondly that of Stoll and Mortimore (1997) who consider an effective school to be one in which pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake. This latter definition has been associated with judging school effectiveness according to measurable outcomes such as examination results, and has influenced the development of school inspection.

Since, as White (1997) points out, many of the goals of education are long term, and therefore, not easily measurable, neither of these definitions is particularly applicable to judging a school's effectiveness in achieving such aims. School effectiveness research, White, argues, has limited itself to short-term 'outcomes', and concentrated on finding out which schools produce, for example, high literacy or numeracy scores, GCSE results or low truancy rates. Current definitions of effectiveness, White argues, are too narrow in scope to address the breadth or nature of many schools' aims. Many parents, teachers, and ordinary citizens, consider aims such as happiness, imaginativeness, moral goodness, civic-mindedness to be important, and yet these do not appear to be easily measurable. Consequently, he claims, we are ignorant as to how effective schools are at bringing about the outcomes the community at large, as opposed to those the research community, is interested in. The RSAcademics Parents Profiles survey of independent schools' parents (2003), which sought to establish the factors which were of most importance to them in judging an independent school, would seem to support this view. Academic success was rated less highly than encouraging pupils to respect others, courtesy and good behaviour, and developing independent thinking.

It is the purpose of this study to examine initially the stated aims of a sample of independent schools and thus establish whether, as White argues, such aims are principally long term. It might be expected that schools which are free of state control and theoretically in a position to be more responsive to the views of their principal stakeholders, would feel freer to concentrate on outcomes that are less easily measurable. The second phase of the research will seek to illuminate the concept of effectiveness as understood in a sample of independent schools and the methods used to evaluate it. Thus, the possible relevance of school effectiveness research to the independent sector could be established.

Brief historical overview of school effectiveness research

As my concern is with English independent schools, this analysis focuses principally on work carried out in the United Kingdom, predominantly that undertaken in England. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000), in their introduction to the International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research, give a brief overview of school effectiveness research

and the change in perspective which has occurred since its inception. Initial school effectiveness research, undertaken, thirty years earlier, by Coleman et al. (1966) and Jenks et al. (1971) had concluded that schools made no difference to pupils' progress, but, by 2000, they argue, there was an internationally agreed assumption that schools do affect pupils' development and that there are observable characteristics in the schools that are most effective. The task of educational policies, it is claimed, is to improve all schools in general, and in particular, the least effective schools.

Teddlie and Reynolds identify three main strands to school effectiveness research:

- Studies of school effects which attempt to relate input to outcomes;
- Effective schools studies which focus on identifying those characteristics which seem to define those schools and classrooms judged to be effective;
- School improvement studies which examine the processes whereby schools can be changed.

Each of these strands, they argue, has a distinct tradition and has been carried out by a different group of researchers whom they classify as scientists, pragmatists and humanists. The different groups have their own sets of values and agendas and have rarely worked together and have often tended to compete intellectually. This, Teddlie and Reynolds suggest, has led to a lack of organisation in the literature, and, for many years, there was a historical separation of school improvement from other forms of school effectiveness research, a view supported by Hillman and Stoll (1994a) and Stoll and Fink (1996). More recent research has brought the two strands of research closer together, but an in depth analysis of school improvement literature lies outside the scope of this study, which is concerned with what independent schools are currently seeking to achieve and how they judge their effectiveness in doing so.

Lauder, Jamieson and Wikely (1998) assert that the model for mainstream school effectiveness research in England was established in 1979 by the study "*15000 hours*" conducted by Rutter et al. Reynolds, Teddlie, Creemers, Scheerens and Townsend (2000) also refer to this research as seminal. This study examined the difference between schools measured on the outcomes of academic achievement, delinquency, attendance, and levels of behavioural problems. The research claimed to establish that:

- Schools as organisations do have an effect on student outcomes in terms of examination success;
- These effects are not caused by chance;
- Improvement in student performance, can, consequently, be engineered;
- Schools are structured as nested organisations (classroom, department, school, government) and effectiveness can be judged by analysing performance at each level;
- Schools have a degree of autonomy and can generate effects independent of external factors.

This initial study can be argued to form part of the school effects strand of research. Reynolds et al. (2000) outline further research topics undertaken in the 1980s which fall into this category as follows:

- Value-added comparisons of educational authorities based on their academic outcomes;
- Comparisons between selective systems catering for the most able and non-selective or all-ability systems;
- Work into the properties of school effects, such as size, differential effectiveness of different subject departments, the differential effectiveness of schools on pupils of different characteristics;
- Studies which focussed on one outcome and attempted to relate this to various in-school processes such as studies of disciplinary problems.

They cite the work of Mortimore et al. (1988) examining the effectiveness of primary schools and Smith and Tomlinson (1989) as landmark studies. Mortimore et al. used a wider range of outcomes than had previously been used in school effectiveness research and included a broader spectrum of data on school processes, including, for the first time, classroom observation. Smith and Tomlinson showed large differences in effectiveness between schools and reported substantial variation in results in different subjects, attributed to the varying influence of different departments. Reynolds et al. argue that the work undertaken in the 1990s and early twenty-first century falls largely within the same intellectual tradition. None of these studies has focussed on achieving a broad range of educational aims, nor addressed the question of how and by whom

the goals of schooling should be defined. School effectiveness research seems to have been essentially pragmatic in character, operating within a limited definition of effectiveness, and has eschewed questions of a more philosophical nature. Many of its critics see it as politically motivated and too closely linked to managerialism. It has resulted in the creation of the view that educational failure is the result of poor schooling rather than the consequence of particular social and economic structures. There has been strong criticism too of the methodology used and the positivistic outlook from which the research stems. These issues are examined in the section below.

Criticisms of school effectiveness research

Lauder, Jamieson and Wikelly (1998) are critical of the model of research which originated in England with the work of Rutter et.al study and which, they argue, has dominated school effectiveness research. They categorise it as a 'received model' and argue that, over the years, it has spawned a number of theoretical constructs which form what Lakatos (1970) calls a "*protective belt*" in order to substantiate the findings. These constructs, they argue, are very similar to the main constructs of management theory: leadership, clear goals, mission statement, ethos of an organisation and staff consensus which are seen as indicators of a high performing organisation.

A summary of such work is the review undertaken by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore of school effectiveness research commissioned in 1994 by Ofsted and published in 1995. The survey attempts to identify, from the literature, those factors which appear to be concomitant with school effectiveness. It is significant that this work was not undertaken as an independent piece of research, but under the auspices of a government organisation, thus implicitly accepting a politically conceived notion of effectiveness.

The 1995 review identifies eleven factors for effective schools:

- Professional leadership;
- Shared vision and goals;
- A learning environment;
- Concentration on teaching and learning;
- Purposeful teaching;

- High expectations;
- Positive reinforcement;
- Monitoring progress;
- Pupil rights and responsibilities;
- Home school partnerships;
- A learning organisation.

Commenting on the findings, Sammons (1995) points out that there are dangers in attributing too much importance to those characteristics defined in the research, as correlations between certain characteristics and effectiveness do not necessarily imply causality. Moreover, since each school is different, there is no simple formula for producing an effective school.

