Hong Kong International Schools and the global EdTech Narrative

How the policy ecosystem and teachers' discourse surrounding Educational Technology within private international schools are sites of neoliberal struggle.

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Abstract

This doctoral study examines how the marketisation of education influences modern schooling, both in practice and discourse. As globalisation accelerates through advancements in computing and internet technology, neoliberal ideologies that prioritise economic success and market-driven reforms are embedded within policy discourses. These policies shape teachers' subjectivities and practices by exposing them to economically framed discourses, fostering normative understandings of success and performativity.

In the context of Hong Kong, a territory shaped by colonial legacy and reunification with China, the education system reflects both globalised neoliberal ideologies and local market dynamics. The Education Bureau (EDB) supports private and international schools, encouraging schools to position themselves in relation to economic success. International schools can be seen as part of neoliberal marketisation, positioning themselves to attract families by emphasising economic markers. This study focuses on one international school network in Hong Kong, analysing how central policy texts and school-level discourses work as part of a policy ecosystem that position EdTech within a neoliberal framework.

Guided by Michel Foucault's theories of discourse, power, and governmentality, the research explores how policy ecosystems construct a neoliberal discourse of performativity and marketisation, shaping teachers' subjectivities. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Fairclough's approach, data included seven policy texts from TSN and eleven from Hill College, alongside questionnaire data[1] and 31 teacher interviews (30 transcribed). The analysis reveals that policy texts draw on global discourses emphasising EdTech as essential for competitiveness. Teachers' discourses are shaped by both local and global narratives, with many accepting EdTech imperatives due to external pressures - policy, parent expectations, and the future economy. While teachers often align with dominant discourses, some demonstrate resistance, challenging normative practices.

The findings conclude that EdTech discourses within TSN and Hill College function as instruments of neoliberal marketisation and governmentality, actively shaping teachers'

[1] The questionnaire was sent to all teaching staff at Hill College, approximately 100 staff, please see Chapter 6.4 and 6.52 for further details.

subjectivities and practices. Individual subjectivities are constructed within a normative discursive environment that equates the ‘ideal teacher’ with EdTech competencies.

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List of Abbreviations

BYOD - Bring Your Own Device

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

DSS - Direct Subsidy Scheme

EAL - English as an Additional Language

EDB - Education Bureau Hong Kong

EMI - English as a Medium of Instruction

EdTech - Educational Technology

Edu business - Educational Business

GCSEs – General Certificate of Secondary Education

HKDSE – Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education

IB -- International Baccalaureate

IBDP - International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

IBO- International Baccalaureate Organisation

IGCSE - International General Certificate of Secondary Education.

LegCo – Legislative Council

MTR – Mass Transit Railway System

PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment

PRC – People's Republic of China

SAR – Special Administrative Region

TSN – The School Network

TSNC – The School Network central Office

UK - United Kingdom

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work. No material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution.

Statement of copyright

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Dedication

"Curiosity … a readiness to find what surrounds us strange"

Michel Foucault

Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth

Introduction

The terrain of Education in a technologized world

Globalisation is a defining characteristic of our current economic and social worlds (Garratt and Forrester, 2016). As a hallmark of the neoliberal governing economy; principles of market competition, deregulation, and individual responsibility have become the organising practices for public services, including education, especially in the US and UK since the 1970s (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism, defined as a governing rationality that extends market logics into other areas of social life, begins to shape global policy making. For example, internationally, these principles were adopted within other areas such as education (Harvey, 2005). The interconnectedness of countries through the flow of goods and services, and more specifically technology, information and people, has been facilitated by the developments in digital and internet technologies (Power, 2014). The rapid diffusion of technology, especially since the growth of the internet, has increased the exchange of trade/finance and ideas. This in turn has led to globalised policy narratives that have facilitated the expansion of neoliberalism and marketisation across national borders.

As globalisation advances, driven by developments in computing and internet technology, societies increasingly incorporate globalised narratives into their policies, promoting the need for digitally literate workforces (Egea, 2014; Gabriel et al., 2020). This globalisation is reflected in the development of a global education industry and international school groups (e.g. Nord Anglia, Cognita, GEMS, as well as franchised schools) with supranational and transnational corporations, NGOs and global policy actors playing an increasing role in the formation of education policy (Ball, 2018b). Educational policy texts, then, increasingly introduce neoliberal discourses of economic success positioning education within a global, competitive market driven by neoliberal principles (Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Ball et al., 2017). Education, therefore, becomes a key site for the reproduction of these global neoliberal ideologies and is extended into schools through the globalised EdTech agenda (Sardoč, 2021).

Globalisation then contributes to the commodification of education as education becomes increasingly viewed as a market and a product/service that can be bought and sold. Educational outcomes become less humanistic, focusing on human values and potential, and more market-driven and individualistic (Harvey, 2005). This shift is reflected in education policy through

the promotion of competition and market responsiveness. As education policy is increasingly shaped by globalised policy narratives, these neoliberal ideologies are translated and mediated within local contexts (Ball et al. 2017). National education policy and strategy begin to incorporate the agendas of the global education industry, which embed economic and business imperatives in the language of education policy (Ball, et al., 2017). Education becomes framed by global neoliberal ideologies of accountability, performativity and efficiency. However, this process is not seamless. Global policy agendas, and influence of global actors, such as the OECD, are interpreted and adapted to local actors and priorities (Rikowski, 2002; Phillips and Ochs, 2004).

This process of adapting global pressures plays out in interesting and significant ways when it comes to the adoption and use of EdTech. The adoption and use of EdTech is often framed within this commodified context, with technology solutions marketed as a way for nation states and schools to demonstrate their effectiveness in responding to globalisation. Globalised education policy often promotes the incorporation of EdTech, linking it imperatively to an individual's and nation's economic success. (Selwyn et al., 2020). For example, the OECD's survey found that of the 37 participating jurisdictions, all were "addressing digital education in their high-level strategic documents guiding education reforms" (Boeskens and Meyer, 2025). In Hong Kong, digital education reform is linked directly to enhancing competitiveness as "the process of global digitalisation continues to deepen, digital education has become a key factor in enhancing competitiveness and cultivating talents" (LegCo, 2025, 1). In this way, the integration of EdTech into education isn't merely about improving learning outcomes; it is fundamentally intertwined with the global economic neoliberal ideologies that shape capitalist economies. Nations and institutions feel compelled to adopt these technologies to remain competitive in the global marketplace, reinforcing a system where education is increasingly viewed as a means to an economic end (Mundial, 2023; Suarez-Guerrero et al, 2023; Egea, 2014). EdTech policies, and EdTech itself, much like the education market, are not neutral (Ball, 1993). EdTech's incorporation and promotion becomes a symbolic action that can reveal the deeply embedded neoliberal framing of education.

Research Context

As seen within Hong Kong, the growing promotion of EdTech also leads to the growing involvement of private interests in education such as NGOs, Edu and EdTech businesses. This leads to further marketisation of education and the subjectivation of teachers as they are shaped

by and shape themselves in response to dominant policy discourses (Foucault, 1971, 2001). Hong Kong's education system is one that incorporates neoliberal ideologies and marketisation (Watts, 2005). As a system it combines government, private, and private international schools, seeing the diversity of school type and curricula as ways to support future success in a globalised economy (Bray and Yamato, 2003). The market in Hong Kong is not neutral and reinforces entrepreneurialism and competition as students compete academically to be placed in high performing schools, or economically to gain entrance into fee-paying schools (Watts, 2005). Hong Kong's Education Bureau (EDB) also prioritises the need for schools and students to become digitally literate and competent within policies and strategic actions (LegCo, 2022). In creating investment funds to promote incorporation of EdTech, as one example, Edu business is invited into the local market, mirroring global policy trends (QEF, 2025).

Within Hong Kong's education system, private international schools introduce additional choice to the market. Private international schools largely rely on student fees to cover operational costs and to maintain high student enrolment, schools must be responsive the priorities of their stakeholders (Kim and Mobrand, 2019). This can be seen through offering international curriculum supporting students to continue education at overseas universities, but also through operationalising EdTech within policy and practice. Teacher interviews in Chapter 10, further support this with participants noting how EdTech adoption is justified in preparing students to be globally competitive. As such, private international schools position themselves as responsive to global education discourses, supporting the interests of parents and students in achieving future success (Chou, 2012). This alignment is evident in the TSN strategy documents where global competitiveness and digital readiness are framed as core institutional priorities (see Chapters 7-8). By aligning themselves with global education discourses and prioritizing EdTech, private international schools embrace the neoliberal values that underpin those discourses (see Chapter 9 and the Education Team's interviews). In positioning themselves as key players in preparing students for success in a globalised world, they reinforce the notion that education is primarily a means to economic advancement (Ramirez and Chan-Tiberghein, 2003). By emphasising the role of EdTech, the schools reflect the globalised dominant discourse that technology is a key driver of future competitiveness. This can then lead to the further embedding of neoliberal values within a school's normative discursive practice as seen through the analysis of policy enactment and teacher subjectivities in Chapters 9 and 10.

Policy, seen through an understanding of Foucault's power/knowledge relationship, shapes dominant discourses and knowledge over normative practices (Foucault, 2002, 2020). These discourses then exert power over an individual's sense of self, as teachers negotiate their responses to policy. Through their enactment of policy and discourse surrounding EdTech, the inevitable tensions and contradictions that emerge during policy enactment highlight where discourses of power and resistance might be present (Foucault, 2008a). As teachers negotiate their identities within the policy ecosystem, dominant discourses surrounding EdTech can be seen as a part of the technologies of governmentality and discipline that lead to teacher subjectification (Foucault, 1988, 2010). For example, tensions arise as teachers face increased pressure, from policy direction and stakeholder expectation, to integrate EdTech within their practice. This could lead to self-regulation as teachers increasingly identify as globalised educators reinforcing the neoliberal marketised framing of education present within EdTech policies (Foucault, 1988; 2012). In this way, EdTech can be seen as one technology of discipline that shapes normative discourses.

To understand how this policy ecosystem manifests at a local level, this study focuses on one private international school chain within Hong Kong, named here as The School Network (TSN) and one secondary school within that chain named as Hill College. TSN is an international school chain operating in Hong Kong, with Hill College as one of their secondary schools[2]. In focusing on one private international school chain within Hong Kong, this study explores how the policy ecosystem shapes the discourses surrounding EdTech. The policy ecosystem here refers to both formal policy directives alongside those texts sent to the community that help to create the normative discursive context present within the school and wider school network (Kemmis and Heikkinen, 2012; Ball, 2016a; 2017a). As part of the research, this study focuses on: policy texts from TSN and Hill College, the discourses of members of the Education Team, who work at the head office of TSN and support schools within the network and then teachers at Hill College (see Chapter 10.1 for a fuller description of the Education Team's role within TSN). Informed by Foucauldian concepts of power, governmentality and discipline there is a focus on how these policy texts shape normative discourses, leading to the subjectification of teachers. Foucault states that the construction of an individual subject is ongoing and socially mediated (Foucault, 1988; Walshaw, 2007). Subjectification as a process is ongoing and a part of society in which individuals are shaped

[2] For further details of TSN and Hill College, please see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

by society's normative discursive practices (Mauri, 2018; Foucault, 2011). By repeated exposure to dominant discourses, individuals begin to internalise what it means to be 'effective' in the context of EdTech. However, it is important to note that power for Foucault can also be emancipatory and through their discourse, teachers can resist these norms, thus demonstrating power and agency (Foucault, 2011; 2002; 2020).

Research Problem and Questions

In searching to achieve economic growth and prosperity, governments promote digital and online technologies as one way success can be achieved (Egea, 2014). This positioning immediately places education within the neoliberalist agenda, and the discourse surrounding technology implementation is one of power, in which institutions seek to promote and maintain advantage (Marginson, 2004; Giroux, 2004). The socio-political understanding of how EdTech use, and promotion is framed by neoliberal economic discourses led to a focus on how schools promote EdTech within their policy texts and how these reflect globalised education narratives. Whilst research exists within Higher Education regarding neoliberalism (see Olssen, 2015; Olssen and Peters, 2005; Marginson, 2004, 2010, 2024), alongside research into neoliberalism within Hong Kong (Chang and McLaren, 2018; Lee, Kwan, Li, 2020; Woo, 2013) less often explored is existing neoliberalism within the secondary international school sector.

By examining the interplay between neoliberalism and technological implementation, as highlighted by Egea (2014), the impact of global narratives on local school policies can be analysed (Marginson, 2002). Of interest was how these policies create normative discursive practices and how these then shape the enactment of teacher subjectivity. In looking at the ways, policy and teachers frame the use and adoption of EdTech, this research was interested in exploring how global policy narratives then shape experiences and discourses at a local and individual level.

This doctoral research, therefore, explores the following research questions:

1. How do policy discourses position The School Network within the Hong Kong education market
2. How do the policy discourses shape the role and affordances of EdTech:
    - within network and school level policy texts

    - within Education Team discourses[3]?
3. How does teachers' discourse enact the dominant policy discourses surrounding the use of technology?

As education becomes increasingly enmeshed with digital technologies, as seen with the recent growth of Artificial Intelligence applied to schools, global education narratives often see technology as an unproblematic panacea (Miller and Olson, 1994). While private international schools are undeniably shaped by global education discourses and provide an example of neoliberal marketisation, the EdTech imperative creates markets within markets. By this, once schools adopt technology, they open up to commercial markets, such as hardware and software retail spaces, that already operate within the already-marketised space of education. However, schools and teachers are not simply passive recipients of these neoliberal ideologies (Foucault, 2020; Vähäsantanen et al., 2008). In focusing on policy and teacher discourses, this research seeks to problematise the neoliberal marketisation of EdTech and how globalised education policies are actively negotiated to fit with local contexts and priorities. By exploring how the role and subjectivities of teachers are being continually reshaped by the EdTech imperative, opportunities for resistance and reshaping the policy agenda could be revealed (Garratt and Forester, 2012).

The doctoral research makes use of case study methodology and Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal how policy texts frame individual teacher subjectivities. As explored in Chapter Six, in drawing together Foucauldian theoretical framing and Fairclough's methodological approach, the research explores concepts of discourse as both structures of language and normative framings of knowledge and power, The research first analyses a range of policy texts from The School Network and Hill College that: (1) promote the network and school within the market, and (2) the promotion and affordances of EdTech. This then leads to the Critical Discourse Analysis of interviews with members of the TSN Education Team and Hill College teachers. Questionnaire data is also used to provide context for the operationalisation of EdTech and associated policies within Hill College. The research was carried out during the academic year 2023/2024 and involves 18 policy texts, and interviews with three Education Team members from TSN and 27 Hill College teachers. Discourse analysis is guided by

[3] See Chapter Ten for details of the Education Team and their role within The School Network

Foucault's concepts of power, governmentality and subjectivation and informed by Fairclough's three-dimensional approach (Fairclough, 2001).

Thesis Structure

To support readers of this research, this thesis is divided into five sections.

Part 1 aims to ground readers in the contexts and conceptual frameworks used in the research. **Chapter 1** considers the historical, political and economic ideology of neoliberalism. It explores how this ideology begins to shape interactions in society through economic terms. The chapter introduces concepts such as marketisation, globalisation, and how the incorporation of digital technologies has extended both globalisation and neoliberal economic framing into education. In first linking neoliberalism to globalisation and then exploring how globalisation and marketisation becomes an organising principle within education, the chapter focuses on how neoliberal framing has created a global market for education. The chapter also briefly introduces EdTech as a new site where neoliberal ideologies such as competition are further embedded into education, before relating this global discussion to the local context of Hong Kong. In foregrounding the marketisation of Hong Kong's education system, this chapter begins to explore the contexts and theoretical framings which are then developed in later chapters.

Chapter 2 discusses what constitutes policy and explores how policy functions as a discursive practice inherently linked to power. In reframing policy as a dynamic social practice, simultaneously object, process and discourse; the chapter examines how policy development as an iterative process was shaped by a range of actors, including EdTech actors, each of whom could (re)configure policy agendas. Recognizing that education policies operate at both global and local levels reinforces the understanding that education systems are no longer isolated but are part of the wider globalisation of neoliberal markets. It outlines how policies circulate transnationally before being rearticulated locally. The chapter distinguishes between official "big P" policies and the more informal "small p" policies that frame the generation of official knowledge. It also introduces the concept of policy ecosystems, where competing discourses and cultures collide, leading to a discussion of how policies are enacted and negotiated within the discourses and daily actions of individuals. In introducing EdTech and Edu business as policy actors, neoliberal imperatives around technological competence and market responsiveness saturate policy discourses. Teachers become constructed within this policy

ecosystem as both creative and constrained within the policy agendas and by the dominant logic of neoliberal marketisation and performativity.

Chapter 3 introduces a discussion of Foucauldian concepts in relation to neoliberalism and discourse. This chapter offers readers an understanding of Foucault's concepts of power, the relationship between power/knowledge, governmentality and subjectivation. Power is seen as diffuse and productive, operating through discourses that structure possible actions. By understanding how dominant discourses can reveal relations of power, there will be an exploration of how individuals negotiate their subjectivities within these dominant discourses. Governmentality and discipline help explain how market rationalities cultivate self-regulating subjects. Links will be drawn back to neoliberalism and marketisation and how these create and frame normative discursive practices within education and the possible implications this has for individual subjectivities.

In Part II the specific contexts for the research are introduced. **Chapter 4** draws the focus to Educational Technologies (EdTech) and the debates and tensions surrounding its promotion within schools. Through the incorporation of EdTech, globalised neoliberal policy ideologies are extended into the school site, framed as a means for achieving future economic success. Nations and schools that are seen to embrace EdTech are better positioned to thrive within the global economic and education markets. Through the operationalisation, vertical integration, and platformisation of EdTech and digitally mediated ways of working, Edu businesses and EdTech companies transform classrooms into data ecosystems. The datafication of education is introduced, exploring that it is not just hardware that drives value creation, legitimised by dominant discourses of innovation and personalisation that position EdTech as a solution for schools. Alongside the brief outline of post-digital, there is an exploration of how the cultural factors surrounding schools extend neoliberal values and marketisation into education via EdTech tools and platforms in a way that is harder to discern. The chapter then grounds this debate within the Hong Kong context, demonstrating how policy and public investment combine to amplify the importance of EdTech thus extending the marketisation of education through the incorporation of private interests.

Chapter 5 then explains Hong Kong's context and the context of the education system and the role of private, international education within it. It discusses how through government positioning and school offering, marketisation and neoliberal discourses are built into Hong

Kong's education system. In briefly discussing Hong Kong's educational history, we can see how education within Hong Kong has and is linked to international performance and economic success. The chapter also profiles the highly stratified nature of educational choice within Hong Kong, mapping the mixed economy of the system that sees English Medium education and digital infrastructure as appealing to globally mobile families. In highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated platform reliance, the chapter explores how the specific research contexts of The School Network (TSN) and Hill College are positioned within the local and global education markets.

The literature explored in Part I and Part II is revisited in Part V forming the four key strands used to frame the key findings:

1. Private international schools as an example of neoliberal governmentality
2. External actors influencing practice
3. Policy ecosystems and policy negotiation as power and resistance
4. Constrained teacher subjectivities

In *Part III* the research methodology is explained. **Chapter 6** provides the methodological choices for the study, the participants and the process of data collection. Firstly, the chapter anchors the study in a post-structural qualitative paradigm that uses case-study methodology. The chapter outlines the importance of sampling to the study and how the study uses document analysis, interview and questionnaire methods. In discussing the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the chapter explores how both Foucauldian and Faircloughian approaches to discourse are combined to develop the methodological and theoretical approaches used within the study before introducing the framework used to analyse the texts, drawing together Foucault's concepts with Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the researcher's positionality and ethical considerations.

Part IV presents and discusses the key research findings. Each chapter focuses separately on the analysis of discourses present in policy, and interviews with TSN Education Team, and Hill College teachers. Introducing the participants' discourse and key findings supports the aim of tracing the ways in which teachers' discourses reflect the wider policy debates. In doing so, how they are shaped by these policies, and how their subjectivities and perceptions of

educational and digital technology are negotiated will be explored. **Chapters 7-8** focus on the analysis of the network and school policy texts within The School Network (TSN) and Hill College. This analysis helps to show the first level of policy enactment and subjectification as the network positions itself within the global education debate. **Chapter 9** moves to explore the discourses of three members of the Education Team at TSN. The Education Team, with responsibility for curriculum, professional development, and data innovation within the network work alongside schools to support their strategic development. The chapter will analyse how policy discourses are (re)negotiated at the executive level and how this (re)negotiation highlights the tension between the promotion of strategic discourse and individual resistance. **Chapter 10** then brings the focus to the discourses of teachers at Hill College. In analysing how their discourse is shaped by the policy ecosystem of TSN and Hill College, it will explore how teachers negotiate their subjectivities in response to the neoliberal framing of educational and digital technology.

Part V presents the discussion of key findings alongside revisiting the research questions posed here and the key strands explored in Part I and II. **Chapter 11** synthesises the study's findings through three key stages: it begins by addressing the research questions, then draws together the research, literature and theoretical frameworks through the four key strands identified in Part II, before concluding the study with recommendations for future research. Through this synthesis, the research demonstrates that TSN and Hill College exemplify neoliberal governmentality, wherein policy discourses commodify education and position EdTech as central to institutional competitiveness. At school level, these narratives are enacted through everyday practices that normalise digital conformity and heighten performativity expectations. However, teachers' interviews reveal a more complex reality: whilst many teachers internalise these discourses, others express ethical concerns, ambivalence, or resistance to such positioning. The chapter concludes by recommending more ethical, critically informed approaches to EdTech governance and outlines future research directions, including comparative and longitudinal studies that might build upon this work.

Part I -Theoretical Frameworks

Chapter One – Neoliberalism, Education, and the Marketisation of Education

Chapter One will explore definitions of neoliberalism as both an ideological stance, economic theory, and a discourse that influences policy at both governmental and school level. Firstly, neoliberalism will be presented as an economic principle that drives governmental positioning and discourse. Within this economic principle, the chapter will chart out how education has become a commodity, operating in a competitive global marketplace. In this marketplace, governments use the commodification of education to gain economic advantage ahead of the rest of the countries within that marketplace. The chapter will then draw attention to "actually occurring" neoliberalism within education (Peck, 2013, 141). Specifically, the framing of education around economic principles, and how this leads to the marketisation of education and the teacher will be discussed. In exploring the digitalisation of education, there will be a discussion of how this further extends globalised educational narratives and practices into local markets. Finally, the chapter will briefly introduce the Hong Kong educational environment in the context of the neoliberal ideas discussed in the preceding sections of the chapter. By identifying links between neoliberalism and the thinking of French Philosopher Michel Foucault here, the theoretical framing for adopting Critical Discourse Analysis and the analysis and discussion of findings in Part IV and V is foregrounded.

1.1 Neoliberalism and the framing of education against economic principles

Marxist Geographer David Harvey's seminal text '*A Brief History of Neoliberalism'* remains foundational for any attempt to unpack the multiple layers of neoliberal ideology; offering historically, economically, socially, and geographically situated analyses of its development (2005). Neoliberalism, as a concept, emerged in the early twentieth century and gained traction in the post–Second World War period as economic thinking shifted away from Keynesian models toward an intensified commitment to free-market capitalism (Harvey, 2005). Often characterised as a revival of earlier laissez-faire doctrines, neoliberalism has come to represent "the central guiding principle of economic thought and management" (Harvey, 2005, 2). At its core, neoliberal theory centres on the liberation of the individual within institutional

arrangements designed to uphold free markets, free trade, and private property rights. From the 1980s onward, neoliberalism was increasingly constructed as an "antidote to threats to the capitalist social order," particularly in relation to the Cold War rise of socialist and communist forms of governance (Harvey, 2005, 19).

Scholars such as Venugopal (2015) and Birch (2017) caution that neoliberalism is often deployed too loosely as an all-purpose explanatory label, and thus requires precise historical and conceptual grounding, which this chapter aims to provide. In establishing workable definitions of neoliberalism, and to avoid relying on the concept as an explanatory shortcut rather than a phenomenon requiring explanation, it is helpful to begin with its economic dimensions (Phelan, 2007, 328). Neoliberalism contends that the promotion of human well-being and economic prosperity requires the cultivation of entrepreneurial individuals operating within frameworks that secure private property, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state, within this view, is intentionally constrained; it should intervene only to maintain the legal and institutional conditions necessary for markets to operate and to ensure the "quality and integrity of money" (Harvey, 2005, 2). Crucially for this study, where markets do not already exist, the state is expected to create them and subsequently withdraw, on the assumption that market mechanisms alone possess the capacity to guarantee efficiency and success (Harvey, 2005; Barnawi, 2018; Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Thorsen, 2009).

One helpful way to view it, is as a dominant ideology of capitalisation and the process of marketisation through which individuals become part of the self-governance process (Rowe, 2019; Thorsen, 2010). Neoliberalism is also an economic term, a concept, and a discourse used to describe the application of market economic practices to the sphere of governance (Springer, 2016; Brenner and Holmqvist, 2023). At its core, the economic theory of neoliberalism is concerned with the liberation of the individual within institutional frameworks that are geared towards the free market, free trade, and laissez-faire approaches to economics (Thorsen, 2010). From its early inception, neoliberalism has been situated as a panacea for the world's ills (Benner and Holmqvist, 2023). Neoliberal figures, such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, have claimed that only the adoption of market ideals can be seen as the most moral and efficient way to organise and structure society (Birch, 2015, 572). Hayek suggests that in preserving a "free society" it is the spontaneous order of the market, rather than governmental control that is necessary for efficiency and individual liberty (2008, 58). Friedman argues that a devolved state and freedom of the market is essential for guaranteeing free speech and free

men (Friedman, 1987). Freidman draws links to Hong Kong, citing the adoption of "market-oriented policies of the East Asia tigers - Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea" as responsible for increased prosperity; competitive capitalism and freedom" (2002, ix). By creating the conditions of competitive individualism, the state can enforce its power and therefore impose a culture of self-regulation on actors seeking to maintain their value (Peck et al, in Cahill et al, 6, 2018).

Neoliberal ideologies create a normative discourse in which the market is positioned as the most efficient mechanism for organising social and economic life. This is accompanied by the belief that it is not the role of government to regulate or intervene in market processes but should instead create and maintain the conditions of the market to operate effectively (Birch, 2015; Brenner and Holmqvist, 2023). To ensure human wellbeing and economic success within neoliberal discourse, individuals need to be given the freedom to become entrepreneurial (Harvey, 2005; Thorsen, 2010). As such, the state "should engineer and monitor the accountability of individuals and institutions, to promote efficiency in market terms" (Olssen, 2016b, 311). This results in the introduction of techniques to help manage and sustain the market in spheres other than business, such as growing privatisation, public/private partnerships, increasing competition, increasing choice, introduction of accountability and monitoring to promote efficiency and the reduction of state intervention (Olssen, 2016b; Hill, 2003). In reducing governmental controls on the market, the competitive actions of the market are encouraged and positively positioned (Shields, 2013). By introducing a competition state, future economic success and productivity promotes the 'survival of the fittest', forcing organisations to become more efficient, productive, and thus, gaining a secure market share. Those that are unable to thrive within this culture will ultimately fail and close, leaving, at least in theory, only the strongest and most successful organisations participating in the market. Neoliberalism then relies on homo-economicus[4], situating the individual at the centre of societal success (Harvey, 2005; Read, 2009; Peters, 2016). Yet, even as neoliberalism should open the market to successful actors, many recognise that its adoption maintains preexisting power and economic success in the hands of those who are already part of the elite (Peck, 2023).

[4] Homo-economicus or economic man comes out of the work of John Mills' 19th century ideas of the individual being driven by self-interest to pursue economic success and freedom within the market.

In summary, neoliberalism is deeply rooted in economic rationality, and a substantial body of literature conceptualises it as a reconfiguration of the state around market logics and the corresponding retreat of state responsibility into competitive, market-driven forms of governance (Cahill et al., 2018; Venugopal, 2015; Peck, 2010). This is one way it is different from the broader forms and ideologies of capitalism. This perspective frames neoliberalism as a project aimed at establishing the "competition state," wherein organisations, including schools, are compelled to increase efficiency, productivity, and performance to survive. Those unable to adapt are expected, within this logic, to fail and exit the system; only the most competitive institutions remain. Embedded within this is the widely discussed notion of homo economicus, a model of the individual oriented toward self-interest, competition, and personal advancement, often at the expense of collective or social goals.

1.11 Neoliberalism and education

Neoliberalism is also often seen as one singular global economic system; however, it operates through a multiplicity of actors, networks, and governing practices (Ong, 2007; Plehwe, 2005; Venugopal, 2015). One such practice is the adoption of neoliberal principles within education. This adoption is framed through economic discourses of being governed by the market, being responsive to the needs of governments, education policy actors/individuals and creating choice through competition (Ball, 2012a). Education under neoliberal economics is situated politically, caught between the needs of individuals, society and those of the economy. Due to this, schools are adopting many of the principles advocated by neoliberalism; with competition, marketisation, and performativity often being incorporated into policy technologies, understood here in the Foucauldian sense as the techniques and mechanisms through which the conduct of individuals is shaped, regulated, and made productive within particular power/knowledge arrangements (Ball, 2010; Foucault, 2020; Savage, 2016; 2017). These policy technologies function as instruments that operationalise policy objectives while simultaneously producing particular subjectivities within schools. Whilst performativity will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Three, a brief definition here is useful. Michel Foucault suggests that identity is constructed through repeated actions and speech within the social context (Foucault, 2002). Thus, identity is not pre-existing but a product of the power relations that operate through repeated discourses which shape subjects. Neoliberal policy technologies, frame the individual within a culture of regulation that judges them against measures of productivity or displays of quality that are in alignment with an organisation's aims (Ball,

2010). Judgements of worth and value are ascribed by the market as opposed to individuals deciding. Returning to the education context, Hennessey and McNamara (2013) link performativity and neoliberalism to the marketisation of examination results, arguing that the growth in performativity is a direct result of seeking to maintain market position within a globalised education. Whilst neoliberalism advocates for competition and choice, it in fact removes this from the individual as they seek to make choices within a market that is geared towards productivity and economic success markers. There is therefore no neutrality within the education market - it is situated politically, caught between the needs of society and those of the economy (Ball, 1994; Savage, 2017).

Even at the local school level, parental choice ultimately impacts which schools receive funds and maintain successful positioning within the market (Ball, 2002). Through targeting the consumer (parents and students), what happens in practice is schooling becomes even more stratified, with those stakeholders who can 'play' the market shaping it for their own needs (Apple, 2001). As individuals, parents and students look for schools that satisfy "multiple objectives" beyond academics making the individual become a consumer (Lakes and Carter, 2011, 107; Safstrom and Mansson, 2021; Whitty, 2002). As such, education reflects the broader ideological frameworks of society. Recent global neoliberal ideologies, therefore, are incorporated into the education market with competition, choice and efficiency discourses becoming the normative framing of schools and individuals.

Within a neoliberal ideology, the global knowledge economy prioritises knowledge and skills as the drivers of economic growth rather than physical labour. 'Global knowledge economy' refers to the effects of globalisation whereby universities, schools and academics are situated within a global marketplace (Canaan and Shumar, 2008). According to Marginson, "the worldwide exchange of knowledge [has] a particularly crucial role to play in the formation of a world society" (2010, 6963) and universities provide a means and location for this transfer of knowledge to occur. Knowledge becomes a key commodity that makes universities marketplaces, leading to a growing focus on research that will attract funding, partnerships, and global positioning. The same process of reiterating global narratives is taking place within secondary schools, especially those in the international sector, with performativity measures being used as ways to maintain market position (Soto and Pérez-Milans, 2021; Raaper, 2016, Hennessey and McNamara, 2013). Just as academics in higher education are framed by the

knowledge economy, teachers are similarly framed, being connected to the production of knowledge and skills in students that facilitate future economic success (Hill, 2003).

As competition and economic drivers come to dominate the global policy discourses (both politically and economically), the architecture of this is applied to public spheres (Marginson, 2010). Education, therefore, becomes a commodity and individuals within it subject to marketisation. The privatisation of education and outsourcing of educational systems to private interests further entrenches the principles of neoliberal markets within local contexts (Ball and Youdell, 2008). Education is no longer focused on the needs of the individual but rather those of the economy (Harvey, 2005; Barnawi, 2017; Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Thorsen, 2010).

1.2 Globalisation of neoliberal ideologies and marketisation of education

Globalisation can be seen as an ideology, discourse or phenomenon and process (Garratt and Forrester, 2016). Globalisation gained prominence in the latter part of the twentieth century under conditions shaped by significant economic, political, and technological transformation (Bordo, 2007). Globalisation as a distinct concept coincided with the rise of neoliberal reforms and the deregulation of markets, alongside the growth of global capitalism (Held and McGrew, 2003). Coupled with advancements in transportation, communication and, importantly for this study, digital technologies, the latter half of the twentieth century to today has accelerated Harvey's notion of the space-time compression (Harvey, 2005; Held and McGrew, 2003). As Held and McGrew (2003) state the "instantaneous electronic communication erodes the constraints of distance and time on social organization and interactions" and as such, geographical distances appear to shrink whilst the circulation of capital, information, and people increases (3). These shifts have intensified the flow of goods, ideas, and labour thus creating new forms of economic interdependence and competition beyond state borders that directly influence education systems (Ball, Goodson and Maguire, 2007). Within this context, schooling has become embedded in global policy agendas, international benchmarking frameworks, such as PISA, and expanding markets for educational products and services, all of which situate education within global capitalism and governance (Ball, 2012, 2018; Wiseman and Baker, 2005).

The growth of global education actors and policy networks, through the involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and

Development (IBRD and henceforth World Bank), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development **(**OECD), or Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) - a study by the OECD - means that education is no longer national, but instead part of the global economic markets, with governments judging their successes against global policy narratives (Ball, 2010; Savage, 2017)[5]. By transforming the expectations of education to be responsive to a more interconnected and globalised world, the context in which schools operate has fundamentally changed (Jones, 1998; Marginson, 2004; Power, 2014). Through globalisation, it seems as though the world is increasingly homogenised as a single social entity (Garratt and Forrester, 2016). Due to this, there has been an emergence of globalised narratives of education, leading to policies positioning education as essential for success within the global knowledge economy. As transnational organisations begin to operate within national education policies, there is further enmeshment of globalised economics and marketisation, facilitating the creation of local education markets that are encroached on by global actors (Rikowski, 2002).

Whilst the general tenor of neoliberalism *is* replicated globally through this globalisation, the picture of replication is not identical but gradual and varied to suit the needs of individual markets and governmental interventions (Savage, 2017). This plasticity that neoliberalism provides for governments enables its longevity. Marginson's definition of markets is useful for our understanding of how globalisation and neoliberalism interact for governments:

> "By market is meant a socially structured process of economic exchange, a process not merely economic but one with social, political and cultural aspects and implications." (2004, 177)

Marginson's reference to the social, political and cultural aspects helps keep in mind the multi-faceted and interconnected nature of the market, as it shapes our daily lives. As explored in the previous section, neoliberal ideologies are reliant on government action/inaction. Markets exist because of political choices by the government in terms of funding, deregulation, and introduction of accountability measures (Olssen, 2016b). They are framed by the normative practices and values of what a society deems important and are therefore inherently imbued with power relations. Marginson (2004) however notes that the market, like Ball (1993) suggests, is not free from consequence. Whilst incorporating markets into publicly owned

[5] Globalisation is also seen within the policy development cycle as will be references in Chapter Two, where the involvement of supranational organisations, whose power influences individual nation's policy. (Bell, 2020)

goods and services is often seen as commonsensical, marketisation is very much a process that encroaches on all areas of society and is not always uncontested (Zhang and O'Halloran, 2013; Wedlin, 2008). Rather than being a completely 'free' market, the market in education can be classed as 'quasi' due to the heavy involvement and monitoring by governments (Savage, 2012). Consequently, by incorporating migratory practices such as policy borrowing and international comparison rankings, governments can morph neoliberal practices and discourses to those circumstances present within local markets (Savage, 2017; Ong, 2006; Venugopal, 2015). Education is in the process of and has already been reconstituted "with business-driven imperatives" with the focus on key skills that transfer across the workplace (Lakes and Carter, 2011, 110; Safstrom and Mansson, 2021). As part of this transformation, educational institutes introduce the "tactics of market logic" replicating the wider economic patterns of government and state interventions (Canaan, and Shumar, 2008, 12).

Whilst being promoted positively as a way for consumer choice, the marketisation of education also results in increased stratification (Bartlett et al, 2002). Where state (or public owned goods/services) and private entities occupy the same space, business related practices with public service provision are sometimes outsourced to private enterprise in the name of "value for money" and "quality of output" (Whitty, 2002). Marketisation thus encompasses a transfer of services and products from the public to private sectors (Safstrom and Mansson, 2021; Whitty, 2002). Quasi-markets in education increase inequality as instead of creating conditions for all stakeholders to thrive, there may be a tendency for greater disparity and favouring of those who already have access to the market. As Ball suggests, the "market only exists for some" and therefore marketisation must be seen as a value laden term (Ball, 1994).

Marketisation can then be seen as an apparatus of a wider neoliberal world view as it is "systemic and global" (Bertelsen, 2008, 150) by its nature. This can all be enacted in the context of the school. In this setting, individuals are positioned as both consumers and goods, responsible for the economic health of the nation with supranational organisations such as the OECD and PISA, linking academic and economic success of nation states (Ball, 2010; OECD, 2015). Similarly, education policy becomes framed around "building human capital and contributing to economic productivity" (Savage, 2017, 150). By replacing the "democratic state" with market principles and actions, the market becomes the main producer of "cultural logic and value" (Lynch, 2006, 3). This shifts the focus away from the self as a learning

individual, to being an economic enterprise whilst extending the mechanisms of economy into political and social human activity, establishes these mechanisms within education (Ball, 2013a; Lynch, 2006). In the process of deregulating and opening organisations to the market, governments often opt for a process of privatisation, in which governments can withdraw their support (financial or otherwise) to "make institutions more accountable to their clients" (Bray, 1998, 109). In adopting more business centric approaches to daily life; ownership, access, and success are increasingly evaluated against economic cost/benefit ratios. Marketisation therefore reshapes the identities of all involved; schools are seen as a commodity, providing the product (academic success, certifications, entry to tertiary education and/or workplaces) to their consumers. This reshaping along neoliberal ideologies can be seen in the subjectivation of teachers as education becomes a costs/benefits ratio beholden to the needs of its stakeholders and income stream (Lynch, 2006).

Research into the exportation of higher education to satellite sites in countries abroad, provides clear links to the market of international, fee-paying schools and the discussion of neoliberalism within education (Apple, 2012; Gerrard, 2015). In the same way that universities have established satellite campuses in East-Asia, the secondary school market is also home to a range of international schools (Ramirez and Chan-Tiberghein, 2003). Education's globalisation and commodification can also be seen through the upsurge in schools offering international curricula or franchise schools with links to private schools in foreign countries (Hollis, 2023; Rikowski, 2002). As Hollis (2023) states "two pioneers of transnational school expansion, Dulwich and Harrow have had the weight of their histories and brand names behind them" whilst other school franchises in Asia and the Middle East reflect the demand for a British or English styled education (54). Within Hong Kong for example, franchised school brands such as Harrow, Malvern College and Wycombe Abbey from the UK operate satellite campuses, alongside global brands such as Nord Anglia (EDB, 2004). Where there is greater economic integration of global markets, the ideology of globalisation increases the involvement of the state in creating education markets where the globally mobile individual is a valuable member of the economy. Exporting education models and curriculum positions education within a "wider social milieu" of "commercial marketplaces, nation-states and global economics" (Selwyn, 2011, 6; Garratt and Forrester, 2012). The interconnections of education, education systems and a global political economy means that education can no longer be seen as about the individual but rather, subsumed within a global agenda of the nation-state (Selwyn,

2011). When parents choose an international education, they are not only choosing a globalised identity but also sustaining a market which positions international and global education ahead of that offered locally (Hayden, 2011). Savage (2012) also makes the link between the nation-state and individual communities, citing examples from Australia, where secondary schools adopt market led practices to reinforce through their marketing, a more homogenous ideal of "images associated with academic excellence…emulating the marketing practices of exclusive private schools" (280). Education therefore becomes a site of commodification and consumer choice (Woo, 2013), as well as a field of multiple actors and influences (Apple, 2001). Education systems are inherently political then, as they reflect contemporary societal and economic goals for the government (Ball, 2012a).

Economic approaches to education pervade the policy documents that frame current discourse, seeming to approach education 'problems' in a more linear policy science manner. As Adams' (2016, 292) states, education policy can be seen as reactive, descriptive and focused on improvement through reliance on cost benefit and efficiency. Linking education within this model recognises that education is not solely about creating opportunities for growth of the individual but also sees education as a means for ensuring a country's future economic success. By limiting state intervention and enabling privatization as seen through the prevalence of international private schools, globalisation and neoliberalism provide deregulation that grants the individual 'power' to act in a way of self-interest (Woo, 2013; Lee and Lee, 2013).

1.3 Digitalisation of Education as a tool of marketisation

Whilst the globalisation of education could explore student demographics, curricular, or the growth in franchise schools, for the purposes of this research, the main site of globalisation can be seen through the adoption and positioning of educational technology. Power (2014, 252) suggested that "the combination of advances in ICT and commercial activity in education goods and services will continue to grow exponentially, accelerating the internationalisation of national education systems". Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational technology was positioned as a site of both globalisation and marketisation as nation states began to see digital competence as a means for global economic success (Gabriel et al., 2022). In fact, the incorporation of educational technologies into education can be seen as a microcosm of economic integration in a global market, reliant on free trade, and until recently, minimal regulation.

Even though the digitalisation of education and the impacts educational technologies or policies have on the individual will be explored more in Chapter Two, a brief explanation of the role of technologies within educational marketisation is warranted here. Global capitalism has and is spreading into education policies and practices as official policy promotes the use of technology in education (Selwyn, 2013; Thorsen and Lie, 2006; Apple, 2012; 2001; Gabriel et al., 2022). That "the good and virtuous person is one who is able to access the relevant markets", helps to situate the debate surrounding technology and education soundly within neoliberalism (Thorsen and Lie, 2006,15). There is a subsequent paradigm shift (Petko, 2012), brought about by the "connectivity that juxtaposes diverse geographies, ideologies, and languages" which requires all educational stakeholders to reimagine "how we live, work, learn and play", as we contribute meaningfully to the economy (Hull, et al., 2014, 55). Antoninis et al. (2020) go further by framing the importance of a digital education to ensure individuals are ready for all the technological advances of the future.

Referring to Apple Company® and Intel Company®, Egea (2014, 269) reminds us that "private interests have deep involvement in all sectors of public policy-making" and as such, are beginning to shape the discourses surrounding education. By promoting the involvement of digital technologies within the classroom, educators are actively implicated in the involvement of private interests such as Apple and Intel. As schools embrace the role digital practices and technologies play within the curriculum, there needs to be an understanding of how these decisions reflect and can replicate the wider patterns of neoliberal marketisation practices within education (Ball, 2002; Apple, 2012; 2001; Gabriel et al., 2020).

Whether through the ease of internet communications and web technologies, it seems a given truth that we live in a globalised world and that this is facilitated by technology. As business embraces a global, transnational market, these ideologies of interconnectedness and internationalism are seen as commonsense. Alongside this, the connectiveness brought about by the advances in technology and the creation of educational businesses only accelerates the globalisation of education (Power, 2014). Within this context, it is the digitalisation of education and a tendency for consumers to seek status symbols that will guarantee social capital in the future (Marginson, 2004). In the school setting, this marketisation is evident in the "direct penetration" of commerce and commercially sponsored products into the classroom, in

attempts to appeal to potential consumers (Whitty, 2002, 3). Sipilä views education's role as one that should focus on skills required of the future citizen (2013). The shift into the digital world is the central economic debate surrounding the purpose of education to create digitally literate workforces. The OECD's view that those "unable to navigate through a complex digital landscape will no longer be able to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life around them", suggests that the sole purpose of technology within education is to create economically viable individuals (2015, 3). There is some acknowledgement that research is limited regarding the benefits to learning that using technology brings (Livingstone, 2012), and yet there is an acceptance that technology will become the lingua franca of the classroom (Sipilä, 2013). The inclusion of EdTech as an imperative for future success shapes a new narrative of education aligned within a neoliberalist stance and future (Egea, 2014; Gabriel et al., 2020).

1.4 Marketisation and Hong Kong's Education Context

Whilst Chapter Four will provide a detailed exploration of Hong Kong's education context, it is useful here to provide a brief overview to draw links between the discussions of neoliberalism, marketisation and EdTech alongside charting out the Hong Kong context which is the site of this study.

Harvey explores the concept of neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics, noting that China in the 1970s and 1980s began to open to world markets in highly supervised ways, "limited mainly to Guangdong province close to Hong Kong" (2005, 121). There was a focus on joint ventures between foreign companies and local partners in China, coupled with the growing expansion of a global market in the 1980s (Harvey, 2005). By joining the World Trade Organisation and with the reunification of China and Hong Kong in 1997, both capitalistic and neoliberal practices were further introduced into the state-controlled economy (Harvey, 2005). Hong Kong China has developed globalisation within its markets through the incorporation of global businesses, such as Microsoft in the 1990s, and manufacturing companies building research facilities within the country. In response to changes in the worldwide socio-economy, Hong Kong's direction post reunification focuses education on the needs of a globalised knowledge economy (Chang and McLaren, 2018). Coupled with home-grown businesses in China such as Huawei, and the growth in the private education system, China and the greater China region are both importers and exporters to global markets (Harvey, 2005). Hong Kong's

positioning as both part of China and part of capitalist global economies, provides an interesting site to explore how neoliberal policies and discourses impact educational policies and practices (Chang and McLaren, 2018).

Hong Kong's position as economic intermediary between the West and China allows neoliberal discourses to permeate its educational policy direction (Harvey, 2005; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Chang and McLaren, 2018; Soto & Pérez-Milans, 2021). Being between western capitalism and eastern communism provides an interesting site for exploring how the global impacts of marketisation and the marketisation of technology are enacted within the local level of teacher practices. Hong Kong has positioned itself as a global market for business and finance, whilst also appearing as a high-ranking nation in OECD and PISA reports (Chou, 2012; Yamato and Bray, 2002; OECD, 2019). Subsequently, Hong Kong's education system is situated within a global context by having an education that is responsive and on par with other economically advanced nations (Chou, 2012; Yamato and Bray, 2002; Mok, 1999).

In Hong Kong, private educational institutes have been a central part of the education system since colonial rule in the 1840s. Whilst initially set up to cater for the colonial elites, the population boom and high migration into Hong Kong from China in the post-war era, led to a shortage of government school places and the supported growth of private schooling (Cheung, Randall and Tam, 2015). This, coupled with the government providing support to private schools, especially in the post-war period, can be seen as state mandated rather than "stealth" marketisation (Kim and Mobrand, 2019). As explored in Chapter Five, the local public schooling is further stratified as schools are tiered according to the academic ability of their cohort (Chee, 2012). Therefore, parents strive to have students attend Band 1[6] schools, whilst international and private schools can then provide a choice for those who do not wish to attend a lower banded school whose HKDSE[7] profile might mean that students are unlikely to attend university (Chung, 2016). Alongside this, the Education Bureau (EDB) documentation refers to the "vibrant international school sector" that is seen as "traditionally...meeting the demands from NCS[8] students and foreign nationals, most of whom would eventually return to their home countries for education" (EDB, 2020). This stratified offering, focusing on competition and

[6] A secondary school that admits students who have excelled in their elementary schooling.
[7] The HKDSE is taken by students at the end of six years of secondary school. It is internationally recognised, and the examination comprise four core subjects (Chinese, English, Maths and Citizenship and Social Development) plus two to three electives. https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/introduction/
[8] Non-Chinese Speakers

choice, suggests that marketisation of education is well embedded within Hong Kong. The effect of this is to introduce inequalities as power and economic success are remaining in the hands of those who are already part of the elite and can afford those private institutions that best provide access to the global market (Cahill et al., 2018; Birch, 2015).

With migration into Hong Kong, there has been both a historic and current need for a highly educated and international workforce for the business and finance sector (Chang and McLaren, 2018). The ability to immerse students within an international school experience, where the mode of instruction is English, is highly valued - and seen by many who can pay the fees - as a crucial stepping stone for tertiary study in American, Australian and UK Universities (Mauri, 2024). These institutions market themselves to attract and fulfil the needs of their stakeholders, to maintain good market positioning (Ball, 2016a, 2016b; Apple, 2012; 2001). The Education Bureau and Legislative Council link education to international success, immediately situating Hong Kong within the global education market. This globalisation of knowledge-based economies exerts pressure on higher education institutions to produce elites and to adopt business-like practices to cope with competition in the global marketplace (Mok, 2003). Education and the private international schools could therefore be seen as extensions of the globalisation and marketisation practices that exist in the business world and that were documented in the literature earlier. That the EDB valued and supports (sometimes financially as is the case with The School Network (TSN)) these schools, also lends to the view that Hong Kong educational policy embeds competition and marketisation within its system to enhance the global positioning and attractiveness it holds.

More recently, the agenda of marketisation and globalisation is seen in the proliferation of digital and computer technology being offered, reflecting the EDB's belief that "maintain[ing] the competitiveness of Hong Kong in the 21st century" is reliant on successful implementation of educational technology (EDB, 2014). From the EDB's website's focus on Technology Education (TE), the priorities are clear: working in tandem to support the marketisation of education. For example,

> *TE[9] aims at preparing students to be valuable human capital amidst the rapidly emerging technologies. It enables students to*

[9] TE stands for Technology Education.

- *develop technological capability, understanding and awareness*
- *critically appraise the impacts of technology on the individual, family, society and environment*
- *become competent and confident members of the world of technology and the society at large.*[10]

By framing education and students as "valuable" and "capital" the language is invested with economic terms, a hallmark of neoliberal ideologies (Sardoč, 2021). Alongside this, the EDB has instituted a steering committee on "Strategic Development of Digital Education", which makes one of its terms of reference, to:

> *"Make reference to the good experiences from local, Mainland and overseas to facilitate academic and cross-sector collaboration and promote the development of digital education in Hong Kong."*[11]

The EDB draw attention to the globalisation of digital education by making "reference to the good experiences" from other localities, situating the decision-making process in tandem with global practices. It is clear then that the Hong Kong education system is one that not only operates within a market, but actively curates market conditions as a means of maintaining a global academic positioning, and therefore economic advantage.

It is within this culture of marketisation and globalisation that international schools in Hong Kong operate. To be successful, they must be mindful of the priorities of the EDB and ensure that their offering is at least equal to that of the local system. Parental choice and pressure still see those from a higher economic status, position their children within those schools that will be seen as giving them a global advantage. For those that can afford it, international schools provide not only access to resources but also an education that has concurrency with private schools globally.

Conclusion

The chapter explores how the ideological foundations of neoliberalism and its entanglement with globalisation is influencing government and school policies through the promotion of

[10] https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/technology-edu/index.html accessed August, 2025
[11] https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/primary-secondary/applicable-to-primary-secondary/it-in-edu/scsdde.html

market-driven principles. From the historical foundation of post-World War Two free-market economics to the time-space compression that has been accelerated by digital technologies, education is within a globalised knowledge and networked economy. Neoliberal ideology enables governments to adapt market driven policies to local school contexts, policy borrowings as well as international rankings. More recently, educational technology has become a key component of both globalisation and marketisation. By placing schools as competitive marketplaces, the ideology of neoliberalism is promoted as a moral and efficient way to ensure success. Countries, schools and individuals act as entrepreneurial agents practising self-regulation and promoting performativity measures under the guise of economic success, incorporating aspects of global consumer capitalism into education markets. The rise of international school groups, the spread of global benchmarking systems such as PISA, and the involvement of supranational institutions such as the OECD and World Bank illustrate how education has become embedded in global governance networks. Competence within the digital sphere is linked with economic success of both the individual and the nation-state – reflecting the neoliberal values of education for economic productivity. Due to these factors, there is a growing penetration of business and technology actors into education whose involvement, alongside that of supranational organisations such as the OECD, then subjectifies education and teachers within this discourse.

Hong Kong illustrates an example of neoliberal marketisation through its stratified and diversified educational system. Marketisation is explicit in the promotion of competition via academic ability and parental choice, with the local education market being shaped by global economic considerations. In promoting digital and globalised views of education, the EDB further embeds globalised neoliberalism and the marketisation of educational technologies locally. Within The School Network and Hill College, it is expected that a similar reframing of education and its purposes is taking place. There is an understanding that TSN and Hill College are shaped by a range of interactions with local, national and global levels (Rinne, 2021). Research findings in Part V aim to highlight the link between this theoretical understanding and how neoliberal marketisation shapes the individual. The discussion above directly informs Strand One of this study, positioning private international schools as enactments of neoliberal governmentality. Strand Two, which foregrounds the role of external actors, including EdTech firms and global policy bodies, in shaping educational priorities is also introduced. To support with this understanding, the following chapter will explore how policy is influenced by a range of actors and enacted and (re)articulated at different levels of teachers' discourse.

Chapter Two – Policy: actors, enactment and globalised policy

Following the discussion of neoliberalism and how it transforms education through globalisation, marketisation and digital technologies; this chapter draws attention to how policies are (re)constructed within schools and individual discourse. By first focusing on definitions of policy, the chapter will outline the impact of globalisation and neoliberal ideologies on policymaking, before exploring ideas of policy as object, process and discourse. Following this, there will be a brief exploration of the policy formulation cycle to introduce how policy texts are an example of negotiated practice and how policy actors can shape the direction and priorities of policy both at national, local, and individual level. Having done so, attention will then be brought to how these understandings of policy shape educational policy formation. Policy is therefore positioned as a neoliberal technology which is (re)enacted and (re)negotiated by policy actors, texts and discourses throughout this chapter. This formulation highlights the operation of the concepts of marketisation, subjectivation and performativity within education.

