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PRIMARY THEME — Professional impact and transformation

This poster reports on a pilot study for a doctoral (EdD) project, which was an investigation of how one school reviewed its legal status in the context of government policy imperatives in England, including the drive to convert schools into academies. The aim of the project was to chart, follow, understand and explain the decision-making processes over a period of one year. I examined the discourses and debates about the options that were available to the school and the ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of changing legal status from a local-authority maintained school to an academy, which is an independent state school.

The aims of my thesis project were:

(a) to study the ways in which the values and leadership practices of the sample population of educational leaders - head teacher, senior leadership, other leaders in the school, governors, members of external bodies - were revealed and interplayed through the decision-making processes

(b) to study how theorising about systemic change can aid understanding of policy enactment.

In preparation for the thesis project, I undertook pilot work in a similar school at the point of academisation. The poster presents a comparison of the two schools and their situations.

This was one of the first real-time studies of what it is like to go through the process of academisation. In addition to that methodological contribution, the study also developed theory, by conceptualising the outcomes of the ethnographic research and relating them to the dynamics of identity and the complex reality of systemic change in England.

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