This criticism is echoed by Lauder, Jamieson and Wikely who argue that one of the flaws in school effectiveness research is that it tends to treat all schools as generically similar, and assumes that notions such as leadership and goals are readily transferable from one organisation to another without taking into account the possible effect of the culture or politics of a school. They point out that a further limitation of school effectiveness research is that it is almost totally accepting of the government view that the quality of schooling can be measured almost exclusively by test and examination performance and makes use of a mainly quantitative methodology and ignores ethnographic approaches to the study of schools. If this assertion that school effectiveness research accepts unquestioningly government's priorities is accepted, then the relevance of school effectiveness research to the independent sector becomes increasingly questionable, given that, in principle, independent schools are free to determine their own aims and values and make their own decisions as to how effectiveness can be judged.

Further criticism of school effectiveness research has been made by Thrupp (2001). In his summary of the work of school effectiveness critics in the *Journal of School Effectiveness and School Improvement (SESI)*, he groups these criticisms into three categories: overclaiming, undertheorising, and the inability to control the political use of its findings.

Overclaiming

Thrupp argues that school effectiveness research claims to offer too many solutions at school level, and that it is biased in its origins since it wanted to counter the claim made by Coleman and Jenks that schools did not make a difference to their pupils, thereby ignoring issues of social justice. Furthermore, school effectiveness research has marginalised the curriculum in favour of school structures. There has been no discussion amongst researchers as to what is the most appropriate knowledge to be transmitted in a post-modern age and no engagement with sociological or philosophical theories about what constitutes an appropriate curriculum. This point was also made by White (1997) and Winch (1997) who argued that school effectiveness researchers should enter the debate on the aims and nature of schooling.

Undertheorising

Thrupp contends that school effectiveness research is based almost exclusively on 'scientific' methodology and has placed too great a reliance on large-scale quantitative studies. More detailed, qualitative methodologies, which would have built richer data, have been eschewed, and, hence only accidental, rather than causal relationships, have been established. This view is echoed by Townsend (2001) who argues that the causality between school processes and student achievement constitute a complex set of interactions which are frequently oversimplified in school effectiveness research.

Inability to control the political use of findings

Thrupp claims that politicians, especially those of a right-wing persuasion, have hijacked school effectiveness research findings. School effectiveness researchers such as Reynolds, Barber and Fullan have been involved in promoting New Labour's reforms and hence it is difficult for them to adopt a truly critical stance. Such criticisms did not go unchallenged. Teddlie and Reynolds (2001) responded in a later edition of the SESI journal. They point out that school effectiveness research will always be politically controversial since it concerns the nature and purposes of schooling. They argue that the criticisms are based on a limited reading of the literature, and treat school effectiveness as a homogeneous field, whereas it is a broad field covering the three

fields outlined earlier. They offer counter arguments to the three criticisms made by Thrupp.

Overclaiming: They refute the accusation of overclaiming with the point that school effectiveness researchers have only ever attributed a small degree of significance (12 - 15% in the UK) to school effects as opposed to social factors. They reject criticisms that school effectiveness research should concern itself only with low socioeconomic status schools, because there is little need to reform middle class schools, by referring to Stoll and Fink's (1998) definition of "*cruising schools*" whose ineffectiveness goes unnoticed because of good examination results.

Undertheorising: In response to the claim that school effectiveness adheres almost exclusively to a positivist epistemology, placing too much emphasis on scientific methodology, they argue that many school effectiveness researchers are pragmatists who used both quantitative and qualitative methods, make use of inductive and deductive logic and acknowledge that values play a large part in interpreting the results.

Inability to control the political use of findings: Teddlie and Reynolds argue that the link between school effectiveness and researchers and policy-makers has been exaggerated and that the only way to prevent the misuse of research findings would be not to publish them, which would render the research almost without purpose. Finally, they reject some of the other criticisms, such as the need to broaden the range of outcomes measured or undertake longitudinal studies, on the grounds that these matters are being addressed. They conclude that the gulf between school effectiveness researchers and their critics, the critical theorists, arises from a fundamental difference in standpoints. School effectiveness researchers are pragmatists who aim to improve schools as they currently are, whereas critical theorists wish to change the social order. Given this basic difference in perspective they will never, they argue, reach agreement.

School effectiveness research and the independent sector

As noted above, there are aspects of school effectiveness research which make it debatable whether the findings are applicable to the independent sector. Firstly, there

is no school effectiveness research which specifically relates to the independent sector, and critics have questioned whether it is possible to transfer the findings from one context to another even within the maintained sector, hence its applicability to the independent sector is questionable. Secondly, as noted above, there is no debate as to what the aims of schooling are or should be, rather an implicit acceptance of the government defined status quo, and research is undertaken in that context. Independent schools are, at least theoretically, free to define on an individual basis what they wish their aims to be, hence there could be different definitions of effectiveness. This does not appear to have been an issue in school effectiveness research. Of particular relevance here would be the importance attributed by parents to such outcomes as happiness which are not encompassed within school effectiveness research. Thus, in order for school effectiveness research to be applicable to the independent sector, it would need to be conceptualised in a very different way. The original purpose of my research was to attempt such a conceptualisation.

The aims of secondary education in England

Introduction

In discussing the aims of secondary education, I have understood the term to equate with the Cigman's (2007) definition of secondary school aims as the general purposes of schooling for pupils aged eleven to eighteen. A search of The British Educational Index and the indices of major educational journals for the last thirty years revealed no work specifically dedicated to the aims of independent schools, reflecting the limited body of research on the independent sector highlighted by Walford (2006) and Lucas (2002). However historical overviews of the early aims of education in England are, in fact, referring to independent education, since there was no state-funded educational provision until the late nineteenth century. I have included a review of these historical accounts as they provide insight into the original aims of the independent sector.

In response to the 1944 *Education Act* which introduced the provision of state-funded secondary education for all pupils, without prescription of aims or content, there ensued considerable academic debate about the nature and purpose of schooling. This

is particularly pertinent to the present study since, at present, independent schools are still free to set all their own goals, unlike those in the maintained sector for whom the National Curriculum, which became mandatory in 1988, had defined aims pertaining to the learning programme. An examination of issues raised in the literature concerning the purposes of school education from 1988 onwards is also relevant, since during the period of this study from 2003-2011 there were clearly defined aims for maintained sector schools, which may have impacted on ISC school's autonomy in defining their own purposes. In addition, some studies have been undertaken focussing on the aims of certain groups of faith-based schools. This review will include a brief examination of the literature concerning the aims of faith-based education as they apply to some independent schools, most specifically those in membership of the ISC. Finally, I have included a brief reference to some of the work on parents' reasons for choosing independent schools which reveal the parental perspective on the aims of independent education.