Finally, the term "policy ecosystem" is explored in more detail, drawing reference to the way individuals operate and interact within more than one policy at a time. In the school setting, "policy ecosystem" refers to how individual teachers exist within a myriad of policy conversations, directions and competing priorities. Through this, the ways in which policy is influenced by neoliberal and EdTech priorities and the subsequent enactment in schools and by teachers becomes clear.

2.1 The complexity of policy definitions

In understanding how neoliberal and globalised discourses materialise within schools, first it is necessary to clarify what is meant by "policy". Whilst Chapter One focused on the macro-economic and political conditions shaping education, this section focuses on a conceptualisation of policy as social, text, and political practice. Oftentimes, the understanding of policy is taken at face value, with little critical interrogation of what policy means (Nudzor, 2009; Ball, 1993). Policy has come to shape many of our daily actions and interactions and yet the meaning of policy is used to describe "very different 'things'" (Ball, 1993, 10). Codd (1988)

and Dye's (2013) definition of policy narrows it down to a restrictive and traditional focus on the importance of choice at a governmental level. Codd (1988) defines policy as the "course of action (or inaction) relating to the selection of goals, the definitions of values or the allocation of resources" (235). Dye (2013) similarly summarises policy as: what a government decides to do or ultimately not do. Both definitions suggest an implicit understanding that creating policy is to exercise political power and legitimisation (Codd, 1988). However, policy is more complex both in articulation and enactment as it is a process and social practice which is mediated not just on the large scale but also by individuals (Adams 2016). Policy is a text capable of multiple iterations and interpretations - a discourse that shapes understanding of the problem the policy is created to resolve (Codd, 1988; Ball, 1993). Complexity lies at the heart of policy formulation and implementation as policy creators can never be sure of how it is interpreted and implemented at local levels (Ball, 1993). Policy is also never static, as it is something which is dynamic and constantly in action (Taylor, 1997). Nor do policies exist in isolation, they are continually working against/in tandem with existing policy texts in circulation (Ball, 1993). Finally, policy is not neutral or equitable as policy actors and political elites have access to the policy formulation cycle and are able to "shape mass opinion" (Dye, 2013, 23). Policy then, becomes a means through which powerful parties and policy actors can enact their preferences, shaping society through the process.

As a sociologically grounded entity, policy is a framing device of socio-political powers, often at the local level, detailing accepted notions of: (1) what society is (2) what actions society needs to take (3) and by consequence who or what is being ignored by these larger goals (Dye, 2013). Taking this further, "policy is often described as a thing that individuals can come to know, identify with and implement" (Adams, 2016, 292). Adams' definition moves policy from a macro level to the level of individual (re)enactment. Thus, policy is socially orientated with the potential to frame us as either productive, supportive or contrastingly reduce our value within society and move our 'usefulness' to the peripheries. This is particularly true with the adoption of neoliberal framing into policy texts at global and local levels (Larner, 2000). Understanding policy as a choice by those in positions of power, is a useful starting point which acknowledges the inherent potential for a power imbalance between policy actors and non-policy actors as the former have the choices to act/not act/maintain the status quo (Codd, 1988).

2.11 Small 'p' policies

Policy as a broad conceptual category has been outlined above, here it is essential to distinguish between formal policy texts and the informal, everyday policy practices within schools. Policy is not only those texts, agendas and discourses created at national governmental level. Small 'p' or "little-p policies" as Ball (2017) defines them are those policies that are "formed and enacted within localities and institutions" (10). Small 'p' policy making takes place within schools, translating legislated 'official' policies of the state into local contexts, but also creating micro-political policy texts that are contextually specific (Skerritt, 2025). Within this doctoral research, the focus on small 'p' policy texts has been chosen to help illustrate the complexity of how globalised neoliberal ideologies become articulated at the local level by a range of policy agents including parents, pupils and teachers (Ball, 2017; Ogza, 2020).

As explored in Chapter One, the normative neoliberal discourses that are shaping society and education mobilise power by shaping economic productivity and success as the desirable and legitimate outcomes for individuals. In the establishment of more neoliberal states, governance and regulation through both big and small 'p' policy becomes framed in economic terms (Ball, 2012a; Peck et al., 2013; Elnagar, 2021). Positioning education policy with economic models, recognises that education is part of a globalised economy, subject to the whims of market models and consumer demand (Marginson, 2004; Marginson and Rhoades 2002; Stromquist, 2002). Performativity, productivity and accountability become central foci against which the self is compared (Ball, 2021). The self-regulation, encouraged by localised small- 'p' policy texts, can lead to ontological insecurity, as the individual teacher positions their identity against performativity measures (Ball, 2021; Foucault, 1978). For an individual, small 'p'-policy becomes a regulatory framework against which their value is measured and by which they measure their own value within an organisation (Foucault, 1978; 2020). By subjecting identity to the whims of policy, it is shaped and acted upon by discourses, a relationship imbued with power. These ideas will be explored further in Chapter Three as Foucault's concepts of subjectification and governmentality are explored in reference to neoliberalism (Chapter One) and policy (Chapter Two).

. In networked schools, official policy might be constructed at the level of head office, but it is enacted and negotiated within the locality of the schools (Young, et al., 2023). Within the school, there are multiple identities existing in tandem with the normative school culture; like a microcosm of wider society, schools are complex organisations with many stages of action

and implementation surrounding policy. School policies can be articulated both in the open, through public statements/newsletters etc. or behind the scenes through informal discussions where policy adherence is negotiated and potentially diverged from (Young, et al., 2023; Trowler, 2003). As the meanings of the original policy documents are negotiated from policy creation through to enactment, the realised outcomes of the policy process become an articulation of power (Trowler, 2003; Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough, 1985). Consequently, education and education policy is seen as a means by which governments can work to cure the plethora of social ills. As global connectedness expands, so have the global pressures forming policy decisions and as such a market approach to education becomes apparent within the policy documents shaping education discourse.

2.12 Policy as object versus process

Building on the distinction of big 'p' and small 'p' policies, it is also useful to consider how policy operates as a product *and* an ongoing process. In viewing policy as an object, there is a sense of a concrete product or outcome often in the form of written documents, laws, or regulations. Policy as object is often linked to the view that it is a formal decision made by governments and enforced in a top-down manner. Policy as object emphasises the result, rather than the process. Conversely, seeing policy as a process recognises the more dynamic nature of policy and the role of actors in the ongoing actions and decisions involved in how policies are formulated, implemented and (re)enacted. This view emphasises the stages of policy making and sees policy as a process cycle. Ultimately, policy is both an object and a process. With the former, it is a physical text which is a "formalised act" and is sanctioned and measured by an authoritative body, either governmentally or within the local school management system (Young, et al., 2023, 8). In terms of the latter, policy as a process recognises that at each stage of policy articulation, there is space for re-articulation as the policy is contextualised by those stakeholders enacting it. Within this research, policy as a process helps in understanding that policy texts developed at The School Network Centre are then rearticulated within the practices of their networked schools. This enactment of policy is then rearticulated again within individual teacher discourses and practices at Hill College.

2.13 Policy as discourse

If policy is both an object and a process, it is also a discourse, shaped through language, meaning making and power. Understanding policy as discourse will enable connections to the

conceptual discussion in Chapter Three to be developed more explicitly. Policy as discourse draws attention to policy texts as being constructions of normative knowledge(s). In emphasising the role of language, there is an understanding of how the ways of writing and speaking about policy frames the narratives of educational policy debates. This conception of policy enables attention to be given to how the diction and structural choices within the language are imbued with power relations and societal values (Foucault, 2002; 1980). Alongside policy as a process, seeing policy as discourse helps in understanding how some policy issues are framed and prioritised over others. As aforementioned, policy is whatever the government decides to do or not do, yet this would constitute only official discourse as mediated by those in positions of power to enforce them (Dye, 2013). As such, all policy becomes a discourse between official or counter narratives and voices that at least add shades of nuance to the original document. Taking this further, interaction with official policy creates negotiated discourses, in which the policy and policy actors are placed. In the process of conceptualisation, creation and enactment of policy, there is a positioning of what is seen as positive, or to be encouraged and that which is seen as undesirable by those governmental powers enacting policy through official channels.

It is clear then, that through the process of enactment, the official policy takes on a more amorphous nature, being seen to include any discourse (speech, press statements etc.) that is framed around the central policy problem (Trowler, 2003). This is then translated through policy channels from government to local classroom, through both official mandated policy, wider public discussion (newspapers, etc.) and within individual school policy (Young et al, 2023). In each iteration, an interpretation takes place, moving the original policy away from the intended impacts to the actual implementation at school level. In each stage of discourse, the policy becomes reshaped (Gee 2014). This provides a segue way into wider discussions of Critical Discourse Analysis as a reshaping of relationships of power, actors, and subjects (see also Adams, 2016; Ball, 2016a, 2016b; 2002).

2.14 Policy as Power

This section expands the discussion of how policy becomes a site where dominant interests shape what is seen as legitimate knowledge and practice. As discourse is inseparable from power, policy can also be understood as a key mechanism through which power is exercised and legitimised. Power is a key feature of social practices and policy texts are one way in which

hegemonic and normative practices are articulated (Howarth, 2010; Foucault, 2020). Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) argue that to make and implement policy is inherently an exercise in power. The presence of power relations within policy is widely accepted, especially as policy formation moves beyond the traditional remit of governmental control and into the realm of policy actors. As Howarth (2010, 309-310) succinctly puts it: power draws "lines of inclusion and exclusion", making some policy practices more powerful and accepted than others. The identification of a policy problem also sees governmental and policy actors exercising power over what is included, excluded and the tools or techniques available to ensure their goals are met (Howlett and Mukherjee, 2017, 8). In recasting a social concern within the language of policy, there is an attempt to depoliticise it to suit the needs of a dominant group, whilst that which is targeted by the policy language has its legitimacy diminished (Sutton, 1999).

In the neoliberal organisation of society and education; the absence of a single, centralised authority renders the strongest voice or most influential actor as the one that can shape policy. In the discourse surrounding education policy, "...the public sector is more exposed to political direction and scrutiny…" than perhaps other sectors (Henry et al, 2013, 2). With politics and political agendas being so entrenched in education policy, "the resulting outcomes are political compromises between competing but unequal interest" and ultimately these compromises are a result of the exercising of power (Henry et al, 2013, 3; Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2004).

2.2 Policy actors

If policy is an exercise of power, then identifying those who create, interpret, and enact it is essential. This section examines the diverse and increasingly globalised actors shaping education. Fimyar's (2014) identification of policy as being formed by the multiple interests of many actors extends the understanding of policy as an exercise in power. Within the policy cycle, policy actors are those involved in the formulation of policy problems, shaping policy documents and involved in its dissemination. Educational policy is "porous - open to external influences" and open to a myriad of agendas, politics and value judgments over the purpose and responsibilities of education in the modern world (Wiseman and Baker, 2005, 4). Garrat and Forrester (2012) note that policy actors in the education sphere are "policy-makers, commentators, educational 'experts', educational practitioners and professionals...along with the everyday person in the street" (2012, 12). This suggests that those who shape the policy may not be 'experts' but rather interested parties with their own agendas for engaging within

public policy. The sheer number of actors who could be involved within educational public policy is indicative not only of the importance of education in alleviating perceived social 'problems' but also the central role education has in societal success (Fimyar, 2014; Dye, 2013). What the previous list of actors fails to acknowledge is the extent to which actors can affect the policy making process. Whilst they may have access to the process, they may not have the relevant form of social, economic or cultural capital to impact the decision process (Bourdieu 1984; Howlett et al, 2009).

2.21 Global policy actors

Recognising that globalisation has expanded the policy landscape to include supranational and corporate actors, this section explores how global policy actors are critical for understanding how neoliberal discourses circulate intro local school contexts. With the growth of interest groups and supranational organisations, "private interests have deep involvement in all sectors of public policy-making" (Egea 2014, 269) increasing the number of policy actors. In the globalised landscape of education, policy actors extend beyond national borders, encompassing OECD, the World Bank, IMF and multinational corporations to name a few. To support success within a knowledge economy, those that have the power to affect the policy discussion are those whose access to knowledge is seen as valuable (Howlett et al, 2009, 69). This reshaping of the policy landscape suggests that whilst governments "lend legitimacy to policies", they are not solely responsible for policies being enacted (Dye, 2013, 17). With educational policy becoming a policy that sees economic success of the individual and the state as its prime driver, the number of policy actors from the sectors of business for example also expands (Ball, 2017c; Egea, 2014).

There is a recognition here that as nations have restructured around global economic agendas, the educational policies that occur reflect the interests of often disparate actors. This is because international actors have a regime which sanctions their interventions in the formation of education policy for nation states (Howlett et al., 2006). The growing role of organisations such as the OECD, is one such example. As a result, international systems of measurement are having even greater impacts on domestic policy and agenda setting (Howlett et al., 2006). In a globally networked economy that relies on digital technology for success, private technology companies have become an essential part of the education landscape as well (Jobér, 2024).

Education policy and actors are no longer limited by the borders of a country but are instead framed around neoliberal ideological stances of measurable educational success.

In the OECD report "Trends Shaping Education", it is stated that education must look to the global mega-trends and in doing so, better equip students to meet the demands and transformations of a technology driven world (Burns, et al., 2019, 93). This analysis is important because of how it points to the changing times: "The connected economy has changed the way we work and indeed live. Education must be prepared to change with it." (Burns, et al., 2019, 93). In aiming the text at "policy makers, researchers…teachers" education policy cannot be viewed just within the local contexts but within the global context that has come to shape approaches to and evaluation of education (OECD, 2019, 3; Adams, 2016; Marginson, 2004; Ball, 2017c). With this understanding, the concept of policy networks is important in explaining how actors engage in policy and resource exchange but also how policy is borrowed from other actors/countries to address concerns within a nation state. Again, globalisation is at play here, with supranational measures such as PISA and OECD being used to frame debates of educational improvement and the policies created to ensure this goal (Garratt and Forrester, 2012). Wiseman and Baker shape it more emotively, "Less and less of a nation's education system can be sacredly protected from the harsh light of cross-national comparisons" (2005, 2).

Taking place concurrently are more informal networks of policy referencing through the learning and cross-fertilization of ideas and policy directions, shaped by the global education village (Forestier and Crossley, 2015). Phillips and Ochs (2004) argue that policy borrowing is planned and intentional. Unlike policy borrowing, policy referencing is by its nature more fractured due to the diffuse agencies and systems involved. Policy-borrowing and referencing can happen both locally and internationally, with schools just as likely to borrow approaches from each other as nation states are to borrow from global competitors (Phillips and Ochs, 2004; Whitty, 2012; Forestier and Crossley, 2015). Much like the policy sequence, policy-borrowing moves from identification of successful policies to introduction in the home contexts and then assimilation (Phillips and Ochs, 2004). Whilst policy borrowing can be seen as a way for the nation state to prepare its citizens for the future, there will be local differences and points of resistance, as there is for all policy (Garratt and Forester, 2012, 155). With global NGOs and ranking systems such as PISA, national education systems look to those high performing education systems for 'what works' taking policies/strategies and relocating and reworking

them into local contexts (Garratt and Forester, 2012, Phillips and Ochs, 2004; Forestier and Crossley, 2015). In countries, such as Hong Kong, with colonial legacies, this might mean looking back to Britain, or to the nearest high-performing countries, such as Singapore (Chow, 2014; Forestier and Crossley, 2015, Yan and Brown, 2021). Policy borrowing and referencing then are a hallmark of increasingly globalised education, supported by supranational agencies that operate "above and across" boundaries (Garratt and Forester, 2012, 136).

2.22 EdTech and Edu business as policy actors

One powerful subset of global policy actors is the EdTech and Edu business sector. Educational Technology (EdTech) companies have become key players in the "political economy" of education and often smaller EdTech companies are bought up by larger companies such as Google, Apple, and Microsoft (Kerssen and van Dijck, 2022; Perrotta and Pangrazio, 2023). The enmeshment of EdTech within global companies further extends the economic discourse surrounding education. How EdTech is framed by these companies impacts which aspects of EdTech are promoted and which companies gain access to shape the education market (Komljenovic et al., 2023). As the growth of these private companies within the field of education grows, corporations influence the policy concerns, policy actions taken, and the concept of the teacher (Bulkley and Gottlieb, 2017; Jobér, 2024).

2.23 Teachers as policy actors

While global actors exert influence from above, policy is enacted within schools by teachers, who then need to be considered as policy actors to link the macro policy narratives with teacher practices. Jobér (2024) suggests that entrepreneurs working in public private partnerships in Sweden could be defined as 'policyneurs' as they engage with policy formation. Actors are also present within the school, with their own agendas for policy implementation (Ball et al., 2011c). Teachers are often positioned at the bottom of the policy hierarchy, as powerless agents (Ellison et al., 2018). Yet, they can fulfil several roles within the school as narrators, entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, critics, receivers etc. (Ball et al., 2011c). In each of these roles, teacher actors contribute to the construction and enactment of policy. Within the school, the actor position is not fixed or exclusive, with an understanding that people can move between the roles (see Table 1 below). As Ball (2015b) states, policy "gets done" by many different people, in different ways (467). Through the practices and discourses within schools, teachers as policy actors "perform and negotiate" often with and between competing policy discourses

(Ellison et al., 2018, 158; Braun et al., 2010). As Ball et al. (2011c) suggest in the roles set out in Table 1, teacher actors are not solely passive recipients with little agency but instead can shape how and to what extent policy becomes an enacted practice.

Table 1. Policy actors and 'policy work' (adapted from Ball et al., 2011c)

Policy Actor Role	Policy work
Narrators	Interpretation, selection and enforcement of meanings, mainly done by principals/headteachers and the school leadership teams
Entrepreneurs	Advocacy, creativity and integration
Transactors	Accounting, reporting, monitoring
Enthusiasts	Investment, creativity, satisfaction and career
Translators	Production of texts, artifacts and events
Critics	Monitoring of management, maintaining counter-discourses
Receivers	Mainly junior teachers and teaching assistants: coping, defending and dependency

2.3 Policy Formulation and Policy Enactment Cycles

In understanding how different actors shape policy, it is imperative to outline the policy formulation and enactment cycles and the negotiations that are embedded within them. The policy formation process is often seen as "an exercise in informed problem-solving" (Colebatch, 2006, 309). The policy cycle has been described at length within the literature, and these discussions can be seen to reduce the policy cycle to a systematic and linear process from conception to realisation (Howlett et al, 2006; Lasswell, 1971; Brewer, 1974). This view, however, is reductive and misses the iterative process policy undergoes during the framing of the policy debate. In the process of policy consultation, there is both a linear and iterative process underway with the many actors striving for positive changes in society in relation to perceived societal problems (Dye, 2013). Apple (2019) rightly acknowledges that there is no single linear model of policy formation and implementation. With each iteration of the policy process, there are mediations and compromises that occur. At each of these stages, the negotiations between policy design and enactment are value laden (Taylor, 1997). The policy formation process becomes a discourse of power, where the actors in policy development cycles seek to promote their agendas and as such affect changes that are beneficial for them (Ball, 2016a, 2016b; 2002; Colebatch, 2006). Whilst we may not be able to gain access to the

policy offices where these discussions take place, the end policy can be viewed as a product of these negotiations within the policy cycle. Even with the selection of an initial policy 'problem', government and other policy actors are ascribing value judgments to what is seen as positive or in need of improvement (Dye, 2013). Policy is never a static document but is indeed a process and discursive formation.

In exploring the policy formulation process, both Lasswell's (Figure 1) and Brewer's models (Figure 2) are useful. Whilst Lasswell's seven stages of the public policy process focuses on the decision making within the government, Brewer's (1974) framework expands beyond government to explore how problems are recognised and reconceptualised.

Figure 1. Adapted from Lasswell's Seven Stages of a policy cycle (1971).

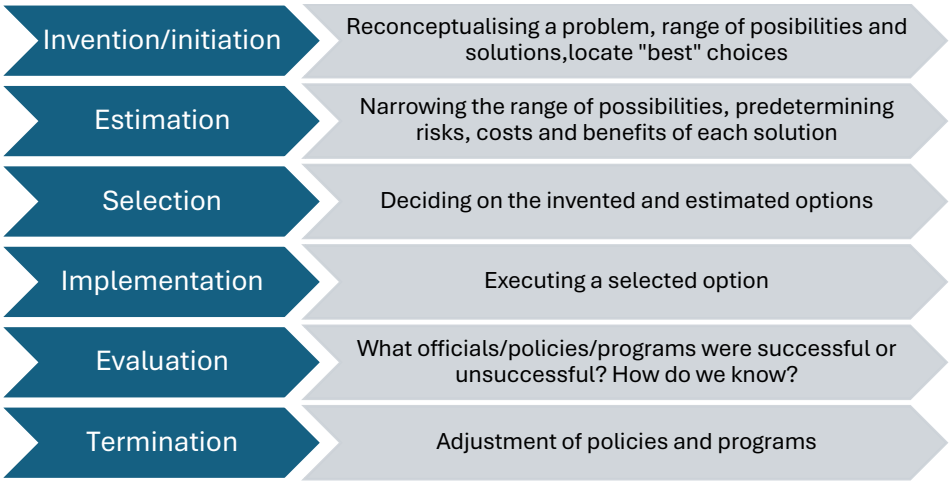


Figure 2. Adapted from Brewer's Policy Sequence (1974)

Whilst these frameworks help in identifying potential policy stages, as aforementioned, presentations of policymaking as linear or a cycle can mask the negotiations and renegotiations that occur at each stage of the process alongside the myriad education actors that now influence all stages of the policy cycle (Ball, 2017a; Olssen et al., 2004). The policy cycle is therefore an articulation and rearticulation of perceived policy problems into the formation of a policy agenda which in turn leads to the generation of the policy text. At times, this policy articulation is a political decision, reflecting the dominant ideologies and concerns at the time, rather than being focused on "what is best for teaching and learning" (Young et al., 2023). The final iteration of policy becomes a reflection of the pragmatic and political choices made by the actors (Olssen et al., 2004).

2.4 Policy ecosystems: implementation and enactment

While policy cycles describe the formal stages of policy development, the concept of policy ecosystems captures the interconnected environments in which policies are enacted. Policies do not exist in isolation, they are continually working against/in tandem with existing policy texts in circulation (Ball, 1993). The underlife of policy reflects the interpretation and mediation policy goes through. It is this exploration of how teachers adjust and relate to policy that is one of the central concerns of this thesis. To develop this, there is an understanding that policy exists within complex dynamic systems that are shaped by international, national and local conditions (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). As Ball (2018) suggests, "policies are [a] ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with…. ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice" (126). In exploring the policy discourses surrounding EdTech within TSN and Hill College, this research will employ the metaphor of "policy

ecosystems", informed by Kemmis and Heikkinen's understanding of the complexity of educational systems. Employing an ecology metaphor is useful as the "interactions of environments, groups, and events capture better the fluidity of policy processes" (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, 154). Within this doctoral research, 'policy ecosystem' helps to acknowledge the multiple actors, strategies, and meanings that shape the discursive practices of teachers. It also helps in reflecting the complexity of the different policy texts that exist within a school, as captured by Ball's "little-p policy" explored earlier (2017).

Ball posits that within the "language of the policy community, an 'ecosystem' is being constructed within which new forms of policy and of governing are being enacted" (2016, 564). This draws attention to how policy is not a fixed text or discourse. Subsequently, within policy ecosystems, a change in one policy can impact multiple sites and shape the enactment of other policy texts. Policy ecosystems allow for an understanding of the shifting meanings and ideational context that the (re)enactment and (re)articulation of policy texts and discourses can hold. In discussing policy ecosystems, it is also important to consider policy enactment. Ball et al. (2011c) set out in their four papers the complex process of policy enactment that centres context, actors, and teacher subjectivities. There is an understanding that policy enactment is shaped by: situated, external, professional, and material contexts (Ball et al. 2011c; Hay, 2025). In identifying these contexts, there is also an understanding that actors are drawn in from each context, again influencing the ways in which policy goes from ideation into practice, to address the policy problem (Ball et al., 2011c; Braun et al., 2011; Stevenson and Tooms, 2010). Through looking at how the discourses and daily actions can be seen as manifestations of policy direction, there is a recognition that policy enactment is also practice of power (Bell, 2020). Just as policy decisions and statements are ways of signalling value and priorities, policy enactment can be seen as the way in which strategic governance is "manifest in the daily activities and experiences of those who work and study in individual institutions" (Bell, 2020, 34).

Policy enactment therefore is a creative and constrained process as individual schools recontextualise and interpret competing policies to reflect localised needs. Within this recontextualization there are moments of tension where dominant global policy discourses are resisted within local contexts (Bell, 2020). Between policy articulation and implementation, the translation of policy aims into enactment practices can lead to policy aims not being met (Hay, 2025). When considering the aims of the globalised policy agenda, EdTech adoption and

development of EdTech skills; the external contexts are negotiated by schools' internal contexts (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2011a). There is an understanding that individual schools translate global policy narratives through their own cultural and situated needs. By contextualising the narratives into operationalised practices, adjustments are made to the original policy due to the situated, professional and material contexts and cultures already existing within the school (Braun, et al. 2011; Ball et al., 2011a; Hay, 2025). Within a situated context, actions and knowledge are inseparable from the context in which they occur. Similarly, the material contexts (physical, economic, staffing, digital infrastructure) also impact how policy becomes implemented, shaped by the professional cultures of the school and staff (Ball et al., 2011a, 2011b; Hay, 2025).

As explored earlier, policy actors are present at all stages of policy formation to implementation, and during enactment, policy actors can fulfil different ideological positions that also impact policy enactment (Ball et al., 2011c). Policy actors, from both within and external to the school, influence the extent to which policy is operationalised and the form that enactment practices take. Practices of policy enactment in turn are inculcated within the power dynamics of policy discourse. At the same time, the competing aims of different policies already existing within the policy ecosystem interact with and can inhibit policy enactment (Braun et al., 2011). Within this policy ecosystem, teacher-actor roles and their position within the policy ecosystem help to take the policy from abstraction into operationalised and contextualised practices (Braun et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Policy, and especially education policy, does not exist in isolation. As this chapter has shown, policy is a dynamic social practice rather than a static directive. Understanding policy as text, process, and discourse illustrates how it circulates across global, national, and local contexts and is continually rearticulated through value laden negotiations between diverse actors (Taylor et al., 1997). Such a perspective is essential for analysing education systems embedded within global neoliberal frameworks, where policy increasingly reflects market logics of accountability, performativity, and competition. For this reason, the chapter has emphasised small 'p' policy, recognising that educational policy is enacted by individuals within schools (Trowler, 2003).

By examining global actors such as the OECD and World Bank, alongside corporate EdTech and Edu business interests, the chapter has shown how educational priorities are shaped through transnational policy networks. Introducing teachers, leaders, and network executives as policy actors further highlights how policies are interpreted and enacted in situated ways within schools. This underscores the importance of policy enactment and policy ecosystems, where competing discourses, material conditions, and institutional cultures shape how policy is lived and reproduced. The growing emphasis on technological competence, and the framing of EdTech as essential for future economic success, exemplify global policy making in the knowledge economy (Olssen, 2004). As a neoliberal technology, education policy is now produced within the wider globalised education market rather than solely by educationalists.

For this thesis, such a conceptualisation foregrounds how TSN and Hill College are positioned within global education markets and clarifies how teachers encounter and reproduce EdTech discourses. This chapter therefore provides the foundation for tracing how global neoliberal imperatives enter the local school context and shape teacher subjectivity. The conceptualisation of policy as a dynamic social practice is the foundation of Strand Three, exploring how TSN and Hill College's policy ecosystems becomes sites of power, negotiation, and resistance. Ideas present here also inform the later analysis of how teachers navigate and reinterpret these discourses as will be seen in Part IV and Part V.

Building on this foundation, Chapter 3 introduces the Foucauldian tools needed to analyse how policy discourses operate through power, governmentality, and normalisation. Together, these frameworks illuminate how EdTech policy practices shape, constrain, and produce teachers' identities within TSN and Hill College.

Chapter Three – Foucauldian Concepts

The appeal and influence of Michel Foucault's work cannot be understated, especially in its application to critical education studies. Foucault's concepts have been influential in providing concepts and in framing knowledge as socially constructed (Walshaw, 2007). In exploring ideas that are seen as normal practice, Foucault helps to draw attention to how cultural and discursive practices are taken for granted, beginning to question how these understandings or 'truths' come about (Foucault, 2005). In education research, three themes from Foucault's work are clearly relevant for this study– discourse, subjectivity, power (Mauri, 2018). Foucault calls on us to study "those forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself [sic]" (Foucault, 1997, 180). Such a study reveals how through the different practices, including education, "a certain idea or model of humanity was developed, and now this idea of man [sic] has become normative, self-evident, and is supposed to be universal" (Foucault, 1988, 15). The result will be to draw attention to how the individual is framed by their context(s). Within this doctoral research, these concepts of subjectivity, power, and normative discursive practices are central to understanding how teachers' identities are constructed within the policy ecosystem at TSN and Hill College. This research being informed by Foucauldian concepts is an attempt to critique how:

> "…the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth" (Foucault, 1997, 32).

By exploring policy and teacher discourses, Foucault's discussions help to show that these discursive practices are framed by and reflective of society, forming individuals' knowledge and sense of self, and ultimately their value and potential (Mauri, 2018).

This chapter will provide an exploration of the following Foucauldian concepts: power, normalisation, discourse/discursive practice, governmentality, discipline, and finally, subjectification. In so doing, they will be applied to this study, drawing links to the previous discussions on neoliberalism and educational policy. As an institution of the state, education plays a central role in the organising and normalisation of power. Schools are both subject to and "centrally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses" which impact teachers' actions and self-identity creation (Ball, 2013b, 3). Educational ideals become organising discursive practices as education can never be morally or ethically neutral but instead is a modern conception of the power relations that seek to organise the individual (Hunter, 1996). In fact, the school site (physical, policy, self) provides a site where many of

Foucault's concepts are evident, operating as a sort of microcosm of the wider political and social structures. By their very nature, schools are politically charged sites where normalisation of the state and its governing of individuals are in evidence. As Foucault states, "Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them" (Foucault 1971:46, cited in Ball, 2013a). In providing an outline of some of Foucault's key concepts as pertinent to this study, this research is embracing the notion that Foucault's theories provide "little tool-boxes" for researchers (Hope, 2015, 537). Through drawing links between Foucault's concepts and how policies construct normative discursive practices that then shape teachers' discourse and identity, this chapter provides a theoretical grounding of the ideas and terminology used within Part II.

3.1 Power

Foucault's theories are often situated within the post-structural and post-modernist theoretical movements, with 'post' suggesting a challenge to fixed notions/universal truths and instead suggesting that meanings are not fixed (Walshaw, 2007, 5). Whilst his earlier work focusing on archaeology of knowledge looked to explore the rationalities that gave "rise to certain organisations of concepts, certain regroupings of objects…", his later work refined this and began to draw out more extensively how individual identities are shaped by systems of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1972, 64; Markula and Pringle, 2006). It is important to note that knowledge and power are not identical terms, but are intrinsically linked, as Foucault states himself, it is the relation between the two terms that is the object of his study (Foucault, 2020).

Foucault defines knowledge in two ways: Savoir and Connaissance providing a clear distinction between forms of knowledge (2002). Connaissance refers generally to the knowledge within a particular field and the truth-claims within a particular domain. Savoir, according to Foucault does not only represent the totality of knowledge in general, but also the "the conditions that are necessary…for this or that type of object to be given connaissance" in a particular context (Foucault, 2002, 16-17). In applying these definitions, it becomes clear then that knowledge is both the truth-claims of a subject/object relationship but also the rules and conditions that enable knowledge to be articulated and perceived as 'true'. In reinforcing certain knowledge within discursive practice, regimes of truth start to be formed and the production of these "truths" then guide the actions of individuals and societies becoming

disciplinary in nature as they shape the way the individual relates to society/society relates to other societies (Foucault, 2020). Knowledge then, reinforces already existing power structures which then in turn legitimises and marginalises through social control accepted knowledge, "…there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1997, 27).

For Foucault, knowledge cannot exist without power - knowledge can be opposed to power but knowledge "can never be innocent in its origins or its effects" (Forrester, 2017, 217). In Foucault's delineation, "the interlinking of power/knowledge means that there is no assuredness that communication is not itself ideological", and therefore discursive acts (such as speech or text) cannot be seen as simply 'true' as they must be considered within the context of their creation, (Olssen, 2010, 21). Knowledge therefore is not a neutral or objective truth as it always constructed within specific contexts both social, historical and political. Additionally, Foucault emphasises that neither knowledge nor power are fixed, but instead continuously (re)created over time and through discourse and discursive practices we can see how "language works to not only produce meaning" but also how socio-political power relations are realised through the choices made (Graham, 2011, 671).

Whilst many see power as reductive and repressive, Foucault is keen to show that power can also be productive, producing knowledge, normative ideas or behaviours and through this, is integral to identity formation (Olssen, 1999, 19). Foucault's conceptualisation of power as diffuse and not just limited to institutions and governments, nor their 'top-down' hierarchical processes, is a useful disjuncture from previous articulations. "The History of Sexuality" moves power away from sovereign, juridical power as "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with" (Foucault, 1988, 93). This brings focus instead on power relations that exist in often overlapping and occasionally contradictory priorities and strategies, employed by a particular society (Lemke, 2012). Power in modern nation states, "rather than operating as a directive from a sovereign…. operates ever more insidiously through disciplinary institutional forms which mask themselves as forms of truth and knowledge" (Olssen, 1999, 175-6). To understand power then, is to understand and explore the operations of power within specific contexts and techniques (Olssen, 1999).

If we accept that power is diffuse and functions "through a net-like organisation", then to explore power relations we need to explore specific aspects and practices of power in local contexts and through this, be able to identify aspects of domination and subjectification that may be in occurrence (Foucault, 1988, 98). In "The Government of the Self and Others", Foucault acknowledges that analysing power means "studying the techniques and procedures by which one sets about conducting the conduct of others", thereby situating power within a socio-relational sphere (Foucault, 2011, 4). Therefore, power and power relations cannot be analysed outside of their context and as societies evolve and priorities change, "a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required" (Foucault, 1988, 5). Whilst referring explicitly to sexuality here, Foucault's description can easily be applied to any change/relaxation in social mores or introduction of new priorities and values. As seen with the advent of new technology and EdTech, we now have "new ways of addressing social problems….and new bases for social authority" (Olssen, 1999, 56-57).

As will be explored next in this chapter, discourse becomes part of power's operation as a mechanism that helps to define what the 'norm' of a society or subject is. The normalisation process reflects which aspects of power have become constructed, true and acceptable. This in turn reflects the power relations that have co-constructed this normative behaviour. In Foucault's exploration, power is present across and within social contexts, organisations and everyday interactions. Within education, this is evident through the rigid top-down hierarchical structures from Principal to Teacher within a Hill College, or CEO to Principals to teachers within TSN. Additionally, teachers are nodes within power relations with the ability to both challenge and channel dominant norms (Narayanan, 2021; Ingersoll, 2009).

In this Doctoral Research, the priorities that exist within an individual school's policies - an example of discursive practice - represent one version of power that is seen as important (Foucault, 2002; Bacchi and Bonham, 2014). In looking at how individuals are shaped by the policy ecosystems of TSN and Hill College, the study explores which dominant or normative practices surrounding EdTech are given power. In reflecting the wider contextual prioritisation of EdTech enabled schooling, and the neoliberal framing of educational practices, teachers are framed ideologically to accept or resist these concepts. The policy documents produced by TSN and Hill College articulate "truths" about education and educational technologies. TSN, in articulating an official policy direction for the network, exerts power hierarchically, and so constructing what being a TSN teacher 'is', through the truth-claims made within policy texts

(Lorenzini, 2018; Mauri, 2018). These policy texts do not only describe organisational priorities, but they also shape the field of possible actions for school leaders and teachers, defining the norms against which practice is judged. By establishing these norms, TSN exercises productive power and teachers come to understand themselves through these rationales. In this way, the TSN policy ecosystem functions as a mechanism through which power operates in structuring subjectivities within the network. However, TSN, in creating these texts is itself constructed by the wider contexts of international and Hong Kong education.

3.2 Discourse and Discursive Practice

Discourse becomes central as it provides the means through which power is both conveyed and (re)articulated from organisational level to that of the individual. Discourse is a central but not fixed concept for Foucault, as with many of the concepts already explored, its definition changes depending on the focus and era of Foucault's writing (Lynch, 2014). In 'Power and Knowledge' Foucault states that "disciplines are the bearers of a discourse" (2020, 106). Taken together with disciplines, discourses produce and in turn sustain power systems. Discourses can be seen as systems of knowledge made up of interrelated parts: discursive and non-discursive practices. Discursive practice relates to elements of discourse such as language, texts and statements, whilst non-discursive practice elements are the institutions/rituals/behaviours that are enacted (Foucault, 2002). Both discursive and non-discursive practices produce and shape power and as such are pivotal in shaping both social realities and individual subjectivation. Discourses then "are the complex networks of statements […] that delimit what can be said, or understood, within a particular discourse; and that determine who can speak" and in this way, they become directly linked to power (Lynch, 2014, 121).

Within each discursive practice, rationalities and rules govern what or how thought, speech, and action take place. In his "Archaeology of Knowledge", Foucault suggests that both individuals and institutions are continually producing and reproducing meanings that shape the realities of experience through discourse (Foucault, 2002; Lynch, 2014). Education, Foucault suggests, is a political site with the means of legitimising and modifying discourses (Foucault 1971). What is deemed as appropriate within the context is invested with power and could be seen as providing a system of 'truth' against which discourses and interactions are measured (Ball, 2012b). Thus, educational discourses not only reflect but actively construct the social norms and normative discourse that shape institutional practices and then individual identities.

For example, decisions made within policy texts at the top hierarchical level impact the daily work of teachers. Whilst some policy texts and interactions are contractually weighted, others leave teachers with choices, and it is within this flexibility of how much or how far to align practice with policy, that teachers can exert their own power positively to resist dominant narratives. Consequently, through discourse, the shape and normalisation of what is considered 'true' can be seen (Foucault, 2020; Howarth, 2010).

3.3 Governmentality and Discipline

Governmentality and discipline are two technologies through which power operates. Governmentality refers to complex ways of governing, where the framing of how an individual acts and thinks is the key focus (Foucault, 2020; Foucault 2010; Davidson et al., 2008). Foucault states there is "contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self [which] I call governmentality", and through this contact, individuals are governable subjects (1988, 19). Governmentality results in the making of subjects who are "subjected, disciplined, modified, and reconstructed" and through the disciplinary strategies of governmentality, the behaviours of individuals and societies are orientated (Olssen, 1999, 104). More recently, it is seen as a way to bring to the fore the micro and macro aspects of power for analysis (Gordan, 2000, cited in Bratich et al, 2003). So, there is a shift towards a more nuanced understanding of how power exists and is performed within the normalisation of everyday activities and discourses.

Whilst neoliberalism and its centrality to education was explored in Chapter One, it would be remiss not to touch on it briefly here as Foucault explored neoliberalism as a rationality of government (Foucault, 1978; Davidson et al. 2008). Neoliberalism, according to Foucault is one way in which we can perceive modern governmentality in action as society is organised along market principles (Lorenzini, 2018). It is a form of governance that brings market principles into all aspects of life, as government frames individual behaviour within the wider narrative of a state's economic success (Foucault, 1988). Under neoliberalism, governmentality shifts to self-regulation and self-governance of and by the individual. Under the influence of market rationalities, individuals and institutions are encouraged to act like entrepreneurial agents within competitive frameworks (see Chapter One). For Foucault, neoliberalism promotes a specific rationality – where individuals (and organisations) evaluate themselves in terms of economic value, and vice versa (Foucault, 1988, 15; Lorenzini, 2018). Butler (2015)

goes further, identifying that neoliberal rationalities see self-sufficiency and the economically successful self as an imperative. By structuring education through neoliberal rationalities, the individual is expected to act in the interest of the self, whilst also supporting the wider aims of society's need for economically productive members.

While governmentality explains how individuals come to govern themselves through dominant rationalities, Foucault (2020) argues that this operates alongside disciplinary measures that shape behaviour through surveillance and routine. In referring to Bentham's description of prisons, Foucault (2020) explains the physical architecture is constructed in such a way as to render all in the prison potentially visible to the watch-room. Prisons, are therefore panopticon, being able to always view the actions of the prisoners, whether the prisoners are aware of the surveillance or not. Foucault (2020) also suggests, in looking at the model of the prison, that due to the threat of surveillance, the individual monitors and potentially changes their actions to avoid the threat of punishment. Olssen (1999) suggests that a school's physical site and "modes of organisation" lend themselves to being seen as part of the panopticon disciplinary governance. Foucault (2020) goes further by suggesting that "society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance" as the individual, rather than facing the panopticon of the prison instead practices self-discipline in aligning with normative practices (306). The panopticon model then can be seen within the normative discourses and practices that help to render members of society "docile and useful" (Foucault, 2020, 311). Whilst referring to universities, Ball's understanding of the practices and technologies of policy are relevant here; noting that they, "constitute the big-neo-liberalism, out there' in the economy, and the little-neoliberalism, 'in here' — in our daily lives and in our heads" (Ball, 2015a, 258). The shifting of neoliberal practices from purely economic theory into the daily practices of education subjectivises the teacher as policies recontextualise what it means to be a teacher and how the teaching practice is constituted (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Therefore, the individual teacher self-governs (Foucault, 2012; Fornet-Betancourt, 1987). So, when existing alongside coercive, disciplinary and panopticon forms of power, governmentality encourages and enforces self-governance.

3.4 Normalisation and subjectification

Neoliberal governmentality then regulates and 'controls' individuals through the ability to shape behaviours and identities through normalisation. In exploring the formation of concepts, Foucault explores how the contextually situated rules of discourse define and "constitute a

domain of normativity for itself" by including or excluding "certain statements" (2002, 68). Normalisation then, is the process where some actions, behaviours, thoughts and discursive practices are evaluated as 'normal' or accepted and against this process of normalisation, the sense of the rational being is also brought to the fore. Normalisation as a process shape both practice and identity. Individuals are disciplined through normalisation to regulate practices to conform with societal norms, in turn reaffirming and sustaining existing power systems and structures (Foucault, 2020).

Normalisation is also not static, and as such the construction of truth-regimes is ongoing, continually being reinforced within and through social contexts rather than through juridical rule. As Foucault explains, "but a natural rule, a norm. The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalisation" (1980, 106). The process is part of a disciplinary mechanism whereby "disciplinary techniques that operate in accordance with such norms, measur[e] individuals and classif[y] them with regard to standards of normality" (McWhorter, 2014; 317). Foucault links the process of normalisation with that of struggle, with certain knowledges being normalised whilst others are consequently subjugated. Thus, by prioritising through normalisation "sanctioned forms of rational discourse", other forms are excluded (Gordon, in Foucault, 1988, 233).

Foucault reflects in 'The Government of the Self and Others' on how the individual is "called upon to constitute him or her-self as a moral subject" (Foucault, 2011, 5). Whilst referring to sexual conduct, the constitution of the self as moral is central to subjectivation, and is phrased by Foucault in several questions:

> "What truths does one need to conduct oneself and others, and to be able to conduct others well by conducting oneself well. What practices and techniques are needed? What knowledge is needed, what exercises, etcetera?" (2010, 306).

Individuals then are both shaped by external factors but also co-create through self-governance and adherence to societal normalisation (Foucault, 2011). In the process of normalisation, individuals negotiate and subjectify their identity within the rules and knowledge of the specific neoliberal episteme of our current times. Subjectivation therefore, is the process where the subject (individual) using the "techniques available to it historically" reconstitutes their identity within the normative frameworks of the context and in differing ways (Kelly, 2013, 513).

Through their internalisation of discursive practices and power relations that govern society, individuals come to understand themselves as shaped by discursive norms in ways that make them a 'rational' being (Patton, 2017). Being a rational or moral subject is not a process of abstract reasoning but due to the embodied systems and everyday practices that govern the individual and societies. Normalisation defines what is deemed as "acceptable" regarding thinking and acting, guiding how behaviour is organised.

This research is concerned with how teachers' identities become subjectivised by the normalisation of neoliberal framings which position EdTech as imperative for success. In exploring the operationalisation of EdTech within school and individual practices, we will be able to see the (re)construction of education at Hill College and how it is normalised as mediated with and through EdTech (Foucault, 2008a). Thus, we can explore how individual's identities are formed in plurality: shaped both by the external discourses of the policy ecosystem and by the subject's own reconstitution within this context. At this point of judgement, techniques of discipline can be used to reestablish the norm. For example, in modern society, "punishment is no longer metered out directly on an individual's body, as instead it is deployed subtly by a series of specialists that judge, label and make decisions." (Mauri, 2018, 86-87). When the self can no longer adhere to the rationality of the entrepreneurial ethic, the very rationality of economic freedom they worked to achieve is that which also destroys them (Butler, 2018; Ball, 2015a). Within this subjectivity, the self must manage their skills strategically and as such becomes "pertinent for the state insofar as he can do something for the strength of the state" (Foucault, 1988, 152). As such, neoliberalism becomes a rationality that normalises the self as economic, and all actions therefore become imbued with this economic imperative. In this practice of discipline, specific strategies can be employed whereby agents are able to reassert obedience, shaping the knowledge that is then (re)articulated through personal and work relationships (Mauri, 2018).

In looking at the policy texts of TSN and Hill College, there is an understanding that these texts represent what is deemed appropriate within the context of TSN. By organising around what is deemed normal, the actions of the individual and others are judged by how closely they are aligned to that of the school. For example, where teachers' discourse internalises the normative policy discourses of Hill College and TSN, we may see their knowledge and practices legitimised. However, in identifying where discursive practice may differ, we are able to identify moments of resistance and perhaps operationalisation of care of the self. Therefore,

through policy texts and normalised discursive practices, school's guide individuals towards knowledge of themselves (Mauri, 2018). The self, therefore, is not isolated or fixed but instead defined and redefined through and within the rationalities embedded within power systems. The domination of the self then occurs as individuals are influenced and controlled by the multiple forces that are present within existing models and systems of power (Foucault, 2002, 1996; Batters, 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter, in exploring key Foucauldian concepts, has shown how power, discourse and subjectivity intersect within educational contexts. As complex social systems, schools serve as microcosms of the broader social mores and power relations, shaping teachers' identities through normative discursive practices and the techniques of governmentality. In embedding neoliberal rationalities into educational policies, we can see how the operationalisation of EdTech within schools is becoming a site of neoliberal struggle.

In applying these concepts, this doctoral research aims to critically examine how the TSN and Hill College policy ecosystem reinforces and shapes the dominant discourses surrounding the purpose and outcomes for education. How teachers negotiate their professional identities within this context could be seen as an example of the complex normalised landscape of power relations. Foucault's concepts directly underpin Strand Four of the thesis, which explores how teacher subjectivities are shaped, constrained, and occasionally resisted within the neoliberal EdTech policy environment. They also support the examination of the disciplinary and governmental mechanisms articulated in Strands One and Three.

To explore how policy texts reinforce neoliberal ideologies of marketisation and lead to the subjectivation of teachers, Part II will draw attention to the specific contexts of Hong Kong and EdTech adoption within schools. This will enable a greater grounding of the theoretical concepts explored in Part I.

Part II – Contextual Grounding

Chapter Four – The centrality of technology within education

Chapter Four draws the focus to the positioning of educational technologies (EdTech) within neoliberal and globalised discourses. Technology use and adoption have been framed economically, and education's role is reframed to provide opportunities for acquisition of and training in technology use. In doing so, education sees the creation of 'markets within markets' as technology companies offer technological solutions and products to schools to support their competition in local and global markets. Consequently, in creating EdTech markets, neoliberal discourses of performance and marketisation are further embedded within schools.

This chapter will first situate technology within economic terms, before exploring how embedding technology within practice is seen as an imperative for educational success leading to a discussion of how the promotion of EdTech creates markets within education. The chapter will then explore the role of EdTech within Hong Kong's educational context to provide framing for the discussions in Part IV.

4.1 Defining the terminology surrounding EdTech

Over the past thirty years, technology and education have become almost synonymous, even though the literature surrounding the politics and policies of its implementation are less clear (Kong and Lai, 2017; Selwyn and Facer, 2013). Guri-Rosenblit (2009) acknowledges that in education research, there is a range of jargon used when describing technology and its uses, leading to confusion over the scope and meaning of key terms. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is often used to encompass most technologies (including hand-held devices and television/radio) (Kozma, 2009). The use of "digital", "ICT" and "Internet of Things" all refer to similar overlapping fields, but the lack of specificity can obfuscate. The use of multiple terms perhaps reflects the complexity and range or scope that is adopted within schools, how these are used, and by whom (Guri-Rosenblit, 2009). It must also be noted that whilst these technologies can be seen as offering a wider range of resources for learning and teaching processes, they have been used more to substitute and adapt teaching rather than offering a redefinition of the educational landscape (Blundell et al, 2022).

In further refining what is meant by technology is education contexts, the ITEA's definition "the modification of the natural environment to satisfy perceived human wants and needs" is useful in that it encompasses all tools that can be used in human endeavours (ITEA, 2000, 9 cited in Duger and Naik, 2001). Educational technologies, therefore, can be seen as any technology that is used within the schooling environment to support human endeavours. As Dron (2022) states:

> "While a subset of educational technologies are designed and sold for the purpose – learning management systems, textbooks, electronic whiteboards, courses, etc. – almost any technology (from a factory to a word processor) can, when combined with appropriate pedagogies and other technologies, be used to support or engender learning" (6).

However, the term educational technology "Edtech" is often used synonymously to refer to the use of information and communication technologies (Duger and Naik, 2001). That EdTech is seen as synonymous with digital and computing technologies also shows the extent to which digital technologies have proliferated everyday practices. In this, Dron raises an important point – that anything used within schools could be considered part of the technology of learning and "whether for good or not…they embed profound assumptions about learning, and about how it should be engendered" (2022, 7). When EdTech is seen only as those digital and communication technologies provided by technology and Edu businesses, then the profound assumptions about learning that these companies have are incorporated into education. The term EdTech is not neutral, tied to commercial, digital and ideological framings.

While the terms technology and EdTech are often used interchangeably within educational discourse, this thesis treats them as analytically distinct. Technology, in its broadest sense, encompasses the socio-material tools, practices, and infrastructures that humans use to mediate activity and learning, whether digital or non-digital (Dron, 2022; Psaros, 2022). From this perspective, almost any tool or system may become educational when situated within pedagogical practice. EdTech, however, represents a narrower and more specific configuration of technology: it typically refers to digital, networked, and often platform-based tools that are explicitly designed, marketed, and implemented for use within educational settings (Selwyn, 2014; Orlikowski, 2007). Crucially, EdTech is not only a technical category but also a political and economic one (Selwyn et al., 2020). Unlike technology more generally, EdTech is frequently embedded within commercial logics, data-extractive business models, and

discourses of efficiency, improvement, and performance (Sancho-Gil, Rivera-Vargas, Miño-Puigcercós, 2020). As such, EdTech carries with it particular assumptions about learning, governance, and value that are shaped by the interests of external actors, including technology companies and policy organisations (Williamson, 2017, 2021a). This distinction is central to the analysis that follows, as it enables EdTech to be examined not simply as a neutral set of tools, but as a socio-technical assemblage that actively participates in the marketisation, governance, and subjectivation processes shaping contemporary education.

Part of the complexity in defining EdTech is due to its dynamic nature and the developments and innovations that occur within the field of technology that then impact the field of education (Ibrahim, 2015). Coupled with this, the operationalisation of technology has led to technology being used in both teaching and learning practices, as well as in the management and organisation of schools (Januszewski and Molenda, 2008; Weller, 2018). EdTech is also seen both as an economic term linked with technology companies, neoliberal discourses, and a pedagogically situated tool and practice that affects educational outcomes. Within this thesis, EdTech is preferred as opposed to the term "digital technology", for example, because the former is not limited to one sphere or practice but is used conceptually to present a catch-all for the different uses and discourses of technology in education. In using the term EdTech within this research, there is an attempt to capture all forms of educational technology use within schools, rather than focusing solely on those used within the classroom. The purpose of this is to recognise that EdTech is often described as having unlimited approaches, possibilities for modernity or progress, and as such, participants will bring to the term their own conceptions (Larsson and Teigland, 2019).

Mason (2018) identifies several metaphors that help to define EdTech from it being a tool; a mechanism; a journey; and an agent for change - the range of different metaphors further highlights the complexity in understanding and defining EdTech. In defining EdTech, the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) defined educational technology as both "an abstract concept" and a "field of practice", stating that:

"Educational Technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources" (cited in Januszewski and Molenda, 2008; 1)

Whilst this definition is helpful in acknowledging that educational technology is both a concept and practice, its utilitarianism is limited as it does not define the 'what' of educational technology, i.e. what are the tools and products that constitute technology in the educational sphere. AECT also adopt value-laden terms such as "improving performance" that centre educational technology within a discourse of improvement that muddies definitions by incorporating ideological positions and interests (McSweeney, 2021). By 2023, the definition had shifted:

"Educational technology is the ethical study and application of theory, research, and practices to advance knowledge, improve learning and performance, and empower learners through strategic design, management, implementation, and evaluation of learning experiences and environments using appropriate processes and resources." (AECT, 2023)

As suggested by both AECT definitions, EdTech balances technological proficiency and teaching/learning, through both hardware and software solutions (Burlacu, 2023; Reiser et al., 2024). Often, any tool that can be used to "facilitate learning" could be defined as EdTech, and there is often a co-opting of technology for education (Weller, 2018). Whilst both definitions bring a focus to ethical use and implementation of technology, by 2023 the definition of EdTech was broader and more conceptual, focusing more on EdTech being used in all facets of education. EdTech is still value laden as it is "advance[ing] knowledge, improv[ing] learning and performance" and linking these with positive outcomes. The inclusion of an ethical focus in the definition suggests that the incorporation of these tools and practices needs high levels of professional conduct (Reiser and Dempsey, 2012). This also means that its incorporation into education is not neutral and is being closely tied to professional identity and educational outcomes (Ideland, 2021; Macgilchrist, 2021).