Historical overview

The aims of secondary education in England prior to 1902: private education

I could find no general overview of the aims of English education prior to the sixteenth century. Most accounts of education during from this period onwards are factual, hence, I have concentrated on the work of a small number of writers to avoid repetition. In his analysis, which starts in the 1500s, White (2007; 2011) traces the origins of the present-day maintained sector curriculum. He argues that the aims of education in England were inextricably linked to religious belief and, in particular, the need to be familiar with all aspects of God's creation. One of his main theories is that Protestant belief has exerted a major influence on English views of the purposes of education. White then traces the influence of religion on education in England through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries stressing the important role of the Dissenters in founding schools whose purposes were to meet the needs of the new urban, industrial middle classes for a more practical education. He cites as examples the foundation of schools such as Mill Hill School, founded by Congregationalists and other non-conformists, Bootham School and Grove House School (now part of

Leighton Park School) established by Quakers. Thus, he points out, utilitarian aims begin to emerge alongside religious ones. The three schools, mentioned by White, are still in existence as private schools and are now in membership of one of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) associations. Hence, this theory of a possible link between religious bodies and educational aims is relevant to the study of contemporary independent schools with a religious foundation. Consequently, I decided to take account of this in my analysis of the aims of survey schools by including religious affiliation as a potentially influential factor.

White (2011) and Ball (2013) examine the work of the three major educational commissions set up in the 1860s, whose remit was to advise on the educational arrangements for the three social classes as perceived at the time. Two of the three commissions dealt with private provision: the Clarendon Commission and the Taunton Commission. The work of the three Commissions indicates a clear link between the class structure and different sets of educational aims. Education's purpose in the nineteenth century, it would seem, was to fit individuals for their set place in society and reinforce the status quo rather than to attempt any change. This is relevant to any consideration of current independent schools' aims as it raises the question as to whether it is the case that the issue of class is still relevant. White (2011) points out that the education, which had hitherto been the preserve of boys, began to be made available to girls. The establishment, in large towns, of day schools for girls, which offered an academic education, was consequently recommended by Taunton. My examination of individual school histories, as reflected in their prospectuses and historical accounts, confirmed that many of the girls' schools in membership of the Girls Schools' Association, a member of the ISC, did originate at this time. Roach (1991) gives a detailed account of the foundation of girls' high schools and comments on their objectives. Firstly, he points out that the great majority of the girls' high schools were non-sectarian or interdenominational. In this respect the first girls' independent schools differed from the early boys' schools, with their strong links to individual denominations. Roach does, however, refer to the establishment of denominational schools and analyses, in particular, the aims of Catholic girls' schools.

The aims of girls' schools, as analysed by Roach, contrast strongly with the objectives of boys' schools in the nineteenth century. Boys' public schools, he maintains, promoted gentlemanly behaviour, courage, loyalty in friendship, team spirit. Greater emphasis was placed on athletic rather than intellectual pursuits, enabling a pupil to become a good fighter, a brave loser, who was outwardly Christian in outlook. Education was viewed as preparation for a life of service, especially in the Navy or Army, or overseas in the countries of the Empire. Girls' schools, Roach argues, did not, at the outset, principally prepare girls for careers, although this may have been one of their founders' objectives. He highlights the disparity between student expectations of emancipation from control and the self-restraint advocated by their educators. Thus, according to Roach and White, the purposes of secondary education prior to the establishment of state maintained secondary schools were linked initially to religious belief, but became increasingly utilitarian reflecting the role the pupils were expected to play in society. Provision for girls developed in the late Victorian era although their role was still considered largely subsidiary to that of men in nineteenth century society. Given the historical difference between the aims of boys' and girls' schooling, I decided to include gender as a factor in the analysis of the results of my aims survey.

The aims of secondary education in England from 1902 to 1988: the early phase of the state system

White's analysis of the aims of secondary education in the twentieth century begins with the establishment of state secondary schools (grammar schools) in 1902, which implemented the recommendations of the Taunton Commission as regards curricular content. A detailed account of the period leading up to the creation of these schools is given by Roach (1991). These secondary schools were open to the small percentage of the population who stayed on beyond the school leaving age of 11 (later 12). Thus, the aim of state secondary schooling at this stage was principally to educate the middle class. In addition, White suggests that the predominance of academic subjects in grammar school curricula was boosted by the introduction of the School Certificate examination in 1917 which marked the start of the national examination system. This may have impacted on the aims of the independent sector as most pupils currently in these schools enter national examinations. The possible influence of examination

requirements on a school's aims was, therefore, borne in mind during my data analysis.

The next major change resulted from the 1944 Education Act (Ball, 2013; Chitty, 2009). Although state control of the secondary curriculum was removed and handed over to individual schools (with the exception of religious education, which was compulsory), Ball (op.cit) argues that the creation of a tri-partite system was still largely class-based. The different schools' goals were still determined by the notion of preparation for particular positions in society. Moreover, it would seem that the religious dimension in education persisted. Nevertheless, maintained schools as well as private schools were otherwise theoretically free to determine their own aims and purposes; a situation that was to be the subject of debate and criticism, especially from White, prior to the adoption of a centrally determined National Curriculum in 1988. In the absence of curricular prescription and, given an increase in secularism over the twentieth century (White 2011), the question arose as to what purposes should schooling serve? Leading figures in the debate were Paul Hirst and Richard Peters. Their work is rooted in a commitment to liberal education and an attempt to define its aims and the form it should take. Hirst (1973) argues that a liberal education is that based on the nature of knowledge itself, which is not defined in instrumental terms involving skills or moral virtues and desirable qualities of mind. It is not derived from temporary values or uncertain beliefs or opinions. The purpose of such an education, therefore, is the fulfilment of the mind rather than the acquisition of utilitarian or vocational skills and knowledge. Hirst argues that education should take the form of induction into each of the different "forms of knowledge". Hence the aim of education, according to Hirst and Peters, can be viewed as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. This view, they argue, originated in Ancient Greece and has reappeared at several points in history. It is surely not fortuitous that it reappeared at a time of ideological conflict between the Western European and North American commitment to democracy and freedom and the communist ideal of China, Korea and the Eastern bloc countries. The purpose of education in the latter states was viewed by the former as indoctrination and preparing individuals to serve the needs of the state. The most extreme example of this was China's Cultural Revolution (Chang, 1993; Salisbury, 1993) which attempted to

destroy traditional forms of education and re-educate society. Hirst and Peters' definition of the purposes of education and the form it should take, though not derived from commitment to a religious ideology, can be said to derive from a political one. This point is not specifically made by White in his critique of their work, although on other occasions he does argue that the definition of educational purposes is a political activity (Reiss and White, 2013). The view that aims are the result of the prevailing political climate is put forward by Harris (1999), who claims that there can never be universal agreement concerning the aims of education. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) contend that educational goals are always influenced by the values which prevail at any particular time, and that there is frequently compromise required amongst interest groups over which values should predominate. If this is the case, then we would expect to see the aims of education in both sectors change over time. Thus one of my research instruments included a question on the frequency with which the school's aims were reviewed and the impetus for definition or review. My research also sought to address the issue of whether there appeared to be any evidence of the influence of current political ideology in ISC schools' aims and the extent to which this posed a constraint on independence.

The National Curriculum Aims

Despite the fact that independent schools are not bound by the National Curriculum, and are therefore free to set their own aims, they are bound by regulations concerning the areas to be covered by the curriculum, which closely resemble those of the National Curriculum. These may have acted as a constraint on the goals they set. It is therefore relevant to consider the issues surrounding the mandatory curricular requirements of state education.

Bramall and White (2000) highlight the similarity between the curricular content of the original National Curriculum and the grammar school curriculum of 1904, whose origins lie in the work of the Taunton Commission (1868). The form of the national curriculum could, therefore, be considered to be ultimately derived from the curriculum devised originally for independent schools, although this point is not made in any of the literature reviewed. Ball (2013) alleges that there was a strong connection between the National Curriculum and the political order of the time. As the party in

power was supportive of the private sector this claim would seem to be well-founded. White (2007, 2011) is highly critical of the National Curriculum's original two aims: to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. He argues that they were lacking in substance and laments the lack of rationale linking them to the prescribed curriculum. He claims that the year 2000 was revolutionary as it saw the introduction, for the first time in history, of a common framework of curricular aims (White, 2004b). This was the position at the outset of my research.

2007 saw a further revision. There were now three aims: that the curriculum should enable young people to become:

- Successful learners, who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve;
- Confident individuals, who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives;
- Responsible citizens, who make a positive contribution to society.

As with the 2000 aims, each aim is accompanied by a list of defining characteristics. Despite the amendments made since 1988, White has remained critical of the National Curriculum. However, his concerns are not rooted in doubts about the desirability of its existence, but rather in its form and purposes. His most recent work with Reiss (2013) advocates common aims for all schools, although not, necessarily, common curricula. This view could be said to fall within the "collectivist" category as defined by Johnson (1987), and discussed in Chapter 2. In opposition is the "individualist" school of thought encapsulated in Seldon's (2010) arguments that thinking and originality are stifled, and creativity limited, by uniformity. I believe this debate concerning the opposing notions of collectivity and individuality to have been important in informing my analysis of data as it related to consideration of the uniqueness or similarity of ISC schools' goals, and their relationship with the National Curriculum.

In the light of the above literature, this research examined the aims of contemporary independent schools and how they are drawn up and reviewed. I hoped to establish whether ISC schools' aims reflect their theoretical autonomy and freedom of self-determination or whether they are influenced by government policy towards the maintained sector. Comparison of my findings with the aims of the National Curriculum was intended to address this question.

Schools with a religious purpose

It is not possible in a short overview to examine the aims of schooling of all the individual faiths and denominations. The analysis below focuses in particular on two which differ from each other, and from the established Church of England, and hence, theoretically, have greater scope for independence from the state. Firstly, Quaker Schools, since all these schools are independent, having their origins in dissent from the established Church, and most are members of the ISC. Secondly, Roman Catholic schools, which, although they are to be found in both sectors, owe their allegiance to a universal faith rather than a nationally established one.

Quaker schools

There is very little literature concerning the aims of Quaker Schools. One possible reason for this is that, unlike other faith schools, the Quaker schools in this country are completely independent of each other, and are not, as a group, directly controlled by a central body or by the Society of Friends. There is, therefore, no over-arching vision for the group of schools as there is, for example, for the Jesuit schools. In fact, the vast majority of pupils at Quaker schools are not themselves Quakers (McCormack, 2008). Nevertheless, representatives from each of the schools do meet annually to discuss topics of common interest such as Peace Education. In 1973 the Society of Friends' Schools Joint Committee (SFSJC) published an analysis of current thinking about the nature and purposes of Quaker education. The work consists of a central text, prepared by the Committee itself, supplemented by papers on various issues relating to the aims of education in a Quaker setting. Stroud (1973) points out that, unlike Roman Catholicism, Quakerism has no central doctrine, and, therefore, the establishment of a coherent educational philosophy is problematic. In fact, Rowntree (1973) argues that there is little to distinguish Friends' schools from other Christian schools. The present-day Quaker movement is, the Committee argues, characterised by several fundamental divisions, which inevitably impact upon any attempt to establish a Quaker ethos in schools. Firstly, there is the difference of opinion over whether or not moral values are absolute and unchanging. Secondly, there is the dilemma as to the extent to which Quaker schools should respond to the materialistic view which prevails in our society. It is argued that Friends' schools reflect this both in

their material provision and in their pursuit of examination results. A similar concern over the appropriate response to materialism by Catholic schools is made by Foley and Grace (2001). In fact, for some Friends the very existence of Friends' schools, which are all independent, and therefore, fee-paying, is at odds with the Quaker ideal of a simple life in a self-supporting community.

The Independent newspaper has occasionally published articles featuring Quaker education, based on interviews with pupils, parents and headteachers at Friends' schools. McCormack (2008) highlights the commitment to the promotion of peace education and encouragement of the peaceful resolution of conflict which forms an essential part of Quaker education. He cites as evidence several examples of pupil involvement in initiatives such as peace vigils or the organisation PeaceJam. Jackson (2007) stresses the schools' commitment to promoting social inclusion. Both journalists refer to the periods of silent reflection which characterise the timetables of Quaker schools in which pupils are encouraged to form their own thoughts and opinions. Thus, despite the internal divisions amongst Quakers themselves as to the nature and purpose of education at Friends' schools, it would seem to outside observers, and the parents who choose the schools for their children, that there are certain clearly defined aims and values which distinguish these schools from the mainstream. This is particularly relevant to this study as it suggests that there is scope within the independent sector for schools to set distinctive goals.

Roman Catholic schools

O'Donoghue and Grace (2004) argue that Catholic schools are often seen as distinctive given that their prime purpose is spiritual, moral and social formation. Unlike Quaker schools, Catholic schools are under the direction of central church bodies. The Catholic bishops in England, and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome, exert considerable influence over the aims of Catholic schools. Whereas Quaker schools are all independent, Catholic schools are to be found in both sectors. In sharp contrast to the Society of Friends, the Catholic Church has a clearly defined hierarchy, and ultimate authority over doctrinal matters rests with Rome. There is, therefore, greater uniformity in Catholic belief and less scope for debate about the aims of Catholic schools.

In 1977 Garrone and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome issued *The Catholic School* which set out the principles which should underpin any education deemed to be Catholic. Of particular importance were: service to the common good and mission to the poor. However, little academic work appears to have been undertaken on the contemporary aims of Catholic education in this country until the mid 1990s. White's (2011) historical overview touches briefly upon the curricula of schools in Catholic countries but says little about the aims of Catholic education in England. The field of literature on Catholic education, and in particular its aims, is dominated by the work of Gerald Grace and his associates, Foley, Arthur, Walsh, O'Donoghue and Boylan. His early research is dedicated to a survey of the mission statements of twenty-five Catholic secondary schools (Grace, 1998). He identifies eight themes which relate to fostering spiritual awareness and practice; a commitment to love, peace, truth and justice; recognition of the dignity and value of all staff and children; celebration of all aspects of achievement; equality of care for all; encouraging excellence in every sphere.

Grace's analysis of *The Common Good in Education*, published by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in 1997, highlights further the Catholic commitment to the service of others rather than oneself. He gives voice to the growing concern that the increasing emphasis on individualism in society could undermine the concept of human dignity, which lies at the heart of Catholic belief, challenging the worth of those pupils who cannot contribute to a school's success, as judged by others e.g. by high academic performance which enhances the school's position in the league tables. Grace (1998, 2000, 2001, 2002) analyses in greater depth, the conflict which has arisen, for those involved in Catholic education, between the Church's social teaching and the New Right ideology, which, he argues, has come to dominate contemporary society.