The lack of finality in defining the terms of educational research perhaps reflects the fast pace of change experienced by researchers in the field, making it difficult for the researcher to be clear in what their terms attempt to capture (Escueta et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2013). For the purposes of this doctoral research, the terms defined in Table 2. Definition of terms will be used as these definitions are grounded in the debates explored within this chapter.

Table 2. Definition of terms

Key Term	Definition
EdTech	EdTech is any technology hardware or software that is used within the classroom and school environment for the managing and development of teaching, learning, and educational management, in a more efficient manner (An and Oliver, 2021; Wong, 2016).
EdTech Actor	Individuals, organisations, NGOs, businesses etc. that work to promote EdTech use within schools.
Edu business	Businesses whose products are targeted and used within the educational context.
Digital Technology	Technology that is connected through the internet, to include but not limited to portable technologies such as mobiles, laptops etc.
Platformisation	The process through which the world of the classroom is increasingly reliant on technology companies to manage the practices of teaching and learning (Cohen, 2024).

4.2 Technology and the global digital economy

Digital technologies have fundamentally changed many of the domains of human and societal practice (Dahlman, et al., 2016; OECD 2024). Technology itself, as explored in previous chapters, has recently been positioned in economic terms and investments in technology are seen as supporting global economic competitiveness (Davies et al. 2022; Ideland, 2021). Globally, technology is seen as a predeterminant for success in the knowledge economy (Mundial, 2023). The digital economy is now embedded within wider economic markets, rather than being the sole preserve of the ICT sector (OECD, 2024). As the digital sector is developing and innovating, investment in digital technologies is seen as contributing to economic growth (Macgilchrist, 2018; Mundial, 2023; OECD, 2025). Recent OECD reports suggest that the ICT sector grew over two times faster than the total economy and was also quick to recover post COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2024). In East Asia Pacific, The World Bank sees investment in new technologies as strengthening the prospects and productivity within countries (World Bank, 2025). Technology use is intertwined with the growth of knowledge and digital economies, and the embedding of technology within economic markets leads to governments promoting strategies that extend the use of technology within local markets (Mirrlees and Alvi, 2019).

As the world's economy, especially in the global north, moves further towards a digital knowledge economy, technology becomes invested with neoliberal ideologies of marketisation and competition. As a result, many countries are promoting a digital first approach. For example, India's "Digital India" campaign, seeks to make available and integrate government services and departments electronically (Goswani, 2016). Hong Kong's Government is implementing initiatives to support its development into a "smart city" (Digital Policy Office, 2025). The Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan stated that, in "the domain of the digital economy, the landscape is complex and rapidly evolving. Competition among cities and economies in this field is keen. Hong Kong must move fast to stay ahead of the curve" (Chan, 2024). Due to the digitalisation of society, the digital economy has moved beyond the ICT sector into all sectors, including education (OECD, 2024). With the recent growth in the use of Large Language Models (LLMs) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), supranational organisations and NGOs, such as The World Bank have linked the potential of these new technologies to "accelerat[e] productivity [and] growth", with economic success and failure (Mundial, 2023, 85). Within this framing, countries wishing to be successful must then adopt digitalised and technologised modes of operation.

The involvement of global agencies such as the World Bank and UNESCO leads to them exerting influence on national education networks as they are seen as "the most influential promoters of EdTech solutions" (Williamson and Hogan, 2020, 2). As digital technologies are being seen as transformative and improving the lives of the individual, there is an understanding that only effective use and adoption will lead to equal opportunities (OECD, 2024). Whilst AI is seen as providing an opportunity for growth and transformation, there is also awareness that generative AI has also led to concerns regarding job displacement, and the need for training in these newer technology fields to maintain economic advantage (Mundial, 2023).

Additionally, the OECD suggests that high education outcomes lead to successful economic ones (OECD, n.d.; Temple, 2002). Therefore, the joining of productivity, human capital and educational policies, suggests that the market has become part of education's narrative (Williamson, 2022). However, there is also an understanding that access to and embedding of technology is uneven, subsequently growing the digital inequality divide (Mundial, 2023; OECD 2024). With the focus on technological skills and digital productivity, economic and

technological success are embedded through neoliberal rationalities (Ideland, 2021; Ideland and Serder, 2023).

4.3 Educational Technology and the incorporation of economic markets

Just as technology use has grown within business and social spheres, education has also been at the centre of this cultural shift (McGarr and Engen, 2022). The EdTech market has seen significant increases in the past twenty years; it was projected to rise to USD 404 billion in 2025, a growth of over 16% since 2019 (Shustova, et al., 2023). The growth in the market since 2020, in part due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, also reflects the wider reliance on education in the technology industry. In 2024, K-12 EdTech held the largest revenue share of global markets, at 39.40% (Grandview, 2024). This introduction of educational technology into the school system furthers the neoliberal marketisation of education by enabling existing markets and businesses to operate within schools. Williamson (2022, 2020) identifies that EdTech is as much about business as it is about either education or technology.

Markets cannot exist within a vacuum, and the introduction of new market products plays into preexisting structures and policies (Peruzzo et al, 2022). Education itself is a microcosm of wider societal views and agendas, so it makes sense that technology use within education is also seen as part of these cultural practices (Cohen, 2024; Suarez-Guerroro, et al, 2023). The discourses surrounding education have become enmeshed with narratives of digital and economic success, representing a global architecture of actors whose conception of education directly impacts what happens on the ground (Hultqvist et al., 2018). Policy actors, such as OECD, espouse the use of EdTech to ensure students can wholly participate within society (OECD, 2024; 2025). As these market expectations are mixed into education, there is a growth in Edupreneurs, Edu businesses, and EdTech investors that are claiming authority over the futures of education and learning (Williamson, 2022; Ideland, 2021; Davies et al., 2022). The COVID-19 Pandemic provided further opportunities for corporations to access both public and private education networks, leading to the further entrenchment of neoliberal marketisation within schools (Moore, et al., 2021).

The latest iteration of EdTech in schools differs from previous technologies due to its connected (internet) and networked (global actors) nature (Williamson and Hogan, 2020; Ball, 2018a). This global context situates the local classroom within a market shaped by business

(Selwyn, 2013; Mirrlees, and Alvi, 2019). The effect of this is to sustain neoliberal framing within education (Selwyn, 2013). For example, in comparing the ability of state or private schools to compete in the market; those with access to a technologically facilitated education will fare better, recreating conditions of the wider market (Selwyn, 2013; Feijoo et al, 2021).

Ideland's description of Chinese and Swedish experiences of education suggests that educational technologies and learning through digital platforms "has become a norm" (2021, 33). This supports Ball's exploration of educational businesses as both filling in and producing, "new opportunities, in terms of demand, for IT services" (2018, 587). Mirrlees and Alvi go further, by suggesting that the incorporation of EdTech and Edu businesses strengthens neoliberal logic within education (2019). It is as though technology in schools is a *fait accompli*; linked with economic development markers, life-long learning, and the ability to prepare learners for a global work market that might not yet exist (Davies et al., 2022). With education being increasingly framed through economic terms, the introduction of technology within educational practices can be seen as a way of preparing the future adult to engage in the digital landscape of work and therefore engage with the tools and companies of the global economy (Mirlees and Alvi, 2019).

By introducing EdTech into schools, business is given access to self-sustaining markets that education provides through both student and hardware renewal (Gavrielatos, 2020; Willaimson and Hogan, 2020; Regan and Wallace, 2018). These markets can be seen as self-sustaining due to the need for schools to replace hardware regularly, continually upgrading and replacing hardware alongside adapting learning platforms to meet new needs, but also through the continual renewal of the student population (Williamson, 2017; Regan and Wallace, 2018). Similarly, those schools instituting one-to-one laptop polices for students choose which company is given access to new customers making schools data sites for Edu businesses (Veale, 2022; Williamson and Hogan, 2020; Renz et al., 2020). As a result, EdTech companies and Edu businesses, exert "hidden influences" on schools through the adoption of their platforms that are beginning to organise the daily actions of schools (Williamson, 2016, 3-4). The digital platform era of education has seen a change from "conventional models of selling stand-alone tools" to a digital ecosystem of integrated platforms where the day-to-day business of education is housed, accessed and managed (Kerssens et al, 2023, 478). The adoption by many technology companies of a vertical integration model means that these companies have a reach that is further and deeper into the architecture of schooling than previous models facilitated. In

granting access to these EdTech platforms, Pangrazio et al. (2022) suggest that teacher subjectivity is now mitigated and shaped by their use of these platforms.

Schools are where "official" knowledge is made available to students and as technology becomes more prevalent within our society, there is a greater push for schools to teach students how to use technology. The onus of this is on teachers as Szymkowiak et al. state, "teachers are role models…there is a growing need for teachers to use new technological solutions in teaching…" (2021, 2). What occurs then is a cyclical argument where greater use of technology in personal use, necessitates greater use of technology in workplaces, and therefore within schools to ensure that the globalised knowledge economy can continue. As EdTech is marketed heavily and often driven by multinational corporations; the growing reliance on digital technology, and therefore EdTech, is situated in a complex interplay of global and local values and agendas (Macgilchrist, 2017). The convergence of business, technology and society leads to greater daily engagement of the individual with technology than previous technology revolutions. Coupled with this, the merging of technology and education sees global internationals, such as Google and Microsoft, develop education facets that promote their products (digital and physical) for consumption within the classroom (Williamson, 2022). Consequently, schools become marketable sites, where the agendas and logics of the businesses invited in are enacted (Decuypere et al. 2021). The incorporation of business into education changes it from public good into a marketable entity responding to and influenced by the wider socio-economic positioning of EdTech and national economic success.

Within schools then, several sites of market choice can be identified: parental choice of school, school choice of EdTech hardware and school choice of digital tools. Each sphere provides opportunities for a network of actors to engage with relationship building, influencing the choices made (McGarr and Engen, 2022). The network actors here (parents, school governance, EdTech companies) influence the policy culture that teachers exist in, framing the use/non-use of governable technology (Peruzzo et al, 2022). Actors rely on their ability to "make judgements, draw conclusions, and frame the practices in contemporary fields of existence", in this case measures of future economic and academic successes (Hultqvist et al., 2018, 3). EdTech becomes both a tool of marketisation as well as governance. Those who adopt EdTech within their practices are hailed as successful, as their self-governance aligns with market rationality and the priorities of those that shape their immediate contexts.

4.4 EdTech products and platformisation within Education

For over a hundred years, education has been a site for technological engagement. Each era of technological development has been "expected to revolutionise teaching and learning" (Howard and Mozejko, in Henderson et al, 2015, 157). Since the dot.com era of the 1990s, access to technology within the classroom has grown. Similarly, the connection between learners and global technology companies has expanded due to the growth of internet enabled technologies. With the decreasing cost of owning a digital device, in 2023, "there were 5.18 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 64.6 percent of the global population", an increase of over 3 million since 2005 (Statista, 2023). In 2020, over 95% of secondary school students had access to the internet for pedagogical purposes (UNESCO, 2023). It is clear then, that digital technologies are, as Selwyn notes, "prominent features of education provision and practice in many countries and contexts" (2012, vii). Yet, there is still a tension between "educational policy and popular opinion, and the realities of the classroom" that lead to technology being used in more limited ways than the technology evangelists would presume (Howard and Mozejko, in Henderson et al, 2015, 157).

It would not be possible here to examine all iterations of EdTech tools and products available within the market, especially given the rapid growth in the field. Moore et al. (2021) list eleven different products in just one paragraph of their paper. However, the number of EdTech Tools and products does not necessarily lead to a diversity of companies involved in education. This is because the platformisation of education results in less diversity, less choice and freedom in the market (Kerssens and van Dijck, 2022; Williamson, 2022). At the same time, it is useful to note that EdTech use goes beyond pedagogy, fulfilling ideational, sociocultural and administrative roles (Hepp et al., 2004). Currently, technology within education can often be categorised by three main uses: 1. Data management systems (MIS) and administration; 2. Pedagogically within the classroom; 3. Communication, with each of these areas providing sites for markets to be introduced and expanded through the adoption of different technology tools (Kuehn, 2017 cited in Moore et al. 2021). Businesses are also creating integrated systems and platforms that provide a one stop shop for educational applications and user needs (Kerssens and van Dijck, 2022). For example, technology companies such as Google, Apple and Microsoft all provide and promote technological solutions to education.

The language of these big tech companies focuses on the solutions offered to the problems of education and frames both EdTech and education in neoliberal terms:

> *"Google for Education tools work together to transform teaching and learning so every student and educator can pursue their personal potential."*
>
> *"Google Workspace for Education helps you enhance instructional impact, prepares students for the future, and puts your institution's safety and security first."*
>
> *"Everything you need to empower learning, now in one place"*
>
> *Google for Education*

Above, using Google products is focused on transformation and innovation, which is in turn framed as being "enthusiastically used" to support digital EdTech incorporation (Marone and Heinsfeld, 2023). On the other hand, below, Apple focuses on the affordances that EdTech tools will give teachers. This highlights the time and efficiency imperatives that change the relationship between student and teacher, to encourage a growing reliance on the platform, thus changing what it is to teach:

> *"We've developed tools to help you guide how your students use devices and apps in the classroom, and give you valuable insight into each student's progress as they work with them. So you can focus on what's most important: teaching."*
>
> *Apple K-12 Education*

The discourses of Tech companies and their involvement within education reflects the marketisation of education and the positioning of their products as solutions to educational challenges (Suarez-Guerrero, et al., 2023). As seen above, Google positions its products as catalysts for innovation and transformation of educational practices, suggesting that those that work with their products are better positioned for success (Power, 2014; Thorsen and Lie 2006). Similarly, Apple focus on the affordance their tools give to teachers to improve efficiency and teachers' understanding of the progress of students. Once again, technology within education is framed by neoliberal discourses which concurrently provide surveillance of teacher and student activities (Foucault, 2020).

With the selling of hardware, such as laptops and Chromebooks, alongside the provision of software and analytic platforms, there is a seamless integration and platformisation of EdTech. Google and Apple's reach and ability to insert themselves into education through the above

texts, is an example of the fusing of private and public spheres, providing a clear example of the growing global educational market (Ortegon and Williamson, 2024; Kerrsens et al. 2023; Thomason and Parreira do Amaral, 2019). As Conner-Zachocki et al. state, “our lives are infused with technology” (2015, 83) and following the COVID-19 Pandemic this has only increased (Moore et al., 2021). The form, modes and definitions of technology in the classroom have also changed, as educational technology no longer means, if it ever did, the stand-alone computer in the corner of the classroom. Education is becoming something “on the internet”, and teachers and students are increasingly being envisioned as technological participants, managing and accessing educational content through networked devices and platforms. (Suarez-Guerrero, et al., 2023, 8). This is compounded by education taking place both within the classroom setting and at home, a result of the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns which has further blurred the boundary between public and private technology use and exposure (Ideland 2021). Platformisation coupled with these impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, gives educational technology companies greater access to all phases of education.

4.5 Datafication, Surveillance, and the Political Economy of EdTech

EdTech companies, operating within a wider political economy, increasingly value data—rather than software or hardware—as their primary form of capital. The economic centrality of data means that EdTech companies’ profitability depends less on the sale of physical products or subscription services and more on the continuous extraction of digital information (Birch et al., 2025). EdTech has, in this sense, “made education investable,” due to the myriad commercial uses this data offers to both investors and EdTech companies (Komljenovic et al., 2023, 2; Enyon, 2022). To understand the role of EdTech within schools, it is therefore necessary to examine the priorities of these companies. As Gray (2016) argues, the digital now plays a central role in “how we organise and imagine” life (197), and the ways in which digital data frame our experience actively shape the world around us.

This process of datafication functions as a form of surveillance, offering insights into behaviours, patterns, and trends, and has controversially been used to make predictions about future actions. As Williamson (2019) notes, “access to digital data is a course of ‘business intelligence’ used to make efficiency savings and gather profit” (1). Within education, data is therefore positioned both as a means of improving student learning outcomes and as a lucrative market opportunity for technology companies (Williamson, 2019). As schools adopt EdTech

platforms, they become not only users of technology but also producers of commercial data streams. Yet, as Gray (2016) observes, there remains a notable lack of transparency in how companies use this data within their business models. His call for "opening up spaces for democratic deliberation" underscores the need for closer scrutiny of both public and private organisations involved in datafication (199).

Jarke and Breiter (2019) raise further concerns about the rapid growth of the education sector as a site of datafication, noting that many of these practices are becoming commonplace and automatic. EdTech firms, then, have a vested interest in expanding datafication and data-harvesting practices into routine school and teacher behaviours, as this constitutes an economic rent that is "actively reconfiguring the techno-economic relations" and practices within the education market (Birch et al., 2025). By encouraging greater use of platform-based tools and integrating dashboards and analytics into everyday practice, platforms ensure that data are constantly being generated. Through these processes, EdTech companies view educational data not only as an asset but as a resource for creating "new products and services that can be marketed" back to schools (Erstad, 2023, 8). As Williamson (2017) acknowledges, schools and their data are monetized, and the idea of "markets within markets" is extended through the reduction of education into data points used to train new EdTech products.

Because data functions as the primary extractable form of capital for EdTech firms, these companies have a structural interest in extending datafication into routine school practices (Williamson, 2017). This incentive drives the design of platform-based tools, dashboards, and analytics systems that require regular user engagement, thereby generating continuous data streams (Komljenovic, 2021). Crucially, the expansion of datafication is legitimised through discourses of effectiveness, efficiency, personalisation, and evidence-based practice. These narratives frame increased data capture as pedagogically beneficial rather than commercially motivated, masking the economic logics underpinning their expansion. As a result, data-harvesting infrastructures become embedded within everyday educational activity, normalising intensifying forms of data extraction.

The datafication of schools further extends neoliberal narratives of accountability, performance, and efficiency, particularly when considered alongside transnational accountability systems such as PISA and local accountability mechanisms encoded within EdTech platforms. This makes the expansion of data-generating practices economically

advantageous for EdTech firms, whose commercial models increasingly depend on the ongoing harvesting, circulation, and monetisation of student and teacher data (Komljenovic et al., 2024). In reconstituting individuals as digital subjects, Macgilchrist (2018) argues that datafication practices become entangled with neoliberal ideologies, particularly the construction of the entrepreneurial self (3).

4.6 Post-digital framing of EdTech and education

Just as the previous section explored the growth of data and data-harvesting as a new form of capital for business, this section briefly outlines the concept of post-digital as it relates to education. In seeing the world as fully enmeshed with digital technologies, a post-digital perspective suggests that life is inseparable from the digital – especially given how far mobile devices are incorporated into all aspects of daily life (Sinclair, 2021; Jandrić and Hayes, 2020). From a post-digital perspective, EdTech cannot be understood simply as a set of digital tools but as part of the entwined social, material, and 'datafied' conditions of contemporary life and schooling. By saying that technological change is "with humans, whether the machines themselves are in use, or not" shows that what it means to be human has fundamentally shifted due to the presence of technology (Jandrić and Hayes, 2020, 2). As Fawns (2018) argues, there is no sense of education that does not include the digital, either in design or the doing of education (132). The extent to which lives are carried out digitally, even when not using a digital device, so education has been shifted to digital, even if these resources are not used within the 'formal' space of the classroom (Fawns, 2018). Sinclair and Hayes (2019) warn though that digital landscapes need to be "well made, nourishing and sustainable" and that the current formation of digital spheres is entangled with inequality (2019, 128).

Framing EdTech use through a post-digital lens therefore enables recognition of how digital platforms, datafication processes, and neoliberal logics become woven into the everyday routines of teaching and learning, rather than functioning as external or optional additions. That this change has happened alongside the growth of neoliberal marketisation practices within education, as explored above, how education and EdTech are framed and used as these neoliberal values are programmed into the platforms and machines we use (Jandrić and Hayes, 2020). In understanding a post-digital framing of education and EdTech, there is space within

the findings chapters to examine how these entanglements might shape TSN and Hill College policies and teacher subjectivities.

4.7 The recent landscape of EdTech within Hong Kong

Since 1998, education in Hong Kong has seen educational technology's role and use as being a catalyst for change (Fox and Henri, 2005). In 2015, the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education, positioned Hong Kong as being able to "reap the full benefits of global technological proliferation" and become a "knowledge-based economy" (EDB, 2014, i). Whilst the strategy is primarily aimed at schools within the local system, as discussed in the Hong Kong Context chapter; the boundary between local public, local private, and international education is muddied, with many schools enmeshed in the state funding architecture. As such, the strategy provides a policy context that shapes the educational vision and mission of Hong Kong more generally: schools not immediately impacted by state education policies will ensure that their IT offering is at least to the same standard to ensure continued prestige.

In 2022, a written response by the Secretary of Education, Dr Choi Yuk-Lin directly addressed the use of IT in teaching and learning:

> "To align with the global trend of harnessing information technology (IT) to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching, the Government has invested over $15 billion since the 1998/99 school year in implementing four strategies on IT in Education (ITE). All the strategies are in line with our education reform that aims to promote lifelong learning and whole-person development of our students."
>
> (LegCo, 2022)

Thus, the funding and prolonged engagement with the Fourth Strategy shapes the wider policy landscapes of Hong Kong Education. This mirrors global rhetoric of "life-long learning" and "education reform". IT, and therefore digital technologies, are seen as a global good due to their ability to support economic growth.

More recently, the Government's Quality Education Fund (QEF) in Hong Kong "provides annual grants of approximately $30 million to support education programs…" (QEF, 2025). By inviting educational businesses to seek funding, it seems as though Hong Kong actively pursues the involvement of business actors in education, providing an example of what Willaimson and Hogan describe as the "emergence of new kinds of multi sector public-private

partnerships" (2020, 2). This involvement changes the nature of education, rewriting "what it means to teach and learn" (Ball, 2018a, 587). In 2019, home internet access in Hong Kong had increased from 74.5% to 94%, with "nearly 6 million" 10-year-olds and older having access to a smartphone - a penetration of 91.5% (Census and Statistics Department, 2020, p.2-4). Hong Kong's high proliferation of internet technology access mirrors global trends, with nearly 60% of the global population actively using the internet, whilst 91% of total internet user access comes through mobiles (Statista, 2020).

In the past thirty years, Hong Kong has changed from an educational landscape that lacked "a government policy [for] the use of computers across the curriculum", to one where IT within schools became central to both teaching, learning and economic success (Fung 1998, 70; Fung, 2001). Hong Kong schools then, exist within a context that promotes and values the use of technology. Government investment in technology initiatives for schools and the growing focus on developing pedagogies around EdTech use, suggest that Hong Kong also positions itself within the global EdTech discourse. Schools then respond to this normative discourse, shaping their offering to be seen as attractive within Hong Kong's education market.

4.8 EdTech and the conceptualisation of the Teacher

Education is not neutral, nor are the practices that are adopted by those engaged in education. EdTech has shaped what it means to be a teacher (Ideland, 2021). When education is increasingly being shaped by external actors (global rankings, EdTech Businesses, local community), what constitutes as "good education" is mediated by these external arguments and agendas (Marone and Heinsfeld, 2023). As such, education and teachers' identity changes to adopt new discourses and enactments of success (Ball and Grimaldi, 2022). After all, schools and their policy ecosystems are spaces that translate global policy directions into specific strategies and discourses to organise daily practice (Dussel, 2014). EdTech becomes just one site where subjectivation occurs and practices are enacted because of the organising practices of neoliberalism. Therefore, how and where EdTech is embraced, and the language used by policies and teachers becomes a site for power.

The language and normative discursive practices present within texts convey dominant cultural values. However, these can also be examples of the "distorted narratives that favour or facilitate power structures" (Suarez-Guerrero, 2023, 1). Policy formation, as explored earlier, enables

those in leadership to set out the priorities that will shape contemporary experiences and values. Recent discourse surrounding EdTech, can be seen as a technological imperative replacing older discourses that no longer serve the interests of the state (Mosco, 2004). To be seen as effective and therefore adhering to the moral good of educational practice means to engage with and use EdTech for the future economic success of the student, school, and ultimately national economy. Teachers negotiate their subjectivities against these policy directions, negotiating what it means to be a teacher in both online and offline spheres. Those teachers that can embrace and blend these subjectivities will be perceived as more successful, but to accept this narrative of teaching is to accept a conception of self that has been mediated by wider narratives of EdTech within globalisation. For the wider school community (governance, wider education networks), their rationalising of the use of technology shapes what a teachers' sense of self is. Technology use therefore becomes a site of struggle and subjectivation (Ideland, 2021).

EdTech and EdTech Businesses help to create the conditions for subjectivation, resulting in the formation of new ideations of teachers and teaching (Ideland, 2021). Schools and teachers are enmeshed in wider economic policy ideations which makes the purpose of schooling as being about economic success (Moore et al., 2021). These EdTech businesses exert pressure on policy actors by attending educational conferences and meeting with education policy makers (Williamson, 2021a; 2021b). EdTech businesses therefore create the conditions for technology to be promoted whilst also creating markets for further technology adoption (Williamson, 2022; Davies et al., 2022). In promoting and using EdTech within their practice, the sense of the teacher has shifted to include and be mediated with EdTech.

Conclusion

As seen through this chapter, the incorporation of technology within education mirrors the increasing role of technology in wider society. As education is framed within neoliberal rationalities, so EdTech is similarly positioned. Alongside this, the concept of post-digital leads to understanding that just as human experience is entangled with the digital, so is education. Through its positioning as an imperative for educational and economic success, its incorporation invites businesses to expand their interests into the education sector. In focusing on how teachers conceptualise and discuss EdTech and its associated policies, this research

aims to problematise EdTech as a concept and its positioning in shaping the subjectivities of teachers (Castañeda and Selwyn, 2018; Ideland, 2021).

EdTech is not a neutral tool but is deeply embedded within neoliberal and globalized discourses. The promotion of EdTech in schools creates new markets and reinforces neoliberal values such as competition and marketisation, especially as EdTech actors from outside the sphere of education, are increasingly included. Due to this, business encroaches into education, and its agendas are shaping the role, subjectivities, practices and discourses of those in the classroom. The (re)formation of teachers' identities by neoliberalism, policy and EdTech introduces areas of both opportunity and struggle as they both subjectify and are subjectivised by these normative discourses, as will be shown through Part IV research findings. As will be explored in Strand Two, the incorporation of EdTech into schools is shaped by external technological, commercial and policy actors, whose influence extends beyond the school site. These global forces, along with neoliberal logics highlighted in Strand One, shape the discursive terrain within which schools operate.

To situate these discourses more fully, Chapter Five will explore the specific context of Hong Kong and the research site of The School Network (TSN) and Hill College. Through this the role of Hong Kong's diversified and stratified education system and the positioning of EdTech as central pillar of Hong Kong's educational success will be explored.

Chapter Five - Hong Kong Educational Context

Within Chapter Five, there will be a discussion of Hong Kong's context, current legislature, and an overview of the areas' demographic with a focus on technology use. This will then lead to a detailed historical outline of Hong Kong's education system and its interactions with international education. Following this, there will be an exploration of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong and how the move to distance, hybrid and online learning methods may have influenced teachers' responses to educational technologies (EdTech) in their practice. By focusing first on the context of the Hong Kong education system and then finally zooming in on the specific contexts of The School Network (TSN) and Hill college, the interaction between the theoretical frameworks of neoliberalism, educational technology and policy will start to become foregrounded for subsequent chapters.

5.1 History and Governance

Over the past thirty years, Hong Kong has experienced major changes to its political and social identities. Once a British Colony in the 1800s, Hong Kong is now a Special Administrative Region (SAR) following the Sino-British Joint declaration in 1984 and Hong Kong's reunification with the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1997. With the agreement and reunification came the operation of one country, two systems in which "Hong Kong's previous capitalist system and lifestyle shall remain unchanged for 50 years" (Sino-British Joint Declaration, 1984). At the point of handover, Hong Kong "assumed the functions of a 'state' in its internal governance" and "after the transfer of sovereignty, it [… managed] its own external economic and cultural relations" (Tang, 1993, 205). Through the Basic Law, Hong Kong maintains a high level of autonomy with much of the internal governance that Tang identifies still being present at the time of research.

Hong Kong is governed by a legislative council headed by the Chief Executive. They are elected by "a broadly representative Election Committee in accordance with the Basic Law and is appointed by the Central People's Government" (GovHK, 2025). Alongside the Chief Executive, Hong Kong is managed through the Executive Council, appointed by the Chief Executive from the Legislative Council and public figures, who support the Chief Executive. The Legislative Council (LegCo) provide a law-making function. District Councils are also in place to provide a link between the government/LegCo and the populace, being consulted on

district affairs that affect the people. The main administrative functions of the government are carried out by the civil service and policy bureaux. Elections take place for the LegCo, with a four-year expiry, and recent changes to their election process have seen concerns raised over the freedom of these elections after a "patriots only" reform was introduced in 2021, with vetting in place for candidates. Out of the 50 LegCo seats, 20 are voted for "democratically by the public, while the remaining 30 spots will be occupied by legislators from functional constituencies, mostly specific to particular industries, trades, or professions" (Tse, 2025).

Due to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) perceived growing involvement and influence over daily operations and election reforms, Hong Kong saw an increase in civil unrest and protest movements from the 2014 Umbrella Movement to the more recent 2019 protests. The latter were a response to an extradition bill allowing Mainland China to extradite Hong Kong nationals (Morris and Vickers, 2015; Piechota, 2020). Hong Kong's education system has seen greater involvement from the PRC, with the introduction of education subjects such as "Moral and National Education" and the National Security Education resources following the introduction of National Security Laws in 2020 (Vickers and Morris, 2022). Education is thus becoming a growing site for greater involvement of PRC governance, suggesting that as the fifty years of "one country, two systems" (Sino-British Joint Declaration, 1984) come to an end, Hong Kong's education policies will be closer aligned to those of the mainland. International schools on the other hand, offer non-local curricular and are only encouraged to refer to the "measures and templates" to "devise relevant strategies and measures in light of their school-based circumstances and needs" (EDB, 2023). This suggests that international schools have greater flexibility in their approaches to learning.

5.12 Society and demographics

Hong Kong is a highly urbanised area, with a population of over 7 million people (Race Relations Unit, 2025). It is mainly homogenous, with "about 91.6% of its people being Chinese" and the remaining population being comprised of both permanent and non-permanent residents from a range of Asian countries and otherwise classified as "White" in the census data (Race Relations Unit, 2025). Approximately half the population are either British Nationals Oversees or British Citizenship, a legacy of Britain's colonial involvement in Hong Kong. As such, whilst the majority language is Chinese, English is also an official language. Both Mandarin and Cantonese are spoken within the region; there is Cantonese medium of

instruction in schools with both written Putonghua and English being taught in local and international schools. English is often used as the mode of instruction in Tertiary Level education, perhaps reflecting the international nature and demographic of that level of education.

Once a dominant manufacturing economy, Hong Kong's economy transitioned to service dominated industries towards the latter part of the colonial era. Hong Kong's economy is one of free trade, low taxation and minimal involvement of the state. With a GDP in 2023 of just under HK$3 billion, Hong Kong has strong trading positions and relationships with China and global partners (HKMA, 2023). Economically advanced and a globally significant hub for finance and shipping, Hong Kong is within the top ten on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2025). Despite this, it is also an area that has high levels of social inequality, especially within the low-income migrant community. In 2024, the "poorest decile earned 81.9 times less than the richest decile in the first quarter of 2024", with nearly 1.4 of the just over 7 million residents classed as living in poverty (Oxfam, 2024). In 2021, the monthly median "domestic household income (excluding foreign domestic helpers) was $27,320HKD" approximately £2,700GBP (Census and Statistics, 2023). However, this excludes domestic workers, whose minimum monthly salary is $4,990HKD approximately £500GBP (Hong Kong Government, 2024). Rental costs accounted for 35.8% of average monthly expenditure in 2019 (most recent data available) and this is expected to have risen to closer to 50% in 2025 (Census and Statistics, 2021). With such income inequality, and a high cost of living, Hong Kong can be seen as highly stratified by income and educational choice.

5.13 Digital Technologies in Hong Kong

Digital technology use and value is widespread within Hong Kong, with 96.6% of the population having access to internet in the home, and 96.4% of the population (aged over 10) having a smartphone as of 2023 (Census and Statistics Department, 2023). Smartphone penetration also increased in 2022 to 97.1%, with 90.7% of the over-65 age group now using smartphones, compared with 68.1% in 2020 (Gov.HK, 2023). Digital inclusion is seen as an important aspect of Hong Kong society, with the LegCo stating "the Government continues to promote various digital inclusion measures to help those in need" to assist with bringing the benefits of digital technology to all members of society (LegCo, 2024). This has been accompanied by an increase in public-private initiatives to provide free Wi-Fi in public areas,

such as the Mass Transit Railway (MTR/Metro) system, government buildings, and tourist spots.

Alongside developing technology access, Hong Kong is a leading technology hub, and the government sees increasing digital expansion as necessary for maintaining its global economic position (HKETOB, 2022). The Hong Kong Government have created a Smart City Blueprint to enhance the experience and benefits of "innovation and technology in their daily lives" (Innovation and Technology Bureau, 2020). The aims of the blueprint are to focus on economic growth, sustainability, and a technology savvy population as a way of ensuring "a strong economy and high quality of living" (Ibid, 3). These priorities were also highlighted in the 14th Five-Year Plan:

> *"The 14th Five-Year Plan puts forward the development pattern of "dual circulation", which takes the domestic market as the mainstay while enabling domestic and foreign markets to interact positively with each other and expresses clear support for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) to develop into an international I&T centre." (Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, 2022)*

This quote makes clear the policy direction of the Hong Kong and Chinese governments, and how for them both, the economy works alongside technology for greater economic prosperity. Hong Kong is positioned as providing a bridge between China and the "foreign advanced technologies" and international markets present within Hong Kong, to meet the demands of the Greater Bay Area[12] (Chu and Chu, 2024). Consequently, Hong Kong's government values the use of technology within schools, having invested, "over $17 billion … since the 1998/99 school year" (LegCo, 2024, 1). This reflects the importance placed on technologically literate citizens for future economic success.

5.2 Hong Kong as an Educational system

Education in Hong Kong -from kindergarten through to secondary school - mirrors the systems of the USA and UK. Hong Kong's education system is governed locally, overseen by the EDB, not the PRC. EDB funds free education for residents in primary through to lower secondary level through Aided and Government schools, whilst expatriate and non-permanent residents

[12] The Greater Bay Area is commonly defined as the nine megacities of Guangdong province, alongside the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau. It is being developed as an economically integrated area.

access the private education network. Private schools in Hong Kong charge on a mean average $250,000HKD, approximately £24 420.10 per annum (LittleStepsasia, 2025). Therefore, the EDB actively supports marketisation through providing this range of educational options. The opening of the market to private, private international schools, alongside aided and government schools, can be seen as way to enhance, “the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of education” (Chan and Mok, 2001, 37). Through allowing “schools to compete with each other, schools are to be deregulated” and through this, accountable to themselves and their stakeholders (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, cited in Chan and Mok, 2001, p30).

Another characteristic of the educational system is how the EDB values the importance of bilingualism and trilingualism. For example, "Hong Kong's language education policy is to cultivate students' biliterate and trilingual abilities, and to be able to express and communicate fluently in Putonghua, English and Cantonese” with 85.7% of households perceiving their competence in Putonghua as sufficient (HKSAR Press Release, 2022). The EDB also provides additional support for ethnic minority and recent immigrant students unable to access the curriculum in Chinese, including offering a range of equivalent qualifications to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, including international GCSEs[13]. Within this system, private schools receive various levels of support from the Hong Kong Government through the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) or the historic subvention provided to some schools for providing a specialised education not catered for by the local government schools. Table 3, provides an overview of the types of schools, funding support, and general demographic of the student body:

Table 3. Hong Kong School Types adapted from EDB Education Website

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">School Type</th><th>Funding</th><th>Curriculum Provision</th><th>Demographic</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Public Sector Schools</td><td>Government</td><td>Fully operated by government</td><td rowspan="2">Local curriculum with Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE)</td><td>Local curriculum</td></tr>
<tr><td>Aided and Caput Schools</td><td>Fully subsidised by government</td><td>Local curriculum</td></tr>
</table>

[13] General Certificate of Secondary Education

	Direct subsidy Schools (DSS)	Partially funded by government subsidies and through collection of school fees.	21 schools offer non-local curriculum as below; all others offer local curriculum	Local and/or non-local curriculum.
International Schools		Self-funded, market-driven basis.	Non-local curriculum (e.g. from demographic's nation states) and International Baccalaureate (IB)	Non-local demographic; specific cultural/linguistic group; for those not wanting to sit local exams
Private Independent Schools		Self-Funded	Most offer non-local curriculum. One offers local HKDSE	EDB requirement to maintain 70% of student population being Hong Kong Permanent Residents.

Direct Subsidy Schools (DSS) are comprised of both local curriculum and international curriculum schools. Out of 80 DSS, 21 offer non-local curriculum. The remaining DSS are "required to offer principally a curriculum targeted at local students to prepare them to sit for the relevant local public examinations" (EDB, n.d.). Some of these schools offer international and local streams to cater for the needs of their students. The era of DSS directly introduced the marketisation of education into Hong Kong's education network, being seen as a way in which standards could be driven upwards through "inter-school competition [from] the private to the public sector" (Zhou et al., 2015, 627).

Many DSS establishments offer English as the mode of instruction over Chinese which is mainly offered in government schools. DSS are also free from the catchment area restrictions applied to government schools, enabling them to choose students that best suit their entry requirements (Ibid). Government, Aided and local curricula DSS schools are subsequently tiered according to the "academic standard of their student intake", from Band 1 to Band 3, with Band 3 being the worst (Chee, 2012, 7). Secondary schools in Band 1 are seen as the most

prestigious or desirable and often attain higher levels of funding due to the competitive advantage they have in attracting high achieving students (Lee, 2023). Due to this, many students who are weaker in their language will either move to the international sections, if affordable to their parents, or be placed within Band 3 schools, where the academic profile is not as high. The introduction of the DSS expanded the marketisation of education and created stratification of access, with more affluent parents opting for the private education network to maintain internationalism, with English often being seen as a prerequisite to work in the global market (Chou, 2012). This overt marketisation of the education system in Hong Kong, follows similar patterns as seen in the UK since the 1980s. As a former colony, Hong Kong's education system had historically borrowed from the policies of England; and the influence of marketisation seems to be another case of this 'policy borrowing', providing consumer choice and allowing families to 'play' the market of education to guarantee later economic success. Whether the preference for English fluency is solely a hangover from colonial times or is indeed a requirement for ease of access to employment in the global market, the EDB have clearly positioned private, and state aided private schooling as central to the education landscape of Hong Kong (Chou, 2012).

5.3 International Education in Hong Kong

International education is seen as an asset to Hong Kong's Administration, supporting the "aspiration to be Asia's World City and an education hub for the Region" (EDB, 2005). The international education system within Hong Kong has a long history, with one of the oldest private international schools, King George V, being founded in 1894 (Time Out, 2018). As with many countries, the definition of what counts as "international" can differ, being either due to offering a different curriculum to the host nation or through the makeup of the student intake (Bray and Yamato, 2003). In Hong Kong, both aspects of international education are evident, alongside a hybridised version of international schooling, where both local and international curricula are on offer. The EDB defines international education as, "those schools offering full-time non-local curricula, enrolling students who do not sit for local examinations", however this definition does not fully capture the full picture of how international education is offered, even within a more 'local' school (EDB, 2012, 1). As of 2022-2023, there were "54 international schools (including one special school) in Hong Kong. In the 2022/23 school year, these international schools, excluding the special school, provid[ed] a total of 46 253 school places and admit[ted] 40 626 students" (HKSAR Press Release, 2023).

Many private international schools are targeted towards English-speaking residents, both from the local Chinese community, but also the expatriate residents, mirroring the historic need for training "a bilingual, bicultural elite to function as middlemen between the British traders in Hong Kong and the merchants…" (Luk, 1991, 654). More recently, the growth of Hong Kong as an economic hub saw migration into the area, increasing the need for schools that provided expatriate families with education matched to their international exposure - especially European and North American experience. Around reunification, international schools saw an increase in numbers from local middle-class families wanting to provide their children with an education more closely matched to the countries being emigrated to, and for those returning to Hong Kong (Bray and Yamato, 2003). Whilst the overt colonialism in the governing of Hong Kong has lessened, others have noted that access to the western markets and participation in global education rankings, such as PIRLS and PISA, are modern enactments of colonial architecture, evaluating former colonies by how far they access and surpass the former colonial powers. Hong Kong is also uniquely placed, bridging both Eastern and Western cultures and politics, with much of the investment in China being funnelled through the markets of Hong Kong. International schools, therefore, market themselves to attract and fulfil the needs of their stakeholders to maintain good market positioning (Ball, 2016a, 2016b; Apple, 2012; 2001). Many parents opt into the more expensive international school system, "in order to obtain other qualities in the education system" that are not perceived as being within local schools (Bray and Yamato, 2003, 67).

Accordingly, international school places are not limited to non-local students. Local students are defined by the Legislative Council as "those who are Hong Kong permanent residents (with the right of abode in HKSAR) and do not have any valid passport other than the HKSAR Passport. Students not covered by this definition are all regarded as non-local students" (HKSAR, Press Release, 2023). Within the 2022-2023 academic year, 65.9% of students enrolled within international schools were classed as non-local, whilst 34.1% were considered local (HKSAR Press Release, 2023). There are also routes for non-local students to attend government schools if they meet the language and academic requirements. As explained previously, the government has created schemes to support non-English/Chinese speaking students access education through immersion and second language classes. Since 2019, there has been a slight decrease in the number of 'non-local' students attending international schools, perhaps due to the impact of school closures amidst the 2019 protests, the COVID-19 pandemic

and rising costs of private international schools. During this period there has also been a slight increase in the number of places held by 'local' students although some international schools, such as TSN and new international schools have entry quotas placed upon them, with 70% of the student body needing to be comprised of non-local students (HKSAR, Press release, 2023). Through the numbers of international schools present, and the support through DSS, the international education market within Hong Kong caters for a significant proportion of local students, perhaps reflecting the desires of local parents for a different style of education to the exams focused system within local schools (Watts, 2005).

5.4 The impact of COVID-19 on Hong Kong schools

The COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2019 and moving towards endemic classification in 2023, shifted education and teaching from in-person to online in many economically developed countries. For these countries, digital technologies played a significant role in facilitating the move to online learning as well as supporting hybrid models of teaching and learning when social distancing measures were eased (Nikolopoulou and Kousloglou, 2022). However, as has been noted elsewhere, not all countries and education systems had the means (economic/infrastructure/training) to move education online (Reimers, 2022). This inequality in access to and continuation of education during the pandemic serves to highlight and reinforce the stratification of social inequity present within the global education system (Reimers, 2022).

Within countries, inequalities appeared as students and schools from more affluent areas were well placed to move to online education, whilst those in deprived areas were disengaged from learning as they did not have access to the materials needed for learning to continue. In Hong Kong, Moorhouse, Lee and Herd (2020) state that schools were generally well-placed for the move to online learning models during the COVID-19 pandemic, since EDB supported schools had for the past few years focused on educational technologies. Many EDB and international/private schools also had already implemented a "bring your own device" (BYOD) policy with students (EDB, 2022; HKSAR Press Release, 2020). However, the Hong Kong Government observed a digital divide in education which affected the poorest families: "the rate of Internet access for families with monthly household income below HK$10,000 was much lower at 71%" (LegCo, 2021, para 3). Even with Government and EDB support programmes, only "32% of all primary and secondary schools […] participated in the

programme" as it required the implementation of Bring Your Own Device policies, that the poorest families could not fund (LegCo, 2021).

Although most Hong Kong schools and teachers had access to and training on digital tools, this did not mean such practice was fully embedded. A South China Morning Post article in 2020 highlighted structural inequalities that the pandemic further exacerbated. For example, "local schools asked parents and teachers to 'mentally prepare' for short summer holidays, whilst some private international schools had 'e-learning throughout'" (SCMP, 2020). More affluent schools, often within private education networks, where ICT was already integrated, were better placed to manage the shift to distance learning. For many schools, the emergency adoption of technology limited the ability to effectively integrate technologies and therefore "the effectiveness of online learning" (Nikolopoulou and Kousloglou, 2022, 1). The sudden shift increased teacher workload and pressure as they sought ways in which to deliver curriculum content and skills online. The change in working practices and conditions was not easy to navigate, even for those who might have considered themselves a "digital native" (Prensky, 2001). As one of the first geographical areas to experience lockdowns, China and Hong Kong schools used different models: fully distance learning, hybrid models with some groups onsite and others learning asynchronously, and truncated days combining independent work and focused skills review (Reimers, 2022).

Hong Kong teachers and students also faced unique challenges that were not present within other developed countries: lack of space (average Hong Kong apartments are only 172 sq. ft), extended social distancing measures, limited access to consistent high quality WI-FI in all areas, along with the difficulties of managing working from home when several people are using the space and resources (Moorhouse, et al.; 2020). Hong Kong and China also saw the implementation of some of the most stringent and longest lasting measures to limit the spread of the virus, including a policy of "zero Covid" resulting in only 16% of in-school education in the first four months of 2020, alongside repeated closures throughout 2020-22 (SCMP, 2022). In fact, the 2022-23 academic year was the first year that was completed fully in-school since 2019, where schooling was disrupted due to the social unrest in the region.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Egea suggested that most countries in the western world had a "detailed educational ICT (information and communication technologies) strategy" (2014, 267). The global shift from face-to-face working to online/distance learning platforms

precipitated a near tripling of the online meeting and teaching services: Zoom and Classroom (NYTimes, Koeze and Popper, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic, as a critical incident, has only served to heighten the reliance on digital technology within schools and as such, further the potential access technology businesses have in classrooms. Although the response in different parts of the world was different, what became abundantly clear was the central role of educational technologies in the learning landscape. In locations who experienced COVID-19 shutdown sooner (China and Hong Kong for example), and had high levels of mobile technology access, the shift to online learning, whilst not seamless, was able to partly fill the learning gap that was emerging.

5.5 Research Context

The School Network (TSN) is the largest English-Medium of Instruction school organisation consisting of 22 schools (including kindergarten and one special school), that operates international schools across Hong Kong. Of these 22 schools, five are secondary only and a further two are all-through schools. The network also operates one all-through school that caters for students whose educational needs cannot be catered for within mainstream classes (TSN website). The five secondary only international schools offer either the International Baccalaureate Curriculum (through Middle Years Programme (MYP), International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBDP) or Career Path (IBCP), or a mix of International GCSEs/GCSEs in Years 10-11, alongside MYP in Years 7-9 and IBDP/IBCP in Years 12-13.

Historically, TSN holds a unique position within Hong Kong as they occupy both the public and private education spheres, with fees “less than half the rate of international schools” (Forse, 2010, 59). More recently, EDB reviewed the provision of subvention to TSN, and it was agreed, due to the diversity in the market, that the historic support for TSN as the main English Language provision educator was no longer required as more schools were available on the market who offered EMI education that followed IGCSE and IB curriculum (EDB, 2024). This subvention is due to cease in 2029. Thus, in real terms, TSN would have to diversify their funding and without parents accepting the increase of fees for tuition, may become a loser within the market. As it stands, the branding of TSN and its privileged position within the Hong Kong system remains strong. In 2024, TSN changed zoning rules to allow greater parental choice - parents are no longer confined by mandated catchment areas for secondary schools but can instead apply to any of the TSN schools. Once within the school of choice, parents and

students are required to remain enrolled for two years before a move to another TSN school is approved. Secondary schools also have designated primary feeder schools, with schools required to provide places for all students in the primary feeder schools who wish to move to the secondary school. TSN now promises a guaranteed route from kindergarten through to Year 13 within a TSN school.

5.51 Governance at TSN and TSN Schools

As a network, and mirrored within the individual schools, TSN operates very much like a market entity, being governed by a board of directors, a CEO, and with each school having its own school council. Within the school councils, the chair, principal and TSN link member will report back to the CEO.

Hill College, one of the secondary schools within TSN, caters for approximately 1400 students from over 30 countries. There are also over 100 staff. As with all TSN schools, English is the medium of instruction, with teachers coming from English speaking countries. Hill College publishes Higher Education destinations as part of their annual report. In 2022, the top five destinations for students were the UK, Hong Kong, Australia/NZ, US and Canada (in decreasing order), again suggesting that students and parents at Hill College are internationally minded, seeing the school being able to provide a level of educational experience that facilitates access to international university.

5.52 The culture of online learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic at TSN and Hill College

During the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures in Hong Kong, Hill College expanded the use of their learning platform to house and track student work, alongside using digital video conferencing software to deliver live lessons. As the school had some experience of school closures during the civil unrest in 2019, there had been planning and training put in place to support staff. Nikolopoulou and Kousloglou's study (2022) acknowledged that teachers' perceptions of technology and the support they are given are key to whether teachers' view technologies positively. By the start of academic year 2020-21, staff were familiar with the use of Google Classroom for housing lesson material and marking students work, live content was delivered via Zoom, and teachers were encouraged to make use of offscreen and independent tasks during lesson time. The school purchased online subscriptions for a range of interactive lesson support tools, such as Kahoot, Peardeck etc. that provided asynchronous and

competitive aspects to maintain student engagement. Older exam classes even completed mock assessments online, supervised via zoom. For many students and staff, digital learning had become a new normal. Buchwald acknowledged in their study that there are three major themes when exploring teachers' perceptions of self during COVID-19 and the transition to online learning, "discouragement, optimism, and a lack of connection" (2022, 119). Whilst many secondary schools and teachers may have had the physical readiness for a shift to online learning, the mental preparedness and skills readiness for learning in this new environment may not have been present. Alongside this, the added stressors involved in quarantining/contracting the virus added to the psychological load borne by teachers.

5.6 Networked Schools

As a network of private international schools under the TSN banner, as explored here in Chapter Five and in Chapters Seven and Eight, schools within TSN compete within the local and international school education market for student enrolment. In this way, how the network, and then the schools, position themselves directly drives funding through student enrolment and the payment of international school fees. To maintain secure student roll and therefore funding, the vision, branding, and policies of the network need to be aligned and this alignment visible within the interdiscursivity of the policy texts.

5.7 Network and School Policy texts

Within Chapters Seven and Eight, the analysis focuses on the policies of both Hill College and The School Network. As part of a network of schools, Hill College is governed by The School Network (TSN) and policy is directed from the central office (TSNC) where official policy is articulated through strategic plans, frameworks, annual reports and toolkits for implementation. This research explored a range of network and school-based texts that could, using the definitions in Chapter Four, be seen as forming the EdTech policy ecosystem surrounding Hill College. The documents explored in Chapter 7 and 8 form part of the official discourse surrounding technology use within the school and/or wider network. Chapter 9 focuses on the teachers' discourses collected during the interview process.

TSN's organisational structure works to create an aligned vision, centred around the strategy documents and CEO Mailshots shared by the central office (TSNC), with autonomy for each school within the network to create individualised improvement plans (Strategic Planning Overview, 2024). The flexibility in how policy is interpreted and enacted within individual

schools could be seen as one way for TSN to capture micro-markets existing within Hong Kong (as explored in earlier in this chapter). Whilst governed by the parent organisation, each school within the network has day to day operational freedom to operationalise policies within their local context.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the tensions at the heart of the education system in Hong Kong and how its colonial background is present and influencing modern provision. It identifies that the Hong Kong education system is stratified through the inclusion of private and international markets built into its landscape. With both the Legislative Council and the Education Bureau linking technology use to economic success, the role of education with technology is emphasised. It confirms the importance of a technologically literate workforce and begins to outline some of the influences on education policy that come from governmental and economic priorities. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, with the resulting switch to online modes of learning and the inclusion of greater educational technology (EdTech), is also introduced here. This has led to greater inclusion of EdTech within daily practice.

Education within Hong Kong is subjected to a range of priorities and actors that link education to neoliberal ideologies of economic success and market competition. As will be explored in Part IV and V, the linking of education with economics situates it within a neoliberal discourse. These dynamics situate Hong Kong stratified education firmly within the framing of Strand One, where private international schools, such as TSN and Hill College, operate as examples of neoliberal governmentality. It could be expected that TSN and Hill College, as private international schools within Hong Kong, are caught between the competing priorities of stakeholders and actors. The impact of and value ascribed to EdTech is expected to be clear within the policy texts and teachers' discourses as will be explored in Part IV. This context also sets the conditions under which Strand Three, policy negotiation, and Strand Four, teacher subjectivities, unfold. Through the analysis in Part IV and discussion in Part V, a greater understanding of how teachers at Hill College (re)create their professional subjectivities alongside technology use, will be foregrounded.

Part III – Methodology

Chapter Six - Methodology

This chapter will outline the research decisions taken in applying a Foucauldian approach; explaining the research process, methodological decisions and methods appropriate to the research questions:

The three research questions identified through the Literature review are:

- Research Question 1 - How do policy discourses position The School Network within the Hong Kong education market?
- Research Question 2 - How do the policy discourses shape the role and affordances of EdTech:
    - within network and school level policy texts
    - within Education Team discourses?
- Research Question 3 - How does teachers' discourse enact the dominant policy discourses surrounding the use of technology?