This issue of the conflict between market forces and educational aims is of crucial importance to those Catholic schools which are independent, where survival in the market place is essential for their continued existence. Grace (2002) examines the challenge posed by the pursuit of individual interests, encouraged by a market culture, to the traditional aims of Catholic schooling, which promote the values of community.

He analyses the concept of ‘the common good’ and its implications for Catholic education, stressing the importance of citizenship in order to develop a sense of commitment beyond oneself and one’s family, and the need to develop individual skills and talents fully so as to put them to use for the benefit of others (Grace, 2000).

O’Donoghue sums up the Catholic viewpoint on education in O’Donoghue et al. (2004), arguing that whereas, Catholic schools, like all schools, strive to encourage academic success, their prime purpose is spiritual, moral and social formation.

Thus, as far as Catholic education is concerned, there appears to be a centrally determined, clearly articulated sense of purpose which would apply to all Catholic schools whether in the maintained or independent sector (Arthur et al., 2007).

However, this notion of education being ultimately for the common good is, it is claimed by Grace, under threat. My survey sample included several Catholic schools and a Quaker school, consequently, I hoped to be able to judge whether the ideal of social commitment still persisted amongst the aims such schools set themselves.

Within the sample of schools who responded to the aims survey in the first part of my research was one Jesuit independent school, which provided not only a copy of the school’s own aims, but also a copy of the Society of Jesus British Province’s (SJBP) publication, entitled *School Vision Statement* (2002). This document outlines the aims of Jesuit schools, and the criteria by which the ethos of such schools should be judged. There appeared to be a distinctive quality to this vision, which led me to undertake a survey of the literature relating specifically to Jesuit education, as distinct from Catholic education.

Jesuit education in England

Jesuit schools are to be found in both the maintained and the independent sectors in England and all are underpinned by a shared vision of the purposes of education. I could find no recent relevant literature in English referring to the aims of Jesuit education other than the aforementioned *School Vision Statement*, an analysis of the characteristics of Jesuit education published by the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE) in 1987, and a work by J.W. Donohue (1963) focussing on the foundations of the idea of Jesuit education. Donohue asserts that there was very little emphasis on aims in early Jesuit writing about education and

much more concern to discuss ways and means. However, he refers to growth in three areas as being the essential purpose of Jesuit education: intellectual, moral and social, in order to serve others. The link between education and service derives from the belief of St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order, that education should be coupled with goodness. The ICAJE's publication accentuates the importance of the teachings of Ignatius of Loyola asserting that:

"a distinctive spirit still marks any school which can truly be called Jesuit....A common spirit lies behind pedagogy, curriculum, and school life" (ICAJE, 1987:7),

The rest of the text is devoted to an analysis of what this implies. A Jesuit education is portrayed as a preparation for a life of service to God and others and the promotion of justice and peace: The SJBP's *School Vision Statement* (2002:3) defines the prime purpose of Jesuit schooling thus:

"to promote improvement in learning for the greater glory of God".

As with the literature on Quaker education, and Catholic education in general, one of the important themes to emerge is the conflict between a faith-based vision of education and the pressures of contemporary society which derive from an emphasis on competitiveness, consumerism and success at all costs. The philosophy informing these schools is quite distinct from mainstream government thinking on education, which, Ball (2008), Ozga and Lingard (2007) and Allais (2012) argue, is currently informed mainly by economic concerns. Therefore, I sought to include the Jesuit school which had responded to the survey in the second phase of the research. Moreover, the impetus to explore evaluation processes in ISC schools derived from the abstract nature of the Jesuit Mission. I was prompted to explore how schools judged their success in achieving those goals which are not susceptible to metrics. As all state Catholic schools are subject to inspection by Ofsted, I decided to include a maintained Catholic school's inspection report in my examination of reports of the two inspectorates, to ascertain whether they were judged in the light of Catholic aims as well as those of the government.

Parental views of the aims of independent schools

Although no work was found relating to the aims of ISC schools, research has been undertaken into the reasons why parents choose to send their children to independent schools. These reflect, to some extent, parental perceptions of the purposes of such schools. They may possibly coincide with the school's declared aims, or may, through market pressures, have influenced them. West and Noden (2003) in their study of parental choice in the London area list those factors which parents claimed were most important when choosing an independent rather than a state school for their child. Academic excellence and happiness emerged as key issues. Nine out of ten parents of children choosing secondary schools thought their child would go into higher education. Consequently, the quality of education and academic achievement were deemed important. Thus, the point made above, about the possible influence of external examinations on independent schools, would seem to be supported by this finding. My analysis of aims statements sought to confirm whether academic success was a key element in ISC schools' goals.

There were different notions of what constituted happiness, but an atmosphere or ethos which would suit the child's needs was cited by eight out of ten parents as an important factor. Allied to the above was the notion of avoidance of risk, both in terms of underachievement, and also from peer group pressure. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's (2003) study of parental attitudes to independent education produced similar findings. They highlight three areas of importance for parents. Firstly, they value academic achievement, as a requirement for entry into the more prestigious universities and careers in business and the professions. Secondly, they want a well-disciplined environment which fosters what are perceived as high standards of behaviour and appropriate attitudes and values. A third priority is the child's happiness which comprised both the child's contentment including freedom from social stress, and the fulfilment of parental ambition. Parents expressed a desire for a strong and supportive setting with good pastoral care, and the maintenance of an orderly atmosphere and good behaviour for the creation of an effective learning environment and the protection of the child. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown conclude that parents want their child's friends to be a suitable influence so as to enable the fulfilment of

their social aspirations both for their child and for themselves, given that their sense of social status is bound up with their child's success.

In 2003 the ISC itself commissioned RSAcademics to conduct and publish the results of a survey of factors influencing parental choice of independent schools. Based on responses from over 5500 parents the resulting *Parent Profiles* report highlighted those aspects from a list of 37 possible school attributes which parents considered most important when choosing an independent school. Foremost were:

- Respects and nurtures their child's individuality;
- Teaches children to respect other people and behave well;
- Is modern and up-to-date in its outlook and infrastructure.

These results were potentially significant as the data were obtained in the year when I initiated my research into the aims of ISC schools, and ultimately led me to consider whether there was any similarity between these schools' aims and parental choice criteria.

In the light of the literature on educational aims I sought to examine whether there was a link between the results of my survey as regards the aims of a sample of ISC schools and several of the areas referred to in the literature above: the aims of the national curriculum; religious affiliation; gender; parental opinion. I chose to explore the possible influence of political ideology on the nature of independence, enjoyed by ISC schools, in my examination, not only of their aims, but also of their evaluation processes and the inspection regimes to which they were subject since these may have impacted on the goals they set themselves.