Chapter Six will first explore the paradigmatic positioning within post-structuralist and qualitative design, as guided by Foucault's focus on 'how' questions understanding that knowledge, language and identity are socially mediated. The chapter will then explain the research design employed, as relevant to exploring discourses of policy by teachers, and the use of the case study and mixed methods approaches to data collection. Following this, the process of data analysis and critical discourse analysis informed by Fairclough's three-dimensional model will be explored. In exploring discourses within policy ecosystems and teachers' discourses, there is an understanding that this research is influenced, socio-politically situated, and guided by the normative practices of the local context (Foucault, 2002). As policies are specific "regimes of truth and value", how they use language to position practice and are enacted, as explored through teachers' discourse, can help to show how individuals are subjectivised (Ball, 2018a, 8). Finally, attention will be given to the ethical concerns for this doctoral research with focus paid to the researcher's positionality due to their insider-researcher role.

6.1 Paradigmatic Positioning - Post-Structuralism

The research process acknowledges that reality is complex, multifaceted and reflective of world views and beliefs (Scott and Usher, 2010; Creswell, 2009). Post-structuralism enables research to explore possible power relations and how this shape and transform subjectivities within

social contexts like schools. Post-structuralism recognises the "constitutive power of discourse" and provides an "antithesis of global capitalisms and neoliberalism's emphasis on the individual" (Gannon and Davies, 2007, 72). In exploring how discourses are reconstituted by globalised education policies that centre neoliberal ideologies as governing principles, adopting a post-structuralist paradigm helps challenge the notion that the knowledge claims made within educational policy texts are neutral (Devetak, 2009).

Whilst Foucault did not associate his work with any one paradigm, his views that meaning is negotiated and contextually situated and that truth is a construction of discourse help in guiding the positioning within a post-structural paradigm.

6.11 Core principles underpinning poststructuralism

Adopting a poststructuralist paradigm for this research is framed by the following core principles:

- Truth is not fixed (Derrida, 1978)
- Through the analysis of texts and discourses, it is possible to reveal the multiple meanings that shape reality and identity, emphasising that texts are never fixed (Gannon and Davies, 2007)
- Power relations shape knowledge (Foucault, 1982, 2000)
- Through the analysis of texts and discourse, the power relations and subjectivation that shape social relations can be revealed (Foucault, 2008a, 2012)

Post-structuralism acknowledges that truth is not singular but shaped by discourse, which is deeply rooted in societal, cultural, and historical contexts. This approach enables a focus on how individuals both produce and are shaped by language (Wright, 2003). Language, therefore, shifts from being a way to describe the world to one that is "constitutive of those worlds" (Gannon and Davies, 2007, 73). Informed by Derrida's understanding that thorough deconstruction of texts and language can reveal contradictions and assumptions inherent within them, this research also views meaning as fluid as suggested by Foucault (Chouliaraki, 2008). Situating this research within a post-structuralist paradigm aims to reveal the meanings inherent within the policy ecosystem and teachers' discourses within TSN and Hill College.

Within post-structuralism, there is the understanding that within discourse, "Knowledge is never unconditioned" and that due to "the heterogeneity of possible contexts and positions" no single perspective can be seen as the truth (Devetak, 2009, 190). Post-structuralism places emphasis on "identifying meanings that are context specific and that relate to the varying discursive practices operating" (Fawcett, Edley, and Wetherell, 2008, 667). As Wright (2003, 34) states, "the embodied self is socially constituted in relation to the social institutions and discourse". In analysing the language within the discourses of policy and teacher interviews, the post-structuralist lens in this study draws attention to how these discourses are a symbolic representation of the systems that govern the individual (Foucault, 2008a, 1971, 1988). A Foucauldian, post-structuralist approach to research enables investigation of how "power is operating, micropractices or everyday social relations" forming knowledge bases that are taken for granted (Fawcett et al., 2008, 668).

In exploring the discourses within the policy ecosystem, post-structural approaches seek to reveal "the discursive and regulatory practices in the texts" (Davies and Gannon, 2005, 312). It is through an investigation of discourse that the shaping of subjectivities and normative practices can be identified, leading to an exploration of potential relationships of power. Shaped by the social context of the school and the wider educational policy culture, post-structuralism can help draw attention to how power relations shape and transform their subjectivities (Foucault, 1979; Mbhiza, 2024). In exploring the discourses within a policy ecosystem that focus on Educational Technology (EdTech), the research examines how these texts construct normative practices within The School Network (TSN) and how teachers' discourses and subjectivities are shaped and redefined in this context. The adoption of a post-structuralist paradigm within this doctoral research helps to offer ways of investigating the power relations that are a part of everyday interactions. By revealing the fluidity of subjectivities, post-structuralism helps draw attention to how global policy narratives are (re)articulated in local policy ecosystems and individual teacher discourses.

In exploring how neoliberal ideologies are embedded within discourse, the paradigmatic positioning supports research reflexivity regarding normative and dominant discourses that are taken for granted. In focusing on the language used in policy and teacher discourses, post-structuralism enables attention to be paid to what *is*, not what *could* be said in any given context (Edkins, 2007). The tension between what is and what could be said exemplifies the relationship between knowledge and power. Rather than being seen as knowledge is

power/power is knowledge, but rather that they are both expressions of each other (Jackson and Mazzei, 2020). Approaching research through a post-structuralist paradigm helps researchers focus on the dynamic relationship between individuals and the meanings they create and reproduce, through language (Wright, 2003; Foucault, 2002). Diaz-Bone (2006) suggests that for Foucault:

> *"At the centre of the analysis lies the individual and her/his discursive production as well as the relationship between discursive practices or discursive formations and processes of subjectification." (8)*

Drawing attention to the words and utterances used within policy, and how these are then internalised in individual teacher discourse, helps to problematise the social relations and teacher subjectivities. As articulated in the research questions, the focus on discourse and how subjectivities are formed with language, highlights the ways in which individuals are institutionalised in how they speak/write about their lived experience (Foucault, 1978; Prowell, 2019). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) state that research from a post-structural paradigm sees that "individuals are not simply puppets of a given system; people are diverse and different, indeed they may carry contradictions and tensions within themselves" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017, 93). This gives legitimacy to the plurality of voices present within the policy texts and teachers' discourses as this doctoral research is not trying to find a cause/effect relationship but rather, capture the complexity of discursive realties within TSN and Hill College.

Post-structuralism also suggests that an individual's discourse is both shaped and will then further shape their social and cultural contexts. In co-creating their reality, both adopting and resisting the contexts that exert influence over them, the individual therefore is not powerless (Foucault, 1988). The post-structural paradigm helps to facilitate an exploratory approach that delves into the nuanced ways in which discourses both construct and are constructed by social contexts, enabling a deeper understanding of the interplay between global influences and individual agency. Devetak's (2009) explanation of language as being "less a neutral, pure medium of communication, than a mediating set of habits, conventions, values and prejudices enabling us to make sense of the world" conceptualises that the way in which an individual decides to use/not use certain words signals how the individual positions themselves in relation to contextual narratives and practices (188). In using the interview method (explored later in this chapter), the focus is on getting in-depth individual perspectives of subjectivities within the TSN and Hill College policy ecosystem. This then enables a close examination of how

subjectivities are aligned or positioned as outside the dominant discourse (Diaz-Bone, 2006). Both positions can be seen as a productive exercise of power, enabling the individual to either resist or conform. Being able to reveal these tensions and contradictions within texts and discourses is an advantage of the post-structural paradigm.

The post-structural paradigm adopted within this research helps to facilitate an exploratory approach that delves into the nuanced ways in which discourses both construct and are constructed by social contexts.

6.2 Qualitative Approaches to research

There has been much debate over the 'quantitative-qualitative' divide within research, especially within education and the social sciences (Cohen et al, 2002). This debate often focuses on the robustness of data and generalisability of findings, often valuing the 'scientific' over the interpretative. Whilst quantitative research often provides large data sets and statistical conclusions, qualitative research provides the researcher with opportunities to analyse a wide range of data sources that help to provide an in-depth focus on a single instance.

Qualitative designs in research, focus on the individual's meanings creation, often at the site of the research problem. In exploring the discourse of policy and teachers, there is a focus on the words that help to construct social realities (Creswell et al., 2017). Denzin and Lincoln (2013) state that qualitative research "consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (6). By following a post-structuralist paradigm, there is the understanding that the narratives of educators and policy discourses are contextually bound. This research aims to qualitatively unpick these socially constructed ideas (Holloway and Galvin, 2016).

Denzin and Lincoln suggest qualitative research is a process that "consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (2013, 6). Accordingly, by adopting a post-structuralist and interpretive paradigm this research seeks to make the worlds and situations of policy enactment visible. Researching teachers' discourses and how policy discourse shapes these from the global to the local level is influenced by political processes (Scott and Usher, 2010). By focusing on the single case of an international school in Hong Kong and drawing out understandings of "the world in terms of its actors", this research is situated within a qualitative research approach. This process enables the iterative investigation

of phenomena as they appear within the day-to-day work of the institution and those who work there (Cohen, et al., 2017, 181). As Morrison suggests, situating the research within a context where there is the "continual process of meaning construction" attempts to identify the practices and politics that entangle teachers in the co-creation of discourses of subjectification (2012, 20).

6.3 Case Study Methodology

Whether conducting quantitative or qualitative research, the main test for a research design is whether the choices made are feasible and logical (Yin, 2003). By utilising case study methodology, this research explored a single case, focusing on providing rich and deep articulations of social truths (Tellis, 1997). Case studies are acknowledged as providing an eclecticism in approach and it is this flexibility that supports my research (Yin, 2003; Bassey 1999 cited by Ashley 2012). This research adopts Creswell's definition that case studies are a methodology within qualitative research (2013).

In positioning this research within a post-structuralist paradigm and using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interrogate the discourses within the local policy ecosystem and individual teacher's interviews; the case study methodology helps to facilitate a "deeper understanding of the social, political, and historical circumstances" (Mohammed et al., 2015). Yet, this is not necessarily a transformative endeavour as Kincheloe et al., would suggest is key for research in a critical paradigm, as the focus was exploratory (2011). In doing so, this provided opportunities to draw attention to aspects of power within the discourses. Thus, whilst it is not situated in a critical paradigm its design is intended to maintain criticality, revealing how the "organisations and actors within the global education policy field" impact the discourses and subjectivities of teachers (Ball, et al., 2017, 19). 'Critical' then, for this research, emphasises the need to question dominant narratives and reveal hidden power dynamics, to capture diverse voices and experiences (Phillips, 2023).

Yin (2003) states the principles for a case study:

1. Investigates a contemporary issue, within its context, where the boundaries between the issue and context are not clear
2. Relies on multiple sources of evidence
3. The focus is on 'how' and 'why' questions.

Baxter and Jack (2008) state that in case studies; researchers often are too broad in question, topic, or objective. As such, it is important to bind a case to avoid this. This case study is bound by time and place (Creswell, 2003) as it focuses solely on the texts and discourses existing in one school and network within Hong Kong. In exploring policy and the contexts of international education, neoliberal ideologies, and EdTech, the phenomena and the context are bound together. It would be impossible to investigate without context being considered (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Case studies provide the opportunity to explore complex socio-political situations and relationships in detail as they are existing within specific contexts (Yin, 2003). Within this research, these are the socio-political contexts and relationships that frame the TSN and Hill College policy ecosystem and teachers' discourses. It is the interconnectedness of the contexts and the case that gives case study research its strength (Hancock, 2006). Knowledge is context dependent, and the case study methodology holds context at its centre (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In Chapter Four and Five, the research contexts of EdTech and Hong Kong education were discussed. In holding these contexts central to the research, there is an understanding that The School Network (TSN) and Hill College are situated and framed by these.

The depth that case study methodology provides, along with the ability to analyse a range of data sources (policy documents, questionnaires, interviews), is a logical choice as it helps provide a picture of the complex social practices being examined (Miles, 2015; Njie & Asimiran, 2014; Yin, 2003). By exploring how individual teachers and school leaders enact policies, and how their discourses shape and are shaped by them, the case study methodology helps to "explore, contextualise and theorise practice", that are socially and collectively mediated (Miles, 2015, 312). Through this, there is also an understanding that the practices and discourses exist both prior and post data collection, and that in exploring language and discourse, teachers' subjectivities are a constant site of struggle that will continue to exist after the research (Miles, 2015; Weedon, 1996).

Much has been written regarding whether case study is a method or a research design (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2012). Whilst some might perceive the flexibility of the case study design to detract from the robustness of the research, its ability to capture the 'fuzziness' of social interactions helps draw attention to its complexity (Ndame, in Okoko et al., 2023). The focus on a single case and the lack of generalisability is often levied at case study methodology as a weakness (Stake, 2000). However, it is the ability to draw attention to the social interactions and complexities, alongside the ability to analyse the multifarious phenomena that contribute

to the case, which make it a logical choice for this research (Cohen and Manion, 1989). Alongside this, adopting the case study enabled a pluralistic approach to data gathering. This approach, rooted in critical theory, recognizes that singular perspectives may overlook nuanced realities within social phenomena (Frost, et al, 2011).

In adopting a more critical research design, the case study also provides the opportunity to analyse existing "power relations" and how teachers are situated within this (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, 59). Mohammed et al. (2015) explore the value of case study within post-structuralism, as providing flexibility and a comprehensive exploration of the discursive contexts that shape the subjectivities of teachers at TSN and Hill College. As Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) note, case studies encourage multiple kinds of data to be collected, enabling strategic selection of data within the post-structural paradigm. As a methodological approach, it also allows for exploration of multiple accounts of the same phenomena, supporting more nuanced examination of the ways in which "people resist power relations" (Mohammed et al., 2015, 103).

Just as policy enactment is centred around relationships of power, so the act of research is also centred around power. Drawing attention to the inherent impacts of power, especially as these dynamics can both privilege and exclude, is essential for critical research and follows in the traditions of earlier critical research (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Apple, 2004, 2001). The critical approach to both the case study but also the theoretical framework and analysis will support in drawing attention to how individual teacher subjectivity is formed and reformed by policies that govern them (Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2018; Olsen, 2008; Power, 1994). There is an understanding that through the poststructuralism paradigm, case study methodologies enable close focus on the multiple ways that structures and language shape and are shaped by people and practices.

6.4 Sampling

Originally the study planned on completing a comparative case study, selecting schools from within the educational network of the researcher. As a middle leader within The School Network, there was access to participants necessary for capturing a representative sample. However, due to changes in personal circumstances and the lasting restrictions on Hong Kong created by COVID-19 pandemic measures, this was not feasible, and as such it was decided

that the study would focus on the policy texts of TSN and those of Hill College as a single case. TSN has also been chosen as it holds significant market share within the local international school's context. In focusing on one site within TSN, Hill College, the research will identify how the macro political agendas are reconstituted locally, providing feasible access to participants (Manion and Morrison, 2011; Gobo, 2006).

Completing a case study within the same network where the researcher is employed, provided opportunities for both convenience and purposeful sampling of both documents and research participants (Creswell, 2013). The research, in seeking to explore how policy is rearticulated at the different levels of a school, looked to recruit a cross-section of participants so that various perspectives and leadership levels could be captured (Creswell, 2013). These include TSN leadership, Hill College leadership and individual teachers. It is important to the case study design, that a clear rationale for who/what is included within the data (Creswell, 2013). As such, within the purposive sampling, policy documents were considered initially due to the reference to concepts from the literature review such as EdTech and neoliberal ideologies. To capture the current context of TSN and Hill College, CEO and Principal newsletters were also included. It was also decided to use both purposive and convenience sampling for the interview participants to represent as many of the actors involved in school policy formation and enactment, as such the documents and some participants are sampled via purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013).

To capture the full voice of the school, a questionnaire was sent to all members of the school teaching staff at Hill College, approximately 100 members of teaching and educational assistant staff. Within the questionnaire an option for further contact and participation was included (discussed later in the chapter). Whilst the questionnaire did generate quantitative data regarding technology use (see Appendix I), the main purpose of the questionnaire was to introduce the study to the school site and to identify as many possible research participants as possible. This helped ensure a sample size that would capture the different perspectives within the school (Creswell, 2013). At this level there was an opportunity for staff to opt-in to the interview stage. Secondly, to capture voices across faculties and management levels, an email was sent to members of TSN departments with links to curriculum, technology, and professional development. A self-selection as well as targeted purposive sampling for interview was chosen to help represent the wider school population (Schrier, 2011; Manion and Morrison, 2011). Whilst population representativeness is not necessary for the case-study methodology,

this study also wanted to include voices that may diverge from the consensus (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Woodside, 2010).

Following the questionnaire, self-selected participants were identified, and this sample was added to those who were purposively sampled from the school and network leadership teams. An invitation to participate in the interviews was then sent to all potential participants (see Appendix B for the overview of participants). The sampling at this first stage of recruitment was a combination of purposive and convenience for both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire generated 30 complete responses and 3 nil returns. From the 30 responses, 21 participants indicated willingness to participate in the interview. Two were excluded after the questionnaire stage due to them being within a faculty over which the researcher had leadership involvement, and one further declined the invitation to interview. To increase the robustness of the data collection, the recruitment email was repeated, and a total of 31 participants were invited to participate in interview. Of these, 30 completed the interviews. Participants at Hill College were incentivised with a coffee and food voucher to recognise the time commitment they were making in agreeing to be interviewed.

Alongside the sampling of participants for research, the policy documents also needed careful sampling. Through using "typical texts" (Wodak and Meyer, 2015, p14) within the network and school, the study wanted to avoid the limitations of focusing on a single text (Yates, 2001). To identify "typical texts" the research focused on documents from TSN and Hill College that directly referenced educational technology or neoliberal ideologies highlighted in the literature review. The process began by accessing open-access policy texts and school/network texts that focused on educational technology. Alongside these, the CEO Mailshots and Principal newsletters were also screened for references to neoliberal concepts and EdTech. Search terms included: EdTech, Technology, Global, Market, Future, Success. These texts were then screened for mentions of key themes and further refined through consultations with educational policy experts to ensure relevance. Appendix K outlines the documents that were identified for inclusion as "typical" texts for analysis from TSN and Hill College.

Refining the sampling processes prior to data collection but also collecting data from several sources/the same source over several instances, helped to avoid Breeze's criticism of the susceptibility to bias that could occur with critical discourse analysis (2011). After all, one strength of the case study approach is its reliance on multiple sources of evidence providing it

with not only rich data, but it can data that can be used to falsify ability to combine data from a range of sources to provide insight into "a larger class of cases", rather than population generalisation (Gerring, 2006, 20). The full range of policy texts included within this study is available in Appendix K, whilst an overview of the participants included within the interviews is available in Appendix B. Interview participants, an overview of their position within TSN and Hill College, alongside faculty area is set out in .

Questionnaire and interview participants also reflected the diffuse leadership structure of TSN schools and Hill College in particular, with teachers often having middle leadership experience within their department, or higher Faculty/Year/House group leadership, in addition to teaching (Appendix I Figure 7.). Three interview participants, Lexi, Becky, Karl, are members of the school's senior leadership and liaise more closely with TSN and network schools, through working parties such as curriculum coordinators. Dan (Creative Arts) leads on educational technologies at Hill College alongside having a curriculum leadership position. As EdTech Lead, he is part of TSN's ICT Strategy Group and Educational Technology Network acting in an advisory role to Senior Leadership at Hill College. He is categorised as a Teacher-Leader here. (For a full description of the interview participants' roles, please see Appendix B. Figure 3). Teaching staff at Hill College are highly experienced, averaging over 19 years in the profession and more than ten years at Hill College (see Figure 4 also Appendix I, Fig 5., Fig. 6.).

Figure 3. Interview participants represented all leadership levels at Hill College, teachers without leadership responsibility, and members of TSN Education Department. Worth noting here and explored in greater depth in Section 6.8 of this chapter is the classification of subject area for staff at Hill College. Given that some subject departments within the school have only one teacher, the decision was made to use faculty references common across education, to provide anonymity to the participants. As such, the label of "Humanities" is well-represented within the participants as this represents several smaller subject areas.

6.41 TSN and Hill College Policy Texts

TSN's strategy and policy documents frame the official discourse practices for individual schools and teachers. See Table 4 below for an overview of categories of the typical policy texts included in the research.

Table 4. Overview of Policy Texts

Policy Purpose	Number from TSN	Number from Hill College
Governance and Accountability	4	4
Annual Reports	2	1
Agenda/Culture Setting	9	14

The policies created by TSN and shared with Hill College during the year of research (2023-24) are set out in Appendix K Table 12. The texts selected are official strategic and planning texts; the annual report reflecting the summation of the previous year's achievements within the organisation; and the CEO Mailshots which could be seen as articulating the policy direction and values under a single identity. Six policy texts relevant to EdTech and TSN positioning are explored alongside the analysis of CEO Mailshots sent to all staff members. These are indicative of policy direction throughout the academic year 2023-24, aligning with the data collection phase of the research. In focusing on these documents, the aim is to create an understanding of the policy ecosystems, as defined in Chapter Two, that interact with and impact teachers' engagement with technology.

The policy texts that frame the discursive context of Hill College during the year of data collection (2023-24) are set out in Appendix K Table 13. Similarly to TSN, the table reflects a range of strategic texts and marketisation roles. Texts identified within this table were all

accessible through the school's website during the year of data collection and can be categorised as follows: promotional; pedagogical; accountability; and infrastructure, with many texts fulfilling more than one role as seen in Appendix J. The analysis of these texts against the Research Questions and sub questions will show how EdTech is both operationalised and promoted by the school to the wider community, extending the narratives of neoliberalism and marketisation. Given the public audience for these texts, the school could be seen as positioning itself as forward-thinking and technologically integrated. By suggesting that the school community is also technologically minded or valuing the use of technology, these texts then echo those of TSN, and in doing so, the policies rearticulate and negotiate the school's positioning within the marketisation and operationalising of EdTech.

By analysing the TSN and Hill College texts together, Chapter 8 and 9 will explore how the discourse within the policy ecosystem are incorporated into the more local level of the school.

6.42 Interview Participants Education Team (TSN)

Three participants were selected from the Education Team, as part of the purposeful sampling's aim to capture voices from TSN that interact with schools to support and develop practice and alignment with TSN goals. The three participants; Marc, Aaron and Zan, were chosen due to their roles within the Education and EdTech Teams where they shape and guide EdTech use and provision, curriculum, and professional development opportunities. The Education Team within TSN work alongside the CEO, Principals, Senior and Middle Leaders within schools to liaise with individual schools in supporting the strategic development and curriculum goals of both TSN and the individual schools within the network. Of the three, two have been teachers and Heads of Subject within the TSN network schools in the past five years, although not at Hill College. A brief biography of the participants is provided in Chapter Ten to provide contextualisation for their discourse immediately prior to analysis.

6.43 Interview Participants Hill College Teachers

Hill College is an English Medium Instruction (EMI) school, and all teachers are fluent English speakers. All interviews were conducted in the researcher's native tongue, English. Participants from Hill College came from nine (out of ten) different departments within the school. Whilst one department was excluded from participation in the interviews (as explored within Chapter Six), the participants here represent each of the remaining departments within the school.

Interviews were conducted with at least one participant from each faculty (see Figure 3 and Appendix I. Fig 5., Fig. 6).

Questionnaire and interview participants also reflected the diffuse leadership structure of TSN schools and Hill College in particular, with teachers often having middle leadership experience within their department, or higher Faculty/Year/House group leadership, in addition to teaching (Appendix I Figure 7.). Three interview participants, Lexi, Becky, Karl, are members of the school's senior leadership and liaise more closely with TSN and network schools, through working parties such as curriculum coordinators. Dan (Creative Arts) leads on educational technologies at Hill College alongside having a curriculum leadership position. As EdTech Lead, he is part of TSN's ICT Strategy Group and Educational Technology Network acting in an advisory role to Senior Leadership at Hill College. He is categorised as a Teacher-Leader here. (For a full description of the interview participants' roles, please see Appendix B. Figure 3). Teaching staff at Hill College are highly experienced, averaging over 19 years in the profession and more than ten years at Hill College (see Figure 4 also Appendix I, Fig 5., Fig. 6.).

Figure 3. Research Participants - Distribution of Teachers' Disciplines and Faculties

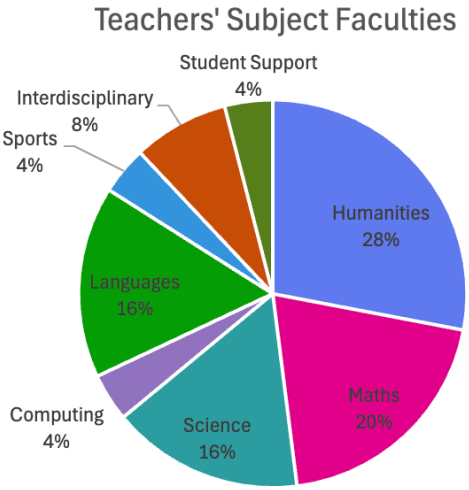
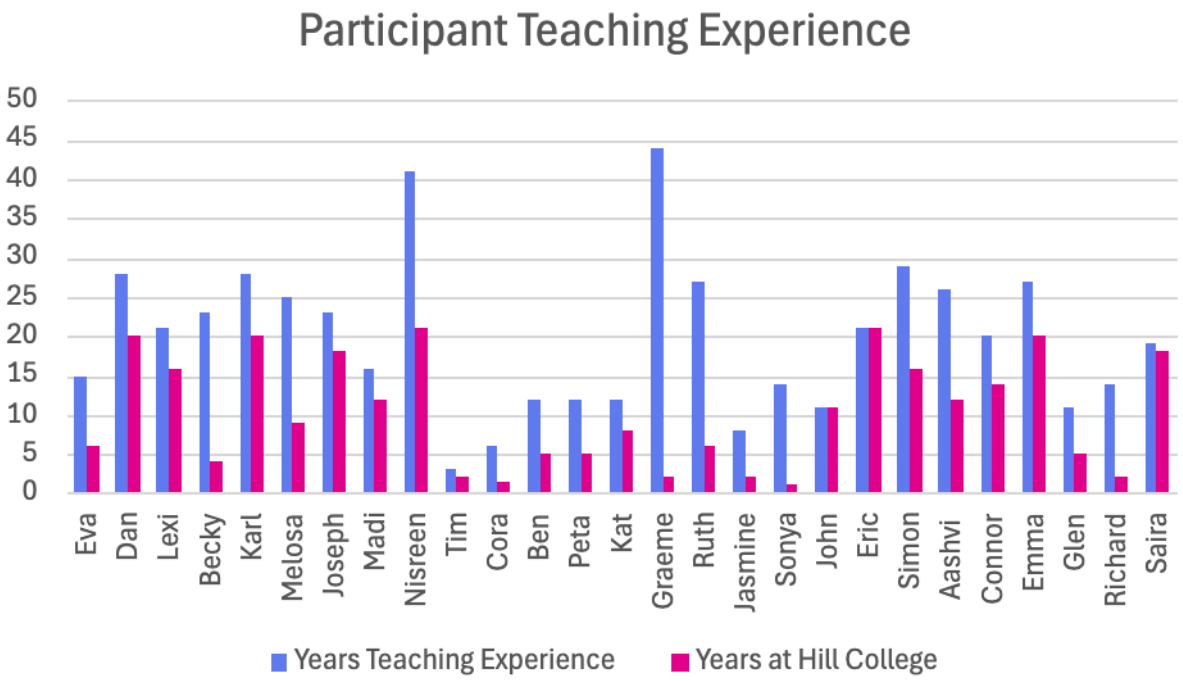


Figure 4 Participant Teaching Experience



6.5 Research Methods

One of the affordances of the case study methodology is the ability to use a range of methods to collect data and how multiple sources of evidence can help in constructing validity (Yin, 1994). As previously mentioned, case study also provides thick descriptions and narratives (Flyvbjerg, 2011, 311; Yin, 2003). What follows here is an exploration and consideration of the research methods used for data gathering. A fuller explanation of the approach taken for data analysis is provided in section 6.6.

The data was collected from the following sources: document analysis to identify themes; responses to the questionnaire and one to one semi-structured interviews. The data was collected in three stages during the academic year 2023-2024:

- Stage One – Policy Text identification and initial analysis conducted; August 2023 – July 2024
- Stage Two – Questionnaire sent to staff and analysed; October-November 2023
- Stage Three – Interviews conducted and initial analysis; January – June 2024

As policy texts, such as CEO Mailshots and Principal Newsletters became available during 2023-2024, these were also analysed. The Annual Reports for 2023-24, which were published in 2025 are also included as reflective documents. In completing the policy collection and initial analysis in Stage One, this enabled the creation of the questionnaire and interview schedule around dominant discourses from the policy texts, alongside understandings from the Literature Review.

6.51 Documents

By analysing the policy documents, we can identify the discourses and constructs that exist within the education context. In analysing pre-existing texts, the research sees them as the "equivalent to the information" gathered from the interviews (Morgan, 2022, 65). As documents are constructs that are both enactments of and on, they relate to aspects of the social world, what is valued and what is not, reflecting the beliefs of the research context (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Documents are not static, in so far as they are put into practice as live things, especially when exploring policy documents that are enacted by the individual. Subsequently, they represent a form of stable data (Morgan, 2022). Whilst informed by a Foucauldian

approach, the researcher understands that a text's meaning and enactment is dynamic and shaped by context. Additionally, the publishing of texts to websites or them being printed as policy documents within an organisation frames the contextual positioning that helps to identify how the community is constructing its identity (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Morgan, 2022). As this doctoral research explores the ways in which teacher subjectivities are shaped, the exploration of the policy texts within the community is a logical choice. For this research, online documents were taken from TSN and Hill College websites (website pages, newsletters, CEO Mailshots), as well as official strategic/policy texts (Denscombe, 2010).

The first two research questions focus on what actors shape the policies; it was important to identify the locally situated policies that would perhaps impact directly on the school and teacher. Therefore, this study combines both TSN documents related to educational technologies, local governance, and the education market that situate TSN within the Hong Kong and international context, alongside those that directly impact Hill College. Within the study, policy documents hold two positions: 1. Within the literature review, framing the wider context of the study and 2. Within the data analysis, the documents used are considered supranational, reflecting the global trends within education policy networks, technology, and the EdTech business. It is through these texts that the neoliberal discourses and the marketisation of education were identified. These policy documents frame the social, cultural, and political contexts for the study, that the individual site policies and discourses are situated within (Sankofa, 2022). Within position 2, the data analysis, the policies were the 'local' policies of TSN and Hill College, providing a rearticulation of the global agenda within TSN and Hill College's normative framing (Denscombe, 2010).

Informed by Flick (2018), the choices as to which policy texts to include within were central. As the policy texts being accessed had already been published by TSN and Hill College, there were fewer concerns regarding credibility and authenticity (Payne and Payne, 2004). All policy texts were extracted from the network/school websites or via the official policy portal accessible to all TSN staff. Some texts were handed to the researcher as physical documents issued by TSN. Choices, however, were made regarding the representativeness and significance of the policy texts (Morgan, 2021). As many policy texts included within the research were widely available (to the community via websites and school staff via intranet) within the year of data collection, the policy texts were seen to be representative of the current discursive context of TSN and Hill College (Payne and Payne, 2004).

In deciding which policy documents to include, purposive sampling was used as the literature review had developed a sense of which policy texts would be included (Flick, 2018). Initially, TSN and Hill College websites were explored for reference to the following: neoliberalism, market position, competition, EdTech, and digital technologies. This helped ensure that the number of texts were manageable and relevant to the research questions (Flick, 2018). Whilst for Hill College the website generated multiple texts, for TSN fewer texts made explicit reference or were publicly accessible. The decision was made to also include the CEO Mailshots and Principal Newsletters, alongside Annual Reports, as their inclusion not only helped to capture the culture in the network but also provided rich data and numerous references to themes from the literature review (Flick, 2018; Morgan, 2021). In this way, the policy texts included could be seen as both public, such as the Annual Reports and website texts, and private such as the CEO Mailshots as they were produced by and for the network (Payne and Payne, 2004). Finally, policy texts were also included if/when mentioned within participant interviews. Documents were excluded if their main audience or enactment was with students as this research was focused on the teachers' discourses and enactment.

Once relevant texts were identified, the raw data needed to be made ready for analysis (Denscombe, 2010). Firstly, a copy of the written text was made. Where these were online or digital files, the files were downloaded, the text copied into a word document, saved on a local hard drive and then imported into the analytical software used (see Section 6.6 for more details). Where in the initial reading it was identified that only a section of the text was relevant, the whole document was still uploaded into the analytical software. Working reflexively, and guided by Foucault and Critical Discourse Analysis, it was important that contextual factors and language that was not apparent in the first reading was not excluded (Denscombe, 2010).

The texts were read iteratively, initially coded to help identify working ideas that guided the formation of questions within the first two stages of data collection: the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview questions. The initial coding focused on identifying normative phrases related to technology and its affordances (Sankofa, 2022). This helped shape the questionnaire and interview questions and provided new insights into the prevailing normative discourses. As the research developed, the growing knowledge of the field also helped to provide a deeper understanding of the research problem (Payne and Payne, 2004). As such, the coding and rereading of the texts became an iterative process, and the importance of the texts

as being responsive to global educational trends became apparent (Denscombe, 2010; Morgan, 2022; Sankofa, 2022).

The selection of policies, as explored in Chapters Eight and Nine, and Appendix K, sought to capture the discourses that govern the school and teachers and the aims of the research (Finnegan, 2006; Sankofa, 2022). Through the documents from the Hong Kong Education Bureau, used within Chapter Five, the study sought to identify how the TSN and Hill College Policy texts reflected the global policy narratives established in the literature review. The use of network and school policy texts helped to establish the official policy ecosystem and discourse that surrounded the participants (Sankofa, 2022). In analysing these texts, the aim was to explore how global policy narratives are rearticulated at the local level of school policy and then internalised by teachers. The layers of policy analysis (network and individual school) correspond to the three levels of participants involved in the study: Education Team, school leaders, and teachers – providing the rich data needed within a case study (Yin, 2003). By tracing how policy discourses are framed and then enacted, it was possible to identify parallels between the discourses in the policy documents and the interview data (Bryman, 2016).

6.52 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are common tools for data collection in mixed methods approaches to case-studies and much literature exists regarding the efficacy of them (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Within this study, the questionnaire was used in the first phase of data collection for two purposes: 1. To provide an overview of the perceptions regarding technology, technology policy and education within the site; and 2. To help identify participants for interviews. In this sense, the questionnaire could be considered a learning process for the research project and a tool supporting participants in becoming comfortable with the research (Cohen et al., 2018). Many of the questions asked for factual information regarding life history and the operationalisation of EdTech within teachers' practices at Hill College. The final three questions were open ended to garner opinions regarding policy statements identified within the Hong Kong Education Bureau's ITE[14]. Both types of questions are common within questionnaires (Denscombe, 2010).

[14] ITE stands for X as explored in Chapter 5.

The questionnaire provided a means to introduce staff to the doctoral research and was presented to staff during a school briefing, alongside a separate email with the link to the questionnaire embedded. It was important to give staff some knowledge of the study and the questionnaire so that they could decide whether to participate prior to the email being sent to them, but it also gave potential participants a chance to ask questions of the researcher and thus feel adequately informed (Denscombe, 2010). Whilst some might suggest that introducing the study in a more formal setting of a staff briefing, where key messages are passed on by leadership to the whole staff, might imply obligation to complete; it was felt that this was outweighed by the tacit approval for the study by Leadership, making staff feel that their involvement would not be seen negatively. Ultimately, staff could decide not to complete the questionnaire and withdraw completely from the research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018).

Questionnaires often have low return rates. Consequently, the questionnaire was sent to approximately 100 teaching staff within the school, after it was introduced during a morning briefing slot, with 33 responses being submitted between October and November. To respect the time of participants, the questionnaire was completed online using the web based SurveyMonkey and included an approximation of time to complete, with a progress bar next to each question so that participants could gauge their progress. Using online questionnaire software had research advantages - speed, automatic sorting of data and the ability to run basic analysis within the program, making it suitable for this research project (Denscombe, 2010).

The questionnaire began with a brief outline of the study (see Appendix C), giving the contact details of the researcher and their supervisor (further ethical considerations are discussed later in this chapter). The questionnaire included a mix of closed questions with multiple choice responses as well as several opportunities for open comments boxes, to provide opportunities for all voices to be heard (Denscombe, 2010; Cohen et al., 2011, 2018). The closed questions allowed for quicker comparisons whilst the optional “other” open box enabled individuals to share ideas not originally considered during the design stage. This also prevented the option lists becoming overly long (Denscombe, 2010). The questionnaires were based around the themes and initial research questions identified from the literature review and from policy texts from the Hong Kong Education Bureau and TSN, with the three final open-ended questions asking participants to offer comments on three statements from the policy texts. The three open ended questions gave teachers a chance to share their personal narratives, providing areas for

further discourse analysis and opportunity for the researcher's suppositions to be challenged as part of the reflexive process of analysis (Cohen et al, 2018; Morgan, 2022; Sankofa, 2022).

At the end of the questions, there was an option for staff to leave contact details if they were happy to be contacted for phase two of data collection: the interviews. This was important to enable staff to self-select and by placing this at the end of the questionnaire, staff would already have an awareness of the types of questions being explored and would be better able to give informed consent.

6.53 Interviews

Interviews help researchers gain information regarding the participants' world view and are widely used in both post-structural paradigms and case study methodology, especially when considering complex phenomena (Denscombe, 2010, 173). Interviews provide spaces for meaning creation, but there is always a power imbalance between the researcher and the participant, as the researcher directs the flow of questioning and conversation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Denscombe (2010) also acknowledges the power imbalance within research interviews as the agenda is set by the researcher. An important ethical concern during the interview process was how to signal to participants what was "on" and "off" record, especially at the end of the formal questions, where there was the potential to slip into co-worker roles (Denscombe, 2010). Within the interview schedule, verbal attention was drawn to turning off the recording device, so that participants knew that any continued conversations were now private and not considered part of the research conversation (Denscombe, 2010; Cohen et al., 2018).

The narratives produced within the interview context are situated within socio political contexts and contexts of power (Jäger and Maier, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018). The meanings and knowledge created within the interview are negotiated. As explored later in this chapter (see section 6.81), the positionality of the researcher and researcher identity can impact the nature of the interview (Denscombe, 2010; Tanggaard, 2009). Tanggaard (2007) explores the power dynamics within interviews, especially considering the ways in which the discourses of researcher and participant "cross, touch, ignore, and exclude each other" (160-161). Situating the research within a Foucauldian and post-structuralist paradigm is to understand that meanings are both created and downplayed through discourse (Jäger and Maier, 2016).

Discourse within an interview is not naturally occurring but is instead a negotiated subjectivity in response to the context, questions, and researcher (Tanggaard, 2007). In using the semi-structured interview to understand the world from the participants perspective, there is an understanding that the interview process represents a specific context for dialogic production (Tanggaard, 2009, 1499). What is of focus is not the subject themselves, but the discourse and the interview process is one method that can reveal how language creates subjectivities (Tanggaard, 2009; Lippke and Tanggaard, 2014). Within this research, there is clear understanding that the interview is located within the wider socio-political contexts of Hill College, TSN, and Hong Kong, and thus in the structures of power.

The average length of each interview was 40 minutes, with the shortest one being 30 minutes and the longest 76 minutes. Research participants were asked to choose a time and location of their choice, with four interviews being conducted over Zoom, three were conducted offsite at a café, whilst all others were conducted face-to-face at Hill College or TSN. At Hill College, some participants opted to conduct the interviews in their teaching rooms, some in a meeting room, and some in a staff room. At TSN the interview was conducted in a private office space.

The interview method here used semi-structured questions to allow for open sites of negotiated meaning to be created (Ruslin, et al., 2022; Denscombe, 2010). Whilst each interview used the same interview schedule (see Appendix A), flexibility was built in to allow for follow-up and probe questions (Cohen et al., 2018). This allowed for parity across the interviews but also gave opportunities for asking for clarity and developing richness in the answers (Cohen et al., 2018). The parity in the interview schedule supported initial coding, meaning finding and identifying similarities across multiple texts. Interview questions were developed out of the research questions identified during the literature review and because of the initial analysis of the policy documents and questionnaire data.

As a representational practice, decisions regarding transcription - what to transcribe, what to omit - is a site in which power and bias can be present (Davidson, 2009). Approaching the transcription process, bearing in mind that the analysis would be using Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the focus in transcription was on the language, rather than any paralinguistic features. The interview data was transcribed using a web-based transcription service and then hand corrected. Any fillers removed in the initial web-based transcription were added back in and the transcription remains denaturalised; to show how societal structures and

practice determine discursive elements and vice versa (Fairclough, 2013). Whilst this may have made the transcript harder to read, removing these hesitancies may have removed aspects of the teacher's narrative and expression central to understanding the language and metaphors used. It was important to maintain as much of the participants' even as the transcription process constructed a version of their voice (Davidson, 2009). The transcripts were iteratively explored as new data emerged/information was gathered, following the Critical Discourse steps detailed in the next section.

6.6 Data Analysis

Through this research, a range of data was gathered: policy documents; quantitative and open-ended written responses from the questionnaire and semi-structured interview data. Each of these data sets was analysed using the most appropriate tools for answering the research questions and adhering to paradigmatic position. All policy texts, interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses were imported into Quirkos[15], a computer and web-based software to assist with qualitative data analysis.

As introduced earlier (section 6.51), policy documents were analysed first to identify themes and key phrases to help frame the questionnaire, but also as a data set, representing existing TSN and Hill College discourses. In analysing the policy texts that helped frame the policy ecosystem, these texts presented public and normative positioning of TSN and Hill College practices and were multifunctional (Finnegan, 2006). Multifunctional here is taken as a way of understanding the multilayered nature of meaning, but also how the texts perform functions that help to advertise to the wider community, frame the normative practices, and subjectivities enacted at Hill College and TSN. All texts were coded iteratively and the process of re-reading texts multiple times was essential so that the discussion reflected a reasonable interpretation (Finnegan, 2006).

In analysing both the policy documents, interviews and open-ended questionnaires as discursive texts, key phrases related to ideas from the literature review (e.g. neoliberalism, markets, EdTech etc.) were first identified. As discourses create beliefs about the world, first

[15] Quirkos is simple qualitative analysis software, available across multiple platforms, including cloud based. https://www.quirkos.com/index.html

identifying phrases linked to ideas in the literature review helped to identify dominant discourses and ideologies (Sapsford, 2006). These were used to help create initial nodes (see Appendix J). Each phrase/section was then analysed using the analytical schema informed by Fairclough's three-dimensional framework and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as explored in the next section (Fairclough, 1993, 2003). Appendix D contains the schema used for coding the policy texts and interviews. At each stage, the data was approached iteratively, seeing analysis as an evolving process (Denscombe, 2010). The first reading of the text focused on commentary, identifying the "dominant story" within the text (Devetak, 2009, 197). During this first reading, repeated phrases, positioning of TSN/Hill College, and phrases linked within neoliberalism and EdTech were identified. Fairclough (2000b) identified discursive phrases "including the symbolic resources of neo-liberal discourse" that prioritise narratives of progress, competition, modernisation and new productive subjectivities (148).

The next stages of reading were intended to deconstruct the linguistic choices to understand how the discourse creates meanings (Denscombe, 2010; Devetak, 2009). Each text was read multiple times, becoming familiar with the details in the text (Denscombe, 2010). Each reading alternated between identification of discourse features and situational features. Coding the data with these features helped to identify repeated expression and possible meanings/normative practices (Denscombe, 2010). This then supported identification of where interdiscursivity and intertextuality occurred both across policy texts and within the teachers' discourse. By analysing with CDA, the analysis drew attention to the power dynamics that were at the centre of teacher subjectification and the "structural power relations" present within education (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, 61). Further discussion of CDA is explored next.

6.61 Critical Discourse Analysis

As explored in Chapter Three, discourse is socially constructed and as such cannot be considered neutral (Foucault, 1971, 2022). Being shaped by knowledge and power relations, discourse is not static and the discourses existing within educational contexts can be seen as the reconstitution of macro-structures within the micro-structures of language (Rogers et al. 2005). Discourse here refers to both written and oral texts, and in analysing a range of policy, questionnaire and interview texts from within TSN and Hill College; there is an understanding that language is both meaning forming and produces subjects within the discourse (Graham, 2011; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Schiffrin, 1994). Foucault's concepts and approaches, as discussed in Chapter Three, are clear in this focus on power/knowledge relationships within

the institution and the normative ideologies that are created and reinforced. These ideas are central to the development of CDA (Rogers et al., 2005). In drawing attention to how discourse is socially mediated, CDA keeps at its centre that discourse captures a moment within the political, economic, and social (Fairclough, 2013). Fairclough's approach with CDA focuses on how language acts are understood as moments within and as a result of political, economic and social relationships (Fairclough, 2013). The use of CDA within this study aims to draw attention to the ways in which the macro-structures of society are replicated, reinforced, enacted, normalised, or resisted within the discourses of teachers (Rogers et al. 2005).

By being critical, CDA seeks to cast a critical lens over society, reducing "illusion" and providing spaces for "'subjugated knowledge' against 'dominant knowledge'" (Wodak and Meyer, 2015, p7). By adopting CDA for data analysis, the emphasis shifts to understanding how discourses and other social elements are either highlighted as powerful or dismissed (Fairclough, 1995). Additionally, it involves critically examining how discourses from other fields, such as economics, are recontextualised within the study's context (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). This approach enables a critical examination of how the political-economic framing of neoliberalism, being recontextualised within education, can be seen as an appropriation of external discourses and strategies within the school, used to support the interests of 'powerful' actors (Wodak, 2015). By applying CDA to educational research, the ways in which the macro-structures become articulated within the discourses of a school are explored, enabling a focus on how language "mediates relationships of power and privilege" (Rogers, et al. 2005, 367).

As the research explores policy and teacher discourses, Fairclough's three-dimensional model can help to analyse how these discourses both make and reflect social and political ideologies (Fairclough, 2001). In considering how international schools are marketised using EdTech, the ideologies and interests of stakeholders should come to the fore, foregrounding the social conditions, social institutions, and the wider level of society (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough's model focuses on the "interplay between three levels of social reality: social structures, practices and events" and in analysing teacher discourses surrounding policy enactment, micropolitical processes can be seen (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999 cited in Fairclough, 2013, 232; Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Fairclough and Wodak). Through exploring educational policies as a discursive event, it is possible to apply Fairclough's schema for discourse to the policy texts and teachers' discourses, identifying what

and how these texts work together to frame social practices (Raaper, 2016; Rogers, et al., 2005; Marginson, 2002; Fairclough, 1993).

Figure 5. Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of discourse analysis

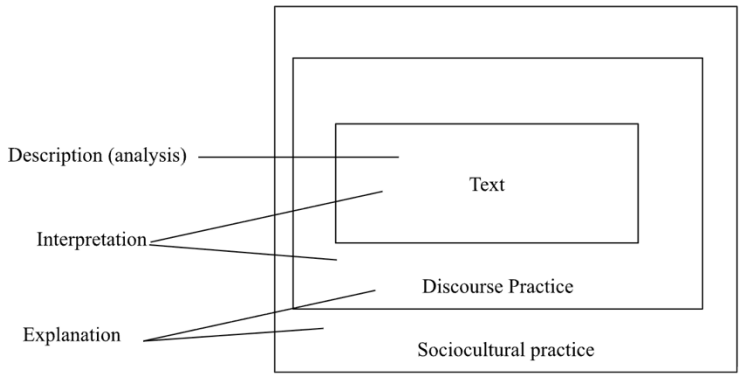


Table 5. Summary of Three Dimension applied to analysis

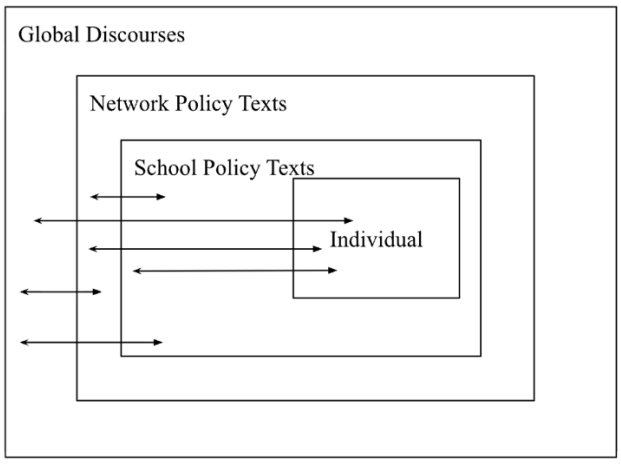
Text Analysis	Vocabulary (e.g. diction, hedging)
	Grammar (e.g. syntax, agency, modality, repetition)
Discursive practice What other texts, what other discourses it relates to Text, context and other discourses	*Text production and consumption*
	Situational Positioning
	Intertextual context *E.g. specific texts referred to*
	Interdiscursivity
Social Practice	*Determinants*
	Key Statements
	Effects

Within this research, policy texts, open-ended questionnaire responses, and interview texts are explored through Fairclough's three-dimensions (Figure 5). As seen in Table 5 the first stage of analysis focuses on the words themselves, and the grammar, and the second on discursive practices (contexts of production and interdiscursivity). Through this analysis, the text will then be explored as a social practice in Fairclough's third stage, drawing back to consider the ideas

explored within the theoretical frameworks in Part 1. The full schema used for analysis is in Appendix D. As Janks (1997) states, the process of analysis is not "tidily linear", and moving between the different stages of Fairclough's framework enables patterns and disjunctions within the discourses to become apparent (330). In looking at how these texts reveal social determinants and key statements, it will be possible to identify where discourse normalises or resists dominant discursive practices (Foucault, 1972; 1993).

By looking at the discourses within the texts that become normalised and presented as 'common-sense', we begin to see how those at TSN and Hill College become constituted within the situational, intertextual and social contexts of both the school, network and Hong Kong's international education markets (Foucault, 1978, 2012; Fairclough, 2000b; Janks, 1997). As Figure 6 suggests, the process of (re)articulation and transfer does not happen in one direction all at one time but instead is a process of negotiation and recontextualization at each stage.

Figure 6. Shaping of discourses within policy ecosystem.



Each text included within this research can be considered a discursive event, produced by and responsive to coexisting and sometimes contrasting discursive and socially constructed priorities (Fairclough, 1993). It is important that the analysis remains critical, wary of over generalisation or "obscuring differences which might actually turn out to be important" (Fairclough, 2008, 813). As such, the analysis will take place in two waves, paying close attention to the texts to enable proper analysis (Fairclough, 1989). Analysis in Wave 1 focuses on core policy documents, focusing on policy documents from The School Network and Hill College that explicitly referenced EdTech. By focusing first on the policy texts, the determinants at institutional level will be identified (Fairclough, 1989, 163). In analysing the

linguistic and intertextual features of the policy texts, we can see the ways in which the discourses of the policies work together to both reflect the macro interests of society but also to create grounding claims about priorities for the networks that frame the discourses present within the interviews (Fairclough, 1992, 1989; Salma, 2018).

The policy texts were initially coded and analysed following Stages 1 and 2 as outlined in Table 6 below. Particular attention was paid to where the texts repeated key phrases/ideas from the literature review and to where intertextuality occurred as these worked together to help build the contextually situated power/knowledge relationships (Fairclough, 1992b; Bazerman, 2004). As Fairclough (1995) states, "intertextual analysis shows how texts selectively draw upon orders of discourse – the particular configurations of conventionalised practices" (188). Through the interpretative writing of Stage 3, interdiscursivity became apparent as the use of similar phrases were identified. During re-reading, close attention was paid to how the texts included elements of neoliberalism, marketisation, and globalised educational policy narratives that help to reveal the rationalising and subjectivising nature of the discourses within TSN and Hill College.

Of particular interest was exploring how Hill College texts worked both intertextually and interdiscursively to create a dominant rationalising discursive context which then helped to construct the teachers' discourses explored in Wave 2.

Table 6. Stages of analysis and coding applied to all texts

Stages of analysis	Focus of analysis	Examples of codes used[16]
1. Use of language	identifying the metaphors used to capture meaning	Metaphors, similes, adjectives/noun phrases; commonplace assertions etc.
2. Grammatical structures	looking at the voice, use of pronouns, the positioning and use of power within the sentences	Repetitions within text; active/passive voice; Verb types; adverbs; syntactical phrasing; positioning of school; positioning of parents etc.
3. Interpretative stages - interdiscursivity	looking at the themes that occur across the texts and the overlap with the themes that have occurred in the policy etc.	Repeated phrases across texts; intertextuality; marketisation; Hong Kong context; etc.

[16] See Appendix K for full list of codes used.

The wave 2 analyses of teachers' interviews and open-ended responses to the questionnaires replicated the approach taken in Wave 1, focusing on the use of language, grammatical structures, and intertextuality. Of particular interest were the common-place assertions, repeated/allusive phrases that mirrored the language of the policy texts and how the texts constructed teachers' subjectivities. During the interpretive stage, attention was given to how the intertextual and interdiscursive elements of teachers' discourses interacted with those of the policy texts. This interaction helped co-create the knowledge and power relationships within the school, as well as shape and influence teachers' subjectivities.

Within Part IV, the discourse analysis of policy texts, Education Team, and teachers' discourses surrounding EdTech will be explored. Each chapter is framed around one of the three Research Questions:

- Chapter 8 - *Research Question 1 - How do policy discourses position The School Network within the Hong Kong education market?*
- Chapter 9-10 - *Research Question 2 - How do the policy discourses shape the role and affordances of EdTech:*
    - *within network and school level policy texts*
    - *within Education Team discourses?*
- Chapter 11 - *Research Question 3 - How does teachers' discourse enact the dominant policy discourses surrounding the use of technology?*

By reflecting first on the texts positioned at the level of the wider network and then focusing on those texts specific to the school, the dominant discourse surrounding technology, marketisation and subjectivation was identified. In structuring the findings chapters in this manner, the aim is to trace how The School Network (TSN) and Hill College policy texts work interdiscursively to create a policy ecosystem that positions and frames EdTech and teachers within neoliberal frameworks of marketisation and subjectivation (Ball, 2023). By focusing Chapters Nine and Ten on the analysis of policy texts, the tensions and priorities of the network and school will be foregrounded prior to the analysis of the Education Team Discourses and how these begin to (re)articulate and (re)negotiate policy discourses. Following this, the teachers' discourses will be analysed in Chapter Eleven. Structuring the chapters in this way, will draw attention to the extent to which teachers internalise and negotiate policy texts, leading

to examinations of how the framing of EdTech in this manner can be seen through a lens of governmentality and power (Lorenzini, 2023).

6.7 Combining Foucauldian and Faircloughian approaches to analysis

In approaching this research with both a Foucauldian theoretical framing and a Faircloughian approach to analysis (through an adoption of the latter's three-dimensional frameworks); a clearer explanation of their approaches to discourse is useful here. Foucault's concept of discourse understands it as a collective practice that not only created shared norms but also creates individual subjectivities (Diaz and Bone, 2008). Discourse, as explored in "The Archaeology of knowledge" can also be defined as the verbal performances (words) and a group of statements belonging to the same discursive formation (Foucault, 1989). Foucault then suggests that these utterances are ultimately intersecting with power (Ong et al., 2024). Therefore, the textual elements, whether analysing speech or written texts, are representations of a social process/product and become framed as much by what is said as they are by the non-discursive elements. Text quite often for Foucault, is seen to mean the written text. Fairclough, however, suggests that this definition should be expanded to represent all forms of language/text created within a social institution. For this research, Fairclough's definition of text is employed to help capture the written, verbal and questionnaire responses as examples of existing discourse within TSN and Hill College.

Fairclough's approach to discourse is influenced by Foucault, situating the linguistic elements within the wider socio-political framing. In also approaching discourse as social practice, Fairclough brings together analysis at the linguistic and syntactical level with a close focus on the text itself (Blommaert, 2005). The text is then situated within its discursive and social practice (Ong et al., 2024). The parallels with Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse are clear – the 'how' of what is uttered signifies the experience from an individual perspective. The individual utterances within the text are then located within the "social institution" (Ong et al., 2024, 4). This is ultimately shaped by the social practices and norms the individual is inculcated within, forming for Fairclough his notion of ideological-discursive formations (Fairclough, 2013). Whilst Fairclough's approach to CDA focuses on how the linguistic features construct and disseminate ideologies, Foucault's framing enables an understanding of

a wider application of discursive positioning within complex power relationships (Fairclough, 20113; Ong et al., 2024).

Combining Fairclough's approach as a methodological tool with the theoretical framing provided by Foucault, enables the research to draw attention to the forms and structures of the language, the normative framings of knowledge and the relationships of power present within the context. Thus, this enables the following: to see discourse as a unit of language in describing the features of the text being described (Fairclough, 2013), whilst also understanding that the linguistic features do not exist within a vacuum. As such, linguistic and syntactical features are representations of an individual's perspective, and relationship with, the social and discursive positioning present within a context. Discourse can therefore "… offer significant insights into the discursive power of language through the author's conscious or unconscious choices" (Ong, et al., 2024, 6). In combining this understanding with a Foucauldian approach to discourse, in the explanatory stages of CDA, it enables the research to go "beyond the text" (Johnstone, 2008). In applying Foucauldian theory, it becomes possible to identify the many potential influences that are framing and regulating individual subjectivities

Although the two approaches emerge from different epistemological traditions (Fairclough's rooted in critical linguistics and Foucault's in post-structural genealogy), their combination is methodologically coherent when treated as complementary rather than unified. Adopting a Faircloughian three-dimensional model for the analysis of data provides a structured, text-focused method for identifying linguistic elements (Fairclough, 2013). Foucault provides the conceptual tools to situate these within the wider socio-political regimes of power and subjectification that occur within the policy ecosystem (Foucault, 2002, 2020; Lynch, 2014). The methodological pragmatism here avoids collapsing the approaches into each other, rather using each for its respective strengths. Whilst full reconciliation between the two approaches is impossible, this research reconciles the tension pragmatically by using Foucault to frame discourse within the power–knowledge episteme beyond the text and Fairclough to operationalise the analysis through his three-dimensional framework (Johnstone, 2008).

6.8 Trustworthiness of the study

Case study research is often criticised for its 'woolly' data, which is why the use of multiple data points and sources were included within the analysis and theory formation. In focusing on

a single case, and one where participants were not representative of the wider population, the ideas/theories presented in this study are not generalisable to the wider population (Yin, 2013). The thick descriptions of how teachers are positioned within the wider educational technology debate is the desired end product (Denscombe, 2010). As such, the hope is to create analytic generalization, linking the findings here to the existing research literature (Yin, 2013).

In analysing with CDA, trustworthiness of the data can be demonstrated through theoretical, methodological, and data sources triangulation (Mullet, 2018). Alongside this, the clear articulation of researcher positionality helps to acknowledge that the act of analysis is itself an act of power (Lazar, 2007; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Within this doctoral research, the use of multiple methods tries "to explain more fully", highlighting the complexity of the discursive practices and tensions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, 141). In exploring policy texts, interviews and questionnaires, this study can provide a triangulation of methods even as the findings are contextually situated (Flick, 2018b; Bergin 2018). In exploring the findings from the questionnaire's open-ended questions, policy texts, and interview texts, there was possibility of comparing the perspectives within each text (Flick, 2018b). In exploring a specific context, there is a lack of generalisability, but in analysing data from different methods, with detailed descriptions of the research, as shown here and in Part IV, descriptive validity is achieved (Bergin, 2018).

6.8 Ethical concerns

Pring states that there is "no escaping moral deliberations", and quite often within qualitative research the notion of what harm looks like can perhaps be less clear cut than in medical research and experiments (2001, 409). Ethical decision making does not stop once the ethics proposal is approved but rather evolves as we are faced with decisions in the field (Wiles, 2013). Therefore, Byrne's principles for ensuring ethical research, which can be guided by the adage *do no harm* were central in researching within the site where I work and hold a leadership position (2022). I have adopted an ethics of care framework within my study, recognising the "interdependency of researchers and research participants" (Wiles, 2013, 15). This was important given my insider role as I already had close working relationships with many of the participants. An important aspect of post-structural research is the role of the researcher as an active participant in meaning-making (Carr, 2021). Therefore, the positionality of the researcher influences the analysis (Creswell, 2013). At all stages of the research journey, this

required reflexivity about my dual roles of researcher and practitioner and the influence this could have on the study. By situating my research within this framework, it drew attention to the reciprocal nature of care, supporting the focus on the cases and the focus on the claims of the individual (Wiles, 2013; Brooks et al, 2014). In doing so, the individual stories and voices are kept central to the research journey.

In this section, the main ethical considerations for the research and how the project endeavoured to *do no harm* will be outlined (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). Ethical approval was gained from the School of Education ethics committee prior to the data collection phase of the research (see Appendix J for confirmation of approval).

6.81 Insider Research and Positionality

In designing the doctoral research, there were several ethical and moral decisions to be made to ensure that participants were safe from harm. Just as there is no single route, there is no one positional standpoint for the researcher. Instead, our perceptions of the world exert an inexorable pull on the decisions we make (Creswell, 2013). What is beholden on the researcher is to articulate and draw attention to the decision-making process and how the research remains feasible, suitable, and ethical (Denscombe, 2010; Yin, 2004). Being aware of and navigating these processes is to acknowledge that power "is central to the research act" and that the act of researching is inherently one where power is present, especially as an insider-researcher whose role involves the management of other colleagues (Scott and Usher, 2010).

Again, as a researcher, I am governed as much by my background and curiosity as I am by the research designs, I choose to adopt. What differs is the need for us to overtly acknowledge and state these ideas and views to the community. A central criterion of CDA is identifying the positionality of the researcher: an EdTech enthusiast and Google Educator (Wodak and Meyer, 2015). Yet I am also sceptical of technology companies' motivations in offering technology to schools and the wider political and economic narratives of education and technology (Olssen and Peters, 2005). As an international teacher, in both Asia and the Middle East, and former EdTech instructional coach, my positionality is central to framing my research interests. I have

been situated within the marketisation of education and within the glocal[17] network surrounding educational policies, technologies, and practices (Rinne, 2021; Kerssen and van Dijck, 2022). Our identities within education are shaped by and mediated through our interactions with others and the policies that govern our work (Ball, 2012b). This act of construction is one of power, where policies and contexts place greater value on certain technological identities than others (Lingard, 2013; Apple, 2004; Ball, 1994).

In case study research, where much of the data is generated from the narratives of participants, the harm here is not physical but perhaps psychological or reputational harm (Byrne, 2022). The research we conduct is dynamic and relies on our relationships with those we are researching with (Iphofen and Tolich, 2018). At every venture, qualitative research even after the publication, is enmeshed in both the moral and ethical responsibilities to those individuals and sites with whom we have researched. Within this, my position within the leadership structures of the school means that there could be at times conflict between my role as a teacher-leader, and that as a teacher-researcher, especially as I navigated my pre-existing relationships (Creswell, 2013; Toy-Cronin, 2018). To help manage the dual identities, I maintained separate email/video conferencing tools, aware that many organisations have the right to oversee the use of organisational devices and software. As such, emails and digital communication came from my university account, as I felt this would mark a separation in digital identities. In using my university account as my researcher account, I felt that there would be positive links made as respondents may feel more secure that any involvement within the study was guided by the university's ethics protocol (Iphofen, 2011). All interviews with staff were conducted at times and in locations of the respondents choosing. All participants were also offered the opportunity to conduct these in-person or via video conference calls. This purpose for this offer was two-fold: to offer a degree of separation between group and researcher roles and to respect the autonomy of participants (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). By providing several types/locations/times for response, I hoped to present a more equal relationship between us, as well as respecting the participant's time.

Another aspect of positionality that I was acutely aware of was my own involvement in the network and school's wider leadership structures and how this might impact the

[17] Glocal here is a combination of global and local, recognizing the growing intertwined nature of local decisions and policy actions within a global education and economic narrative (Patel and Lynch, 2013).

interviewer/respondent relationship (Creswell, 2013). My position could give me more favourable access to gatekeepers but could also create /lead to participants feeling as though they *had no choice* in whether they agreed to participate due to perceived power imbalances (Iphofen, 2011). Whilst the focus of the research was not so much on school policy and choices, but rather how the wider global policies are rearticulated within a school context, there may still have been a sense that involvement within the study would be seen more positively than not participating. To avoid this, those that I had line management responsibilities for were excluded from the research after the initial questionnaire. Whilst this may have led to loss of potentially rich conversations and data, I felt it was more important to acknowledge that the power imbalance that already exists, would be exacerbated by my researcher role, thus making these respondents less able to give fully informed consent. I felt that this was important in maintaining "an ethical research relationship" (Toy-Cronin, 459, in Iphofen and Tolich, 2018; Floyd and Arthur, 2012).

One area where my insider status also had to be considered was within which documents were chosen to include within my data, along with when my role as researcher began and ended. As I could not withdraw from my teaching position, this was hard to manage as I was often aware of wearing two hats in all my interactions (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). Policy texts included in Part IV are a mix of open-access texts available from TSN and Hill College websites and internal policy and newsletter texts. Permission was sought from the Principal at Hill College to include documents that were shared with the researcher through their middle leadership position within the school or that were introduced through participant interviews. Permission was also sought from the CEO; Head of Governance for TSN; and the Principal of Hill College to include documents within the study that were not publicly accessible via the network's website. These included the CEO Mailshots sent to the network; Strategic planning documents and EdTech Roadmaps that were referenced in other policy texts; and the Strategic Planning Overview text. All policy texts were accessed from TSN and Hill College websites or the networked policy drive, within the case study school in academic year 2023-2024. The TSN Annual Report for 2023-4 was published in 2025 and is also included in the research as its role is to provide an account of the previous school year.

Table 7. Policy texts inclusion and exclusion criteria

Data Type	Data Type	Audience	Included?

Internal	Staff Briefing notes Departmental minutes Leadership team meetings and minutes Email communication	Internal school Private/within smaller teams	N
Internal and external	School newsletters School Policy documents Documents shared by leadership team to school leaders Network Policy documents CEO Mailshots	Whole school and wider school community	Y With approval from Head of School With approval from Head of Governance With approval from CEO/Head of Governance
External	School Website Network Website School and Network Policy Education authority website and documents	Whole network, wider school community Public Access	Y

Data that was excluded from my researcher lens were those more informal "day to day' correspondence and could be considered private or related solely to the school's day-to-day operation (see Table 7 above for a worked example). For ease, these texts have been categorised as internal school documents (e.g. where the audience is only intended to be the staff present) and external school documents, where they are published to the wider school community, (e.g. school council/stakeholders etc). While the list here is not exhaustive, it is representative of the typical texts encountered during the research journey. In deciding whether to include or exclude this, the first decision was always centred around the intended audience and the ethics of care - was the access granted only due to the insider role or would other researchers have been able to access this information without insider knowledge (Toy-Cronin, 2018, 461). If the audience was only teaching staff or students, the information was disregarded, whilst if the information included a wider community, e.g. parents, it was designated as official discourse as it was helping to frame the culture of the school to its stakeholders. Alongside this, some documents were made available by the school leadership team which were also included within the study. Where participants reference documents in their answers that were not included below, further questions were asked regarding the participants knowledge and interpretation of them.

Alongside this, the research design planned to time-limit the study to one academic school year. Part of the reason for the one-year design was practical, following the natural school calendar structure from the start of an academic year, where policies and culture are introduced/reestablished, and the end of the school year when teachers will have lived experience of the former policies and culture. This would enable us to explore how teacher positionality is shaped and renegotiated across the year. The explicit mention of a time-limited design was helpful for the participants in providing a clear endpoint for the study.

6.82 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Whilst there was not a perceived risk to individuals in the form of physical harm, there may have been opportunities where reputational harm could occur if comments from participants were perceived negatively within the wider school community (Simmons, 2005). I am aware that within such a geographically specific area and niche education system, it would be difficult to maintain the anonymity of the education network where the research was conducted. The network however has several secondary schools whose identity is closely linked to my site. As such, I have not included site specific information, and have chosen to assign labels to staff to identify level of involvement within leadership structures:

- Teacher (no involvement in school management past department level)
- Leader (teachers who have leadership involvement at Faculty and whole school, but not in the wider network)
- Education Team (Education Executive responsibility from the network)

I have chosen not to disclose the specific department subject area of the participants' to further support their confidentiality and anonymity (Simmons, 2005). This is especially important, as mentioned previously, due to some department subjects only having one-two teachers. This is also given the ease of researching participants at senior level and identifying potential contributors due to their web and media presence/role within the network. Where data has been included that could potentially reveal the identity of an individual, I contacted the participant so that they could reaffirm their consent for the data to be included. This was an important decision as it was a way in which I sought to maintain positive networks and relationships both during and after the research (Brooks et al, 2014).

Within the questionnaires, participants were given the opportunity to 'opt-in' for further participation, by providing a contact name and email. All other questionnaires were completed anonymously. Anonymity for interview participants was also part of the consent form given to all participants at the start of the study. All interview data was coded using the descriptors mentioned above within the file names and before the transcription, coding and analysis cycle.

6.83 Informed Consent

Due to the nature of the case study, it was important to gain informed consent from both the network and individual teachers, especially given the semi-private space of the school environment (Simmons, 2005). In studying both policy and how these policies situate staff, I approached several gatekeepers for access:

- For the policies online and accessible to public - no permission sought
- For researching on site - school leaders
- For internal/network policies – school leaders and central head office
- For staff - central head office and school leadership

Within the consent form and questions, no explicit reference was made to the global policies and agendas that serve as context for this research. To do so this would require academic knowledge in the field that is not expected of participants and might reveal too much of my research aims and skew the conversations that were had (Wiles, 2013). Whilst the research focus was not explicitly referenced in the research overview provided to participants, in semi-structured interviews, questions were posed that would engage participants in reflecting on how they were impacted by the wider educational technology and policy debates. It was important to give voice to the participants without forcing my research narrative onto them. Therefore, all project documents are phrased using language meant for a lay reader.

All participants were provided with an overview of the nature of the research (see Appendix E for participant information sheet). This gave a guaranteed right to withdraw at any time, information regarding secure storage of data, and the potential risks of partial anonymity due to the characterisations of the site that would be difficult to disguise without changing the robustness of the research. This information was provided on an A4 sheet handed to all participants, as well as reiterated at the start of the questionnaire and repeated prior to each interview. Signed consent forms were obtained from all interviewees, whilst completion of the

questionnaire was taken as consent for the data to be included (see Appendix C and F for examples). As Iphofen (2011) sets out, the notion of consent fluidity should be considered within research, which was why it was important for me to gain and reaffirm informed consent at each stage of data gathering (67). It was also important for participants to be able to withdraw at any point in the study and have the right to refuse to answer questions. In designing the questionnaire, only the consent box was mandatory, with all other questions being optional (see Appendix C). Each interview started by re-reading the consent statement below with the participants and provided participants with a copy of the consent form and study information page, including contact details.

Please see the following Appendices for examples of the following documents:

- Appendix A – Interview Schedule
- Appendix E – Participant Information Sheet
- Appendix F – Example of Consent Form
- Appendix G – Participant Debrief Sheet

As part of the ethical protocols followed, digital files were saved in password protected folders housed on the cloud, using a password manager to generate the password. These files and all email correspondence were associated with my university account and required multi factor authorisation for sign-in.

Conclusion

Whilst being informed by Foucault's concept of power/knowledge and governmentality, by using Fairclough's tools for Critical Discourse Analysis this research examines how policy discourses function as technologies of governance as will be discussed through Part IV. In tracing the discursive practices that produce and regulate teachers as self-managing subjects, the complex interplay between macro-level policy frameworks and micro-level teacher agency can be seen as a (re)articulation of neoliberal rationalities. Policies do not simply dictate practice; they are actively reinterpreted and resisted, shaping teachers' subjectivities through processes of normalization and subjectivation.

Part IV – Analysis

Chapter Seven – Policy discourses surrounding EdTech and the positioning of The School Network

Introduction

Chapter Seven provides an analysis of policy ecosystem texts framed by the first research question:

1. How do policy discourses surrounding EdTech position The School Network (TSN) within the Hong Kong education market?

In seeking to address this, the analysis in this chapter, therefore, focuses on how the policy texts position TSN and Hill College within the education market in Hong Kong and internationally. This situates them within the globalised policy narratives that centre neoliberal ideologies within education (Harvey, 2005; Power, 2014). The chapter will explore how TSN and Hill College policy texts work interdiscursively with each other, and how they are positioning themselves as responsive to local and international markets and demands. Within this, space will be given to identifying key policy actors that are introduced through the policy texts and that shape the discursive and operational practices of the network and school, before drawing the focus to how EdTech is positioned as a form of neoliberal marketisation. The focus is not on EdTech per se, but rather how policy texts introduce and sustain neoliberal marketisation through EdTech and the impact that this has on teachers' subjectivities (Foucault, 1988; Thorsen and Lie, 2006; Gabriel et al., 2022). EdTech, within the policy ecosystem, is centred as a means of capturing and responding to market demands, reflecting the dominant neoliberal positioning of technology in education as an imperative for success (Power, 2014).

The policy texts outlined in

Table 8 from TSN and Hill College are central to the analysis within Chapter Seven. See Appendix K for the full description and list of policy texts used within this study.

Table 8. Chapter 7 Policy Texts from TSN and Hill College

TSN Policy Texts		Hill College Policy texts	
Policy Name	Scope	Policy Name	Scope
TSN 5 Year Strategy 2020-25	Current strategic plan for all Schools in the network Given to all school leaders	Digital Literacy	All stakeholders
TSN Strategic Planning Overview (SPO)	School Evaluation prompts to be used in planning and reviewing school improvement planning	1-2-1 Laptop Programme	All Stakeholders
TSN Technology Integration Roadmap	Strategic planning for EdTech implementation	Digital Leaders Council (DLC)	All stakeholders
TSN Annual Report 2022-23	Published on TSN website to public view	New Staff	New staff information
TSN Annual Report 2023-24	Published on TSN website to public view Sent whole network Saved all from past academic year with EdTech reference	What we expect of staff	Information regarding school expectations
CEO Mailshots		Annual report	Annual report published on HILL COLLEGE website
[redacted]		Principal Newsletters	Published to school website, sent to staff, parents, council

Finally, through the analysis of policy ecosystem discourses, the values and ideation of how education and teachers are conceptualised by TSN and Hill College can be explored (Apple, 2013; Viennet and Pont, 2017). In doing so, how the texts position TSN, Hill College, and individuals as entrepreneurial selves responsive to market needs, becomes clear (Peters, 2001; Ball, 2010; Soto and Perez-Milans, 2021; Foucault; 1991).

7.1 Interdiscursivity and institutional influence within TSN and Hill College policy texts

Discourse is seen as "a system of meaning that constitutes institutions, practices and subjectivities in contradictory and disjunctive ways" (Larner, 2000, 12). Within policy texts, the discursive practices and subjectivities constructed can be seen as ideational, constructing a version of the desired identity and practices for all stakeholders within the network (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). As already explored in earlier chapters, TSN is in a process of moving away from the partial subvention/funding from the Hong Kong Government to one of economic independence, promoting its leadership in the competitive international school market in Hong Kong (***Strategic Plan, 2025***). Through the discussion of TSN Strategic policy texts and Hill College's Strategic Plan, we begin to see the ways in which Hill College aligns and negotiates its position in response to TSN directives (Peck, 2010; Foucault, 2020).

In exploring the ***Strategic Plan*** from 2015-2020, the distinguishing feature is the marketisation of TSN and attempts to align all TSN schools. The text frames the actions of the network and schools, being deployed in a panopticon manner, and introducing language of neoliberalism at a strategic, network-wide level (Gane, 2012; Foucault, 2020). By 2020, the focus of the network's strategy remains on the position within the global markets of education but situates this within a context that *"takes account of global innovation and which produces excellent outcomes for our students"* ***(TSN 5 Year Strategy, 2022)***. The strategic objectives incorporate the language of economics, *"Operate as an efficient, effective and unified organisation, fully optimising our assets and generating best-value..."* seeing TSN and its *"assets"* as being the *"students and the best talent"*. The ***Strategic Plan*** makes clear that through being a *"unified organisation"* TSN and associated network schools are well placed to take advantage of their position within the local education market. What is less clear through this, and further TSN policy documents is the extent to which TSN exerts control over the daily operations and practices of individual schools and teachers. Whilst strategic documents could be seen as a roll-out of disciplinary practices to create alignment, the enactment of these within individual schools might differ due to contextualisation within professional identities and cultures (Peck, 2010; Bell, 2020). In Chapter Ten the perspectives of the teachers will be explored and the extent to which teachers internalise these dominant discursive practices will become evident.

Hill College Strategic Planning documents actively cite TSN policy texts and policy directions. Through the intertextuality, Hill College contextualises its approach against TSN Strategy (Fairclough, 1992).

> *"The Hill College Strategic Development Plan will: Align with the TSN Strategic Plan" (Hill College Strategic Plan 2019-2020)*
>
> *"We will be seeking to ensure that Hill College is fully aligned with [TSN]…initiatives, ensuring that our future working practices are even stronger than those we had before." (Hill College Strategic Plan 2020-2021)*
>
> *"We expect our students, staff, and community to embed our Mission Objectives within everything they do, as they strive to achieve the TSN Vision…" (Hill College Strategic Plan 2023-2026)*

The grammatical similarities across the texts position the collective responsibility and focus on future actions, "*Hill College…will", "We will be", "We expect"* alongside the infinitives *"Align", "to ensure", "to embed"* reflecting a commitment to the TSN's strategic priorities. The language parallels the institutional narrative and normative framework, rearticulating the goals and vision of the wider network in the local context (Foucault, 1988; Zannini, 2021). Interdiscursively repeating these within individual school policy texts suggest that Hill College is responsive to and guided by TSN policy texts (Fairclough, 1993). Furthermore, ***Hill College's Annual Report*** states, "*Finally, having TSN as a world-renowned organisation to guide and support everything we do, we are definitely onto a winning formula, and I knew all of this before I arrived!"*. Hill College's policy text works in an interdiscursive and multifunctional manner. The form of the report represents official policy, whilst the grammatical structures and personable tone mirror that of a speech, possibly leading to a sense of persuasive identity formation and promotion of personal interests (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2015).

The ***Strategic Planning Overview (SPO)*** from TSN also works interdiscursively with both the ***5 Year Strategy*** text and individual school improvement plans, with the active voice *"it aims to assist you in that process"* ***(SPO, 3)*** acting as an evaluative agent *"gives you indicators of success and poses some questions"* ***(SPO, 3).*** This directly shapes the actions of individual schools and leaders. In shaping the discourse and practices within the networked schools, the

policy texts also comment on the central role of EdTech within the strategic vision, thus embedding neoliberal discourses within the local context (Gray, O'Regan and Wallace, 2018). The use of the modal in the TSN's ***Strategic Planning Overview (SPO)***, rather than offering choice to schools within the network, acts imperatively. By positively positioning the development of EdTech, the text uses the active present tense continuous voice:

> *The school provides training and support to enable all members of the school community to use and access digital systems, technologies and resources so that they can perform their roles effectively and efficiently*
> *The school can rapidly switch between face-to-face and distance learning as required and regularly reviews its provision and plans in line with the Distance Learning Framework.*
>
> *(SPO, 18)*

In using the simple present tense active voice, there is a sense of continued action from *"The school"* foregrounding a description of school's actions and their impact on the teachers *"so they can perform their roles effectively and efficiently"*. Within the adverbials, there is incorporation of language that is suggestive of marketisation and competition, positioning teachers within neoliberal discourses of performativity. The reference to other documents within this section ***(Distance Learning Framework; Digital Citizenship Framework)***, helps to reveal the interdiscursive nature of these texts. The top-down positioning of TSN policy texts, rearticulated within the school's policy texts, further embed neoliberal language of efficiency and the use of EdTech to secure market position (Peck, 2010; Fairclough 2015).

As a strategic document, the text outlines areas for TSN Schools to evaluate their progress against, taken directly from the ***TSN 5 Year Strategy.*** For example, digital and modernisation are identified as one core area for evaluation in asking leadership within the school to evaluate themselves against the *"Quality Statements"* and *"Reflective Questions"* which *"may be used as a series of prompts to support the review and development of digital and modernisation"* ***(SPO, 18)***. The text makes it seem that schools, as seen with Hill College's Strategic Plan, are subject to TSN policy discourses when completing school evaluation and development planning. In framing the actions of schools, TSN policy texts create specific rationalities of what a good school is, in this case, one that embraces the technological imperative (Foucault, 1982). Schools, in enacting the TSN Strategy policies, set out norms that are then translated

through school-level policy enactment, and the ***SPO*** and ***TSN 5 Year Strategy*** function as technologies of governance that shape school behaviour. In this way, power is articulated through policy, framing the actions of others (Foucault, 1982; Bălan, 2010).

7.2 The discursive positioning of TSN and its member schools

Repeated across all policy texts explored in this chapter was the concept of TSN education being *"on the cutting-edge of global innovation in education"* ***(Strategic Plan, 2015, 8)*** and *"At TSN, we never stand still"* ***(Annual Report 2023-24***). By framing what happens within the network through idiomatic phrases of "*cutting-edge"* and *"never stand still",* both texts situate TSN as focused on continuous improvement. The texts perhaps work interdiscursively with the ***SPO*** and **TSN 5 Year Strategy** as part of the policy ecosystem to frame a range of actions that induce further actions from TSN schools to capture the education markets (Foucault, 1982). There is a need for surveillance of actions within the network to, "*Develop and deliver a model of education which is relevant, takes account of global innovation…"* ***(TSN 5 Year Strategy)*** ensuring dominant and responsive positions within the global education market (Gane, 2012; Mindzak and Kumar, 2024). This is made apparent in the citing of student roll *"TSN's long-term future relies on strong enrolment numbers"* ***(Annual Report, 2023-24)***, foregrounding the economic imperatives that govern the network and policy discourses. The Strategic Plan takes this further, stating the need to *"develop products and services recognised as leaders in education that can be taken to the market"* ***(Ibid, 9)***. Not only does the network provide education, but it also seeks to develop education as a product that can be marketed to others, being both a consumer and producer of policy discourses shaping the education landscape (Colebatch, 2006). By encoding this into Strategic Plans, the governance of TSN actively engages with the marketisation of education, commodifying the education and policy texts it offers (Howlett et al., 2006).

TSN identity within the policy texts is presented as an example of networked governance (Ball, 2009). The texts from TSN focus on the collective, whilst policy texts from Hill College mirror TSN discourse, focusing on the individual school and teachers. TSN texts repeat the focus on collective identity, *"we never stand still"* (***Annual Report 2023-24***); *"we harness"* ***(CEO Mailshot April***); *"our students"* ***(TSN 5 year Strategy***). The use of metaphor in *"It is by working together, as one TSN family"* ***(Annual Report, 2023-24)***, praises the efforts of the community whilst alluding to norms of kinship and commitment that juxtapose the more formal language of other TSN policy texts. In the normative framing we can see the subjectification

of identity take place. Individuals within the network of schools negotiate their practices and identities within the narratives of the TSN policy ecosystem (Narayanan, 2021; Ingersoll, 2009). Within Hill College policy texts, there is a similar framing of collective identity, *"Our challenge…", "We have…"* (***New staff),*** and even in the title of one text ***"What we expect of our teachers".*** This frames teacher subjectivities through their ability to adapt to normative practices. It is less clear, however, whether the positioning through inclusive pronouns includes TSN and the wider network or is solely inclusive of those already within Hill College.

Whilst the language mirrors TSN's norms of kinship and effort:

> *"Our challenge is always to ensure that our students reach their full potential, and meet the rightly high expectations of their parents and the local community" (New Staff)*
> *"We have an innovative school week structure…the school enjoys a reputation for innovation and risk-taking" (New staff).*
> *"Be skilled…" (What we expect),*
> *"we develop and empower"* and innovation: *"high standard with the latest interactive and digital facilities" (1-2-1 Laptop)*,

The parallel phrasing in the extracts from the ***New Staff*** text focus first on the collective pronouns *"we"/ "our"* and identity formation of teachers, followed by the impact this has on the wider community's perception. Aligning closely with TSN's innovation, Hill College texts reference the *"latest…facilities", "innovation and risk-taking";* highlighting progressive practices that help position the school and the network as leaders, whilst internalising neoliberal performativity within the policy language (Ball, 2012a; 2012b; Macfarlane, 2021). The focus on the public response and the goal of education supporting stakeholder expectations, to *"meet the rightly high expectations of parents and the local community",* emphasises the public perception and local market position in attracting students and responding to the needs of the stakeholder (Lynch, 2006).

TSN policy texts present organisational identity conditionally within the CEO Mailshots:

If our organisation is going to change to meet the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities of emergent technologies such as Generative AI and Large Language Models, then the opinions of our school communities must play a leading role.

CEO Mailshot Feb 2024

"If we are to change to meet the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities of emergent technologies, then it is vital that we harness the collective expertise of our whole community.

CEO Mailshot April 8th 2024

In repeating the conditionals *"If our"*, *"If we",* the Mailshots suggest an obligation for those within the network to do something differently, if the infinitive phrases *"to meet the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities"* are to be successful in relation to technology. Whilst in the February extract, the text specifically identifies AI, in April the descriptor is left open to "*emergent technologies"* suggesting that all aspects of EdTech should be encompassed. By asking through the modal *"must",* the text expresses the necessity of teachers' opinions shaping practice. Similarly, April's text asks teachers to *"harness the collective expertise of our whole community"* expressing a call-to-action response to the power that technology can have. It simultaneously emphasises the agency and responsibility that those in the network must adapt to through the changes brought about by technology and its position within the Hong Kong market (Hunter, 1996; Zhou et al., 2015).

In following TSN policy direction, Hill College texts actively position themselves as aligning with TSN priorities through reference to the importance of EdTech. In Hill College's ***DLC*** text, there is clear reference to promoting the school as a response to contextual and technological changes.

It is unsurprising that the Digital Leadership Council (DLC) has grown at pace during the last five years …. The importance of digital literacy was thrown into sharp relief during 2020-21 with the entire school forced into online learning.

DLC

This focus helps to promote the school as responsive to global trends. The text promotes student agency in shaping the way EdTech is navigated. This is an example of social shaping, where the school responds to the call to action issued by the TSN strategic planning texts explored earlier (Fairclough, 1993). This is made apparent when the text celebrates the school's

accomplishments, *"The DLC has a regular podcast…has link projects with two of our primary schools"*. This shows how the school's views regarding EdTech transcend the physical boundaries of the school itself, reaching out to the local community and TSN feeder schools, building a sense of alignment across the network but also situating EdTech as a potential site for marketisation (Selwyn, 2013; Thorsen and Lie, 2006).

Hill College texts also praise the efforts and link these to the collective identity. In some cases, they become more problematic in the phrasing, *"give selflessly to provide enrichment opportunities for our students"*. Across the examples, the use of the present tense and often active voice in describing the school helps place emphasis on it actively linking dedication from staff to impact on students. The adverbial modifier *"selflessly"* emphasises altruism in a professional role and moralises teachers, framing and celebrating sacrifice within a process of continuous productivity (Ball, 2021; Ideland, 2021, Birch, 2015). In acting as governing rationalities, the texts construct the school as enacting and sustaining values, showing that the process of governance seems natural and ongoing. Staff are invited to constitute themselves as altruistic and productive, self-regulating subjects (Foucault, 1982). By "guiding the possibility of conduct", the texts can be seen as examples of power and governance as they guide the actions of staff (Foucault, 1982, 789).

7.3 The discursive positioning of TSN and Hill College within local and international education markets

TSN's offering includes schools which are both international private and international private with partial support from Hong Kong's government. Whilst the subvention is currently being phased out, as explored in Chapter Five, the onus is placed on the local market to secure full student numbers and ensure profitability. TSN policy texts highlight the engagement and support of the wider Hong Kong education market through being a strategic partner of Asia-Pacific International Schools Conference (AISC). AISC is run annually alongside a concurrent Asia Learning Expo which links together educators and Edu businesses. In 2024, the conference and expo were also supported by HKEdCity[18]. The ***CEO Mailshot*** from December frames involvement in the conference through language of competition and performativity:

[18] "Established in 2000 with the support of the Quality Education Fund, Hong Kong Education City (EdCity) was incorporated in 2002 to become a wholly owned company of the Government. Its mission is to enable better adaptation to change curriculum initiatives through technology." https://www.edcity.hk/home/en/about-us/

"TSN is an organisation that is always looking ahead, and this month's Asia- Pacific International Schools Conference (AISC) is an excellent opportunity for us to shine a light on our culture of innovation. As the strategic partner of AISC which takes place on 13 - 14 December, we will reflect on the many ways we are embracing new thinking and the best of new technology to make sure our students thrive now and in the future. Artificial intelligence in education will be a key topic as we examine its potential to transform teaching and learning"

(CEO Mailshot Dec)

The positive lexical framing *"always looking ahead", "excellent opportunity", "thrive"* and future oriented modals *"will reflect", "will be a topic"* suggest TSN as strategically positioning itself to take best advantage of the conference and EdTech to ensure positive outcomes for students. Continuing with the inclusive pronouns *"opportunity for us to shine a light on our culture of innovation",* the text both serves to create an inclusive institutional identity whilst the metaphor normalises the strategic and aspirational determinism. As Fairclough (2003) suggests, metaphors work as a resource to create a shared understanding that normalises neoliberal framing. As explored in the policy chapter, actors within education are not always obvious and overt, but rather the links between the actor networks are diffuse and often overlap. By being a strategic partner of the international conference, the text asserts TSN's institutional power within the Hong Kong education markets (AISC, 2024). The support for EdTech inclusion through the Conference and Expo by the Hong Kong Government, as well as their own policy texts as explored in Chapter Four, signals support of market logic and to some extent an endorsement of the commodification of technology (LTExpo, 2025; EDB, 2014; Fung, 2001). For TSN, in offering and normalising EdTech use as central to educational progress and economic success, they position themselves as key players within a neoliberal market (Suarez-Guerrero et al, 2023; Moore et al., 2001).

Maintaining economic health, as a not-for-profit international private school network, means TSN actively markets itself to maintain student numbers and market position within Hong Kong (Watts, 2005; Woo, 2013). The importance of reaching new clients such as *"potential families and potential staff"* ***(TSN Annual Report)*** helps to convey the sense of every interaction with the network being one of potential profit/cost. Teachers and their actions are aligned with TSN's collective:

> *"Our exceptional staff, in and out of the classroom, all understand the role that they play in making good on the promise that we make to our families: that we will help every single student be the best that they can be."* ***(TSN Annual Report).***

The active voice and present tense construct staff as neoliberal subjects that must continually work, through self-governance, to meet TSN's institutional goals (Foucault, 2011). By introducing the gerund phrase *"making good on the promise",* teachers' actions are again imbued with the moral imperative and accountability as well as reinforcing the individual accountability needed for student success (Ball, 2010; Kelly, 2013). In describing the students' efforts to *"be the best they can be"*, both teachers and students are positioned as entrepreneurial agents whose interests seem to intersect. Presenting both as marketable assets, the text links the efforts of both to market position and future success (Ball, 2013a; Olssen, 1999; Foucault, 1982).

Similarly, TSN *"have adopted a digital first approach, meaning that our first priority is to be an active part of the online conversations that people are having about education"* ***(TSN Annual Report)***. The direct object of *"digital first approach"* is complemented by the desire *"to be an active part of the online conversations"*. Again, this positions TSN 's identity as a leader within education who has identified that many of these conversations are now mediated through technology use. By citing both *"online conversations"* and *"people",* the ***TSN Annual Report*** and ***CEO Mailshots*** work interdiscursively to foreground active digital presence, EdTech integration, and collective responsive professional identity, as part of the competitive global education market (Chou, 2012; Yamato and Bray, 2002; Gabriel et al., 2022).

In analysing the policy texts from Hill College, overt reference to the market or positioning of the school within Hong Kong and internationally were less apparent. Despite this, many policy texts echo the concerns and priorities of TSN documents, often replicating phrasing and language that align with TSN's educational goals (Fairclough, 2003). These are most evident in texts whose audience is primarily new staff, constructing the identity of Hill College teacher and beginning the process of subjectification (Fairclough, 1992). The following quotes provide clear examples of the economic framing of education and the moral imperatives mirroring that which is present within the ***TSN Annual Report***:

"The 1400 students at Hill College are our most outstanding assets"

"Not surprisingly, Hill College is continuously oversubscribed and there is a high demand for places"

(New Staff)

The first statement draws focus through the metaphorical comparison of *"students"* to *"assets"* to the monetisation and economics framing of students and their learning. This is supported by the reference to the number of students on roll, linking numbers with economic imperatives of success. By later describing - with the adverbial phrase - *"continuously oversubscribed"* within the passive second sentence, both exclusivity and competition are reinforced, helping to shift the agency away from the school itself onto external actors such as parents (Bray and Yamato, 2003; Watts, 2005). Education, students, and teachers become framed through a discourse of excellence and asset management, reducing them to an economic imperative.

7.4 Key actors within policy discourses

As explored in Chapter One, education is connected globally via international rankings, NGOs and think-tanks, as well as digitally through technology (Savage, 2017; Marginson, 2004). Nation-state education does not exist in a vacuum, and the incorporation of international schools allows for greater expansion of global education agendas and policy transfer (Ball, 2017c; Hayden, 2011). Alongside this, the incorporation of technology into schools introduces additional sites of marketisation alongside opportunities for external actors to become involved in curriculum and pedagogy (Apple, 2001; Ip, 2024). Through the policy texts, TSN and Hill College actively engage with a range of actors, beginning to show how these actors and their embracing of EdTech could exert influence over TSN and Hill College (Williamson, 2021a).

7.41 Curriculum Actors

In referencing the IB Global Conference, the CEO Mailshot introduces the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO)[19] as providing a curriculum aimed at international mindedness, incorporating into local education markets a global educational curriculum model. By its very nature, the IBO model of education is one that is transnational, focused less on the needs of the individual nation-state, and more on the positioning of individuals (schools and

[19] The IB, or International Baccalaureate is a global education foundation that offers curriculum for students aged 3-18. It is a "global leader in international education" (IBO.org, 2025). It was established in 1962 and promotes "progressive rigour, global-mindedness" (Gardner-McTaggart, 2024)

students) within an international market of education (Resnik, 2012). By referring to it here, the CEO Mailshot provides one opportunity for the network to align their practice with the IB.

> ✦ *We are shaping the future of education*
> *The annual IB Global Conference brings together educators from around the world to discuss the evolving landscape of teaching and learning and the role we play in shaping it. This year, we sent 35 TSN ambassadors to the three-day event in Daegu, South Korea, which had the theme - Inspiring learners, realising potential. Congratulations to the colleagues who showcased new and innovative thinking during their presentations on educational technology, safeguarding, wellbeing, student agency and career-related learning. TSN is at the forefront of these important conversations, which means we are well-positioned to take a confident lead in developing the future of education in Hong Kong and globally. The next Asia Pacific IB Global Conference will be held in Singapore in March next year. Contact our Education team for more details.*
> *CEO Mailshot April 26th 2024*

The IB Global Conference is identified as *"bringing together educators"* and *"developing the future of education"* ***(CEO Mailshot April).*** As all TSN schools are IB schools, having presentations from TSN colleagues that, *"showcased new and innovative thinking ... on educational technology"* perhaps draws links between the IBO and EdTech, suggesting that the IBO supports EdTech learning. The Conference then, not only acts as a policy actor but also becomes a part of the policy as discourse that shapes the enactment within international education (Gardner-McTaggart, 2024).

The use of active voice and present tense, once again places TSN as an active entity within the global discourse surrounding education. Nestled under the subheading of "*We are shaping the future of education"*, the active verb and inclusive pronoun position the collective identity as cutting edge and leading education's future. Using the collective abbreviation and inclusive pronoun *"we"*, individual agency and disagreement are subsumed into the group identity, perhaps signalling the power/importance of network identity over that of the individual teacher. When referring to the IB conference, the language used is reminiscent of diplomacy - *"we sent 35 TSN ambassadors"* ***(CEO Mailshot April 26th, 2024),*** suggesting that the role of teachers is one of an accredited official acting on behalf of TSN and its image/branding globally. Teachers are attending conferences not for their own benefit, but rather as envoys for the 'nation of TSN', embedded within the marketisation of and image building that would normally be associated with nation states (Gabriel et al., 2022). The role of the IB as influencing policy

is also alluded to through the theme of the conference, *"Inspiring Learners, releasing potential"*, positioning education as a model of inputs and outputs, repeating a global positioning of education through economic lenses of profit and loss. That this is then linked with comments regarding technology and innovative thinking, again is common across the emails.

As explored in Chapter Three, power operates through techniques and institutions by producing self-regulating subjects (Foucault, 1982). An example of this can be seen within the reference to the IBO virtual inspection, which uses pedagogical tools (Zoom had been used during COVID-19 for online learning) as the medium for inspection visits and school tours:

> …an IB Evaluation visit. This visit was remote, consisting of a variety of Zoom meetings with many members of the School Community and including a School Tour and classroom visits
>
> *Annual Report*

The use of an EdTech tool to produce evaluative knowledge of the school can be seen as an adjustment of practice and the rationalisation, shown through the matter-of-fact tone, enables governance at a distance (Foucault, 1982). The knowledge that circulates back to the school from the virtual visit can be seen as an extension of the knowledge/power relationship as it subsequently informs school strategy. In this context, EdTech functions not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a means of surveillance and accountability (Foucault, 1982). Framing EdTech in this way highlights its increasingly complex and negotiated role within the school and teachers' lives, as it creates a dynamic relationship of power and responsibility (Kerssens and Van Dijck, 2022).

7.42 EdTech Actors

Alongside the promotion of EdTech by curriculum actors, such as the IBO, TSN and Hill College, policy texts also identify a range of EdTech actors. Whilst newer EdTech actors, such as MagicSchool AI and those that are used evaluatively, such as International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)[20] and Turnitin, are mentioned explicitly; others that fulfil a delivery or learning management systems role, such as Google and Apple are often referred to

[20] "The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)'s mission is to empower educators to reimagine and redesign learning through impactful pedagogy and meaningful technology use", ISTE provide standards to guide educators in their application of EdTech, alongside providing CPD opportunities. https://iste.org/

more in teachers' discourses rather than the policy texts. Apple is mentioned in Hill College policy texts, explored later in the chapter for their marketisation role. The introduction of EdTech Actors such as Apple at the local level, rather than in the strategic texts, suggests that within policy enactment, schools retain some discretion to choose and adapt technologies to fit their specific contexts. Even though Foucauldian governance shapes the norms and rationalities of the EdTech imperative, Hill College's local implementation shows how those policy goals are translated into practical actions (Braun et al., 2011).

ISTE inclusion within policy texts foregrounds it as an actor within both TSN and Hill College, lending agency to ISTE standards and framing of EdTech. ISTE is referred to in both TSN level texts and those of Hill College. An NGO, ISTE works with the educators to promote the use of EdTech within schools. By providing training and accreditation standards, ISTE states it provides, *"the competencies for learning, teaching and leading with technology, and are a comprehensive road map for the effective use of technology in schools worldwide"* (ISTE, 2025). By providing a standards-based framework, like the IB, these can be seen as measures of accountability and therefore exerting influence over the network schools and individual teachers. However, ISTE also works alongside technology companies, naming their *"year-round mission sponsors"* as Microsoft, Google for Education and Prodigy[21] (ISTE, 2025). Through this, we can see that their work is also influenced by technology companies and may not be value neutral and becomes a mode of regulation.

Within the CEO Mailshots, policy texts are presented as award winning, working interdiscursively with TSN's positioning as innovative:

> ✦ *Learn about our award-winning initiatives*
> *The innovative projects happening across TSN continue to be recognised with awards and commendations. Most recently, we were honoured at the Esperanza x ISTE Asia Education Summit for our TSN Technology Integration Roadmap. The roadmap was created by the TSN Education team and includes comprehensive guidance on planning, integrating and assessing educational technology in our schools…*
> *CEO Mailshot October 2024*

[21] Prodigy is game-based learning for Maths and English (https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/teachers)

The policy text ***TSN Technology Integration Roadmap*** *"...was created by the "TSN Education team"* based at TSN. The verb phrase *"was created"* with the prepositional agent *"by the TSN Education team"* positions the policy and its creators in knowledge positions, shaping, as shown through the gerunds (*planning, integrating, assessing*) the sense that this policy provides a normative framework for how teachers should be engaging with EdTech. By including the pronoun *"our"* a central tension might be present between what the agents at TSN suggest EdTech should be/do and what is practised within individual schools. By citing the *"we were honoured at the Esperanza x ISTE Asia Education Summit",* ISTE's reference here provides a clearer example of external actors' involvement within education. As ISTE works to provide pedagogical grounded support for educators, its recognition of the network's progress and roadmap then lends a certain cache to the network as ISTE's global positioning of the importance of *"integrating"* EdTech aligns the pedagogical and technology values of ISTE and TSN.

ISTE's role in shaping practice and EdTech identity within Hill College is also expounded in the ***DLC*** and ***Digital Literacy Texts***:

> *In the 2016-17 academic year, the TSN adopted the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) with Hill College working hard to embed these vital strands into our curriculum.*
>
> *Digital Literacy*

The school's policy text subordinates Hill College here as it reacts to the decisions made at network level *"TSN adopted the ISTE".* The main clause within the sentence, emphasises the actions taken by TSN at a network level in adopting the involvement of ISTE, thus legitimizing it, followed by the participial phrase *"with Hill College working hard"* creating connection between these two actions, suggesting a grammatical equality and therefore support of TSN's past actions. By once again using phrases that prioritise the effort of those involved to *"embed these vital strands into our curriculum",* there is a sense that ISTE is legitimised in their ability to provide something that is essential for school and student success, creating a sense of urgency and morality again into the reshaping of what the school does. We can also see the hierarchical structure of the network presented, with Hill College exemplifying their work as a school in response to TSN policy direction. In adopting ISTE within the school, the ***Digital Literacy text*** provides a concrete example of how one strand from ISTE has been embedded:

> *For instance, in meeting Standard 5, the school has partnered with Beyond Skin Deep (BSD) Coding Academy to use the Launchbox: an online platform in which students have the opportunities to learn coding skills …*
>
> *Digital Literacy*

ISTE then can be viewed as fulfilling a controlling mechanism through the quality assurance referred to *"in meeting Standard 5"*. In adopting these standards, there is further inclusion of external actors as seen in *"has partnered with Beyond Skin Deep",* to address the needs of an EdTech focused NGO. In a similar way to ISTE being influenced by its technology sponsors, Hill College brings in new actors to effectively fulfil their commitment to upholding the ISTE standards, it establishes a continuous cycle of EdTech innovation that necessitates the involvement of additional stakeholders, and their agendas, to maintain it.

Within the ***Annual Report***, "MagicSchool' is one external actor that is focused upon, investing it with influence within the school and teacher use due to its ability to directly shape the ways teachers use AI within the classroom:

> *Staff training focused specifically on MagicSchool with both the teacher and student facing side of the application showcased, after the latter was released in March/April of 2024. Given that staff have the ability to invite students into MagicSchool classrooms, they can select the apps for students to use and see every prompt entered by the students during the written process. This supports staff in authenticating essay processes in conjunction with the use of TurnItIn*
>
> *Hill College Annual Report*

Here the active voice at the start focuses agency on the staff training, the adverb choice *"specifically"* investing MagicSchool with credence in the eyes of the teachers due to the attention the school gives it. The extract emphasises teacher agency and power in choosing how to engage with the technology: *"they can select the apps…see every prompt…"* but not whether they should be engaging with it. Technology is also presented as actively supporting teachers in their roles, by presenting technology as the subject pronoun and present tense verb, "*This supports"* indicates that technology can complement and positively impact the work of teachers in ensuring academic honesty of student work, using another tool "Turnitin". Even

when the moral aspect of technology is engaged with, the discussion is primarily focused on which tools to use, rather than whether the tools should be used at all.

Direct reference to EdTech actors within the policy ecosystem, as explored above, legitimises them. In promoting and adopting these actors and agendas within policy texts, it introduces further control mechanisms into the school and teachers' experiences, perhaps "redistribut[ing] organizational and educational power to benefit platforms" (Kerssens and Van Dijck, 2022, 289). As Foucault explores, discourse can relay power relations through the reproduction and normalisation process (1982). Naming EdTech actors within the policy texts both legitimises them and reinforces the marketisation of education.

7.5 The role of EdTech in neoliberal marketisation

In policy texts, the discourses created are never static, instead they are re-imagined dynamically by the changing nature of the school and teachers (Taylor, 1997; Simmons, Olssen and Peters, 2009). Policy as discursive practise promotes value laden positions that schools take to maximise their potential to attract students (Ball, 1995). In recent discussions of education globally, the value ascribed to EdTech and the need for digitally literate workforces that can fully participate within the global knowledge economy has been emphasised. The normalisation of EdTech in policy texts can be seen as one way in which schools position themselves as responsive to market concerns. The policy texts promote technology enhanced education as both a fundamental aspect of current education, *"A modern school integrates educational technologies"* ***(TSN Roadmap)*** but also forward thinking and future proofing, *"adapt education strategies to keep pace with the evolving job market and technological advancements"* ***(TSN Annual Report 2023-24).*** This is also valued at school level: *"the appetite for educational technologies within a computer science context seems to be growing"* ***(Hill College Annual Report 2023-4)***. In doing so, EdTech inclusion within schools results in "the insertion of market relations into fields of experience" as Edu businesses begin to define what education is and should be (Ball and Grimaldi, 2022, 4).

The positioning of EdTech within policy discourses shows the extent to which TSN and Hill College have embraced EdTech and by extension introduced market principles into education. This also highlights how the operationalisation of EdTech becomes framed alongside discussions of market-positioning, national/international success, and future proofing for economic success (both for the network and the students). Framing of EdTech through a

performativity lens becomes apparent in the CEO Mailshots which repeat the central role of EdTech within the positioning of the network, positioning technology as central to the role of the network:

> *As we look ahead to 2024, I urge you to think about the ways AI can be used to help us enhance our strengths and overcome challenges and to ask ourselves - how can new technology make us better at what we do?*
>
> *CEO Mailshot Jan 2024*

The use of the compound-complex sentence enables the text to shift the positioning of teachers as active in the introductory complex sentence *"As we look ahead",* the *'we'* is active, whilst the CEO imperatively asks staff "*I urge you to think*" with the direct imperative from the CEO to teachers to take cognitive action. The voice then shifts with the embedded clause about *"the ways AI can be used",* where the voice of the text shifts to passive, with AI as the subject; yet in the interrogative "*how can new technology make us better at what we do?"* with the syntax of technology as the subject and the inclusive pronoun placing those at TSN as the object on whom technology has an impact.

Whilst TSN policy texts state that network schools should ensure *"all members of the community…use and access digital systems, technologies…"* ***(SPO)***, and to comply with the TSN Technology Vision *"A modern-day school integrates educational technologies to transform teaching and learning"* ***(TSN EdTech Roadmap);*** no specific technologies are explicitly identified, excluding MagicSchool AI in the CEO emails. The absence of centrally mandated technologies suggests that whilst alignment is expected, schools within TSN have a level of freedom to choose the technologies that best fit their individual contexts. By inviting Apple in[22], Hill College enables it to influence what is done within learning opportunities and how, "*…using Macs and numerous other forms of technology to support learning and teaching. All teachers are all issued with their own Apple Mac laptop"* ***(New Staff about us).*** In adopting a passive voice, the school's issuing of the technology is diminished, placing the focus on the technology itself, the Apple Mac Laptop. The school is defining the technological landscape of the school, promoting a vision of EdTech operationalisation that normalises sophistication. With Apple as the main technological actor, *"other forms of technology"* are marginalised

[22] In the interviews collected as part of the research, the process for choosing Apple was explained in depth by Joseph and Dan. Extracts from these discussions are included in Chapter 9.

which whilst present within the sentence, are not explicitly named. Apple's presence within the school, a version of public-private partnership, enacts marketisation by locking school users into its products and commercialising everyday teaching practices.