Appendix 6a Framework comparison until 2009

- Ofsted and ISI

(as outlined in reports examined)

OFSTED

1. Description of the school

2. Overall effectiveness of the school

**Effectiveness of the sixth form
(where appropriate)**

3. Achievement and standards

ISI

**1.Characteristics of the
school**

2. The Quality of Education:

*The Educational Experience
provided*

*Pupils' Learning and
Achievements*

*Spiritual, Moral, Social and
Cultural Development of
Pupils*

*The Quality of Teaching
(Including assessment)*

**3. The Quality of care and
Relationships:**

*The Quality of Pastoral Care,
and the Welfare, Health and
Safety of Pupils*

*The Quality of Links with
Parents and with the
Community*

*The Quality of Boarding
Education (if applicable)*

4. Personal development and wellbeing

4. The Effectiveness of Governance and Management:

The Quality of Governance

The Quality of leadership and Management

5. The Quality of provision:

5. Conclusions and Next Steps:

Teaching and learning

Overall Conclusions

Curriculum and other activities

Next Steps

Care, guidance and support

6. Leadership and management

6. Summary of inspection evidence:

List of inspectors

7. Inspection judgements (grade tables)

8. Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Appendix 6b Comparison of frameworks introduced in 2009

– Ofsted and ISI

OFSTED

1. Information about the school

2. Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness : how good is the school? – grade

The school's capacity for sustained improvement - grade

Main findings

What does the school need to do to improve further?

3. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4. How effective is the provision?

5. How effective are leadership and management?

6. Sixth form

7. Views of parents and carers

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire(table)

8. Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

*Overall effectiveness of schools (table of effectiveness judgements-
percentage of schools)*

ISI

1. The characteristics of the school

2. The Success of the School

a) Main findings

b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(ii) Recommended action

3. The Quality of Academic and Other Achievements

- a) The quality of pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills*
- b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision(including community links of benefit to pupils)*
- c) The contribution of teaching*

4. The Quality of Pupils' Personal Development

- a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils*
- b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety*
- c) The quality of boarding education*

5. The Effectiveness of Governance , Leadership and Management

- a) The quality of governance*
- b) The quality of leadership and management*
- c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians*

Inspection Evidence

Appendix 6c The Independent Schools Standards Regulations

(ISSR)

The following list contains the headings under which the ISSR relevant to secondary education are grouped:

- Part 1 Quality of education provided
- Part 2 Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of pupils
- Part 3 Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- Part 4 Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors
- Part 5 Premises of and accommodation at schools
- Part 6 Provision of information
- Part 7 Manner in which complaints are to be handled
- Part 8 Quality of leadership and management of schools (Introduced
in January, 2015)

Other legislation

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools

Source: ISI Handbook for the Inspection of Schools the Regulatory
Requirements April 2015

Appendix 7 Self-evaluation methods in ISC schools

The following self-evaluation methods were used by one or more of the schools in the study:

- SEF (ISI or religious order)
- Questionnaire
- Lesson observation
- Audit
- Internally devised survey
- External survey e.g. University of Durham 'Yellis' (Year 11 Information System) pupil attitude survey
- Scrutiny of records e.g. bullying, sanctions
- Exit interviews (staff or pupils)
- Discussion forum – e.g. committees, parents' meetings, school council
- Informal discussion (staff, pupils)
- Comments from alumni
- Value-added systems e.g. The University of Durham's ALIS (Advanced Level Information System)
- Reports on aspects of the school e.g. health and safety, child protection
- Appraisal/performance management schemes
- Pro-forma
- Interactive media e.g. for comments on artwork

Appendix 8 The interview schools

School Number 1 (Interview date: October 2007)

School number 1 is a day school for girls aged 3 to 18. It was founded in the first decade of the twentieth century and moved to its present site in the suburbs of an East Midlands city twenty years later. The school is a Christian (Church of England) foundation, but welcomes pupils of all faiths or none. As a whole, the school has 50% of pupils from ethnic minority groups, mainly Asian. In the Junior School, 75% of pupils are from ethnic minority groups. There is only one member of staff of non-European ethnicity, as the school receives very few applications from other groups. Three of the fourteen governors are Asian.

The prospectus, seen in 2007, stated that the school aims to foster the skills to enable its pupils to become confident and articulate adults, able to meet the challenges presented by a period of rapid change. It hopes to develop individual potential in academic work and extra-curricular activities. The celebration of success helps to reinforce a sense of community. The values of tolerance, respect, honesty and integrity are key elements of the school's ethos. Pastoral care and an extensive guidance programme are an important aspect of the school's provision, in addition to a broad curriculum which includes French, Spanish, German, separate science from Year 7, drama, dance and music. The school offers a wide range of activities including a variety of residential trips in the UK and abroad, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and expeditions to the developing world. In recent years there has been an extensive building and renovation programme including a drama studio, computer rooms, a library and resources centre, additional classrooms and an improved hall and dining facilities.

School Number 10 "Opportunity Knocks" (Interview date: June 2008)

School number 10 is situated on an attractive site in the outskirts of a small Midlands town. It caters for boys aged 7 to 18, and has approximately 1000 pupils in total. The school has a small number of boarders, but the majority of boys are day pupils. The school has a long tradition of educating boys, dating back many centuries.

The school aims to provide a broadly based education, and to delay specialisation as long as possible. The curriculum reflects this. All pupils are encouraged to take part in the extra-curricular programme and there is a large number of clubs and societies in addition to a wide-ranging programme of sporting, cultural and outdoor activities. The school encourages pupils to develop their individual talents to the full and to accept responsibility for themselves and others. It has a continuous programme of development and is well endowed with facilities including a Performing Arts Centre, excellent science facilities, sports centre and extensive playing fields. Admission to the school is selective, based on academic achievement in the entrance examination set by the school.

School Number 13 (Interview date: June 2007)

School number 13 is a school for girls aged 11 to 18. There are currently 225 boarders and 60 day girls. Founded in 1850, in Kent, it moved to its current site in the south of the Midlands in 1946. Admission is selective using the common entrance paper in addition to an interview, school report and verbal reasoning paper. Selection of pupils depends on a number of criteria including: suitability for the school in terms of character attributes, academic ability, particular strengths in an area such as art, sport, drama or music, personal circumstances and school reference. Boarding is arranged by year groups and there are four vertical houses for competitive sports. Housed in a manor house dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries the school also has modern facilities including a swimming pool, squash courts, science laboratories, 6th form boarding house, facilities for technology, ICT and modern languages and pitches for hockey, lacrosse and rounders. The curriculum includes Latin and several modern foreign languages. The extra-curricular programme includes Enterprise Initiative, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, social service, debating, public speaking, Model United Nations. The following statements, from the current prospectus, reflect the school's aims:

- The school is a Christian foundation and this underpins all aspects of school life.
- We encourage them to grow in confidence and to fulfil their potential as individuals.

- The school aims to challenge the girls in a variety of ways through the wide-ranging curriculum, through our stimulating extra-curricular programme and through an exciting number of optional activities.
- It is important to give the girls opportunities to lead as well as to be members of a team.
- Boarding allows the girls to achieve independence.

School Number 26 (Interview date: September 2009)

School number 26 was founded just over eighty years ago as one of the country's first co-educational boarding schools. It is situated in parkland in a rural location in southern England. It aims to promote happiness and security for each individual pupil in a friendly, informal atmosphere. The school offers a broad curriculum, including three modern foreign languages and places a particular emphasis on the creative and performing arts. The school has extensive sports facilities and the curricular programme in the secondary phase includes outdoor education which takes place in the school's adventure centre. The premises include a new sixth-form complex, modern science laboratories, an art and design centre, an ICT centre, a Performing Arts centre, a music school and separate junior and senior libraries. A wide ranging extra-curricular programme is offered including week-end and holiday activities such as caving, climbing, canoeing, skiing, scuba-diving, trekking and snowboarding. There are regular World Challenge expeditions to developing countries and the school participates in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Music provision is particularly strong and features an annual overseas concert tour. Admission to the secondary school is selective. Pupils sit the school's own entrance examination or, at 13+, they may also take the Common Entrance Examination.