By adopting a one device per student approach, Hill College requires families to adopt technology use and more specifically Apple. As an informational text, the ***1-2-1 Laptop* Programme** can be seen to be didactic, setting out the direction that the school takes regarding its laptop programme. Yet, within this, there is a clear positioning of the target demographic as being one that would have the capital to afford the products required to access the school. For example, *"All students at Hill College must have a MacBook Air"* with the modal verb obligating the purchase of specific, branded technology, repeated in *"MacBook is an essential piece of equipment for day-to-day learning"*. Those families and staff wishing to be part of the school, therefore, are coerced into accepting a technology actor if they want to gain entrance to the school. This is made even more apparent with more regulatory statements: *"The school's ICT Centre cannot provide support to other brand-name…"* and *"only MacBooks purchased through the school online order platform will be supported by the Apple service counter at school"*. The *"cannot"* and determiner *"only"* coupled with the passive voice of the second sentence, create a sense of fatalism or technological determinism within the text. Where there might have been a route to choice regarding brand name, the lack of support for technology not bought through the school could remove this as an option as it creates barriers to accessing support that are not present to those who comply. EdTech references in these policy extracts reveal that choice is reconfigured as an economic decision and access to EdTech further embeds commercial rationalities.

7.6 The positioning of individuals within policy discourses

Individual positioning is more apparent within Hill College texts as these focus more on specific events and people, rather than the group identity formation in those from TSN. As the Hill College texts focus on one specific site, the description of individual cases and events serve to exemplify the priorities of the school. For example, all members of the school community, not just teachers, are expected to be technologically literate as seen within Hill College's policy texts. Staff should *"Be skilled in applications of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), with the ability to use technology to enhance learning"* ***(Working at Hill College– What we expect).*** Parents are asked to download and engage with iSAMS a mobile application that *"is a management information system for schools. It is a*

single database through a suite of portals, to bring together the whole school community" ***(iSAMs App)***. The factual nature of the statements highlights the agency of the technology over the human participant in an uncontroversial manner. For staff, the imperative *"Be skilled"* which is reminiscent of a job qualification uses the parallel construction of *"skilled in the applications"* and *"ability to use…to enhance"* ***(Working at Hill College)***. This prioritises the need for technology use to be skilfully operationalised within teacher practise. For both staff and parents, technology is central to how relationships with the school are negotiated.

In celebrating the success of students, the aspirational embedding of technology seen within the ***Strategic Planning Overview*** *"Various events including the TSN Co.Co., Hour of Code, lnnoFair, TSN STEM Competition, Game Jam, Esports Tournament*[23] *have been held to promote digital learning"* is furthered in the Principal's newsletter. This links an external event with the importance given to technology by Hong Kong, but also international schools more generally. In publicising the event and the School's Principal directly addressing it in their introduction to the newsletter, *"...I want to acknowledge the students involved in Code(H)ers…"*[24] ***(February Newsletter),*** its significance is reinforced. The ***Principal's Newsletter*** celebrates student achievements with technology, building a picture that acknowledges the societal value placed on technology. Both the newsletters and the CEO mailshots position success of individual students and schools within a narrative of competition and recognition within the local community. The *"student-led event"* is *"organised by 9 international schools in Hong Kong"* (February Newsletter), furthering the importance of EdTech within the community of the school. That this is celebrated within the newsletter could be seen as one example of how EdTech use is marketised within international school's discourse. In both hosting and promoting the event, international schools are showing their support for the Hong Kong EDB's EdTech initiatives. In this way, TSN and the larger network display an understanding of the Hong Kong education market by offering an experience and education product that goes beyond that of the local system (Bray and Yamato, 2003).

[23] Each of these is a TSN organised competition or conference for schools within the network. *TSN Co.Co. is a student led computing conference, Hour of Code is a global imitative by Computer Science Education Week and Code.org to introduce students to coding., lnnoFair is an annual science fair competition open to 14-18 year olds in Hong Kong schools, supported by TSN., TSN STEM Competition, Game Jam, Esports Tournament are all competitions run by and for the TSN network.*

[24] Code(H)ers is a student run initiative to promote women within STEM. It is organized by a team of girls from eleven different international schools in Hong Kong. https://codehershk.org/about

Within these extracts, EdTech is discursively produced as transformative, enacting a logic that positions individuals as skilled, competent users. Staff, students and parents are shaped by the policy texts into becoming self-regulating actors, framing their actions against these normative discursive practices (Foucault, 1982; Lemke, 2001). To be a productive member of the Hill College community, individuals must demonstrate technological competence, accept evaluative practices that can make performance visible (through the iSAMs app) and internalise marketised ideals of future-readiness as seen in the celebration of student EdTech use (Thorsen and Lie, 2006; Gabriel et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Across TSN and Hill College texts, EdTech is not only presented as beneficial but also a normative and expected component of educational practice. Policy texts perform multiple roles and the texts explored here work to create an ecosystem that foregrounds innovation and market position. These discourses link educational goals to competitive advantage, presenting EdTech as central to achieving TSN strategic aims. Interdiscursively, Hill College aligns closely with TSN's strategic priorities, revealing a hierarchical relationship (Fairclough, 2008). Both TSN and Hill College are framed as innovative and globally competitive, with TSN positioned explicitly as a market actor in Hong Kong. By privileging the role of EdTech within the policy discourses, and commodifying its role, the texts create a rhetoric of what "good" schooling is, and how TSN and Hill College provide this. In using economic language to signal competitiveness, the policy ecosystem reflects broader neoliberal and globalised educational discourses (Ball, 2010; Peters, 2001; Plehwe, 2021). By tying market status to institutional success, the policy framing treats individuals as economic assets, reinforcing the view of private international schools as neoliberal sites (Cahill et al., 2018; Birch, 2015). Through the normalisation, Edtech becomes embedded within both the routines of the network and the policy ecosystem, shaping subjectivities before any explicit pedagogical choice is referred to. This specifically addresses Research Question 1 and 2 as the TSN identity places education as a commodity (Research Question 1) and within the network and school level policy texts, EdTech affords the school the role of being 'forward thinking' and parents and students respond to this by being disciplined into purchasing specific technology through the school (Research Question 2).

Notably, both TSN and Hill College policy texts work to build a sense of community and collective action—especially visible in TSN's CEO mailshots. Inclusive pronouns ("we",

"our") and metaphors ("TSN family") construct a shared identity, consistent with CDA's focus on how language shapes social identities and power relations (Foucault, 1982, 1994). This collective framing makes subjectification less overt: it relies on a common-sense vision that discourages disagreement (Foucault, 1982). The policy discourses around EdTech position TSN as a market-oriented, competitive provider in the Hong Kong education market. By framing technological adoption as central to institutional quality, future-readiness and global leadership, TSN and Hill College position themselves as responsive to global education discourses. These policy texts situate EdTech as a visible market of innovation and future-readiness, functioning both as a branding resource and strategic instrument for maintaining market advantage. The discursive work surrounding EdTech then can be seen as market work – it positions the school network as forward-looking and globally attuned.

The texts also demonstrate alignment with external actors, showing that policy and practice are shaped not only by schools but by wider organisational agendas, so policy is not neutral (Ball, 2012a). This influence of EdTech and Edu business actors on policy and practice is a recurring strand in the rest of the thesis. TSN's macro strategic texts supply the vision, while Hill College's local documents show how those goals are enacted in everyday practice, revealing the diffuse nature of power relations (Foucault, 1982). Policy discourses operate interdiscursively as governance, marketisation and innovation intersect, and they are embedded within the broader socio-political contexts that produce them (Rogers et al., 2005). Policy discourse acts as both brand strategy and governance technology – marketing TSN to local and international markets while embedding the practices and infrastructures that sustain that market position.

The policy discourse emphasises a technological imperative, especially evident in discussions of the network of actors operating at Hill College. The chapter identifies a network of actors as influential in shaping policy discourses, contributing to the diffusion of power, often obscuring the origins of policy decisions and embedding external agendas within local contexts (Foucault, 1994). Within Hill College policy discourse, we see the creation of markets within markets, with Apple and MagicSchool being explicitly named. Whilst the approaches taken align with global trends in education, the policy texts leave little room for discussion/to raise questions regarding the influence of these actors in shaping practice and policy. The operationalising of EdTech is often presented as natural, EdTech is not merely a pedagogical tool but could be seen as a mechanism for embedding neoliberal values such as efficiency, innovation, and

competitiveness within the network. In positioning TSN and Hill College at the forefront of the Hong Kong education market, the policy texts emphasise that they never stand still and are always seeking to innovate. By normalising EdTech and innovation as imperatives, the texts promote "individual responsibility as motivating discourse" casting staff, students and parents as entrepreneurial subjects accountable for sustaining institutional competitiveness (Wacquant, 2012, 72). Finally, the framing of EdTech within these policy texts constructs a particular vision of educational quality, where innovation and excellence are defined in technological terms, evidenced with digital fluency and efficiency. By aligning with the market-based logic of productivity and entrepreneurialism, space for alternative pedagogical or relational understandings of educational value are narrowed.

Chapter Eight – Policy discourses shaping the role and affordances of EdTech within network and school level policy texts

Introduction

As explored in Chapter Four, EdTech has become a central focus for schools globally and the prevalence of technology products within personal and school use has increased, leading to greater infiltration of technology companies into our daily lives (Conner-Zachocki et al, 2015). In Chapter Seven, the discussion centred around the positioning of The School Network (TSN) and Hill College within both a local and a globally connected education market that privileged innovation and particularly EdTech use as ways to maintain and increase market position. Chapter Eight addresses the second research question,

> "How do the policy discourses shape/position the role and affordances of EdTech within network and school level policy texts?"

This draws links between the previous discussions surrounding the economic imperatives being placed on education and the situating of EdTech as part of the neoliberal architecture that subjectifies teachers.

The policy texts from TSN and Hill College outlined in

Table 8 are explored further within this chapter. The Principal Newsletters from Hill College and CEO Mailshots are particularly focused on as they help to contextualise the daily operationalisation and enactment of policy discourses within the network and school. These are supplemented by further interrogation of policy texts explored in Chapter Seven. The policy texts represent examples of neoliberal ideologies that work within the policy ecosystem to create normative discourses of accepted knowledge and power that see EdTech as an educational imperative (Foucault, 1988; 1971; Peck, 2018). Whilst there is no single policy entitled "Educational Technology" from either TSN or Hill College, there are a range of documents that situate technology, digital, and educational technology as valuable and required for the future successes of both the network and the students. These texts work interdiscursively to create the policy ecosystem in which teachers operate (Ball, 2016a).

This chapter focuses first on the positioning of EdTech within the policy texts, identifying the normative discursive practices that are likely to shape the individual. In first exploring EdTech's positioning as positive, then its agentic role within learning, there is a discussion of how EdTech is shaping educational practice within TSN and Hill College. The chapter then focuses on how the EdTech imperative is linked with future success, drawing links back to the arguments from Chapter One and Four, showing how TSN and Hill College are responsive to global educational markets and policy narratives. Finally, the chapter draws attention to tensions within the policy texts, identifying how Hill College's framing of EdTech begins to problematise its use within the school.

8.1 EdTech as positive transformation

Many of the policy documents from TSN and Hill College are publicly accessible. This means they not only govern staff actions but also serve as marketing tools, promoting the Network's values and priorities to current and potential stakeholders (Braun et al., 2011). Due to this, the language associated with EdTech is often positioned alongside language that promotes the future orientated goals of the network as introduced in Chapter Seven.

> *If we can be at the forefront of new thinking, it we can confidently harness the emergent new technologies and if we can continue to trust in our people, we can take the next step. We can be world leaders.*
>
> *(SPO, 3)*

Whilst technology is only briefly referred to in the introduction section (above) of the TSN's ***SPO***, the statement is value laden. Success of the network and the ability to *"harness new technologies" **(SPO)*** is linked with TSN being *"world leaders" **(SPO).*** The conditional phrases and the introduction of the modal verb phrase *"if we can continue to trust in our people"* introduces a sense of morality to the action taken by *"our people"* and what it means to be seen as trustworthy but also as supporting economic good. EdTech is important for TSN schools to be seen as world leading within the local markets (Egea, 2014). The inclusion of the conditional at the end of the list prior to the final action *"we can take the next step",* leads to the syntax placing the emphasis on the human actions in response to *"new thinking"* and using *"emergent new technologies".* As seen in later policy texts, and within teacher's interviews in Chapter Ten, teachers' success and value become mediated through embracing and using technology *"confidently".* The operationalising of EdTech is explicitly linked to the creation of entrepreneurial subjects who, through the systems put in place, work for the benefit of the network (Williamson, 2021a; Foucault, 1988). By normalising technological competence as a desirable subject position, the operationalisation of EdTech within the policy ecosystem embeds these expectations into everyday practices and discourses. The policy texts linguistically legitimate the operationalisation of EdTech as a marker of professional worth, shifting responsibility onto members of TSN to act entrepreneurially to ensure the success of the network.

Similarly, the CEO Mailshots acknowledge that technology is changing what happens within schools:

> *The hot topic across the organisation is, of course, technology and how it is shaping the future of teaching and learning.*
>
> *Mailshot Sept*

The linking verb *"is"* rendering this sentence neither active nor passive; instead indicates technology being the point of focus for the network. The parenthetical emphasis *"of course"* further implies a fait accompli regarding technology use as transformative. This is then developed with the embedded *clause "how it is shaping"*, placing technology as the active voice subject impacting on teaching and learning.

In the October and December CEO Mailshots, the transformative role of EdTech and AI is concretely positioned:

> ✦ *Learn about our award-winning initiatives*
> *The innovative projects happening across TSN continue to be recognised with awards and commendations. ... Well done also to TSN Central School, who won an award for "X", a project that embraces new thinking and the best of new technology. Let's continue to build on this success and ensure our students thrive now and in the future.*
> *Mailshot October 2024*

> ✦ *We are building the future of learning*
> *TSN is an organisation that is always looking ahead, and this month's Asia- Pacific International Schools Conference (AISC) is an excellent opportunity for us to shine a light on our culture of innovation. As the strategic partner of AISC, which takes place on 13 - 14 December, we will reflect on the many ways we are embracing new thinking and the best of new technology to make sure our students thrive now and in the future. Artificial intelligence in education will be a key topic as we examine its potential to transform teaching and learning.*
> *Mailshot Dec 2023*

The coupling of technology with positive diction *"innovative projects"* and *"culture of innovation"* creates a narrative that frames the use of EdTech within the TSN as transformative and praise-worthy. Using descriptive transitive verb *"embraces"* and repeating the superlative noun phrase "*the best of new technology",* reinforces EdTech as something that teachers *should* be using in their practice. Similarly, AI is also positioned as transformative in *"its potential to transform teaching and learning"* ***(Mailshot, December).*** By repeating the role EdTech has in changing teaching and learning, *"it is shaping the future of teaching and learning"* ***(Mailshot, Sept),*** the infinitive construction again foregrounds technology, using active voice to position it as a force that can shape the future of teaching (Mauri, 2018). The inclusive pronouns and the modal auxiliary verbs *"we are", "we will"* and the third person *"TSN is"* are suggestive of futurity and the centrality of positive and transformative engagement with EdTech. By repeating *"we"* along with the present continuous *"are"* gives the utterance a sense of finality over TSN's use of technology and its importance for securing the Network's success (Feijoo et al, 2021). This excerpt, like others, does not explicitly state who in this occurrence is *"TSN"* and *"we"* creates ambiguity where tension could exist. Prior research suggests that teachers

may not see themselves reflected within this technological and future facing narrative (Ideland, 2021; Ball, 2021).

> *The technological revolution that is now upon us demands that we transform what we do and how we do it so that our young people are ready to face the world, whatever it looks like in the future.*
>
> *(TSN Annual Report)*

As the above extract suggests, EdTech has come to the forefront of the network, shaping and changing what teaching is and means (Ip, 2024). The phrasing here provides an interesting example of the immediacy needed to respond to technology, but also its complex nature as the sentence structure echoes the multifaceted and interrelated factors of the use of EdTech within schools. In giving technology agentic power *"demands that we transform",* the transitive verb suggests teachers and education are being acted upon by technology, making the statement become a call to action for TSN teachers. A moral imperative for the use of EdTech is reinforced, presenting a challenge to the teacher and student experience. Technology is associated with the future success of students, with the aim that *"our young people are ready to face the world."* In this context, *"the world*" is metaphorically used as a nebulous term representing the marketable success of students, as emphasised within educational policies (Savage, 2017).

Hill College echoes TSN's view of EdTech as transformative but adopts a more modest, practice-focused tone. The ***Responsible Use Policy (RUP)*** states that *"Technology at Hill College School supports and enhances the quality of work done by students and staff"*. In using the active voice, technology's agency and positive role is emphasised, while keeping the focus on classroom practices. This is also seen within the ***Principal's Newsletter*** where Hill College's approach to Year 7 *"ICT Induction"* is described:

> *This approach enhances their learning experience and fosters collaboration and mentorship in our school community. ... The integration of diverse media and information technology has significantly contributed to the quality of student learning, enriching their educational journey and increasing engagement in their subjects.*
>
> *(Newsletter Feb)*

Presenting technology as the central subject grants agency in shaping the student experience by *"enriching"* it and *"increasing engagement"* supported by the repeated, positive portrayal of technology throughout network and school texts. The implicit argument, therefore, is that teachers who integrate technology into their lessons are supporting this agenda and aligning with the school's identity as a technology-focused institution. Hill College policy texts align with the digital integration trends currently present within TSN policy texts and these themes repeating interdiscursively across policy texts creates a clear narrative of positive technology use (Fairclough, 2008). Framing its use in positive lexical choices, perhaps limits the opportunities to diverge from this view, however the texts adopt a more practice focused position, translating strategic policy goals in more tangible routines. By presupposing technology is essential and can transform the work of schools and teachers, EdTech is not just operationalised but built into the architecture of schooling. As such, it could be argued that EdTech functions panoptically by producing self-disciplining subjects as teachers align their practices with policy-endorsed norms (Foucault, 2020).

8.2 EdTech positioned as an agent within learning

One notable feature of the policy texts is the description of EdTech as an agent in shaping learning experiences within education. In the TSN ***Strategic Planning Overview (SPO)*** EdTech agency is positioned through the active present tense in the first sentence, whilst in the second the schools are presented as the active subjects:

> *Digital technologies and resources enhance and transform learning and teaching.*
>
> *Schools use digital technologies to enhance engagement, collaboration and connection through synchronous and asynchronous opportunities to enable the continuity of student learning.*
>
> ***(SPO)***

Digital technologies are portrayed as having agency and influence over what occurs in schools. At the same time, schools are depicted as active participants in shaping the meaning and use of these technologies, with student learning remaining the central focus in both contexts. There is now a shared ownership of classroom activities, with schools and teachers working in harmony with technology to facilitate learning.

In the ***CEO Mailshots*** from TSN, there are further links with technology as an active agent within education and to the futures of students and the network's efforts, *"we will reflect on the many ways we are embracing…the best of new technology to make sure students thrive now and in the future".* The role of education is not only for education's sake but for an unknown future where technology is central to success. The syntax prioritises the efforts of unnamed staff *"we"* and *"our"* which has a clear suggestion that technology cannot be divorced from what teachers are doing in the classroom. The inclusion of *"many ways"* and *"the best of"* gives an indication that staff are expected to embrace technological diversity whilst also evaluating the applications. The ambiguity of the term "inclusive" is connected to "the best of new technologies," implying to recipients of the emails that education is closely tied to technology. It also suggests that schools and teachers within the network should adopt and endorse these views. As staff internalise and perform the networks tech-centred aims, the evaluative and future orientated framing become normative discursive practices. These then act panoptically as teachers self-regulate and adopt practices that are consistent with the network's vision (Foucault, 2020).

Whilst it was difficult to identify pedagogical policies that explicitly outlined how EdTech was adopted pedagogically in the texts from TSN or Hill College, there was evidence of Hill College promoting active EdTech use as a norm within school practice, mirroring the active positioning of EdTech in the ***SPO***. Two texts, ***1-2-1 Laptop Programme*** text and the ***Digital Literacy Text***, provided the clearest exploration of how EdTech use was framed as an active participant within the context of teaching and learning. The ***Digital Literacy*** text clearly introduces a rationalising principal for the inclusion and active use of educational technologies, situating its use within a framework of competency:

> *Some people associate digital literacy simply with the functional skills of being able to use a computer or particular software package effectively. But at Hill College School digital literacy is about much more than having access to or being able to use a computer. It's about collaborating, staying safe and communicating effectively. It's about cultural and social awareness and understanding, and it's about being creative.*
>
> *Digital Literacy*

By offering a definition of *"digital literacy"* and therefore EdTech use, the text defines but more importantly for the purpose of the text, provides examples of how the school goes beyond

"*simply the functional skills"* ***(Digital Literacy)***. This positions the school's approach as more aspirational. Hill College's technology identity is presented as *"much more than having access to or being able to use a computer"* ***(Digital Literacy)*** and therefore a more worthy conceptualisation of EdTech and its uses. The active voice and present tense repetition *"It's about"* when exploring successful Digital Literacy practice, and therefore successful technology use, provide a range of examples of what this *"much more"* is. This highlights how technology competency is active in meaning making within learning. Successful technology use is presented as extensive and multifaceted by the text. The listing of best practice examples help to operate as a governing rationality, setting standards and shaping aspirations for Hill College stakeholders (Foucault, 2001) In doing so, the expertise of the school is emphasised, establishing a disciplinary practice, helping the text in achieving one of its aims – constructing the school and its approach to technology as innovative and world-leading (Foucault, 2020; Balan, 2010).

In promoting itself to prospective staff and families, the school's website texts note that *"All classrooms are fitted…with the latest interactive and digital facilities"* ***(Facilities)*** repeating the idea that what happens in the classroom is actively mediated with and through technology use. The ***1-2-1 Laptop Programme*** text focuses mainly on the operationalising and technical requirements of the named programme, it is included here as it explicitly positions EdTech as active in shaping learning experiences. The website text frames much of the teacher discussion within Chapter Ten and speaks to the operationalising of EdTech within the wider school. In explaining the commitment to a 1:1 policy, the text states:

> *Hill College (HC) is committed to a 1 student to 1 laptop initiative with the goal of enhancing and expanding the learning opportunities for all students.*
>
> *1-2-1 Laptop Programme*

The use of the present tense *"is committed"* and the gerunds *"enhancing…expanding the learning"* ***(1-2-1 Laptop Programme)*** are indicative of the continuous action of the programme and repeating the active role of technology in learning.

In addressing new staff, Hill College's ***New Staff About Us*** text sees EdTech positioned as positive and enticing:

> *"We have a sophisticated ICT infrastructure, a one to one laptop programme using Apple Macs and numerous other forms of technology to support learning and teaching. All teachers are all issued with their own Apple Mac laptop"*
>
> *(New Staff About Us)*

In using active voice, the first sentence emphasises the school's agency, using the collective pronoun *"we"* to create a shared identity that sees *"ICT infrastructure"* as central to effective teaching and learning. Through the intertextuality of referencing the ***1-2-1 Laptop Programme***, the text actively draws on the understanding that technology is there to enhance and "*support teaching and learning"*, repeating the understanding that EdTech is a facilitator of the learning process (Fairclough, 2005). Whilst not suggesting that teachers are replaced by the technology, there is a clear expectation that teachers engage with EdTech.

The positive positioning of EdTech within Hill College is further addressed in the Principal's March Newsletter which celebrates the Parent-Teacher Association's purchase of *"a state-of-the-art VEO video camera."* ***(Newsletter March)***.

> *The VEO camera enhances school sports with its ability to easily record games, leveraging AI for automatic highlight detection and analysis. It can be used to give students personalised feedback, enabling them to improve their performance.*
> *The VEO camera can be a significant asset for IGCSE students who have selected PE as it can capture detailed recordings of their performances, providing a visual basis for assessments.*
> *Having this technology will greatly enhance physical education classes and benefit student development for many years to come…*
>
> *Newsletter March*

EdTech is described positively using phrases such as *"state-of-the-art"* and focusing on the affordances that the technology provides staff and students through the verb phrases and adverbs, *"enhances school sports", "easily record games", "leveraging AI", "enabling them to improve"*. Again, the active present tense voice and placement of the technology as the active subject gives technology agency over what happens in student learning.

The discursive and normative practices within the policy ecosystem suggest a rationality in which EdTech is both a technique of governance and a marketised form of power shaping

identities and practices within TSN/Hill College (Foucault, 2001; 1982). The policy texts explored here might suggest an uncontested view of EdTech adoption and operationalisation. The knowledge claims present within texts such as ***Digital Literacy*** legitimise Hill College's expertise and act as a form of governance aligned with neoliberal imperatives of competition and innovation. Again, the policy ecosystem can be seen to position teachers, parents and students as self-improving and responsible subjects who embrace the EdTech imperative as a means for ensuring future success (Ong, 2007).

8.3 EdTech as essential for future success

TSN policy texts often explore how TSN is preparing for the *"future of learning",* linking this with EdTech use. In the ***December CEO Mailshot***, the futures of students' and the network's efforts are referred to, *"we will reflect on the many ways we are embracing…the best of new technology to make sure students thrive now and in the future"* ***(Mailshot December).*** Here, the role of education is not only for education's sake but rather equipping students with competencies for an unknown future where technology is central to success (Gabriel et al., 2022).

> *… we will reflect on the many ways we are embracing new thinking and the best of new technology to make sure our students thrive now and in the future. Artificial intelligence in education will be a key topic as we examine its potential to transform teaching and learning*
>
> *Mailshot Dec 2023*

The syntax prioritises the efforts of unnamed staff and reinforces a discursive regime that technology cannot be divorced from education (Foucault, 1971). In fact, the inclusion of *"many ways"* and *"the best of"* gives an indication that staff are expected to embrace technological diversity, also seen in the teachers' discourse, whilst also evaluating the applications of these. It is unclear within the extract who is included within *"we"* and this ambiguity is linked to *"the best of new technologies"* shaping the collective identity of the email recipients (Weir, 2009).

Hill College's ***Digital Literacy*** text also repeats EdTech's framing for future success:

> *As a progressive Learning Community, Hill College embraces technology as we develop and empower our community to become media literate Digital Citizens who can Make a Difference in an increasingly complex and interconnected global society.*
>
> *Digital Literacy*

By positioning Hill College as *"a progressive Learning Community"* technology use is framed as being *"progressive"* situating the school, like the wider Network documents, within the view of technology use being forward thinking and innovative, replicating language used by EdTech companies (Marone and Heinsfeld, 2023). The syntax positions the actions of the school first, then the impact on the individuals, and the outcomes on wider society last. The use of verbs *"embraces", "develop"* and *"empower"* assigns a positive and active tone to these actions. This framing suggests that the school's adoption of EdTech and its operational use endows skills and confidence among those who attend the school, portraying these actions as beneficial. From a Foucauldian perspective, the school's power could be seen as productive actively constructing the subjectivities of those at Hill College (Foucault, 2020). Later in the text, engagement with digital technology is presented as a fundamental right for its students: "*Digital literacy is an important entitlement for all of our students at Hill College School in an increasingly digital culture"* ***(Digital Literacy)***. Digital Literacy, and by a wider extension all EdTech, is a naturalised inevitable future for which the school is providing an essential education.

The ***Principal's September Newsletter***, whilst not initially focusing on EdTech, does help to show the importance of EdTech for students' future successes. By referring to the alumni network of Hill College, the text highlights the possible destinations for future students, leveraging the appeal of a highly competitive school and programme:

> *The highlight of our visit was by far having some of our most recent Hill College School Alumni giving up their time … and assisted our students with the AR technology that they use in their learning*
>
> *Principal Newsletter September*

The reference to Edtech within the final verb phrase, *"assisted our students with the AR technology that they use in their learning"* positions the EdTech conversations within the school in the larger context of the wider education market (Mok, 2003). By providing access

to these technology experiences, the school actively positions itself as forward thinking, implicitly suggesting that familiarity with technology will lead to future successes. In providing access to this experience there is a normalisation of technology use, moving it beyond novelty and further supporting the positive discourse around EdTech's use in students' future lives (Mirrlees and Alvi, 2019).

By positioning both the use of technology and the school's identity as entities that accept and promote technology as an essential aspect of belonging to wider society, the declarative tone suggests a form of technological determinism. This perspective is reflected not only in the other texts included here but also in many of the teachers' utterances in Chapter Ten. According to the ***Digital Literacy*** text, the school's goal is to develop citizens who can function effectively in a digital and globalized world (Selwyn, 2013). In this context, the role of technology and the school is equated with education that leads to future success, repeating the messaging found in the CEO Mailshots (Fairclough, 2008; Wodak and Chilton, 2005).

8.4 Tensions within policy discourse

However, within the ***Hill College Annual Report***, there is an instance where EdTech and digital devices are viewed from a more critical stance when used by students:

> *...introduced the new Digital Device Guidelines, which are now in place for 2024-25. This was informed by several books, most prominently Jonathan Haidt's The Anxious Generation and Ross Parker's The Screens That Ate Children, as well as articles and Podcasts from the World Economic Forum, the Huberman Lab etc. ...*
>
> *... growing research, which suggests a correlation from 2010 onwards between teen anxiety, depression etc and smartphone use, we decided as a school community to adopt a phone free approach ...*
>
> *Hill College Annual Report*

Within the extract, the blending of both active and passive voice, *"introduced the new"* and *"was informed by"* creates an authoritative tone that foregrounds Hill College's expertise and responsiveness to new concerns regarding digital technology, whilst to some extent distancing the school from the responsibility of judging technology negatively. This is evident in the enumerative phrasing *"was informed by several books...articles…and Podcasts…"* with the passive voice placing focus on the action of creating the guidelines with the formal, authoritative tone, rather than on the research itself. Like earlier policy texts the use of inclusive

pronouns, *"we decided as a school community"* initially suggests shared ownership but one that extends beyond the teachers and leadership to include parents within the decision-making process. The acknowledgement of possible negative consequences of technology adoption, present through explicitly citing titles that signal concern about technology's impact, *"Anxious Generation…The Screens that Ate Children"* emotively link digital devices with anxiety and harm to children, framing technology as something potentially harmful, especially for young users. Hill College's power as a regulatory agent is also present, *"to adopt a phone free approach"* guiding and shaping appropriate engagement with digital technology for students directly through the policy text and indirectly by shaping how teachers are expected to manage and police student actions. Technology use here is presented differently to the other knowledge claims, introducing a tension between technology marketisation and use of technology for positive educational outcomes, and the negative consequences for students' personal use of technology. The extract's use of authoritative citations, *"Jonathan … Ross Parker's … the World Economic Forum, the Huberman Lab…"* construct technology as a dangerous and problematic force. This reflects broader societal fears and reinforces institutional power in regulating technology by producing "truths" that discipline users, framing them as vulnerable to technological risks (Foucault, 2020; 1980). As Hill College is at the forefront of enacting and operationalising TSN policy discourses, the policy texts from Hill College reflect more critically on the implications of technology use. By simultaneously promoting and problematising EdTech, Hill College texts create market opportunities and self-regulating discursive norms.

Conclusion

In seeking to answer the second research question: "How do the policy discourses shape the role and affordances of EdTech within network and school level policy texts?"; this chapter shows that policy language consistently constructs EdTech as an active agent in shaping student learning. The ***CEO*** Mailshot and ***SPO*** present EdTech as transformative, portraying teachers as proactive adopters who *"embrace",* evaluate and select the best tools to shape learning. Across the Hill College texts, EdTech's role in enhancing learning is repeatedly emphasised. More importantly, Hill College portrays its use as sophisticated, supported by infrastructure and the wider school community. Together, these texts normalise a positive, innovation-led view of technology that aligns with broader neoliberal discourses thereby defining which affordances are valued and how actors are expected to enact them (Zannini, 2021).

As shown in the CEO Mailshots, Annual Reports and SPO there is a clear top-down alignment of TSN and Hill College institutional identities as Hill College policy texts reflect alignment with the strategic goals of TSN. At the same time, the school policies are more modest and critical of EdTech's role within operationalised practice, perhaps reflecting how the daily practices of the school have shaped the enactment of strategic policy locally (Bell, 2020; Ball et al., 2012). Whilst the policy texts reflect Foucault's concept of governmentality in their intertextuality and interdiscursivity, Hill College practices and policies are also responsive to local pressures. The main normative discursive framing of EdTech within the policy ecosystem shapes the culture of EdTech use and subjectivities within TSN and Hill College (Foucault, 1982). A dominant narrative is EdTech's transformative role within education, linking its inclusion within schools as essential for future successes of both the network and students, reinforcing a neoliberal positioning of EdTech. Hill College policy discourse highlights the sophisticated infrastructure and 1:1 laptop programme as two ways that the school provides opportunities for students to engage with skills needed for future success (Ball, 2013a; Olssen, 1999). However, as the extract from Hill College's Annual Report suggests, the use of digital technology within schools is not unproblematic or uncontested. Even so, all the policy texts can be seen as examples of the school's disciplinary power as the policy discourses create an environment that mandates behaviours and practices (Foucault, 2020, 2010). The contradictory framing of technology as a fundamental right for students, but also a practice inherent with risk, introduces morality and ethical decision making to teachers' practice and perhaps subjectivities (Foucault, 1982, 2001). There is an imperative need for students to be fluent in a technologised and globalised world, yet also a need to protect them from the harm of digital technologies. The extent to which these discourses exert influence on teacher subjectivities will be explored in Chapter Ten.

EdTech is framed by the policy discourse as a central, active participant within education, shaping both the teaching and the learning experiences for teachers and students. Hill College's definitions of EdTech emphasise the affordances of EdTech in creating collaborative, culturally aware classrooms. The marketisation of EdTech becomes one way in which TSN and Hill College assert their responsiveness to market demands. Hill College's policy texts in particular show the creation and legitimisation of certain types of knowledge, such as EdTech competency as seen in *"embraces technology as we develop and empower our community" **(Digital Literacy)***. Through this legitimisation, the power of TSN strategic goals relating to EdTech as being necessary for success are reinforced (Foucault, 1988; Lorenzini, 2018). The

policies create a narrative that suggests technological competence is fundamental for innovation and global competitiveness, with continual positioning of EdTech in positive terms such as *"has significantly contributed to the quality of student learning"*. Such phrasing makes EdTech only be seen as positively transformational. This has implications for teacher (and student) subjectivities and practices, potentially limiting their ability to negotiate EdTech use and shaping teachers' relationships with technology.

The policy ecosystem explored in this chapter reflects the technological determinism that can subjectivise teachers, mandating community-wide technology adoption and illustrating the Network's governmentality. However, the analysis also suggests that the normative discursive practice is one where EdTech practises are legitimised and encouraged. This normalisation of EdTech creates a standard against which educational practices, and therefore teachers, are judged. A regime of truth seems to be established where EdTech is competitive, innovative and necessary for education even where there are concerns regarding its impacts. Ultimately, policy discourses position EdTech as a central, market-valued technology, legitimised at Network level and operationalised at school level. Thus, EdTech helps brand TSN competitively in Hong Kong and to govern teachers, students and parents into entrepreneurial, tech-competent subjects whose practices and worth are measured by their adoption and effective use of these technologies.

Chapter Nine – Policy discourses shaping the role and affordances of EdTech within Education Team discourses.

Introduction

Within Chapter Nine, the analysis of the Education Team discourses will explore where/how the policy ecosystem discourses are being (re)conceptualised by the Education Team. As such, this Chapter answers Research Question 2's second part:

2. How do the policy discourses shape the role and affordances of EdTech:
    - within network and school level policy texts
    - within Education Team discourses?

Within The School Network (TSN), those who work at central office in the Education Team, as explored in Chapter Six, play a central role in providing a link between the schools and the TSN leaders such as the CEO, Director of Education and Educational Technologies Lead. Those that report to the Director of Education at TSN have been categorised in this research as members of the Education Team, as they are involved in policy formation and articulation across the network, whilst also supporting and advising individual schools and leaders. How team members frame EdTech policy, and how this framing shapes how they are seen, affects how EdTech becomes normalised and negotiated across the wider network. Due to this, their role and subjectivity can change dependent on whether they are working within the centre on strategic goals or within schools where they become positioned both as agents for TSN enacting policy direction or as agents for the schools to feedback on and influence upwards the direction of strategy and practice.

This chapter will first provide an overview of the Education Team research participants, exploring their role within TSN and how this may begin to (re)articulate policy discourses. Following this, the analysis will focus on how their discourses work interdiscursively with those of TSN before exploring more specifically the role of EdTech in shaping educational practices. Present throughout the analysis is a discussion of how the Education Team positions themselves and how they critique the role and affordances of EdTech within global and local

(TSN) practice. Unlike the policy texts which mainly present EdTech as a panacea and imperative for education, the Education Team are more nuanced in their views, reflecting on the ways in which their subjectivities and the role of education is subjectivised by the inclusion and promotion of EdTech.

9.1 Education Team Participants' Biographies

Marc is a member of the professional development team, working within the Education Team to develop Continuing Professional Development opportunities across the network. This is coordinated through both internal and external providers and working alongside school leaders to support development plans, as well as providing individual teacher development opportunities. Marc has worked within the organisation since the late 2000s having worked in industry, finance and economic roles previously. Marc is reflective on his growth within his role, developing from an initial lack of understanding of what the role meant at TSN, *"when the appointment was made, I not I didn't have necessarily a very clear idea of what professional learning and development entails"*. His personal ideologies, *"I need to posit something, Flick, is that I am a materialist, basically, in opposition of idealist"* shape his view of his role. He further elucidates on his personal interest in *"political philosophy, but from a continental standpoint. ... So personal attractions to the post structuralist and critical theorist"* which can be seen through the more philosophical framing within his discourse.

Aaron has also worked outside of education, taking a career break to pursue a role in finance, before returning to education and being a teacher for over twenty years. He is currently an advisor within TSN supporting curriculum development. He had previously taught within the network, as a Head of Department, after teaching internationally for over twelve years in Europe and Asia. Aaron describes his view of EdTech as both appreciative of practical EdTech applications, *"One of my favourite EdTech kinds of things is PhET Animations"*[25], "*I actually felt that my feedback to the students actually went up, got better by using the EdTech"* and sceptical, *"I've never known any single whiteboard to get really well used. So I have a slight yeah, scepticism about some of the investments that have been made in EdTech along the way"*. Aaron also reflects on his previous experiences of EdTech implementation, *"I was the person in the ... who actually read the entire contract all the terms and like compared it actually with*

[25] The PhET Interactive Simulations project at the University of Colorado Boulder creates free interactive math and science simulations. https://phet.colorado.edu/

Microsoft and with Apple", often framing his current views and actions against his previous experience of lacking agency to affect change.

Zan currently works within the EdTech team at TSN focusing on innovation and data, describing himself as *"always passionate about all things data related"* and *"on my own time, I was doing some projects"* using data. He has worked within TSN as a teacher and Head of Department for approximately five years before moving to TSN to join the EdTech team. Zan has been an international teacher for more than nine years. He positions his current role:

> *"we, we want to make TSN a data driven, educational organization"* whilst acknowledging that *"some people don't like the word data driven, because they say, oh, data doesn't drive anything people drive it. So data informed is equally okay".*

He describes his view of EdTech as *""I'm all for technology. And I think the future is with technology",* suggesting an alignment with current normative discursive practice within education.

Due to their positions within the TSN, their discourses can be seen as a way that official discourse is rearticulated and translated into the wider network. Their discourses are explored separately here as, due to their role, they are potentially the first site within the network's leadership structure for policy iteration and negotiation. How members of the Education Team frame policy direction, their TSN subjectivities, and personal identities, in response to the policy ecosystem could highlight potential tensions that exist within the network. By working alongside the CEO and wider Governance and Education Team in policy creation at TSN level, their discussion of policy texts here helps to provide the framing of normative discursive practices present within the Networks' policy ecosystems. In exploring their discourses, the language used to discuss the positioning of TSN within Hong Kong and global markets, along with their discussion of the role of educational technology within the network begins to contextualise the policy discourses in Chapters Seven and Eight linking to the (re)articulation of these policy discourses within teachers' discourses explored later in Chapter Ten.

9.2 Interdiscursivity and institutional influence within education discourse - reflecting on and with TSN policy texts

Within the discourses of the interviewed Education Team, there are often instances where the discourse mirrors that of TSN policy texts either in phrases or ideas that are repeated across the interviews. Whilst very few direct policies are named or referenced explicitly by those

interviewed, there is clear internalisation of the normative discursive practice surrounding technology as imperative for the success of TSN and TSN schools, and the marketisation or market positioning of TSN within both local and international markets. Whilst the policy texts from TSN and Hill College focus primarily on the positive affordances of EdTech, within the discourses of the Education Team, there is a greater tension between the rationale for and adoption of EdTech within the network.

Within the interviews with the members of the Education Team, all three referenced TSN's position within local and global markets and the role EdTech plays in enabling this. Aaron acknowledges how the geopolitical positioning could influence Hong Kong schools,

> *"Hong Kong, the Greater Bay Area is being set up as the tech hub of China. And so again, that's going to put lots of pressure on schools around here to align with that geopolitical context of where we are…".*

This shows an understanding at TSN of the need to align with educational priorities of both local governance, education markets, and stakeholders as explored in Chapter Four and previous analysis of policy.

> *Technology is linked to resource and links to finance. Fact that we are independent or private semi-private institutions means we have access to a wealth of resources that school would not have necessarily. I'm not saying that it doesn't happen. Maybe in the DSS schools, but local school would not have access. So when we talk about technology, we are talking about a savvy deployment of resource savvy… (Marc - CPD)*
>
> *Again, there's a lot of competition between the international schools in Hong Kong. And shiny things are good for your brochure. Are good for showing what you're the kind of school that you want to go for. And therefore one would surmise that we can people will go to schools and we want to have the biggest shiniest thing going on. (Aaron - Curriculum)*
>
> *So from that they come here to Hong Kong, and it's a very, very high tech environments where everyone has a MacBook. (Zan - Data)*

Marc identifies that, *"Technology is linked to resources and links to finance"*, establishing the economic factors that influence decisions surrounding technology integration and adoption. He also explores TSN's position in Hong Kong's education market with a direct contrast being

made between government schools, Direct Subsidy Schools[26] and TSN: *"we are independent or private semi-private institutions means we have access to a wealth of resources…"* drawing attention to perceived disparities within the local education markets. Aaron's more informal description of *"shiny things"* and Marc's *"savvy deployment"* which refer to EdTech could suggest a more dismissive perspective not to EdTech itself, but towards the policy agenda surrounding its implementation, seeing it as a marketing tool employed by schools. Syntactically, *"shiny things"* are linked with promotion, *"are good for your brochure…good for showing…we want to have the biggest shiniest thing going on".* This is also mirrored in Zan's language, *"…they come to Hong Kong, and it's a very very high-tech environment"* which references through the repetition and contextualisation the importance of technology. In Aaron's repetition of *"good",* there is acknowledgement of the school's clientele and needs, *"people will go to schools…have the biggest shiniest thing"*. Zan's *"where everyone has a MacBook"* draws attention to the market of education in Hong Kong. Both are echoing the technological imperatives seen within wider Hong Kong governmental positioning (see Chapter Four) and promotion of EdTech, but also within Hill College's 1-2-1 laptop text within TSN's policy ecosystem. The Education Team's discourse not only reinforces how individuals are organised performatively, with EdTech adoption being seen as "hyper-rational" (Ball, 2003, 317), but also how the policy discourses within TSN have shaped individuals to accept this narrative, an example of disciplinary power (Foucault, 2020). In promoting and rolling out EdTech products, TSN is identified as conforming and vigilant to the demands of the neoliberal ideologies (Peck, 2008; Gane, 2012).

Marc also states that TSN's success is partly dependent on its use of EdTech:

> *"…in the context of Hong Kong, I don't believe that it would be commercially savvy for our organisation to make a a statement about non accepting technological advancement".*

Marc's statement suggests that EdTech is necessary in Hong Kong's educational context, using the prepositional phrase to ground his discussion of technology and the marketisation of education. The embedded clause with the predicate phrase *"…it would be commercially savvy…"* highlights the desirability and strategic advantage of embracing EdTech, while the more hesitant second statement shifts the focus to the final phrase, *"non accepting technological development".* Marc's language pragmatically links the organisational strategic

[26] An exploration of the funding and categorization of Hong Kong schools is present in Chapter Four.

decisions within the local context, illustrating how TSN remains vigilant and responsive to the local norms to maintain its market position (Foucault, 2008b; Gane, 2012).

Reflecting TSN's stance, Marc's language goes further as his use of negation underscores TSN's need to capitalise on this moment:

> *You don't want to become the organisation that solely that refuse technical technological advancement. Why not? Because I thought it's what English public schools do. So in other words, in, in the context of the territory where we are, it would not be we are not Forest school. I was going to say we are not Montessori either, but Montessori now develop all of those biometrics. (Marc - CPD)*

The use of inclusive pronoun *"you"* linked syntactically with *"the organisation"* suggests that this utterance focuses more on his organisational identity. The subjectivation is clear within the extract, *"You don't want to become…", "It would not be [who] we are…", "we are not"*, with the inclusive pronouns and negative modals suggesting a sense of prohibition for the organisation being positioned without EdTech. The normalisation of a particular school identity is also introduced, *"…not Forest school", "we are not Montessori"*, setting TSN up in opposition to Marc's beliefs about these schools not embracing EdTech, whilst drawing alignment syntactically to *"it's what English public schools do"*. This is positioned immediately after the rhetorical question *"Why not?"*, suggesting the identity of TSN is closer to that of English fee-paying schools than to that of the others, showing an understanding of the organisation's customer base. Again, the normalisation of the EdTech imperative is reinforced through top-down and bottom-up discourses, with the comparison to other schools shaping the identity of what TSN values into a homogeneous acceptance (Foucault, 2020, 2008b).

Aaron also repeats phrases/ideas from policy. He acknowledges the importance of market positioning, *"and indeed we always want to be leaders. We set ourselves up to be leaders in the field"*. The intensifiers "indeed" and "always" reinforce and work interdiscursively with TSN policy language. Aaron's language here is more motivational in tone, reminiscent of the CEO Mailshots, *"We can be world leaders"*. Similarly to the policy texts, TSN is positioned here as active and responsive to market needs with a focus on continuous innovation, suggested by the verb phrase, *"moving at the pace they're going"*, linking to earlier statements regarding the need for speed in responding to these demands. Again, the shared identity through the

pronouns “we” suggests that members of the Education Team align their discourse with that of the policy. However, this alignment is not completely without challenge from Aaron:

> *I as I said earlier, I don't need to repeat it, but I have really big concerns that we're running in this direction, because everybody's running in this direction.*
>
> *(Aaron - Curriculum)*

By backchanneling, Aaron reinforces his concerns regarding the direction education and TSN is heading in. The metaphor of *“running”* and the adjective phrase *“really big concerns”* negatively position the adoption of EdTech within schools. Aaron notes that this push is coming from market positioning and is a vestige of economic principles within education, with the rationalising *“because everybody’s running in this direction”* suggesting both the normalisation of EdTech in education and the speed at which adoption is taking place. There is a sense that Aaron is aware of the “architectural apparatus” involved in the promotion of EdTech (Foucault, 2020, 303). He understands that within this normative framework, both schools and teachers reinforce these norms through their own practices, reflecting Foucault’s idea that individuals often enforce and reproduce power structures on themselves (Foucault, 2020).

9.3 Positioning of EdTech actors within discourses

The incorporation of EdTech is not an uncontested notion within the discourse of the Education Team, with members questioning the normalisation of this discursive priority especially regarding EdTech Actors, their priorities, and their access to TSN schools. Their critique draws attention to the tensions that exist within policy and practice that were beginning to be seen within Hill College policy texts. Marc expresses some ambivalence and confusion surrounding EdTech companies, *“people like me who are scratching their head and thinking who is behind those technological corporation organisation…”*. His idiomatic phrasing reflects a sense of scepticism at the opaque power structures in the interrogative, something not present within the TSN policy texts. This is developed when considering one of the TSN purchased EdTech products, MagicSchool AI[27] as Marc expresses his uncertainty regarding who has access behind the scenes:

[27] MagicSchool is an online AI system designed by former teachers explicitly for use in education It frames itself as “AI for educators: MagicSchool is the leading AI for teachers, schools, and students.” https://www.magicschool.ai/

...you would have access to a Magic AI. And obviously, I'm sure that there is some dashboard analytics running in the background and who is using it, who's not using it again, that's in terms of surveillance or, that there is something very sinister about it. (Marc - CPD)

So I see that and there's a sense of dissatisfaction in me with the fact that every such company that appears on the horizon, especially in our data rich world today, it tries to drag everything that's happening in the school, towards their platform. So the promise is that they will give you these beautiful dashboards and these personalized learning pathways, but in order for that to happen, you need to do everything on their platform... (Zan - Data)

Marc's normalisation through the adverbial phrase, *"And obviously, I'm sure that there is some dashboard analytics",* draws attention to the invisible surveillance and data collection that occurs within the EdTech product. However, within the syntactical construction, the focus is placed on the interrogative pronouns, *"who is using it, who's not…"*, suggesting an acceptance that the surveillance is taking place but reinforcing his uncertainty as to the identity and motivations within the opaque power structures of the product. By framing this through the noun *"surveillance"* and adjective *"sinister"*, Marc's discourse conveys a sense of threat that teachers are exposed to when engaging with these products, even when these have been introduced at network level.

Zan's critique, however, draws attention to some of the marketing strategies used by EdTech companies, showing that whilst companies engage with overt strategies of *"promise"* and *"beautiful dashboards and these personalised learning platforms"*, their agenda is to *"drag everything that's in the school towards their platform"*. The metaphor of control through the verb *"drag"* suggests that EdTech companies actively exert control over the school's actions, resulting in less choice/freedom for schools once they start to engage with a product. The opaque data practices of the EdTech companies extend Foucault's concept of panopticon discipline into the digital world of education. The power operating across the network and among individual teachers is dispersed and subtle, centred on norms of productive and effective EdTech use. The adoption and promotion of MagicSchool AI across TSN exemplifies disciplinary power in action: it shapes what counts as acceptable AI practice and aligns teachers' uses with head-office expectations (Foucault, 2020). Companies also surveil the network, influencing practice both top-down through platformisation and bottom-up by

guiding how teachers incorporate the product into daily routines (Foucault, 2020). In a neoliberal framing, the market itself becomes a regulatory agent, shaping individuals into more docile, governable subjects (Gane, 2012).

Marc explains that there is a *"schizophrenia, because we need to, we still need to be part of it, part of the discourse with pressure from internal pressure and external pressure."* The metaphor and the repeated word *"pressure"* suggest a tension between Marc's individual subjectivity and agency, and the constraints imposed by both internal (within TSN) and external (education market) forces. Zan also describes the tensions idiomatically, *"it's like a two-edged sword…I feel like they're* [EdTech companies] *from a very good place trying to make education better…on the other hand, they are commercial companies, so they're interested in sales",* identifying a possible conflict in the motivation of the companies that engage in the EdTech market. Aaron speaks more explicitly about the motivations being economic,

> *"And so again, my kind of my story about this is yeah, it's Ed Tech is owned by the billionaire class of Silicon Valley, and it serves their needs potentially more than that it serves our student's needs."*

Aaron's discourse is direct and critical, focusing on the corporate control within EdTech whilst also prefacing the utterance with informality and opinion, *"my kind of story about this"* perhaps acknowledging that his more critical stance is not in line with organisational normalisation of EdTech. By focusing on the companies behind EdTech, the passive *"EdTech is owned"* emphasises that it perhaps serves the needs of the *"billionaire class"* as EdTech is the subject being acted upon. The repetition of this idea is seen in the following conjunctive second clause *"serves their needs potentially more than that it serves our student's needs". Additionally,* using the active voice construction once again places the needs of the students as secondary to the needs of elite capitalist interests, *"being pushed by the big tech businesses, rather than being called for by educationalists".* Within the more critical stance, we can see Marc and Aaron grappling with the institutional rationalities and market logics that have arranged practices so that policy ecosystem's aims (and powerful actors' interests) take precedence, shaping what counts as legitimate educational practice (Foucault, 1982).

Zan also reflects on the motivations of EdTech companies and how they position their products towards schools:

"So I feel like, frequently, the interaction of these companies is driven by these financial interests, and they will try to sell no matter what so they will easily exaggerate what the product can do, for example, or they will easily when I ask them for evidence that their product works, and they don't have any, they would easily give anecdotal evidence, but presented as if it was some kind of a serious research" (Zan - Data)

Zan's use of the generic third person *"these companies", "they will", and "they don't"* suggests a generalisation of behaviour across all EdTech companies with the dependent clauses relating back to being *"drive[n] by these financial interests"*, echoing Aaron's more critical stance. The active voice modals, *"they will try to sell", "they will easily exaggerate", "they would easily give"* lists the techniques that the companies engage with in order to gain access to TSN; with the adverbials *"frequently", "easily", "no matter what",* suggesting a sense of frustration at the actions of these companies, with the evaluative statements challenging the dominant narratives surrounding the EdTech panacea. The final clauses perhaps position Zan as an informed or critical observer of this process resisting the commercial logic presented. Zan's active role in asking *"for evidence"* and his dismissive tone in *"give anecdotal evidence but presented as if it were some kind of serious research"* highlight his critiques of the marketing practices. Their discourses offer a challenge to the dominant narratives of more uncritical EdTech adoption seen previously within TSN policy texts, echoing the critical stances seen within some Hill College policy texts. In this way, they begin to problematise their understanding of EdTech and EdTech practices against their own moral code, resisting the unproblematic positioning in the TSN policy ecosystem (Foucault, 1988). In adapting Foucault's idea that "the subject been compelled to decipher himself in regard to what was forbidden a sense", here, the Education Team decipher themselves against the EdTech imperative, where in the policy ecosystem, not using and promoting EdTech is 'forbidden' (Foucault, 1988, 17).

The critiques in this analysis draw attention to the tensions inherent in the discussions of EdTech's role within education. Marc focuses on a personal/institutional struggle - *"schizophrenia"* - elicited by the pressures within TSN and the broader education market, suggesting that personal agency of both TSN and individual teachers/employees is beholden to market pressures (Ball, 2003). Zan directly addresses the ambiguity in the role of EdTech actors and the motivations of companies in this sector. In identifying possible positive motivations and intentions, he acknowledges there might be a clash with commercial interest that could

create a conflict with educational goals. The EdTech companies exert their power through the truth claims made about desirable technology, shaping policy choices and teacher practices (Foucault, 1982, 2020). Aaron offers a sharper critique, emphasizing EdTech's ownership by wealthy Silicon Valley elites and arguing that it primarily serves capitalist interests rather than students' needs. His use of passive voice and contrasting active constructions underscores how corporate control marginalizes educational priorities, framing EdTech as driven by profit rather than genuine educational demand. There is a tension then between the internalisation of marketisation and moral obligation to use EdTech and the discourses exposing a disjuncture with the policy ecosystem. The Education Team question the normalisation of EdTech and how EdTech actors act in disciplinary ways to present a regime of truth that states EdTech is essential for future and market success (Foucault, 1982). Through drawing attention to the commodification of education through technology and the competing pressures within the globalised education market, the Education Team's discourses complicate and problematise EdTech's use in a way that is not present within the policy discourses.

9.4 EdTech as informing practice

In focusing on the adoption of EdTech previously, there is a sense that this adoption will impact and inform educational practices, shaping what activities take place within the school and how. Aaron's role as Curriculum Advisor involves visiting *"seven different schools and [different] classrooms"* in the network. He reflects on this when considering the role of EdTech in the classroom, *"I generally see laptops open. It's very rare for me to go into a room and I don't see laptops open"*. In using the present tense and compound sentence, Aaron links the infinitive *"go into a room"* with a repeated action *"laptops open"* and with the adverbial, *"generally see", "rare for me…I don't see laptops open".* Later Aaron elaborates *"around our schools, you will I wouldn't like to put a figure on it, but a large majority of the time you will see screens up"* describing the normalisation of EdTech within daily practice. The actions within the classroom are matching the organisational identity of established technology use. Aaron correlates this adoption and role of EdTech when he states *"must be really significant"* through the modal suggesting that practice within education is and does need engagement with EdTech.

Zan reflects on the role of EdTech when it is introduced at network level and the power of this introduction creating a sense of imperative:

> *I would say that if we actually sign up for some products as TSN, which means that we're not mandating that schools are using it, but still, we say, "Well, look, TSN has purchased that. So you're free to use that", then I think by doing so, and we don't frequently do that on the organization level, right. So if you like by doing so, we're kind of sending the message that we think this product is strategically important to us. (Zan - Data)*

The discourse here internalises aspects of TSN policy, adopting discourse and strategy decisions of TSN within his explanation. Whilst acknowledging through the present continuous, TSN *"are not mandating"* he recognises that by buying a product, *"we're kind of sending a message that we think this product is strategically important to us"*. Through the pronoun use, Zan constructs his subjectivity as a critically reflective member of the Education Team, *"I would say…"*. His organisational identity changes from *"we're not", "we say"*, versus a separate teacher identity *"you're free to use"* and then back to his personal reflection and organisational identity *"I think…we don't"*. In the extract, Zan's language is often conditional and tentative, softening the institutional voice, as he considers the implications that occur in top-down purchasing of EdTech. Zan makes a final evaluative statement using the present continuous suggesting the continued importance that *"this product is strategically important to us"* suggesting the organisational message and the impact of strategic decisions on individual actions. The organisational endorsement *"TSN has purchased"* invests EdTech products coming from TSN as symbolically more powerful as the illusion of choice in *"you're free to use"* is negated. The Education Team's discourse internalises the normative discourses of TSN policy ecosystem, suggesting they act as framing devices for teacher subjectivities (Foucault, 1971, 1988). Through the purchasing of EdTech subscriptions and products for the wider network, TSN exerts power over the practices of the network (Foucault, 2020). The operationalised practices as seen by Aaraon, suggests that the TSN policy ecosystem has become a regime of truth that governs teacher actions and subjectivities (Foucault and Sheridan, 2020). This suggests that the ideal teacher, according to TSN policy direction, and seen through the Education Team's discourses, is one that engages with and has operationalised EdTech.

9.5 EdTech as operationalised practice – a network level discussion

In the Education Team, whose role at Head Office is more strategic, there was less discussion of EdTech as operationalised practice. Instead, they spoke of EdTech tools and actors introduced at the network level:

"we're a Google school" (Zan - Digital)
"we are using at organizational level, those Google Platform" (Marc - CPD)
"We now have what four different AI tools which are now available within the TSN ecosystem. MagicSchool AI, and Google, whatever it's called. And anyway, yeah, there's a there's a bunch which have been released recently." (Aaron - Curriculum)

The inclusive pronouns suggest an acceptance and operationalisation of EdTech, and technology reliant subjectivities as seen in *"there's a bunch which have been released"*, with acknowledgment of *"Google school" and "using…those Google Platform"* in shaping subjectivities and practice. EdTech use is prevalent throughout the network, especially with Aaron's description of what he sees when visiting schools as Secondary Curriculum Advisor*, "it seems that the automatic assumption for learning is it's going to involve a screen".* This reflects not only TSN's positioning but also wider discussions within education as explored in Chapter Five. He links this with the way in which assignments are mediated through technology, *"…set on Google Classroom, things like that and therefore naturally it goes through the communication tool to suit the screen.".* The operationalisation of classroom practice through Google becomes a central aspect of Aaron's discourse, reflecting what he sees during his school visits. The normative discursive practice is of EdTech enabled education and implicit awareness of the platformisation of education to become more reliant on Edu businesses such Google and MagicSchool AI to facilitate modern educational practice. Zan's comments regarding the review of educational applications used across the network notes that, *"some schools submitted lists of up to 600 different apps that are used in the school".* This highlights the extent to which EdTech has become operationalised within the network and the difficulty perhaps for TSN to support and regulate this.

Zan and Aaron also identify how structurally, EdTech becomes operationalised within the TSN network; whilst Marc draws attention to how the markets influence strategic decisions. Zan states that *"In TSN, it's a bottom-up approach. So it's the schools that decides that they're using",* reflecting operational freedom for schools, such as Hill College to choose technologies that support their individual aims and contexts, as suggested by the adoption of Apple products explored in Chapter Seven. However, there is also the presence of network wide oversight and policy formation, *"there's a there's the ETN the Education Technology Network for teachers at TSN and I know they work on the policy documents and roll out." (Aaron – Curriculum).*

Aaron's coordinated clauses introduce both his knowledge of *"the ETN"* and the understanding of their role, *"I know they work on policy documents and roll out"*, suggesting that they act as an internal institutional actor exerting influence over policy iteration. Aaron's acknowledgement of the presence of this group is discursively linked to Zan's description of *"a bottom-up approach"*, but rather than suggesting a grass-roots approach reinforces a more institutionally situated approach that could then limit teacher agency.

Finally, Marc reflects on the challenges of strategically framing the purpose and future outcomes of education with parents,

> *"[they would] challenge us about how would you prepare our children for the for a future for a post TSN life if you don't if you don't factor in or if you don't bring to the fold and those technologically element".*

Marc places himself in the role of the parent when he says, *"you prepare our children"* whilst acknowledging his institutional identity, *"challenge us"*. In discussing parental views, Marc draws attention to the role of parents as consumers within the market of education, highlighting their ability to shape the discourse and priorities within the network, resulting in EdTech being part promoted and eventually accepted as operationalised practice. In discussing the operationalisation of EdTech, and linking to the expectations of the market, there is acknowledgment of the neoliberal subjectivities that are present within the network (Foucault, 2008b). Learning within TSN is shaped using technology, indicating that the network has adopted global educational norms that position EdTech as essential for achieving success, both for the network's position in the market, and for the students' future (Whitty, 2002, Sipilä, 2013).

9.6 The discomforting morality surrounding EdTech

Whilst the discourses of the Education Team accept and largely support the strategic direction and adoption of EdTech, there are moments of critique present. Aaron expresses a level of discomfort with further adoption of EdTech, speaking specifically about the growth of AI use in the network:

> *But are we leading in the wrong direction? Not is our leadership in the wrong direction. Is the whole movement in the wrong direction. So that's my fear about that in terms of other edtech. (Aaron - Curriculum)*

In using the active voice, and series of interrogatives, Aaron is exploring the power/knowledge relationship alongside institutional identity. Rather than only focusing on TSN identity, he considers the globalised EdTech agenda, *"the whole movement"*. The fragmented syntax and the emotive statement *"that's my fear"* highlight his tension and critique of the broader ideological positioning of technology enhanced education.

Marc reflects on how operationalising EdTech and AI would lead to changing practices within teacher training, expressing grief, *"be the day where we can actually mourn"* when *"all of those transformation in the UK"* are introduced. By metaphorically positioning this as a death for teacher training, the language suggests that EdTech and AI is fundamentally changing what it means to be a teacher. With the contextual framing of the UK, there is perhaps an identification that teaching is becoming more globalised and changes within the UK will, due to the historic links with Hong Kong, impact what happens locally and within TSN.

> *... I'm not saying we shouldn't at all, but we should by default compensate that or with maybe some more foundation components such as I don't know the philosophy of education, a bit more theory, ethical…*
>
> *...I think that's very worrying for me. We are looking more and more at the machine, which really, as I said, frightens me. (Marc - CPD)*

The discourse repeats the earlier tensions between incorporation of EdTech within teacher training, *"... soon generative AI is going to be part of the curriculum of the PGCE"*. He elaborates that EdTech has a place *"I'm not say we shouldn't at all"* but that there might be a need to *"compensate that…*[with] *the philosophy of education, a bit more theory, ethical…"*. Through the modals, Marc introduces an obligation from an unknown *"we"* suggestive of either TSN or wider educationalists that tech enhanced education should be negotiated with greater focus on philosophical understandings perhaps using this as a care for the self as resistance to techno-centric education. Both Marc and Aaron seem to have accepted and internalised the current level of EdTech enhanced education. The more recent introduction of generative Artificial Intelligence into education and further incorporation of the machine causes concerns, *"I think that's very worrying for me .... as I said, frightens me" (Marc), "I want humanity to be in control of the machine as a tool." (Aaron).* In critiquing the growing adoption and operationalisation of EdTech, Aaron and Marc resist dominant policy discourses

surrounding the increasing use and implementation of EdTech revealing conflicts present within its ideological framing. By resisting these discourses at executive level, they create opportunities for policies to become negotiated and reshaped during their application within schools.

Across the Education Team, a level of criticality and willingness to express concerns regarding EdTech were shared. On the one hand the Education Team see EdTech as essential for market competition, thus supporting TSN policy positioning; but on the other, they are critical of the motivations behind EdTech companies and the increasing need to integrate EdTech within practice. Aaron uses an extended metaphor to the rationalisation of EdTech's incorporation and influence within education.

> *Each step along the path seems like a useful step. So everybody takes a step. And I want to stop and say, "yes, you're walking down there, and that part of that's lovely, but it goes over a cliff. And maybe we want to take a slightly more difficult path to begin with, which ends up in a much greener and sunnier place". (Aaron - Curriculum)*

Zan and Aaron are both explicit in their concerns regarding the ethics enabling EdTech and Edu business access to student data in schools. Zan explains that in TSN, *"there's a lot of discussions happening currently about data privacy and data protection. And we do have policies around these things. But they, in view of the recent developments, they are now very much outdated, and they need to be updated."* The active voice, *"discussions happening currently"* frames TSN as responsive to the changes brought about by AI and the growing number of educational apps being used. However, the contrastive *"But"* when referring to the policies along with the intensified *"very much outdated",* highlights quickly, how the landscape of EdTech has changed and that there is now a gap between official Policy and the current context.

Within this gap or ambiguity Aaron raises his concerns over freemium business practices, and the ethics surrounding the use of free products within education when this results in the teachers and students becoming the product:

Because a lot of the times, obviously, they're free. And there's that whole problem of you know, if the product is if the software is free, then you're the product. Whatever however it's pronounced and so we generally use the free ones. So therefore, what are they getting out of it? Are our children for sale. And should they be? Should we just use apps which are paid for? Should we be should we be allowed to use ones which are free?

(Aaron – Curriculum)

The lexical field of business and economics underscores the commodification practices that EdTech companies engage with. Aaron repeats monetary costs, *"free", "free ones"* juxtaposing the ethical/moral costs, *"you're the product"* and *"Are our children for sale"*. The repeated modals, *"should they", "Should we"* question the normative acceptance of EdTech within teachers' practice. By drawing attention to the inequalities in the power/knowledge relationships here, the subjectivation of teachers and students by EdTech companies is introduced. There is an opaqueness with how EdTech companies use the data they collect but also whether teachers are aware of the ethical implications of asking students to sign up to programs without awareness of how that data will be used. In operating without clear policy frameworks, teachers cannot make an informed decision.

Aaron's vehemence comes across in comparisons he makes between personal and school practices. He first sets out the student experience, *"Kids have to go to school. They don't have choice…"* then using again semantics of monetary costs and moral costs and obligations, "*And if they through that are then sold into some company's ways of doing things. Then I have concern".* Aaron positions students as products within the markets of EdTech operationalisation. Then he explores the agency adults have in their own engagement with technology, *"it's different if you sign up to your own kind of social media, (…) then it's up to you whether or not you tick that box and consent to it"*. He identifies that outside of school, staff have the power to choose for themselves but within schools, the power dynamic shifts and perhaps neither staff nor students have agency over EdTech companies. In front loading the subordinate *"when it's coming to school…"* technology acts like a gatekeeper and disciplinary mechanism whilst the second person pronouns are perhaps inclusive of everyone within a school, *"…you can't come to school and learn unless you use this technology now and they do things like that*[28]*. I don't think that's okay."* Participation in education becomes dependent on

[28] Here Aaron is referring back to a prior statement regarding the predatory practices of Large Language Models and AI companies in using data, "And Google and I'm sure other companies as well learn everything. They they're they're trawling through, everything's written."

EdTech as the modal, *"can't come"* and conditional *"unless"* links the action of learning to the use of technology. The power of the teacher/individual is negated, and agency resides with the EdTech companies.

EdTech incorporation is identified through the discourses as a moral and ethical decision that needs greater clarity from both policy and within TSN. Marc identifies that at TSN *"we don't have a steering group"* to explore the prudence of technology adoption which could *"actually address those fundamental questions of technique by opposition of, as I said phronesis [29]... I think it's it's questionable"*. By highlighting the gap, he identifies a potential need and perhaps a negotiation of professional dissent, *"I think it's it's questionable"* that allows space for reconsidering and resisting existing practices and framing of EdTech that remove or limit the agentic power and knowledge of teachers and students.

9.7 Positioning of self through policy discourses

Within the Education Team's discourses there is a clear tension between their identities as individuals, as a member of TSN, and that of a leader within TSN. In wearing these different 'hats', there does not seem to be an ability to reconcile the tensions between these subjectivised versions of themselves. The balancing of TSN organisational identity alongside their role in supporting or framing the subjectivities of teachers is emphasised through Marc's discourse, reflecting his role in curating Continuing Professional Development opportunities in the normalisation of EdTech within the network. In emphasising the progressive identity of the network, *"...we are creating a space for the educations to grow with educators with the technology..."* the inclusive pronouns and active voice emphasise the agency and supportive role of the organisation in shaping technology use by teachers. The pronoun *"we"* parallels that of the CEO mailshots, indicating an internalisation of corporate identity and priorities that then construct teacher subjectivities with EdTech.

[29] Phronesis is a Greek team which means 'practical wisdom' that has been derived from learning and evidence of practical things. Phronesis leads to breakthrough thinking and creativity and enables the individual to discern and make good judgements about what is the right thing to do in a situation. Taken from https://oxford-review.com/oxford-review-encyclopaedia-terms/phronesis-definition-meaning/ accessed 23/07/2025

It's going to be about productivity. And we know that time is is the beast for educators and the management of time. You can see that even saying that it's like you create almost like a mirage. You can say no, Marc, you have to adopt AI. You cannot imagine how time saving it is. (Marc - CPD)

Alongside this, aspects of neoliberal productivity are clear in his phrasing, *"…I'm hearing from colleagues talking about about AI…. the first thing they say is it's going to save you so much time", "It's going to be about productivity. And we know that time is is the beast for educators. And the management of time."*. The metaphorical *"time is is the beast for educators", "and the management of time"* repeats the previous assertion *"it's going to save you so much time"* with EdTech positively positioned. Marc swaps between the generic *"you",* inclusive of a wider audience, implicating due to his role, TSN educators more generally, but also himself in the third person, suggesting a fragmentation of self. The modal "*you have to adopt AI"* suggests that EdTech adoption is non-negotiable and there is an interplay between institutional rhetoric and personal experience. The process of identity creation is evident in Marc's discourse as it shows the subjectivation that takes place as Marc tries to balance his concerns with the moral imperative, setting "care of self against duty to others", in this case the network (Ball, 2003, 216). In the normalisation of EdTech, and the adoption of AI, there is a construction of a new "teacher ideal" who is technologically compliant and efficient.

Zan's descriptions of EdTech summarises the central tension existing within the Education Team. In describing his teacher identity, he is emphatic, *"But as a teacher, I I'm all for technology"* whilst as a member of the EdTech Team within TSN he states, *"I feel like sometimes technology used for the sake of using technology and critically can produce some negative effects".* This reflects on how the operationalisation of EdTech is perhaps a response to a strategic priority rather than a response to pedagogical best practice.

And I think the future is with technology. But I also recognize that there's a big opportunity for us to misuse technology, use it incorrectly or inappropriately, and make things worse if we don't do it appropriately. But I also think that if we managed to use it well, then it may open a lot of doors in the future. (Zan - Data)

Whilst agreeing with the positioning of EdTech as essential *"the future is with technology"*, Zan hedges this with the negative framing of EdTech practices, "*there's a big opportunity for*

us to misuse technology…" and *"make things worse".* Zan warns that EdTech operationalisation can be harmful - a narrative that runs counter to the current normalisation within the policy discourses. The adverbial *"critically"* and conditional, *"if we don't do it appropriately"* demonstrate that there is also a moral imperative for expert understanding and deployment of the tools within practice that is not prioritised within the policy discourses explored in the previous chapters. In the repetitive syntax *"But I also",* the discourse presents the ideas as equally important, foregrounding the need for EdTech use to be expert if it is to *"open a lot of doors in the future",* further underscoring the tension between optimism about Edtech's potential, and caution regarding its risks.

Aaron's discourse at times shows his conflict regarding EdTech and the policy directions suggested in the previous findings chapters. In putting forward his opinion, he separates his personal identity, *"And I fully understand why TSN and our EdTech team are moving at the pace they're going…"* with the syntactical order focusing first on personal identity *"I"* as separate from the corporate identity of *"TSN"*. However, there is collective framing for *"our EdTech team"* and finally his alignment with the goals of the organisation, *"we always" / "We set ourselves…"*. Aaron's explicit separation of personal identity ("I") from the corporate body ("TSN" and "our EdTech team") highlights an internal conflict between individual perspective and institutional expectations. Aaron is emphatic in his expression. The modifiers *"fully"* and *"indeed we always want"* strengthen his conviction and position him through subjectivation as someone who, while recognising the need for EdTech, implies by omission a degree of uncertainty or reluctance to embrace TSN's strategic direction. He also positions himself as critical of EdTech actors that have become operationalised within the school, *"I'm not a big fan of Google in terms of the ethics"* building on earlier discussions of his discomfort surrounding the introduction of Google for Education at a previous school. He does acknowledge the practicalities of the tools which *"allowed us to continue, stumbling on through the pandemic"* with Google Tools positioned actively, enabling education to continue through their agency and downplaying the role and practice of the teacher in shaping the learning experience. This linguistic balancing highlights the underlying tension between personal scepticism and organizational conformity in the adoption of EdTech, which is never fully resolved within his discourse.

Marc actively positions himself outside of the policy formation cycle, *"I'm sitting outside the realm of policies, really, to be very frank"*. In stating that he operates *"outside"* policy realms,

Marc positions himself as an outsider able to critique and offer resistance even whilst providing CPD opportunities for staff at TSN. The discourse markers and fillers used when discussing his role, *"So now," "really," "to be very frank," "yeah," and "as I said"*, capture the ongoing process of identity formation Marc participates in during the interview, reflecting that subjectivation is socially co-constructed with and through language and dependent on context. Marc reflects on the affordances of his role

> *"yeah, I'm just here to, as I said, to train an environment, or the conditions for the potentiality of learning, of growth and development and learning in general, for educators",*

prioritising abstract concepts that are centred around an individual's personal development rather than strategic and policy-driven opportunities. The emphasis on *"potentiality of learning"* reinforces a need for human-centred educational ideologies, mirroring Aaron's discourse over man versus machine in education. Unlike Aaron, Marc positions himself as less of a policy enforcer but more as a catalyst for change, *"I see my role as creating the conditions for ideas to emulate…to create an ecosystem where affordances are there"*. In this framing, CPD opportunities might be seen as an area where resistance to marketisation and subjectivation could be fostered, although this is not elucidated on within the interview.

Ultimately, Aaron is the most explicit in how he positions himself within the organisation, as a critical policy agent, challenging the dominant narratives within the network, whilst trying not *"to step too strongly into Paul's[30] area of working".* Aaron's positioning may reflect his negative experiences at previous schools with the introduction of Google for Education as he frames AI as a potential threat, *"the rise of AI, I feel actually there was a need to step into. So I'm actually beginning to step into that space much more"*. Aaron juxtaposes his role *"I feel you need somebody who's on the other side again asking the questions"* with those within TSN EdTech's team and leadership,

> *"I feel that the people who lead EdTech are sometimes like the champions of this thing. They love this. They know what the possibilities are. And they just want us head down there."*

Aaron's discourse reveals the tension between respect for the EdTech leaders, present within the metaphor *"champions of this thing",* whilst being ambivalent in presenting EdTech as *"this thing"*. Aaron's colloquial phrasing *"they just want us [to] head down there"* suggests a

[30] Paul is used as a pseudonym here for one of the Education and EdTech leaders within TSN.

critique of the leaders' expectations, framing the normative discursive acts and practices as narrow and unquestioning. Contrasts are created through the pronouns which suggest subjectivity and power. Using *"They"* to refer to the EdTech Leaders, Aaron's discourse suggests the group have the power to shape discourse, whilst the inclusive *"us"* and the first person *"I"* shows Aaron switching between his TSN identity and his personal subjective viewpoint, perhaps revealing the contestation around the current normative discursive practice at TSN. Aaron uses metaphorical language explicitly to explain his perception of his corporate role, *"I feel my role may become was a bit of a, an anchor, just to try and not slow things down just for the hell of it. But just to say we need to think really carefully about the direction..."*. The modal *"my role may"* and first-person help Aaron express his personal perception, whilst allowing for negotiation between this and his institutional identity, *"we need to"*. The metaphor, like the earlier one used by Aaron suggests the sense of movement and journey, although by phrasing his role as *"an anchor"* he positions himself as a mediator of the strategic direction being taken. Again, he uses the more colloquial phrasing *"not to slow things down for the hell of it"* which can be seen as humanising the critique, as he then reinforces the need for moral and strategic evaluation through the inclusive *"we"* drawing back to his institutional role. In phrasing the *"need to think really carefully about the direction",* Aaron's implied imperative positions him as a cautious advisor advocating reflection over unchecked momentum.

In exploring how the Education Team position themselves, the analysis reveals how subjectivities are framed both with and against the EdTech imperative. In exercising power, the policy discourses surrounding EdTech have become ways in which individuals are coerced into adopting the idealised version of a TSN employee (Foucault, 2001). Both the discipline of the market and the norm creation reframe behaviours against economic values of productivity (Ball, 2003). However, whilst there are clear moments where the Education Team are governed by the policy technologies, they also have power to resist and reshape the governance of others through how policy is enacted. Within the different subjectivities (critical insider and promoter of EdTech), the technologies of the self are developed as the Education Team grapple with a sense of ethical and moral obligation against the marketised promotion of innovative adoption and practice within the network (Foucault, 1988).

Conclusion

As demonstrated here, the rearticulation and normalisation of policy texts within discourse is complex. The Education Team balances the needs of the organisation and repeat ideas and language from the policy ecosystem, but they also problematise the marketisation of education through EdTech and in the introduction of markets within markets. In accepting that EdTech has become essential for education, there is a growing understanding that modern education globally is one that is technologically enhanced (Selwyn, 2012). Aaron's discourses provide clear examples of critique and resistance to the TSN policy ecosystem's normalisation of EdTech as imperative for future success, whilst Marc and Zan express criticism more generally regarding EdTech and Edu businesses. However, there is clear articulation of the normative discourse in TSN's framing of their EdTech identity as a way of securing market position (Miller and Olson, 1994; Hultqvist et al., 2018, Moore et al, 2021). The narrative of market success within the policy texts subjectifies the identities of the Education Team as they become framed as entrepreneurial-selves and must mediate themselves within the structures of the network but also in relation to how the policies frame the identities of TSN and TSN schools (Olssen, 1999; Harvey, 2005). Rather than acting solely as corporate representatives, the Education Team problematise the dominant EdTech discourses. Whilst accepting the normative discourse of EdTech operationalisation within education, the discourses present personal reservations with EdTech adoption. As mediators within the policy ecosystem, they highlight moral unease regarding the commodification of education, resisting the moral imperatives surrounding the techno-centred image of education and society that is promoted within both TSN and international education policy discourse (Ball, 1995).This brings to the fore a recurring motif within this thesis, that there is power and resistance within policy ecosystems.

EdTech and the TSN policy discourse reinforce neoliberal values of competition and efficiency, bringing to the fore the tensions that can exist between the purposes of education: individual growth versus economic success (Wiseman and Baker, 2005). The Education Team seem to balance different ideological positions and subjectivities within their discourse. Their discourse suggests that they might be viewed as corporate representatives, strategic mediators, as well as subjectivised individuals with limited power to resist/affect change. Inhabiting these different subjectivities frames how they respond and influence the agendas present within the policy texts (Foucault, 1997; Howlett et al., 2009). As corporate policy agents, TSN is

positioned strongly within their discourse with understandings of EdTech as a resource tied to competitiveness and market differentiation. The Education Team acknowledges the global and local education markets that TSN occupies and as such help to situate the policies within that global narrative that exists both within and without organisations and state actors (Fiymar, 2014).

EdTech from the Education Team's perspective seems to balance understanding of an increasingly technology driven world and economy with uncertainty over how operationalisation of EdTech is understood pedagogically (Macgilchrist, 2017). Whilst they might adhere to the professional identity of TSN as technologically savvy and innovative, this normalisation is fundamentally shaped by power relations as they balance their corporate subjectivities with their sense of self, reflecting Thomas' view that "people actively construct their individual and collective identities in discourse" (Thomas, 2005, 4). What begins to be revealed is the tension inherent within the power/knowledge relationship, especially with the construction of the EdTech imperative in education as one truth-regime that the policy ecosystem seems to normalise (Foucault, 1988). They emphasise the opaque nature of Edu business practices, suggesting unease over the perception of panopticon surveillance within the use of data and what constitutes appropriate practices by TSN, teachers but also the EdTech companies and programs (Foucault, 2020). Terms like "sinister", "drag everything" and "owned by the billionaire class" reflect a critical stance toward the power/knowledge dynamics of EdTech actors and how their involvement is framed within the policy discourses. Marc's positioning "outside the realm of policies" and Aaron's role as a "critical anchor" illustrate how individuals negotiate their place within institutional power structures. In being aware of the potential complexities of EdTech incorporation and the ethics of students becoming commodities for Edu businesses, the Education Team discourse positions themselves as critical insiders. These reflections enabled the Education Team to practise care-of-self by renegotiating their discourses and subjectivities surrounding EdTech through moral and ethical terms (Batters, 2011).

The analysis of the Education Team reveals that they occupy a meso-level governance position within TSN's wider power architecture. Positioned between senior TSN leadership and school-level actors, they operate as translators and mediators of strategic priorities rather than as end-point implementers. Their discourses show how they internalise TSN's organisational imperatives (innovation, competitiveness, digital readiness), while also being responsible for

rendering these imperatives coherent and actionable for schools. This positioning distinguishes the Education Team from teachers, whose encounters with EdTech policy occur primarily through its enactment in daily practice. Whereas teachers negotiate EdTech through classroom-level demands, performativity pressures, and forms of self-regulation; the Education Team negotiate it through strategic responsibility, market alignment, and ethical tension. Their influence over policy translation affords them a degree of discursive agency, yet this agency is shaped by different constraints, including organisational loyalty, global benchmarking, and expectations of innovation.

In Foucauldian terms, the Education Team experience governmentality through the requirement to uphold strategic coherence and promote technological transformation, while teachers, as explored in the next chapter, experience discipline through the normalisation of technology use. Both groups are shaped by TSN's neoliberal framing of education, but the modalities of power they encounter differ in important ways. The Education Team are positioned as policy actors and custodians of organisational identity, whereas teachers are positioned as technologised practitioners. This distinction explicitly highlights the uneven circulation of power within TSN's policy ecosystem and provides a foundation for understanding the divergent subjectivities explored in the subsequent chapter. The significance becomes even more apparent when turning to the teacher discourses examined in the following chapter, where the effects of these power relations are enacted within everyday practice.

Chapter Ten – Teachers' discourses and the enactment of dominant policy discourses

Introduction

The discursive practices of the policy texts in Chapters Seven and Eight, established the policy direction of The School Network (TSN) and Hill College as prioritising and valuing technology-enabled teaching. Teachers and students were positioned within a dominant discourse of technological determinism and imperative. Therefore, to be seen as valuable to Hill College and the wider network, the implication is that teachers need to engage actively with EdTech: using it to enhance what they do for/with students to sustain; firstly, the market position of the school network, but also to future-proof themselves and their students for the globalised economy. Ideland (2021) describes how teachers are reconfigured by neoliberal ideologies and policy framing in relation to the incorporation of EdTech. Positive framing of EdTech in discourse downplays problems *"which makes room for neoliberal politics"* leading to the subjectivation of teacher identity (2021, 43). This description of how teachers are refigured by the incorporation of EdTech and EdTech companies within education is significant in understanding how the teachers at Hill College reflect upon subjectivation within the policy ecosystem (Ibid.).

Chapter Nine explored how the policy narratives begin to be recontextualised and articulated by the Education Team's discourse. In doing so, the process of how individuals are subjectivised begins to be established, along with moments of criticality regarding the operationalisation of EdTech within TSN. These reflections enabled the Education Team to practise care-of-self by renegotiating their discourses surrounding EdTech through moral and ethical terms (Batters, 2011). In bringing the focus to teachers at Hill College, Chapter Ten will explore the final research question:

> RQ3: How does teachers' discourse enact the dominant policy discourses surrounding the use of technology?

By looking at teacher perceptions of policy discourse, the analysis seeks to identify practices of discipline and care of the self that can occur within the process of subjectivation established by regimes of truth (Foucault, 1982, 2020). The analysis is made up of both questionnaire and

interview data, as set out in the methodology. It will first introduce the research participants, discourse context of the interviews and the EdTech discourse within Hill College. The analysis will then examine teachers' discourse and positioning in relation to the policy ecosystems of TSN and Hill College. Following this, the analysis will outline how teachers talk about their daily practice, drawing links to how this reflects a normalisation of policy discourses. Finally, the chapter will consider how teachers enact their subjectivity through descriptions of their role as teachers, possible implications within and for their practice, and what this might mean for our understanding of teaching.

10.1 Discursive context of the interviews

Some teachers backchanneled to ensure their answers were relevant and repeated phrases from the questions before answering, *"I'm not sure if I answered your question…"*, *""What or who do you think?"* (Eva - Languages) when speaking in their second language (English). Many interviewees expressed their interest in the research, *"I'd be very curious and keen and actually eagerly look forward to your thesis"* (Saira - Humanities), *"really enjoyed this interview, because you asked some questions I haven't thought about before"* (Eva - Languages). Others expressed an interest in my perspective on the topic and the implications it could have for the direction of TSN and Hill College, *"if there are certain areas, as you're writing your paper, that you feel should be priorities, you know, strategically going forward"* (Dan - Creative Arts). Whilst a number expressed their concerns over their perceived lack of knowledge on the topic, *"I think I've said everything I have to say about EdTech as much as I know which is very little"* (Ruth - Student Support) often at the end of the interview. Despite these reservations, all participants spoke at length and clearly articulated their daily use of EdTech within their practice as can be seen below, identifying a wide range of EdTech tools from both personal-professional practice and those used institutionally:

> *"… We're using the normal one like Google Classroom …" (Richard, Languages)*
>
> *"… Zoom was one example. … We use the Google doc, spreadsheet, slides for everything …" (Eric, Computing)*
>
> *"… So yeah, like ISAMs, VLE, Quizizz, Kahoots…" (Tim, Humanities)*
>
> *"… A lot of our schemes are built in edtech like Kahoot, Blookets. So our schemes of work mean that we're we're using these different edtech …" (Glen, Science)*

Across the interviews, participants described an institutional culture at Hill College and TSN that framed their engagement and perceptions of EdTech.

> "*… at Hill College, everything has been actively encouraged. Yep try this technology out. … You can use whatever…" (Kat – Sports).*

Some made links with the purpose of education within Hill College aligning to future success,

> *"Not…using it for their educational purposes but just them being adaptive to new tools … that is something they need to prepare the future" (Glen, Science).*

This suggests that teachers frame their actions and subjectivities within a neoliberal discourse (Ball, 2003; Ball and Olmedo, 2013).

10.2 Understanding and articulation of the policy ecosystem within teachers' discourse

Within the discourses of Hill College staff, teachers describe their understanding and perception of the policies that shape their daily practice. In the questionnaire and the interviews, participants were asked about their knowledge of policies that promoted or were concerned with the use of EdTech (see Appendix C and A for full details of the questions). Two out of the 33 responses identified specific policies by name (see Table 9), whilst more were able to comment on the purpose of policies.

Table 9. Extracted responses Q14 Questionnaire data

The TSN adheres most closely to the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards. HK has to adhere to the Digital 21 strategy, but this has little practical impact on our work…
TSN Technology, social media and Communications Policies, Hill College Responsible Use Policy (RUP) [31]

Three questionnaire responses (see Table 10) did not name specific policy, but interdiscursive framing suggested an internalisation of the normative policy discourses present at TSN and Hill College:

[31] RUP stands for the Responsible Use Policy which is used with student to enforce expected standards

Table 10. Extracted responses Q14 Questionnaire data

All TSN Secondary students are expected to have a laptop, so some degree of educational tech is promoted.
TSN schools require use of a wide range of Educational Technology.
TSN do but not in a highly active way. It's led from the bottom up - meaning that teachers are driving this and TSN support it with policy and training opportunities.

TSN policies are recognised as fitting within wider policy networks, with the intertextual reference to ISTE and the Responsible Use Policy (RUP) picked up on here by staff, suggesting that this policy is more actively embedded within practice. There is identification through the modal phrases that TSN policies shape the direction of individual schools: *"TSN schools require", "All TSN Secondary students are expected…",* but there is also a suggestion that policies are *"led from the bottom up"*. TSN is framed as both disciplinary but also responsive to teacher agency. TSN is positioned as enforcing top-down policy but also suggesting that *there* is space within daily practise to adapt to suit the local contexts and thus mediating relationships of power and knowledge in concert with teachers (Foucault, 1994; Hilferty, 2001). This pattern is repeated within interview data, with participants referring more generally to the normative discourses of the policy ecosystem and many identifying Hill College's Responsible Use policy (RUP) (explored in Chapter Seven and Eight), and behaviour policies that included EdTech specifically.

Operationalised policies, which impact daily teacher practice, are often referred to in teachers' discourses using statements and adjectives that highlight teachers' professional knowledge:

> *… of course, the responsible use policy, I'm fully aware of all aspects…. (Becky, Science)*
> *…I think that's where every school in TSN has RUP (Karl, Leader)*
> *…the responsible user policy, which I have quoted 12 million times to 12 million students (John, Humanities)*
> *…the positive support framework use iSAMs to log concerns (Jasmine, Maths)*

Teachers subjectivation within their own discourse presents them as professional, trusted and knowledgeable disciplinary agents for the schools. By mediating and mandating acceptable

technology use, they enact TSN/Hill College policy grounded in the classroom and Hill College contextual norms (Hilferty, 2001; Bourke et al., 2013). The hyperbolic descriptions*, "quoted 12 million times…"* highlight that these policies are oft quoted within daily practice. Teachers implement policies that reinforce Hill College's surveillance and disciplinary measures, shaping and framing student behaviours.

The contrast between the teachers' understanding of what is required of the students and the hesitancy in identifying policy texts that might frame their daily practice, is often shown through hedges and negations:

> *"… I'm not sure about what the policy is about like for teachers" (Melosa, Interdisciplinary)*
>
> *"what's our policy? There's no, there's no policy …" (Nisreen, Languages)*

Whilst it might seem that the lack of clarity regarding policies could be indicative of insufficient training or poor communication:

> *"… how information shared I think it's something that I think could be done better" (Kat – Sports)*,

there is also a sense that there is room for contradictory practices and interests – those of the network/school and those of the teachers' own self-construction (Welmond, 2002; Robinson and McMillan, 2006).

The hedging, *"I think I'm empowered…. I I don't think"* used by Simon with tentative phrasing suggests a dynamic contestation of identity in response to policy (Ball et al, 2011). However, he also frames TSN policy negatively:

> *"… those policies at TSN in particular I often refer to them as throw the teacher under the bus, you can't comply with them" (Simon, Humanities)*

Simon's emotive imagery *"throw the teacher under the bus"* and personal imperative *"you can't comply"* indicate a high level of mistrust in the institutional practices and a need to resist these practices. His confident assertions could also be due to his significant experience, both as a teacher for 29 years and within Hill College for 16. This experience may provide him with more freedom to indicate the tensions between the letter of the policy and how the policy is enacted:

"… the policies and practice are not always aligned…" and *"Yeah, I think there's a flexibility in the pot, in the policing of the policies" (Simon, Humanities)*

Simon's reference to *"flexibility"* between policy discourse and practice indicates some ability for teachers to shape what they say/do, yet the final utterance *"policing of policies"* reinforces the inherent disciplinary nature of the policies in shaping teachers (Foucault, 1994; Bourke et al., 2015). Karl also recognises the tension between freedom and policing within TSN policy enactment:

"…not sure if every school has been looked over by someone at Head Office. It would be interesting to know. I know that they now have kind of a policy person in there looking after legality and terms of protection … and so again, it's always the how much leeway do you give schools? How much freedom versus the the alignment of the schools." (Karl – Leadership)

The embedded question and noun *"leeway"* mark TSN as the more dominant actor. Karl's diction, perhaps reflecting his leadership role, internalises this imbalance and frames tension as an inevitable feature of being a networked school. The growing alignment across the network with the role of *"head office"* referring to TSN in a disciplinary mode, highlights the power of TSN to modify the actions of individual schools. The third person and reference to *"a policy person"* gives anonymity, suggesting a panopticon framing of TSN's relationship to the schools, modifying their response to policy. Foucault argues that discipline is central to managing populations, and references to TSN Head Office and the delegated space for local policy enactment suggest schools are beginning to be rationalised against TSN priorities (Foucault, 2001).

Dan and Lexi explicitly set out the top-down strategic framing of policy, reinforcing TSN's disciplinary power to decide on what constitutes official policy and what is *"an initiative"* for practice at school level:

…. So the digital driving license is an initiative in school, rather than a policy. Policies have to come from TSN…. (Dan, Creative Arts)
"…the academic honesty is a TSN [policy]…so they have a academic policy which we are then creating our own guidelines on …" (Lexi, Humanities)

The imperative phrasing and use of third person reinforces TSN's influence and control over individual school and teacher behaviours. Policy is something that is done at TSN level by *"they",* whilst schools and individual teachers - *"we"* - operationalise these through school-based guidelines. The inclusive pronouns *"our context"*, *"our digital…", "our own"* clearly articulate greater sense of ownership and belonging with the policy ecosystem of Hill College, than that of TSN. Foucault (2001) comments that with government[32] there is an employing of tactics to "arranged things" so that "such-and-such ends may be achieved" (211). TSN's strategic direction frames institutional policies, and through school-level action, subjectivation begins to take shape in the expectations and routines those policies produce. The disciplinary power of TSN works downwards into school polices and then is enacted upon and by individual teachers, perhaps mirroring Foucault's description of sovereign power (2001). Whilst the power of TSN is not exerted through overt force, as with sovereign power, there is a sense that compliance with the top-down mandates is required of staff. The power of TSN then impacts the ability of teachers to act, and TSN's policy articulation becomes disciplinary, limiting of individual's autonomy as they seek to reconcile their sense of self within this governmentality (Foucault, 1988, 1982).

TSN policy is framed more as something that is done to teacher, becoming a direct action of TSN governmentality (Foucault, 2001). The teachers' discourses use language that suggests a sense of surveillance and panopticon disciplinary action. However, the 'unofficial' policies that make up the policy ecosystem at Hill College, due to their co-creation by staff are framed more positively within discourse, suggesting greater ownership and support of these discursive practices (Foucault, 1994; Buchanan, 2015).

10.21 New policy directions and teachers' discourses

There was also a clear articulation of new policy directions being taken at Hill College that seemed to run counter to the strategic position of EdTech as a positive imperative.

> *"…devices policy we're having next year, no phones in school is a good one" (Ruth, Student Support)*
>
> *"…there is big one next year about no mobile and no laptop for students next year I think is going to be huge" (Richard, Languages).*

[32] Government here is used in Foucault's sense of "the right disposition of things" (2001, 208).

The new Hill College policy direction is positively articulated by staff, possibly reflecting their bottom-up nature and sense of ownership over the strategic decisions. Richard (Languages) acknowledges that the change *"is going to be huge",* highlighting that Hill College's change in approach to technology is significantly different to current operationalised practice. However, there is still a sense that education relies on EdTech, and that this change is an adjustment rather than a full reversal of EdTech. John links the new policy direction at Hill College to wider global trends:

> *... we're even starting to see it a little bit now with the new policy on the phones and computers and you're seeing it all over the world. You know, I think I wonder if if we're going to kind of come full circle a little bit, you know, or re evaluate and maybe revalue technology in the classroom. (John, Humanities)*

Like the Education Team, Hill College teachers are beginning to challenge the existing discourses surrounding EdTech. John's hedged idiom, *"we're going to kind of come full circle"* brings attention to the moral panics that are often present when new technologies are introduced. While the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of EdTech-mediated learning at Hill College (see Appendix I, Figure 12), the growing reliance on these technologies is now being *"re evaluate[d]"* by staff, potentially introducing new imperatives that could influence the future policy direction of TSN. Even within these Hill College policies, however, teacher subjectivation is clearly present as Richard acknowledges, in relation to new rules about technology use during duty hours:

> *"So, we will need to monitor ourselves also in front of the students. Because how could you be a role model if, for example, during duty I am on my phone?" (Richard, Languages)*

Richard recognises that this policy shift will impact his working self as the modal phrasing "*need to monitor ourselves"* suggests that technology use has been so thoroughly operationalised within daily life, that teachers will need to actively self-regulate their behaviour and potentially be held accountable by their colleagues to enforce this new policy. This self-regulation and subjectivation then begins to appear in relation to both institutional policies and within school policies showing the many levels of discipline and governmentality that teachers

experience within their daily practice (Foucault, 2020). In monitoring their practices, teacher subjectivity could be seen as a means of operating for the common good, accomplishing tasks "expected of them, practice the trade to which they are signed" (Foucault, 2001, 210). The common good becomes aligned with Hill College policy discourses and, in this sense, submitting to the governance and management teacher practices by these rationalities (Foucault, 2001).

10.22 Policy gaps and teacher subjectivities

There are also instances of teachers asking for more direction from policy, with their language still framing policy as shaping teacher subjectivities:

> *"… But yeah, I don't think we have policy on the other side, which is what I would hope for, that we have policy that like kind of encourages us to use or like encourages use of it, encourages us to or to participate in CPD to make sure that we have use of it. …/… Suppose, when you put something in policy, it has to be quite black and white, doesn't it? …" (Becky, Science)*
>
> *"… I feel a space within policy to encourage more and to force teachers to be a little bit more of a risk taker or and say like our each course should promote the use of responsible use of some sort of edtech …" (Glen, Science)*

Becky's repetition *"encourages us…encourages use…encourage…"* highlights a desire for a clearer direction from policy in the use of EdTech and her description of *"what I would hope for"* constructs a more hopeful way forward. Becky identifies that policy shapes teacher actions and her policy preference contrasts with Glen's, which is framed by more forceful diction choices. The difference in discursive framing of policy may reflect how rapidly the EdTech landscape has evolved within schools, especially following Hill College's move to online learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic school closures in Hong Kong (see Chapter Five). The perceived gap between policy and practice articulated by Becky and Glen reveals an anxiety driven by the teachers' awareness of the power/knowledge dynamic at play. Their use of EdTech in what they perceive to be the "desirable" way demonstrates how the school's discourse has instilled a sense of self-discipline, as they seek to conform to what is considered effective and appropriate by school leadership. In much the same way that Foucault links the disciplinary practices of a prison to those of a school, teachers perform their subjectivities in a way to maintain their desirability (Foucault, 2020). In this way, we might say that the objective

of TSN and Hill College has been achieved as through the internalisation of normative policy discourses, self-governance against the policy rationalities is evidenced (Foucault, 2001).

10.23 Internalising neoliberal and EdTech imperatives

Whilst there is implicit policy awareness as explored above, this is more evident within the language teachers use to describe EdTech and its uses, rather than focusing on policies perse. Teachers internalise language from the policy ecosystem of TSN and Hill College adopting many of the phrases explored within Chapters Seven and Eight policy texts. In doing so, their explanations of education and Hill College can be seen as being framed by neoliberalism and EdTech imperatives.

For Madi, private education is framed in economic terms, and this means internalising the economic framing present within Hong Kong's education market. EdTech is framed as a key priority for private schools,

> *"you have the means to pay for technology-based education"*
> *"If I think about private schools, at least in Asia…it's one to one laptop education now" (Madi, Humanities)*

Dan expands this to focus specifically on the market pressures that dictate action

> *"And there's certainly there are pressure I think, to not just provide technological education, but for our kids to be on the cutting edge of what's possible" (Dan, Creative Arts)*

Eric also frames TSN's ability to capture the market positively:

> *"I will say we are in a, at least to me, I think TSN school is in a good position. We push technology since long, ever since long time ago …" (Eric, Computing).*
> *"… TSN understands these needs. They try their very best to bring us the good things, although not always work. But they they try to stay on top. And they try to compete with the rest." (Eric, Computing).*

All three participants internalise the importance of the market, echoing sentiments present within the CEO Mailshots and referring to policy directly in their language. TSN's position and the framing of EdTech within Hill College is situated in economic normalisation. Eric's repetition praising effort emphasises the market logic that permeates decisions made at TSN.

Teacher's discourse suggests a clear neoliberal framing - EdTech use is the expectation for international schools.

Further internationalisation of the policy ecosystem is seen within the language of competition and responsiveness employed by teachers. The imperatives and adjectives create a sense of urgency within teacher's discourse, reflecting the tone present in earlier policy documents. Eva (Languages) and Saira (Humanities) refer to international schools as *"innovative" (Eva, Languages)* and using *"state of the art technology" (Saira, Humanities)* as they both refer implicitly to the school's actions through the inclusive pronoun *"we think we are more innovative" (Eva, Languages)* and *"you're trying to draw kids" (Saira, Humanities),* linking their identity to that of the school. Saira states explicitly the *"very competitive market"* that the school inhabits, again drawing attention to the economic framing of decisions regarding EdTech adoption.

Ben repeats the economic diction and draws attention to how aligning with global EdTech actors can help both market the school's identity to potential customers but also how this then is internalised and negotiated by teachers:

> *"… schools at a more leadership level, buy into things like they'd argue we're going to be so it's almost like a... A selling point to be we're a Google school or we're a Apple school, wherever we are. So by school wanting to have that label, or be able to say that to parents or just being able to have some of the products that are offered... (Ben - Maths)*

The process of internalisation is identified within Ben's syntactical ordering, firstly focusing on *"leadership"* and that decision to *"buy into things"* which creates moments for renegotiation: *"they'd argue we're going to be"*. The contrasting pronouns and verb phrases suggest that the EdTech direction is done to teachers at a strategic level drawing on the associational prestige to help capture the local market.

Teachers also reflect on the desires of parents regarding EdTech, internalising these expectations and shaping their actions to adhere to this normalisation:

"…the parents probably expect it. … they would think we were old fashioned if we didn't use it in some way." (Ruth, Student Support)

"… Parents are very strong and support education massively and support, AI and other technology in education because they want their children to be at the forefront of everything." (Ruth, Student Support)

"… You know, parents want to see that their kids are learning in cutting edge stuff that is going to give them an advantage, you know, in the workplace going forward." (Dan, Creative Arts)

"… I think there would be questions on why aren't you using it. It is beneficial in a lot of ways or even there so much edtech. If you just didn't use any of it there'd be a question. At least one thing will fit your teaching style there's one thing that's going to benefit you or your students. So why aren't you using it?" (Glen, Science)

The verb choices in their descriptions *"expect"* and *"want"* frame EdTech use to meet market demands, with explicit references to education as economic success: to *"give them an advantage,"* prepare them "in the workplace," and ensure they will *"be at the forefront."* Glen notes, *"... there would be questions on why aren't you using it"* which highlights the power of the normative environment and need to respond to market desires. Teachers self-police when asked about the need to use EdTech to satisfy an unseen actor (Ideland, 2021). Glen's syntax adopts the persona of the school to voice managerial and parental questions. In so doing, he internalises the EdTech imperative of the policy ecosystem to frame his self-policing. Teachers self-regulate to suit the disciplinary power of the school's and parental normalisation of EdTech for student success. In this way, their subjectivities are shaped by the normative discourses surrounding and exerting subtle power on them. Adopting innovative practices and technologies could be seen as a new "economy of power" that constitutes what it means to be a teacher in international schools (Foucault, 2020, 310).

The teachers' discourse normalises neoliberal practices, exemplifying entrepreneurial subjectivation as they internalise institutional rationalities within the ecosystem (Foucault, 1982). By invoking "innovation" and naming corporate brands, it creates intertextual links to global tech identities. The discourse conveys a sense of inevitability tied to market logic, casting schools and teachers as both consumers and promoters of EdTech, helping to develop EdTech markets within education. The interaction between policy and teacher discourse

produces regimes of truth that normalise these market logics. Consequently, individuals are measured against TSN's normative practices and self-regulate to conform (Foucault, 2002).

10.3 Operationalisation of EdTech in shaping and changing practice

Both the questionnaire and interview data provided evidence of EdTech being operationalised in Hill College. The questionnaire responses revealed a wide range of EdTech tools and applications used throughout the school, many of which are accessed via school-provided laptops (see Appendix I Figures 4-7). Teachers identified a variety of pedagogical tools used within learning as well as 'background' technologies used administratively in their role (see Appendix I Figure 9). Participants also echoed ideas from the policy ecosystem when describing their EdTech use in both these practices. In Question 11, one participant directly named Hill College's "1-2-1 laptop" policy (see Table 11).

Question 17 asked participants to reflect on a statement from the TSN Strategic Framework: "Digital technologies and resources enhance and transform learning and teaching".

Table 11. Extracted open-ended questionnaire responses

Extracted Responses from Q11
We are a 1-1 laptop school so some degree of EdTech use is essential. However, the degree to which EdTech is used depends on the learning objectives.
Extracted Responses from Q17
I agree that technology enhances learning especially independent practice, creation of resources and online language tools. …
I agree that they enhance learning. …
I strongly agree with this. We need to adapt our teaching and use technology to help us.
I think these types of tech have enhanced and transformed learning and will enhance and transform teaching for those teachers that engage with it. …
It transform it, that is why it is important to understand it as teachers and educate our students to use it well. …
Agree, we need to ensure our students are competent and confident in using technology as they develop in their educational journey to the work place. …

The responses reference concepts from the policy ecosystem, explored in Chapter Seven and Eight, through the repeating of phrases such as *"adapt"* and referencing the need to prepare

students for the *"workplace"*. Teachers' statements of agreement indicate the internalisation of dominant discourses, whilst the phrase *"we need to adapt"* suggests a sense of obligation to conform to the expectations of the system.