School Number 42 (Interview date: June 2009)

School number 42 is a co-educational Catholic boarding and day school guided by the principles of the Society of Jesus, which was founded in the late sixteenth century. It is situated in a rural location in the North of England. The preparatory school caters for pupils aged 3 to 13, and the senior school caters for pupils aged 13 to 18. The school strives to educate pupils in the principles and practices of Roman Catholicism. It

welcomes pupils of other Christian denominations and encourages them to take an active part in the school's worship and spiritual life. The curriculum aims to reflect the ideals of the founder of the Jesuits: the importance of trying to find God in all things; the development of each individual's talents; breadth and depth in learning; encouraging pupils to think for themselves, and to communicate effectively; to be aware of other people's needs. The school strives to develop "*men and women of competence, conscience and compassion*" (Independent Schools Yearbook 2008 – 9). A broad curriculum is offered with a wide range of subjects available at GCSE and AS/A2 Level. Great importance is attached to music with all Year 9 pupils learning an orchestral instrument at the school's expense. The extra-curricular programme is extensive, encompassing many sports, voluntary service, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, and Cadet Corps. Recent building development has included provision for Science and the Performing Arts. A new Library/Learning resource Centre has recently been completed.

The school's mission statement reflects its principal purposes:

- To educate the young to develop and use their talents as fully as possible for the greater glory of God.
- To educate the whole person, integrating a pupil's intellectual, spiritual, moral, emotional, psychological, social and physical development, thus assisting in his or her progress towards that fullness of life which comes from God.
- To form men and women for others, and make the school an apostolic centre for the local and wider community.
- To remain faithful to the school's Ignatian and Jesuit tradition and spirit.
- To foster a strong community with Jesus Christ at its centre.

After the appointment of the new Head the wording of the school's mission statement was changed, but he considered that the essence remained the same and was content to accept the above statement.

School Number 72 (Interview date: July 2008)

School Number 72 is a co-educational day school for pupils aged 10 to 18. Situated in an industrial Midlands town, it was founded almost 500 years ago and has a long history of scholarship. It aims to provide a challenging education and develop self-

awareness and responsibility. It fosters a sense of community and altruism whilst valuing individuality. The school has an ongoing programme of building development. Most recent building projects include an Arts Centre and a Sixth-Form Centre. There has been a significant investment in IT facilities.

The school is selective with admission determined by performance in the school's entrance examination at 11, and by interview and GCSE results at 16.

Pupils study a broad curriculum at Key stage 3. Most pupils study 10 subjects at GCSE and 3 or 4 in the sixth-form. The school has a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme encompassing sport, a Scout troupe, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, music, drama, art and many other clubs and activities.

The school's aims statement emphasises partnership with parents, the provision of a challenging, but supportive environment, and the development of such personal qualities as creativity, responsibility, self-awareness, respect for diversity, tolerance, and concern for others. It seeks to treat pupils as individuals and enable them to feel respected.

Appendix 9 Aspects of evaluation criteria

Key Characteristics of effective schools (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1995)

- professional leadership
- shared vision and goals
- learning environment
- concentration on teaching and learning
- purposeful teaching
- high expectations
- positive reinforcement
- monitoring progress
- pupil rights and responsibilities
- home-school partnership

Evaluation framework (Macbeath and Rand, 1995)

- school climate
- relationships
- organisation and communication
- time and resources
- recognition and achievement
- equity
- home-school links
- support for teaching
- classroom climate
- support for learning

Appendix 10

Schools inspected until September 2015 under the Ofsted framework for inspecting education in non-association independent schools

City Technology Colleges and Colleges for the Technology of the Arts

The City Technology Colleges, launched by the Conservative Government in 1986, were designed to be independent or private schools, run by educational trusts established specifically for the purpose and heavily supported by industry or commerce (Adonis, 2012). They are not fee-paying and were intended to receive initial capital expenditure and some running costs from industry or commerce with the remaining current expenditure being met by the DES. In the event, industry and commerce proved reluctant to fund the City Technology Colleges and much of the expense was met by central government (Walford 2006).

The 1988 *Education Reform Act*, passed under a Conservative government, established the legal framework for the City Technology Colleges (CTCs). The first CTCs opened in 1989. They were to be registered as independent schools, and funding by central government was enshrined in legislation. The very legislation is, in effect, contradictory. Despite government claims that they are independent, it is difficult to justify this description since they are financially dependent on the state and accountable to the state through Ofsted.

Academies

Section 65 of the *Education Act 2002*, drawn up by the Labour Government, provided for the establishment of Academies and specified their core characteristics. Such schools are, in law, independent, not maintained schools (Gunter, 2011). The *Academies Act 2010*, passed shortly after the formation of the Conservative /Liberal Democrat Coalition government, made provision for expansion of the academies programme by enabling all schools to convert to academies if they chose to do so (West and Bailey, 2013; Walford, 2014a). The first Academies opened in 2002 (Adonis, 2012). Like their predecessors, the City Technology Colleges, Academies were intended to have a private sponsor. This could be an individual, business, faith group or voluntary organisation (Tice, 2008), making a long-term commitment to an Academy

and dedicating time, money and insight to improving education and life chances for its students. The DCSF publication *Academies and independent schools prospectus*, (2007b) aimed at encouraging independent schools to become sponsors of academies describes academies thus:

“Academies are a new type of state school, established in areas of educational disadvantage, and demonstrating independence, leadership and innovation.....Academies receive all their revenue funding from the state at a level comparable to other local schools, so no fees are paid by parents. But they differ from other state schools in that they are supported and managed by independent sponsors” (DCSF 2007:2).

This view is reiterated in *Academies – Everything you need to know* (DCSF, 2010). Leo et al. (2010) refer to eight areas of independence, identified by PricewaterhouseCoopers in their annual reports, which distinguish academies from Local Authority (LA) schools. These are principally concerned with admissions, exclusions, staff pay and conditions and certain exemptions from National Curriculum requirements and LA management, planning and financial arrangements. However, the Academies are quite clearly, in the government’s view, maintained sector schools. Although they are not part of a homogeneous group owing to their individual agreements with central government (Gunter,2011) they do receive most of their funding from government and are subject to inspection by Ofsted, albeit, until 2015, under the framework for independent schools. They may not be accountable to a Local Authority, but do report to central government through their individual funding arrangements. In fact Ball (2013) states that they cannot be considered as either state or independent schools.

Free Schools

The free school initiative was launched in June 2010 by the newly elected Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government with the first Free Schools opening in September 2011. The *Academies Act 2010* enabled local groups to apply to central government for funding to set up and run a school (Higham, 2014). They can be set up by a wide range of proposers, including charities, universities, businesses, educational groups, teachers and groups of parents (Chitty, 2014). They are all-ability but are,

however, state-funded and regulated by Ofsted. They do not therefore meet the definitions of independence given in Chapter 1. Moreover, they were established after this research was undertaken. For these reasons they do not lie within the scope of this work. Nevertheless, by May 2016, according to a BBC website post, more than half of mainstream state-funded schools were Academies or Free Schools ([www.bbc.co.uk, 7/5/2016](http://www.bbc.co.uk/7/5/2016)), illustrating the government's belief that they were increasing the autonomy of the maintained sector. The wider context for this approach is examined in the final section of the literature review focussing on educational policy.

University Technology Colleges (currently known as University Technical Colleges)

Launched by Lord Baker, who with the late Sir Ron Dearing, set up the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, the first University Technology College opened in September 2012 within the Academies structure. University Technical Colleges were promoted as a new concept in education for 14-18 year olds offering the opportunity to take a full time, technically-oriented course of study, preparing them to “*innovate and invent*”. They are supported by universities and funded by the state (www.utcolleges.org). Students follow a programme integrating an academic curriculum with technical and vocational elements. The sponsoring university or college is not required to provide funds for either the initial building or the running costs. Universities are expected to contribute by allowing access to specialist facilities and using their expertise to help with:

- Curriculum development
- Teaching e.g. mathematics for engineers
- Guiding suitably qualified students to foundation and full degrees.

As Academies these colleges will have flexibility over the length of the school day, year, and timetable. However, in common with other Academies, they will be state funded, obliged to follow a curriculum which is, to some extent prescribed, and inspected by Ofsted. They are therefore not included in this research.

Studio Schools

The first two Studio Schools in the UK, based on a model already used in the USA and Denmark, and named after the Renaissance studio where working and learning were integrated, were opened by the Studio Schools Trust in 2010. By February 2017 there

were thirty-four studio schools in England (www.studioschoolstrust.org). In the publicity brochure *Studio Schools* (2015) they are described as a new kind of school for 13-19 year olds. The brochure claims they seek to bridge the gap between what young people need to succeed in life and the skills and knowledge provided by the current educational system. Studio schools operate an extended day and have enterprise and entrepreneurship at their heart. Key features include project-based learning, personal coaching, and enterprise connections. Students gain traditional qualifications in line with the National Curriculum.

Although these schools do aim to deliver the curriculum in a manner which differs from mainstream schools, nevertheless they offer qualifications based on the National Curriculum, and do not, themselves, purport to be anything other than a variety of state school. As was the case with Academies it is difficult to see in what way they can be considered truly independent.

Faith Schools

Within the maintained sector there are faith schools, defined by the DCFS (2007c) as schools with a religious character. They may be voluntary-aided schools, part-funded by a trust or religious body and associated with a particular religion or denomination. They are obliged to follow the National Curriculum, participate in National Curriculum tests and assessments, and are inspected by Ofsted. They are not considered independent by the government and hence are not examined in detail in this study.

Private faith schools are entirely self-funding and many belong to an ISC association. Walford (2006) highlights a great diversity amongst private Muslim schools and the grounds for opposition to them which have arisen. These differ from earlier ideological reasons for opposing the private sector. Muslim schools are seen, by some, as fundamentalist; some feminists have opposed the establishment of separate secondary schools for girls on the grounds that they may be a way of inculcating a conformist and repressive view of the role of women. Thus, it would appear, from the literature, that the issues surrounding Muslim independent schools are specific to this group of schools only, and do not, necessarily, apply to independent schools in

general. Moreover, none of these schools belonged to an ISC association at the time of this research. For this reason they are not included in this study.

Walford (2006) and Baker and Freeman (2005) describe the emergence of the new Christian schools in the 1980s. None of these schools belong to the ISC and hence they do not feature amongst the schools surveyed in this research. The following overview is, therefore, merely to help set the context. As with Muslim schools, the new Christian schools' origins are attributed mainly to dissatisfaction with state schools and a desire for a closer link between the education the children receive and the faith they profess, particularly as regards moral values, in this case based on the teachings of the Bible. However, he argues that the reforms that have occurred in recent years have made it easier for parents to find a state-funded Church school more in line with their beliefs, these are outlined by John Burn ed. (2001), who describes the distinctively Anglican approach to education which should be found in Church of England schools following the *Dearing Report* (2001). Hence, Walford argues, there was less need for these newly formed private Christian schools and their numbers have declined in recent years.

Appendix 11 Home education

Lubienski (2003), Rothermel (2003), and Smith and Nelson (2015) comment on the increasing frequency with which parents in countries such as the UK and the USA are opting to educate their children at home, although as Smith and Nelson point out, the lack of a legal requirement for parents to notify their local authority of this decision makes it difficult to determine exact numbers. This is referred to as elective home education by the government department responsible for education in England (DCSF 2007a). The *Education Act 1996* Section 7 sets out parents' rights to educate their children at home:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –
a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
b) to any special educational needs he may have,
either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

The aforementioned DCSF document points out that the words "*suitable*" and "*efficient*" are not defined in the Act, but have been broadly defined in case law. "*Efficient*" is defined as "*achieves that which it sets out to achieve*", and "*suitable*" as that which

"primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so". (DCSF, 2007a)

There are no specific requirements as regards curriculum content, amount of time devoted to education, assessment, standards of achievement, or premises.

Local authorities (LAs) have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis (Rothermel, 2003). This contrasts strongly with other countries with highly developed educational systematic monitoring where evidence of progress is required, often specifically in mathematics and reading (Badman, 2009). However, LAs are required to intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education (DCSF, 2007a). Moreover sections 10 and 11 of the *Children Act 2004* set out the responsibilities of local authorities with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Local authorities have the right to insist on seeing children in order to enquire about their welfare where there is cause

for concern. However, such powers do not bestow on local authorities the ability to see and question children subject to elective home education in order to establish whether they are receiving a suitable education (DCSF, 2007a).

Thus, it would seem that home schooling is largely, but not entirely, independent in the manner defined in Chapter 1, given that parents receive no subsidy, and plan their child's education for themselves on an individual basis. State control is limited to intervention if there is cause for concern, either over the education provided, or the safeguarding or welfare of the children concerned. *Elective Home Education* (DCSF 2007a) and the report to the Secretary of State for Education, produced by Badman (2009), list the most common reasons why parents choose to educate their children at home amongst which are philosophical or ideological views, dissatisfaction with the system, religious or cultural beliefs, bullying, distance or access to a local school, a child's special needs, unwillingness or inability to go to school, or parents' desire for a closer relationship with their children. Lubienski (2003) attributes the choice to home educate to a rejection of interference from, and accountability to, any external authority. As such, it represents the assertion of individual goals over collective ones. Power and Taylor (2013) argue that home schooling can accord cultural recognition to those whose needs in this respect might otherwise be overlooked.

Rothermel argues that the picture of motivations for home education is complex, based on her administration of a questionnaire to a sample of home-educating families. Despite attempts in earlier studies to classify such parents, she concludes that their motivations are so diverse as to defy categorisation. Smith and Nelson (2015) conclude similarly, from their lifestyle survey, that home educators do not constitute a homogeneous group but rather consist of individuals with different motivations. However, except where a child has special needs, arrangements to educate a child at home do not constitute a school in the state's view. Given the apparent diversity of the aims of home schooling, a more detailed analysis lies outside the scope of this study. Moreover most home-schooling arrangements do not constitute a school in the state's view but they could provide a topic for future research into different forms of independence in education.

Appendix 12

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