In the interviews, participants consistently highlighted just how thoroughly technology has become integrated into their personal and professional routines. When exploring the role of EdTech in their daily lives, Hill College teachers expressed how operationalised technology is in their routines. Madi explained:

> *"I'm going to be online using some EdTech tools for my work, right? Either going to be on my email, I'm going to be on the VLE. I'm going to be on the Google Drive" (Madi, Humanities)*

Similarly, John states:

> *"I use all the standard things that we're using like Google Classroom and whatnot" (John, Humanities).*

The use of the simple present tense by both teachers underscores the consistent and ongoing engagement with these tools. The less formal lexical choices, such as *"whatnot"* and the tag question *"right?"* hint to the familiarity and normalisation of EdTech use. The syntactical positioning of John's *"whatnot"* after listing *"all the standard things"*, may seem dismissive but reinforces the normalisation and internalisation of the tools used at Hill College as part of everyday practice. The teachers' discourse focuses on practical/everyday applications of these tools as part of everyday practice at Hill College. While these teachers focus on practical applications, their discourse suggests that education is now mediated through technology. John and Emma go further stating, *"... it's just part of the world we live in now. It's not just edtech, it's just everywhere" (John, Humanities),* and *"So I think we rely on techno, technology a little bit more. Our world has changed. Hong Kong has changed" (Emma, Creative Arts),* acknowledging education reflects wider societal trends. The framing of EdTech as common-sense and treating technology use as taken-for-granted professional behaviour, suggests a subjectivation of teacher (Foucault, 2001). Tech-mediated education is legitimised, first by the policy ecosystem and then here, in the teachers' discourses; becoming a tacit regulation that reflects the wider socio-political neoliberal positioning of technology as imperative for personal and global success (Mirlees and Alvi, 2019).

While EdTech has become integrated into everyday practice, as discussed above, its implementation is also shaped by school mandates and underlying power dynamics. Teacher professional judgements are presented as secondary to the needs of the school. The operationalisation and incorporation of school mandated systems can be seen in the interview extracts here:

> *"...- I think the leadership team make a decision like er if we are a Apple school or Chrome school, or whatever Google's school ... "(Eva – Languages)*
>
> *"... the sort of basic bread and butter stuff which we all have to use, like Google classrooms or VLE or whatever ..." (John - Humanities)*
>
> *"... for one you're required to use Google Classroom ... (Ben - Maths)*

The repeated references suggest these systems are an expected part of everyday practice, taken for granted as suggested by the idiomatic, *"bread and butter"* and uncontested by the teachers. Hill College's actions impose a "law of truth" on individuals (Foucault, 1982,781). However, Eva acknowledges that the use of these systems is shaped by the underlying power dynamics of school hierarchy, with leadership having the power to shape teachers' actions. Madi links the actions of the school with the expectations on staff:

> *"So it is expected now that we're using Google Classroom. How do I know that? Because it was created for us by management using the VLE right? So they've gone and created Google classrooms for us" (Madi, Humanities).*

The power dynamic between staff and school leadership is clearly expressed by Madi describing staff behaviours using active phrasing, *"expected now that we're using"* and the passive *"created for us by management"*. Madi acknowledges agentic choices:

> *"...now of course we can say we don't want the classroom, we can create our own classroom..."*

whilst also painting a panopticon picture of the school:

> *"one day we walked into school and um, Google classrooms were ready for us, you know, so there was that expectation that we are going to use it".*

Teachers within this discourse are controlled by the implementation of Google Classroom to become a specific type of teacher (Mauri, 2018). By repeating the lack of agency, in the operationalisation of Google Classroom, there is a suggestion that staff's agency exists in appearance of how to use the technology but has little impact as Hill College's power is exercised over them (Foucault, 1982). Google Classroom's implementation could be seen as Hill College's disciplining of professional action, inducing staff to embed it within their practice (Foucault, 1982).

As EdTech is operationalised at Hill College, teachers' classroom practice shifts in the ways learning and resources are organised and communicated to students.

> *"... And it's so simple, like, you know, get out your laptop, go open google classroom, they can go through classrooms, and there'll be a link, they follow the link, they got all the work past work and things on Google Classroom ..." (Jasmine, Maths)*
>
> *"... They have the device, which is amazing. So we can just go through the device, they can use the device quite openly within lesson..." (Glen, Science)*
>
> *"... I think a a software that that delivers the information to the kids is a non-negotiable, let's say ours is Google Classroom. And I'd say now, AI is a non-negotiable..." (Tim. Humanities)*
>
> *"... I'm just so used to having laptops in lessons now ..." (Joseph, Science)*

Across the discourse above, there is repeated use of present simple and continuous tenses to describe the habitual actions of staff in describing the procedural aspects of lessons mediated with EdTech: *"get out your laptops", "follow the link", "go through the device", "they got all the work... on Google classroom".* This suggests both the operationalisation of EdTech and the technical competence of staff. Participants use modal and evaluative phrases, *"non-negotiable", "amazing"* reinforcing the necessity and transformative power of EdTech use within daily teaching. Technology is also presented as a mediator of learning, for example *"delivers the information"*, positioning it as an autonomous entity that subjectifies teachers' practice. Joseph's *"I'm just so used to having laptops in lessons now"* and Jasmine's *"it's so simple"* suggest that EdTech has changed perception and practice in comparison to previous experience.

As the normative practices and discourses within the policy ecosystem shape teacher subjectivities and practices, there is also a sense that this has become an institutional practice against which teachers evaluate themselves (Foucault, 1988). It seems that teachers have internalised and enact the policy expectations of competent use of EdTech, regulating their behaviours to become compliant subjects within these institutional norms (Foucault, 2020).

10.31 New Technologies impacting teacher practice

Interviews also displayed AI as an emerging feature, as Hill College and TSN policymakers continue to seek innovative and cutting-edge technologies for operationalisation into school practice. During the year the interviews were conducted, TSN had bought a network wide subscription to MagicSchool AI, as explored in the policy analysis in Chapter Nine. This decision is commented on by participants:

> *"I'm sure not every school has MagicSchool. Haven't seen the cost of it, but I'm sure it's no cheap to buy that for a whole organisation" (Tim, Humanities)*.

The economic outlay mirrors the strategic policy texts use of economic language - investment within staff and infrastructure to maintain market position, providing for parental expectations and TSN image building of providing a world-class education. Kat explores how the school has positioned staff regarding AI use:

> *"like of MagicSchool and the use of AI going forward, again, it's something that we have actively embraced as a school is the use of AI to again try and make lives easier" (Kat, Sports)*

The active voice and connecting of personal actions with the school's aligns with the wider strategic positioning of TSN. In talking positively about AI and MagicSchool, in particular, teacher's position it as the next evolution of EdTech, a panacea for educational problems, responding to policy discourses explored in Chapter One and Four (Suárez-Guerrero, et al. 2023).

Within participants interviews there were many examples of AI use being explored, often using positive diction choices, suggesting the growing normalisation of AI within education:

"… I think AI is going to be more empowering for them [students], *things like MagicSchool because suddenly no matter what is thrown their way, they know that they can simplify this text and they can make sense of it…." (Saira, Humanities)*

"…I think the technology is smarter than before. Like before, it's a tool. Now, I can learn things from new knowledge, new information from those tools from AI …" (Eva, Languages)

"…So AI is very helpful. I needed to I wanted an itinerary for my summer I got a detailed itinerary, but then I did not think about it. I'm blindly following it. …" (Aashvi, Humanities)

In using *"empowering" and "helpful"* the descriptions of AI place AI as actively shaping what is happening within the classroom, but also their personal use. Saira focuses on AI as actively leading and shaping student learning. Eva contrasts her previous and current understanding of AI with the temporal marker signalling a newer view of AI as actively contributing to her own learning. AI is seen as active in knowledge creation rather than Eva relying on her own professional knowledge. Aashvi's metaphor, *"blindly following it"* reinforces this, leading to the idea that AI tools are now seen as the most powerful form of knowledge creation, leading the humans - the exact concern Aaron (Education Team) expressed in Chapter Nine. Within the discourse explored here, there is a lack of critical reflection with AI being framed in positive and innovative diction choices. AI is given the power over staff, shaping their knowledge and actions, leading to teachers subjectivation.

Teachers' discourses also highlight the moral imperative to use AI within teacher practice already becoming internalised:

"… so MagicSchool is something that I need I need to go through and sort through and find the ones that fit and I'm just I'm not there yet…" (Sonya, Science)

"… but so that you know the magic schools' is is, is this we're told to use it by by the organisation …" (Simon, Humanities)

This change is exemplified with two staff members. The imperative that Sonya *"need[s] to go through"* these instruments, may influence her professional path and the adoption of AI-aligned principles. Simon, in contrast, refers to MagicSchool as a more disciplinary practice, explaining

that *"we're told to use it"* at Hill College and TSN. In this way, the *"organisation"* shapes teacher behaviours and practices.

Across the discussions of AI, practices of care of the self are evident. In noting how individuals cultivate their conduct, skills and ethical relations to knowledge, there is a re-orientating of self around the new technological competencies of AI (Foucault, 1986). Eva and Saira adopt AI as a resource for self-improvement; whereas the moral imperatives and technologies of the self can be seen with Sonya and Simon's statements suggesting that these practices become duties of the self (Foucault, 1986). Teacher responsibility and entrepreneurialism can be seen in the self-managing subjectivation as teachers judge themselves, as Foucault might posit observing themselves, against AI aligned competency. There is a tension existing between the policy ecosystem's uncritical presentation of AI as empowering and supporting TSN strategic positioning and how this then is enacted in how teachers cultivate subjectivities (Foucault, 1986).

10.4 Teachers' agency and decisions making around EdTech

Teachers can, at times, influence school decisions, practising their agency. Eric identifies his roles on a school committee[33] *"... that decided to use Apple" (Eric, Computing)*. Dan and Joseph also comment on the decision to introduce 1-2-1 Laptops and Apple in particular.

> *"... So in particular, Microsoft, and Apple were the two kind of, you know, front runners back in 2008. And they presented to the school, and there was a committee of people put together I was on that committee, it was felt that Apple would be far more appropriate for our students..." (Dan, Creative Arts)*
>
> *"... when we did our when we introduced our laptop programme here, for example. So the we ended up going with Apple, and the reason we got went with Apple is because they gave a really good deal and we'll put a tech in there for I think he was there for three years down in the ICT office who can help..." (Joseph, Science)*

Dan identifies that Edu business was invited into schools and the decision-making process focused on what was *"more appropriate for our students"* suggesting a sense of care and perhaps pedagogical framing of this decision, although this is not explicitly mentioned. Joseph

[33] The committee

focuses on the business tactics employed by Apple, articulating how EdTech adoption is not solely about the school's market position but also about generating income for big business, *"Apple…gave a really good deal…put a tech in there…. for three years down in ICT"*. In explicitly discussing the self-sustaining market that is introduced into schools through the incorporation of EdTech products, Joseph's discourse shows an understanding that Apple's involvement is motivated by economic business practices as explored in Chapter Four.

In commenting on the school's previous adoption of 1-2-1 laptop policy, he describes the motivation of the companies and development of self-sustaining markets in education:

> *"… obviously, they know they if they get students buying their laptops or they're young, they're going to learn how to use those devices. And they're more likely to keep using Apple later on. And it's a similar thing with Google. I mean, if Google can have people using all their applications, then they'll be very used to using Google and they'll always want to use Google…" (Joseph, Science)*

The companies' actions are presented as being driven by market and economic principles, establishing a customer base within schools and exposing students to their products. In doing so, the focus is on profit not pedagogy, and in a similar way to TSN seeking to maintain its future success in the market, they *"target education … in the future they can grow and people stay with that company …. Call me cynical"*. Joseph offers a personal anecdote that illustrates this dynamic, explaining how the school's decision to exclusively support Apple products (referred to in Chapter Seven) led him to switch away from his preferred technology:

> *"So, I stuck in my laptop for a long time. But then I was kind of got forced into using the Apple I guess because some things in school stopped working because they were only set up then for Apple products" (Joseph, Science)*

He indicates that in the face of school-level technology decisions, teachers have little agency or power. The decision ultimately swayed Joseph towards Apple, *"I would probably stay with Apple now I guess. But that has definitely come because of work in school"*. In recounting this experience, Joseph draws a parallel between his EdTech biography and what he believes will happen to students because of the adoption of Google and Apple. He reflects, *"But now everything I buy is Apple. I don't even think about it now. … a big part of the fact I use Apple*

now comes from the school's decision". Joseph's adoption of Apple products reflects how power operates not through overt coercions but through the seemingly benign choices of the school shaping individual choices and normalising certain behaviours and practices (Foucault, 2020). Within the discourses, there is a sense that neoliberal ideologies, present within the policy ecosystem normative discourses, have just become framing technologies for the educational self, but also the personal subjectivities and practices of staff (Foucault, 1971, 1987, 1988, 2020).

10.5 Enactment of Teacher Subjectivities

The interviews enabled an understanding of teacher subjectivity in the context of EdTech policy discourses. The interview process itself can evoke previously unarticulated aspects of subjectivity and self-formation, as Foucault (1971, 2020) explores, the act of speaking can reveal truths that did not exist prior to that moment. By framing questions around teachers' perceptions, roles, and integration of EdTech and EdTech companies, both within Hill College and TSN but also in Hong Kong more generally; their discourses reveal their enactment of subjectivity. This examination of teacher subjectivity, and the discourses framing it, acknowledges that these processes are not neutral but value laden – shaped by the socio-political contexts and normative discursive practices that exist within the policy ecosystem of TSN and Hill College. The values that emerge in the teachers' reflections on the role of "teacher", highlight the power relationship shaped by social and institutional practices (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 2001; Liaqat et al. 2024). Teacher subjectivation at Hill College is, therefore, constructed within a complex interplay of the policy ecosystem, peer and stakeholder relationships, but also by technology itself.

The analysis below explores the tension between the normative discourses surrounding EdTech and teachers' fear/moral panic over how the growing reliance on technology might impact their future selves. This section of the analysis first explores how teachers describe themselves and their roles; how EdTech shapes their subjectivities/practices and the implications this may have on their subjectivities. While embracing the general direction of the policy ecosystem, the discourses reveal an awareness of morality and ethics like those expressed by the Education Team in Chapter Nine.

10.51 Teachers as responsive, competitive and efficient beings

Teachers frame their practice economically, highlighting how their use of EdTech helps them become efficient agents (Read, 2009). The policy texts express a need to maintain a pressure

to be at the forefront of educational trends, which is also present within the teachers' discourses, subscribing to the trope of moral responsibility (Wacquant 2010). The policy texts express a need to maintain a pressure to be at the forefront of educational trends, which is also present within the teachers' discourses. Across several teachers, the discourse suggests a subjectivation against competitive ideals:

> *"…it is going to continue to evolve … we as practitioners need to continue to keep up with the developments because if you don't, I think you're going to be left behind. …" (Kat, Sports)*
>
> *"… There's always this feeling of inadequacy oh my god, I should be doing more so I think that leaves you always feeling quite inadequate …" (Saira, Humanities)*
>
> *"… I think this is more like long distance running. Some teachers are like ahead. They they have made a really progress …" (Eva, Languages)*

Kat focuses on the personal imperative, *"we…need to continue…to keep up with the developments"* before linking this to being *"left behind"*, mirroring the imperatives and phrasing of the TSN policy ecosystem *"… to keep pace"* explored in Chapter Seven. The discourse suggests a moral imperative framing teacher subjectivation in relation to others in the organisation and with a need to be responsive to market demands (Ball, 2003; Ball and Olmedo, 2013). Saira extends this by identifying that within the context of Hill College, there is *"always this feeling of inadequacy"* emphasising the moral imperative to be competitive as "*I should be doing more"*. Eva's metaphor frames EdTech use as a competitive endeavour, some teachers are *"ahead"* and perceived as winning while others, and perhaps herself through the third person, have not made *"progress"*. The discourses suggest a culture of self-regulation and discipline. Teachers subjectify themselves, taking responsibility for their professional identity as technologically competent. This discourse internalises both the TSN policy ecosystem and the neoliberal emphasis on education and individualism discussed in previous chapters (Wacquant, 2010).

EdTech is presented as one way to reduce teacher workload, enabling them to be efficient and productive:

"… AI's just making that a little bit easier to develop the resources…" (John, Humanities)

"… Google it saved me some time …" (Eric, Computing)

"… I've got technology that helps me do that more efficiently …" (Tim, Humanities)

EdTech here is unproblematic, supporting teachers in their roles. Through the discourse, the internationalisation of both the policy ecosystem's focus on efficiency is evident.

Simon's questionnaire response offers some resistance to this narrative:

> *"… the ever-changing nature of educational technologies means that teacher workload is likely to increase rather than decrease in the near future as time and CPD is required to keep up with these changes" (Simon, Humanities)*

However, his resistance is not about rejecting technology, but rather about challenging the time-saving narrative. He emphasises that *"time and CPD is required to keep up"* still positioning him within entrepreneurial and competition subjectivities.

Not all teachers are comfortable with how EdTech has changed the concept of a 'good teacher'. Simon and Nisreen refer to themselves using the same metaphor of *"dinosaur"* in reference to their age and technical capabilities:

"… he always makes me feel inferior because he's so on to it [EdTech] *…, in a lot of ways I see like, I am a dinosaur (Simon, Humanities)*

"…But being a dinosaur once again, I sort of like knowing my subject and you know, I'm in a department of dinosaurs and so a lot of our planning is very much non edtech…" (Simon, Humanities)

"… okay, so given that this isn't my forte I'm a bit of a dinosaur …" (Nisreen, Languages)

Describing themselves as *"dinosaurs"* they adopt a subjectivity that positions EdTech use as a modern necessity, rendering themselves as outdated. They reduce their perceived threat to TSN and Hill College goals through the first-person, framing EdTech skills and engagement as an individual responsibility, internalising the neoliberal discourse of the entrepreneurial self

(Read, 2009). John's articulation *"even a luddite, luddite like me can deal with the basics"* highlights how technology mediation has shaped and continues to shape how teachers are expected to conduct themselves. His statement, *"we have to accept some level of EdTech right? It's the 21st century…" (John, Humanities)* frames EdTech adoption as an unavoidable reality, reflecting the subjectification of teachers as they regulate their behaviour to conform with societal expectations (Foucault, 1982). Within John's discourse we can see the "'responsibilising the self,' a process at once economic and moral, is concomitant with a new tendency to 'invest'", with the investment here being in the skillset needed to keep pace with socio-cultural practices of modern life (Peters, 2001, 61).

Interestingly, less experienced teachers also use similar language, suggesting a normalisation of teacher subjectivities that those not embracing EdTech are positioned as 'old-fashioned'. Tim, in his third year of teaching after transitioning from a different career, compares his limited EdTech knowledge to that of colleagues, *"I'm sounding so prehistoric"* and *"… I'm still a bit analogue"*. Kat, with twelve years' experience, frames herself similarly, *"… I'm quite young still in kind of the field. I don't feel like I'm prehistoric yet"*. Both reinforce the normative discourse at Hill College - the rejection of EdTech will lead to a feeling of being or becoming extinct. In comparing their practices against the normative institutional practices, there is again a sense that subjectivities are framed against others within the school (Foucault, 2020). The sense of discomfort identified in the misalignment of practices – where the discourses within Hill College particularly frame a particular 'truth' about what it means to be a competent teacher – could see these teachers framed as outside the norm (Foucault, 1988, 2002, 2020).

10.52 Teacher practices adapting to Hill College

Teachers reflected on how joining Hill College had impacted their EdTech biography. Jasmine, and Tim have all taught at Hill College less than two years and have recent experience in the UK. They compared their previous experiences to that within Hill College. Tim described the knowledge gap experienced when he first joined and was trying to find information and resources:

> *"… people were talking about it's on the Google Classroom. I was wandering around and which ones that Google one, wasn't that bad, but I'd never because I've never used it …. What does it look like?" (Tim, Humanities)*

In jokingly describing his search for a physical classroom, Tim's experience highlights how knowledge is taken for granted by the school, forcing new staff to adapt to normative practices of the school.

Jasmine identified that she was *"... not used to the pupils using technology as much"* when working in the UK, acknowledging that her practice still differs to others within her team: *"over a week, like I might only ask one class of pupils to get their laptops out once"*. However, she does identify technology use and applications:

> *"there's obviously a lot of websites that the pupils use that can self-mark which is really useful ... they can get their feedback more instantaneously. And again, it's things like Mathswatch MyiMaths[34]"*

suggesting growing familiarity and adaptation to the EdTech present within normative discourse.

Cora comments on how her practice at Hill College has changed to embrace EdTech:

> *"In terms of day-to-day teaching, I've pretty much adapted to the department, we use Google Classroom…" (Cora, Design)*
>
> *"…so biggest change is it sad to say sort of a reliance on technology…" (Cora, Design)*

In adapting to the department, she actively self-governs and internalises the normative discourse and practice. However, there is a sense of unease, *"sad to say"* suggesting that the EdTech mediated identity is not always one that is comfortable.

Richard provides an interesting counterpart - a highly experienced teacher who joined only Hill College two years ago. He positions himself initially as a *"kind of old fashion teacher"* not using EdTech earlier in his career. He then explains that the school's practice has changed his teaching:

> *"…the last two years, especially here in Hill College I think we really started to use AI because I'm gonna tell you something I use it for my teaching…" (Richard, Languages)*

[34] MathsWatch is "the complete online Maths platform that makes learning available to your students 24/7 from anywhere in the world" (https://www.mathswatch.co.uk/) and MyiMaths is "a whole-school interactive resource for use in the classroom and at home" (https://www.myimaths.com/)

He repeats this when comparing his teaching experience at Hill College to other private international ones:

> *"…if I compare it with my school before, my before I was in X school for one year, it was a really small school. We almost don't use it. But before that I was in China in Y School, so it's kind of a really good school. But we didn't use it so much. So, I feel here. We use it more than other schools. …. Like that's the identity the culture of Hill College…" (Richard, Languages)*

Richard refers to prestige and size as two factors that influence EdTech use within the other schools. In discussing Hill College, he refers explicitly to *"that's the identity the culture of Hill College"* suggesting the EdTech narrative is not solely a result of globalised educational narratives but is deeply embedded in the discourses and practices of the school (Foucault, 1982; Ideland, 2021).

More experienced members of staff identified that Hill College shaped their subjectivities. Madi (Humanities) identifies that her pedagogical practice changed upon joining Hill College due to having access to laptops - *"I had to transition from the worksheets based teaching…"*. Lexi (Humanities) acknowledges that moving to Hill College *"…is where it changed"* as all students having laptops changed *"the dynamics of how to use technology"*. There is also comparison between past and current practice, where *"Today… there's a massive change. It's like 180 degree. I use a lot of technology" (Aashvi, Humanities)*. The latter suggests that the process of subjectivation is continual, with teachers governing themselves to adapt to current dominant discourses (Foucault, 1982).

10.53 Teacher as moral and ethical subject

Even as teachers accept the prevailing discourse of EdTech within teaching, there are instances of resistance where a teacher's beliefs conflict with this neoliberal framing. Like Marc's metaphor of a *"schizophrenia"* (Education Team, Chapter Nine), teacher subjectivation is a fractured and complex process, renegotiating itself depending on context.

Using discourses that mirror the concerns of the Education Team, teachers expressed concern over the practices and motivations of EdTech companies. John is cynical in his description of the companies, recognising that teachers are both the market and product:

"…probably gathering and harvesting all of our data and information and using it for their own benefit and are probably using it against us in some way…" (John, Humanities)

Saira (Humanities) suggests education is *"an add on product to their basic core business"* and the access to data becomes a *"question is how to monetize that"* considering education to be *"pawns in their hands"*. In identifying that economic motivations are central to these companies, both discourses reveal a growing critique and opportunity for resistance. Through their metaphorical language, Saira and John recognise their lack of agency in the face of the EdTech companies' actions, matching Aaron's sentiments in Chapter Nine.

Tim also questions the motivations of the companies using conditional language to describe the adoption of AI, suggesting that there is both still time to change direction and time to question the motivations behind granting access:

"… actually, the people funding it might be big data might be into using the data…. you'd call it okay like a disguise you know…. they're they're gaining access through our perhaps naivety maybe because we don't, we don't know" (Tim, Humanities)

Tim presents a conflict between teachers/education as naïve and the companies as deceptive. Teachers' expertise and power are diminished and instead Tim sees them as innocent or too trusting; whilst EdTech is the aggressor, shaping and using those within schools for their own profit.

The lack of knowledge identified by Tim and repeated by Kat begins to create a discourse of discomfort:

"… we don't know how safe it is. We don't know what's being done with the data … who they're sharing it with what they're using it for…" (Kat, Sports)

"… I think it's something that, you know, we possibly are at risk of, you know, lawsuits or whatever potentially" (Kat, Sports)

Kat hedges her discourse and the concern of legal ramifications for not having knowledge presents the risk and fear that teachers operate within, whilst at the same time, feeling the need

to adhere to TSN and Hill College culture. The EdTech environment creates risk, and because Kat lacks direct power, she is at a loss.

Lexi does identify that these concerns are beginning to be addressed at network level:

> *"… I know TSN is being a little cautious about our students are signing up to things. Are we basically, allowing those companies to have access to our data…" (Lexi, Humanities)*

but the focus is on students, rather than on protecting teachers. Teachers are left to navigate this terrain for themselves, both as moral and entrepreneurial agents responsible for their own self-governance (Foucault, 1986).

10.54 Resistance to normalised policy discourses – AI as transformative

Within TSN and Hill College Policy texts, AI is presented as a fait accompli that will enhance education. Several teachers expressed concern about the pace and rationale for AI adoption, producing a negotiated subjectivation in response to the TSN policy ecosystem.

Melosa (Interdisciplinary) suggests frustration over the speed at which EdTech changes/new tools are introduced. Melosa describes the changing landscape of EdTech:

> *"So I think there's like big shifts in technology. And then now, like, like, now there's AI and how are we? How are we using that in all that we do too" (Melosa, Interdisciplinary)*

Her uncertainty over AI adoption, shown through the implicit questions and repetitions, also reflects the speed of the changes. In grappling with how to express how AI will be used, there is a sense that Melosa is actively constructing her identity in response to AI through the interview.

Richard alludes to the speed of EdTech changes and Hill College's adoption of new technologies, through the temporal discourse markers:

> *"… for example, before it was Poe, now it's MagicSchool. Okay, in two years is gonna be a puh puh puh..." (Richard, Languages)*

Richard's tone is perhaps more frustrated as the informal interjections *"… puh puh puh"* could suggest that MagicSchool is just the most recent example of EdTech change being introduced to staff. There is a sense of being burdened by the influx of new technologies, suggesting a resistance to neoliberal discourses of innovation.

Graeme is critical of adopting technology when the primary motivation is maintaining market position.

> *"I'm wary of, if we're heading towards AI and stuff like this. I think maybe it's just an old man talking now that that there comes a fad. And people jump on the bandwagon." (Graeme, Maths)*

Graeme positions his opinion, *"I'm wary of"* within the collective identity of a teacher, *"if we're heading"*, suggesting that the inclusion of AI is not just limited to Hill College but to the teaching profession generally. Describing himself as *"just an old man talking"* actively reduces his power and downplays his concerns. Reducing his power reduces his 'threat' to organisational identity, perhaps a way to protect himself. The language used to describe AI is dismissive, *"stuff like this", "a fad",* suggesting it is a *"bandwagon"*, suggesting the reason for its use as an adoption is not grounded in pedagogical reasoning but rather in organisational image creation surrounding innovative EdTech adoption.

Connor (Maths) and Nisreen (Languages) both express uncertainty regarding how AI will impact their roles as teachers. Connor states, *"I don't know what, how AI is going to impact our day to day lives in terms of teaching and learning and us as professionals"*, with the interrogative verbs, *"what, how"* and future active, *"is going to impact"* suggesting Connor has internalised that AI will become operationalised. Similarly to Graeme, he focuses first on his professional identity, *"our"* and *"us as professionals"* framing his critical reflection over how AI will subjectify the profession in general and shape *"day to day"* practices.

Nisreen identifies a presentation given within Hill College about AI as beginning to shape teachers' subjectivities:

> *"…we did a presentation one day after school it was a very short one about AI and its effect and and in during the presentation and he said by the end of this presentation a lot of information in this presentation will be out of date. And it freaked me out it really freaked me out. I was so scared by it. It really upset me because the first thing that occurred to me was that we are going to be redundant as teachers." (Nisreen, Languages)*

By identifying the school providing training, she reinforces the school's power in mandating AI use. Nisreen's diction is emotionally loaded, *"really freaked me out. I was so scared…really upset"* repeating adverbs and using intensifiers to highlight her panic regarding what it now means to be a teacher. The verbs *"freaked", "scared", "upset"* suggest a subjectivation based on fears linked to the impacts of AI. Nisreen links her personal reaction to her collective teacher identity, similarly to those above. Her concern, expressed through the simple future *"we are going to be redundant as teachers",* suggests that based on current evidence and perception, teachers will no longer be needed in an AI mediated education. For Nisreen, AI does not just shape and subjectify teachers, it has the potential to replace them leaving her just with a sense of panic.

In promoting the use of AI, Hill College's policy ecosystem can be seen as prescribing desirable self-practices for staff (Foucault, 1982). In questioning and sharing their worry, there is a sense of othering against the perceived mandate to adapt to new EdTech innovations. In exploring AI, individual subjectivities are prominent and central versus those of the collective institutional identity (Foucault, 1982, 1988). The rapid changes staff face enmeshes their subjectivities within the neoliberal framing of entrepreneurialism and productivity (Peck, 2010). In evaluating their subjectivities, teachers such as Nisreen and Graeme towards the end of their career, suggest they will become obsolete; whilst others such as Connor remain uncertain as to how these new technologies will reconstitute teacher professional identity (Foucault, 2008a; 2020).

Conclusion

Like Chapter Nine, the process of subjectivation and policy negotiation at Hill College is complex. Teachers' language and practices are shaped by the policy ecosystem and normative discourses established by TSN and Hill College (Foucault, 1971, 2002). Drawing on Foucault's ideas, individual subjectivities are continually negotiated and reframed by their socio-cultural and political environments. At Hill College, teachers operate in a highly technological environment where digital tools and EdTech are integrated into many systems and practices. As EdTech is incorporated into policy and operationalised practice, teachers' discourses reflect both the affordances and challenges of EdTech. In this way, they operate in what Ball (2003) acknowledges is a splitting of teacher identity caused by the clash of personal and institutional goals. In addressing Research Question 3, this demonstrates a tension inherent in how teachers

enact dominant discourses surrounding EdTech. Alongside this, there is an understanding that working within an international private school network is framed by neoliberal ideologies.

Throughout the analysis, it is evident that teachers' discourse is shaped by neoliberal ideologies of what a good teacher is expected to be (Clarke, 2009). Economic concerns and market competition drive discussions about educational expectations. Teachers generally accept that attracting students is essential to maintaining the school's market position. Furthermore, participants recognize that as a private international school, Hill College has the financial resources necessary to adopt and promote EdTech. This has led to a general agreement that innovation and the integration of EdTech are critical for school success as this is an accepted narrative within the context (Cohen, 2024; Suarez-Guerroro, et al, 2023). Teachers create subjectivities that repeat policy phrases such as "innovative" aligning with network goals. By situating themselves as forward thinking individuals, their teacher subjectivities are linked to attract students to the school, self-regulating their discourses and internalising market values that position EdTech positively (Clarke, 2009). As will be discussed further in the Discussion and Conclusions Chapter that follows, this self-governing by teachers is met with a complex interplay of constrained teacher subjectivity vs teacher agency.

Additionally, teachers often frame their behaviours through a neoliberal lens. Some present themselves as tech-savvy, seeing technology as an integral part of their identity and a way to improve the school. Others negotiate their response to EdTech, seeing it as a necessity framing their behaviours around the expectation for students to have laptops, echoing language found in the Hill College and TSN policy texts. As such, teachers are framed by the powers of TSN and Hill College, shaping their subjectivities within the dominant discourse (Foucault, 2002). New staff, in particular, adjust their practices and subjectivity to align with the school's culture, sometimes feeling as if they are outsiders. In discussing their changing practices, we can see their subjectivities begin to match normative practices. Teachers not only self-regulate but could be seen as acting in an entrepreneurial manner to ensure their success within the school (Foucault, 2020). For less experienced teachers, the process of self-governance and the adoption of normative practices can create discomfort and a sense of otherness, underscoring the broader challenges of subjectivation within this dynamic educational environment (Foucault, 1982). Overall, teachers have mainly internalised the neoliberal framing of education, accepting their role as one of equipping students with skills for future economic success.

The discourse often highlighted tensions between practice and belief resulting in negotiation and self-governance (Foucault, 2011). Teachers expressed concerns over EdTech's adoption, the priorities of Edu business and EdTech companies, and the implications for their subjectivities as teachers. There was a criticality in exploring the motivations of companies that operate in the EdTech sector, with their practices being framed as opaque or focused solely on profit. The moral ambiguity of AI as the latest iteration of EdTech was also present. Professional identities were negotiated with participants exploring the economic and neoliberal framing of adoption within their language (Clarke, 2013; Fairclough, 2000). Staff also expressed conflicting views and positionalities regarding AI and its impacts on the profession. Whilst some saw it as helpful, using phrases that suggested it had agentic power in personal and classroom practices, others framed it as an additional mandated practice from the school. Finally, some teachers expressed doubt over their role as teachers due to the growing focus on AI adoption. The EdTech imperative in education for some teachers goes beyond an economic neoliberal framing of subjectivities and becomes a threat to their sense of self.

While teachers internalise the economic framing of EdTech as explored through Chapter Seven and Eight, they also express concerns that the policy as written and the policy as enacted do not always align. TSN and Hill College policies are both supportive of teacher innovation and practice and simultaneously seen as restrictive and panopticon in nature (Foucault, 2020). There is a sense that policy as written at TSN is then (re)articulated through guidelines at Hill College. In their enactment of policy, teachers explore the tension between their freedom and lack of constraining policy, whilst also stating that policies police and restrict their actions in a top-down manner showing how their subjectivities are formed in plurality (Kelly, 2013). TSN is seen as both a supportive agent in teachers' discourse and one which imposes policies on the individual. On the other hand, Hill College is framed more positively within teachers' discourse. Most participants use inclusive pronouns suggesting greater alignment with Hill College than with TSN. In exploring strategic decisions regarding EdTech, there are criticisms over the lack of control over these decisions. Interestingly, teachers shift between using inclusive "we" and personal pronouns when discussing normative practices and discourse surrounding EdTech that are perceived less negatively, perhaps framing themselves as rational beings within the context of Hill College (Patton, 2017). Teacher subjectivities and technology are deeply intertwined with Hill College's policy ecosystem, with participants caught in the

moral 'schizophrenia' Marc describes in Chapter Nine, which is a dynamic Ball (2003) also explores.

Part V – Discussion and Conclusions

Chapter Eleven – Discussion and Conclusions

In Part V, TSN and Hill College policy texts and normative discursive practices were explored leading to an analysis of how these texts frame the subjectivities of the research participants. Private international schools are inherently part of a neoliberal marketisation of education, due to their fee structure. Across the policy ecosystem and teacher discourses, there seems to be an acceptance of neoliberalism framing education within the private international school system of Hong Kong. Most prominent within the policy ecosystem and teachers' discourses is an understanding of the EdTech imperative that is also promoted within the globalised policy agenda surrounding education. There are also moments where resistance to marketisation and normative discursive practices surrounding EdTech are seen, especially in response to the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovation within The School Network and Hill College. In exploring the policy documents and discourses within TSN, we begin to see the extent to which policy and teachers internalise the practices of the market.

This final chapter will draw together the discussions and findings in relation to the research questions. The discussion will be structured by the three research questions, exploring how neoliberal ideologies and the marketisation of EdTech influences teacher subjectivities. Across this chapter, the four key strands developed through the literature and findings are woven together. Strand One is reflected where the literature situates international schools within neoliberal governmentality; Strand Two resonates with the discussion of global EdTech actors and policy entrepreneurs; Strand Three aligns with scholarship on policy ecosystems, negotiation, and resistance; and Strand Four draws upon Foucauldian and post-structural work on subjectivation and teacher identity. Having drawn together the three research questions and theorisation through the key strands, this chapter will suggest practical applications and avenues for future research.

Summarising key findings in relation to the research questions

Three research questions framed this doctoral research:

- RQ1 How do policy discourses position The School Network within the Hong Kong education market?
- RQ2 How do the policy discourses shape the role and affordances of EdTech
    - within network and school level policy texts?
    - within Education Team discourses?

- RQ3 How does teachers' discourse enact the dominant policy discourses surrounding the use of technology?

In focusing on how policy texts framed discourses and practices surrounding EdTech, this research sought to explore how teachers' subjectivities are framed by neoliberal ideologies that lead to the marketisation of education and EdTech.

RQ1 How do policy discourses position The School Network within the Hong Kong education market?

In looking at policy texts from TSN that referred to EdTech and the CEO Mailshots for academic year 2024-2025, clear construction of network identity and strategy is evident (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). TSN constructs an identity within the discourse that is used to help capture the market within Hong Kong, placing education as a commodity and commodifying teaching expertise and EdTech (Woo, 2013). TSN policy texts make repeated use of economic framing, using analogies of costs, benefits and assets when describing the practices and people within the network. Critical Discourse Analysis demonstrated that policy texts construct TSN and Hill College within neoliberal ideologies, creating a normative discursive culture that values competition, efficiency and future facing practices (Savage, 2016). Through the strategic planning texts from TSN and Hill College, Hill College is framed by the TSN policy text and then Hill College texts in turn subjectify teachers through performativity and a focus on future orientated actions and collective responsibility. The construction of network identity goes beyond market positioning, exemplifying a form of governmentality (Foucault, 1982). In framing education as a commodity, and the practices at TSN and Hill College as marketable assets, the discourses enact neoliberal governance by shaping individuals and Hill College against economic imperatives (Ball, 2024).

By constructing a normative discourse that prioritises competition and performativity, teachers are encouraged to self-regulate in alignment with the policy ecosystem discourse (Bevir, 1999; Foucault, 2020). In constructing a normative discourse that values future-orientated subjects who internalise the market-based EdTech imperative, teachers, as explored in Chapter Ten, internalise the collective responsibility and strategic priorities. TSN and Hill College's governmentality can be seen through the construction of this dominant discourse, exerting power over the freedoms of individuals (Foucault, 2011, 2020). Policy texts' repeated use of inclusive pronouns suggests that stakeholders at TSN are constructed alongside the economic

imperatives of the wider network. TSN texts focus on general ideation and culture setting, with the CEO mailshots in particular voicing the strategic direction of the network. By combining elements of personal email correspondence and formal policy language, these mailshots act as positioning documents introducing and reinforcing dominant discourses with the wider teaching network (Fairclough, 1996). Aimed just at employees, they provide a clear signalling of the positionality teachers should adopt as members of TSN. The policy texts, no matter the author then work in "creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person" (Foucault, 1995, 201). The texts therefore function panoptically - they instantiate TSN's invisible surveillance and shape school and teacher subjectivities. Through this, we can see TSN power being exerted over teachers.

This research demonstrates that TSN positions itself as an innovative and forward-thinking leader in education. In constructing an identity that promotes responsiveness to the demands of global education policy, there is an embedding of neoliberal ideologies within the policy ecosystem. As Gray, O'Regan and Wallace (2018) suggest, neoliberalism can be seen as a discursive phenomenon as well as a market based one. In framing TSN identity in this way, there was a sense that all stakeholders were engaged in evaluative practices, comparing what was happening locally with global innovation and policy narratives (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Neoliberal ideologies of competition and responsiveness to globalised education are present across all policy texts explored in this research. TSN policy texts situate themselves within a globalised education context, echoing many of the themes identified in Part I and II. As a private international school network, there is an expectation from stakeholders that they provide students with an international experience that will facilitate easier access to education and labour markets outside of Hong Kong (Bray and Yamato, 2003). By promoting themselves as educational ambassadors, participating in global conferences, TSN construct an image of responsivity and global connectedness. TSN participate in the globalisation of educational policy narratives (Soto and Pérez-Milans, 2021).

TSN is positioned as an innovative, forward-thinking leader in the global education market, prioritising EdTech to differentiate itself from more traditional systems. When promoting themselves in the local Hong Kong market, emphasising TSN education as world leading and a route to future success, the policy texts use neoliberal language to frame strategic positioning and identity. As Holborow (2007, 52) states, "the market resonate[s] not just through official documents, but at every meeting, in emails and the language of individuals". Within the

interdiscursivity Hill College aligns itself with TSN policy, revealing the hierarchy that exists when policy from TSN shapes the actions and policy ecosystem at Hill College. In demonstrating networked governance, the texts suggest clear alignment, showing that the network is responsive to stakeholder need. However, as explored in Chapter Nine, this framing of individual schools introduces potential constraints on school autonomy. Aware of Hong Kong Education Bureau's focus on promoting digital technology within education, TSN demonstrates institutional rationality through its promotion and engagement of EdTech actors. By inviting ISTE, MagicSchool, and other partners into the network, both TSN and Hill College demonstrate their responsiveness to market needs (Ball, 2012a). Hill College's policy documents explicitly incorporate and echo TSN's language, reinforcing the expectation that staff actively monitor and adapt their practices to engage with these key organisations. Through introducing EdTech actors into the school, the policy ecosystem is constructed as responsive to innovations in the wider socio-political environment (Wiliamson and Hogan, 2020). By embedding ISTE standards into the framing of EdTech use through the policy texts, Hill College focuses more on how ISTE standards shape practice, whilst TSN focus on the award received. Hill College uses the intertextual reference to the ISTE standards to legitimise the work with EdTech, introducing aspects of morality in how EdTech shapes the school's work. TSN, by comparison, uses the reference to enhance their market offering. Through this, it is possible to see the messy process of policy enactment where TSN signals the policy direction, whilst individual schools have some freedom to enact these through frameworks and guidelines relevant to their local context (Ball, Maguire, and Braun, 2011).

RQ2 How do the policy discourses shape the role and affordances of EdTech

- within network and school level policy texts?

In exploring the policy texts from TSN and Hill College, the importance of presenting a forward-thinking and innovative network identity is clearly established as one way to position themselves within the Hong Kong international education market. By promoting an educational offering that differs from the local, more traditional schooling system, TSN prioritises the importance of EdTech and as such enmeshes the identities of teachers, TSN and technology (Ideland, 2021). EdTech, as explored in Chapter One and Four, has become part of the neoliberal marketisation that shapes the socio-political framing of education.

EdTech is presented as positive transformation within TSN and Hill College policy texts. Often invested with agency in the discourse, EdTech is positioned as essential for future success in relation to the demands of TSN's stakeholders and the local Hong Kong market. Through the agentic framing of EdTech, teacher autonomy and choice are removed as Hill College repeats its commitment to an EdTech mediated education. Teaching and learning are seen as reliant on and carried out with some form of technology, repeating ideas from TSN texts reinforcing Hill College's positionality within a more centralised policy direction. Fairclough (2001) states that "power in discourse is to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contribution of non-powerful participants" (41). Using positive diction helps situate EdTech in a dominant discursive practice that subjectivises all stakeholders. By removing neutrality, teachers are positioned to accepting the dominant discourse as the texts address the ideal TSN subject. For teachers and parents, EdTech is presented as sophisticated and enhancing what happens in the classroom. The support of EdTech, seen in the purchasing of new technology by the parent-teacher association, supports the normative discourses that have been created in the policy ecosystem.

Within the policy texts there is also a sense of the shifting EdTech landscape and the role new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence might play within education. Within the policy texts that are engaged directly with the community, such as the CEO Mailshots and Hill College Newsletters, the responsiveness to global trends is more apparent. Often, policy texts cover practices that are institutionalised or events of the past, yet their continued existence in written form contributes to the normative practices. Ball (1993) explores that policies are continually operating in the present and past, posing problems to be solved in the local context. The mailshots and newsletters help frame the current (re)contextualisation of TSN and Hill College practice, being a more up-to-date articulation of policy practice and direction. In representing a (re)articulation of existing policy texts, the language frames the 'problem' that current endorsement of action seeks to resolve (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Artificial Intelligence (AI) is seen as the new disruptor with the power to reimagine what teaching and learning could look like, reflecting the EdTech myths that suggest that new technology create immediate discourses of reforming and removing educational problems (Suárez-Guerrero et al., 2023). As a network that positions itself as responsive to new thinking, TSN frames AI in a similar manner. AI use is framed as a desirable quality, framing those who do not adopt to the new EdTech landscape as abnormal and in need of supervising or correcting (Foucault, 1991). In removing the

autonomy of schools by purchasing network wide subscriptions to MagicSchool AI, there is a suggestion that like other school platforms such as Google Suite for Education, AI will become part of the architecture of school practice.

However, there are moments were the EdTech imperative can be problematised within the analysis. The operationalisation of EdTech within the policy ecosystem can be seen in the framing of stakeholders within both TSN and Hill College networks. TSN promotes the adoption of digital first practices, capturing the market and shaping the conversations surrounding teaching and learning. Hill College provides technology to staff, promotes the technology infrastructure within policy texts, and acts in a disciplinary manner with the adoption of Apple computing that parents must purchase as condition of entry to the school (Foucault, 1999). In doing so, Hill College not only interacts interdiscursively with TSN policy texts that promote embracing technology but also shapes the experiences of stakeholders. Acting as a moral agent, the school introduces Edu business into the school context. Parents and students are disciplined into purchasing specific technology through the school. Hill College arranges the infrastructure and resources to enforce the EdTech imperative, a modern reframing of the panopticon mode of surveillance (Foucault, 1999, 2000) The normative discourse is clear, teaching and learning at TSN and Hill College is technologically mediated.

In promoting a single, transformative view of EdTech, the TSN and Hill College policy ecosystem might not align with individual needs of the community. Tensions are present with some Hill College policy texts, perhaps a reflection of the complexity of the policy enactment process. Whilst TSN policies can be seen as ideational and culture forming, Hill College texts reflect more of the practicalities of policy enactment. Whilst there are clear examples of Hill College policy texts repeating the discourse of those from TSN, in the local enactment of strategic policy directions, Hill College texts provide a more nuanced view of EdTech. Within the Hill College newsletter, there is a growing mistrust of digital practices in wider socio-cultural contexts that influence tech use. Whilst this can be seen as a moment of resistance, there is also a sense that the school is responding to the concerns of the market (Ball, 1993). As parental concerns and changes in wider societal discourses surrounding some digital technologies change, Hill College demonstrates its responsiveness and agility in creating new school level policy practices. As such, rather than being seen as a moment of resistance, this can be seen interdiscursively – a way that Hill College and Hill College staff are evaluating and choosing which aspects of EdTech could and should be used with students.

Policies create a shared understanding and collective practice around EdTech that frames it as a largely positive and transformative influence for teachers and students through teaching and learning (Melucci, 2013). Policy texts situate EdTech use within TSN and Hill College as a way in which their education differs to that of others, especially through the promotion of award-winning texts. The language further embeds neoliberal ideologies through the marketisation of EdTech to promote the efficiency, responsiveness and innovation that takes place within the network given its presence within several texts (Fairclough, 1996). Interestingly, it is in the responsiveness to socio-political contexts that introduces space for resistance. In evaluating their practice, Hill College have some freedom to negotiate their enactment of TSN policy direction, whilst still adhering to the normative discourse that values EdTech.

- within Education Team discourses?

Resistance to neoliberal marketisation and the EdTech imperative is seen within the ambiguity in the Education Team's discourse. Foucault (1991) suggests that the subject can differ in the different contexts and be shaped by policy discourse, as well as having some agency. Within the discourses of the Education Team, this can be seen in the negotiation of subjectivities in response to corporate identity and personal ethics (Foucault, 2019). Their discourse introduces greater negotiating of subjectivity, revealing that whilst participants internalise the general dominant discourse of the policy ecosystem, there is space for transgression. As such, Foucault's concept of transgression can be seen here as "the establishment of a separation or the measuring of a distance" between their personal ethics and the direction of the network (2019, 74). The analysis shows an acceptance of competition and a problematising of the inclusion of EdTech actors, businesses, and AI within TSN.

The Education Team recognises the need to respond to market trends and often shows enthusiasm for the potential EdTech offers in teaching. Rather than being coerced, the Education Team internalises the need to adapt to market conditions within the network. Their discourses suggest that they also perceive themselves as actors who need to align with market-driven logic, suggesting that subjectivities are both shaped by the policy ecosystem and their roles within the Education Team (Ideland, 2021). Marc, however, also advocates for creating space for critical reflection among teachers. Within the space of the interview, there is a sense that the Education Team have access to "the unfolding space in which it is once more possible

to think" (Foucault, 2005, 34). While he embraces the idea that teachers should be knowledgeable about EdTech and AI, his discourse reveals greater ambivalence. The team supports the use of technology but raises concerns about the companies' motivations and the impact of data mining on students (Williamson, 2019). They are aware that schooling and students risk becoming commodities, with power concentrated in the hands of companies whose true intentions remain hidden from individuals. In this case, there might be a suggestion that the EdTech companies and the datafication of education can be seen as disciplinary power (Foucault, 2020). The subjects (teachers and students) are being surveilled without their knowledge, trusting the school to protect them (Foucault, 2020).

At TSN, the three Education Team members actively challenge prevailing discourses about EdTech. By problematising the datafication of education, they create new perspectives on the role these companies play within the network. As Foucault (1979) suggests, where there is power there is also resistance. The Education Team's challenge to normative discourses could be seen as a form of resistance that is embedded within power relations. Aaron and Marc reveal a moral dilemma in their discourse—shaping their professional subjectivity around a moral vision of what education and teaching should be. They constitute themselves as moral and ethical arbiters of how EdTech is framed within the policy discourse (Foucault, 2012). Instead of simply conforming to TSN norms, both reflect on their roles and identify areas like policy formation and professional development where they can exercise personal agency (Power, 2011). Through their words and actions at TSN, Marc and Aaron express resistance that can influence the broader policy ecosystem, defining their subject position and actions in relation to TSN dominant discourses (Foucault, 1987).

Resistance to the normalisation of EdTech imperatives and the introduction of market forces within education is evident in the discussions of the Education Team. Unlike the policy texts, the team expresses ambivalence toward including EdTech companies in the school network. They question the companies' motivations and critically discuss the commodification of students and education, revealing a form of productive power (Foucault, 2020). In questioning these companies' motivations and involvement, the Education Team questions how these market forces are reshaping education (Ip, 2024). In producing new subjectivities for education, what it means to be a teacher and a student is reshaped in consumer and product relationships. Students are begun to be seen as data points and consumers, and education a product and a market for EdTech businesses.

RQ3 How does teachers' discourse enact the dominant policy discourses surrounding the use of technology?

Evident within the teachers' discourses is the internalisation of the neoliberal framing of education. In presenting themselves as tech-savvy, they frame themselves as responsive to the EdTech imperative, repeating the dominant discourse that EdTech is an essential for classrooms and learning. Through discussing the operationalisation of EdTech practices, and the repetition of language that frames it with imperatives, it becomes clear that education has been changed. Teachers suggest that, within Hill College, there is an expectation for EdTech to be used in most lessons, citing the 1-2-1 Laptop Policy either directly or through associated phrases. This policy ecosystem shapes their subjectivities, as teachers adapt and modify their practices to align with normative expectations - an example of realised "mechanisms of power" (Foucault, 1982). In this way, the socio-cultural environment of the school encourages teachers to self-govern, effectively producing entrepreneurial selves who manage and demonstrate their technological expertise ensuring their wellbeing in a neoliberal framing of education (Foucault, 1982, 784). In particular, the framing of AI is both seen as a revolution that will support teachers and a tool that will change behaviours in the classroom. Despite any ambivalence, the discourse shows an acceptance that teachers must adapt to and embed new technologies in their work, echoing the "normalisation of discourse practices" of TSN and Hill College policies (Fairclough, 2023, 74). This reflects how power operates not just through rules but by shaping the way teachers understand and govern themselves in relation to technology (Foucault, 2002).

The analysis also revealed that across Hill College, there are many teacher subjectivities and negotiations surrounding the policy ecosystem. Many teachers have internalised the pressure to engage with EdTech. Some teachers' discourse suggested a more optimistic framing around EdTech and how it enables them to be more efficient within their roles. Madi and Dan, both with leadership roles, reproduce language from the policy ecosystem and neoliberal framing of education. There are moments when their adoption causes a splintering of subjectivities as seen with Tim, John and Saira, especially when exploring the motivations of EdTech companies. When teachers express a lack of power in responding to certain EdTech policy directions, it highlights the organisation's disciplinary power over their actions (Foucault, 2020). At the same time, teachers recognise that they are given opportunities to influence the policy and

direction of TSN and Hill College. While these opportunities might appear as forms of devolved power and shared decision-making, they can also be understood as a strategic way for the network to produce docile subjects "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" by the policy discourses (Foucault, 2020, 136). By facilitating spaces for teacher input and voice, TSN and Hill College create a sense of co-construction around policy. This co-construction does not necessarily equal genuine empowerment; rather, it functions to discipline teachers by aligning their attitudes and behaviours with organisational goals (Foucault, 2020). In this way, the network uses the appearance of collaboration to reinforce control, guiding teachers to govern themselves in accordance with policy directions.

Like the Education Team, there is also a sense of negotiation in relation to EdTech. Analysis showed that there was concern surrounding the motivations of EdTech and Edu business involvement within education. Teachers described EdTech use as an economic practice, recognising that by implementing these technologies, they become complicit in creating layered markets within education. The disciplinary power of neoliberal ideologies surrounding EdTech can be seen in the discourses as teachers accept the operationalisation of EdTech within their practice, a response to the policy ecosystems' discursive "regulation and intervention" (Gane, 2012, 613). Notably, none of the teachers directly opposed EdTech's presence in education; most acknowledged that its use has made parts of their work more streamlined and practical. In exploring the impacts of the platformisation practices of companies such as Google, a form of stealth disciplinary power and marketisation can be seen (Williamson, 2021a; 2022; Grimaldi et al, 2023). Within teacher discourses, the convenience of the platform is linked to improvement, which leaves the disciplinary effects often invisible or uncontested (Foucault, 1978). Similarly, the incorporation of technologies such as Google Classroom reshapes teaching practice, with platform logic becoming a default mode of professional practice. With the subtle exercise of power as EdTech companies create vertical alignment within their products, teachers come to expect and adapt to these integrated systems, increasing the likelihood they will adopt company-supported tools (Perrotta and Pangrazio, 2023). In this way, EdTech companies shape the actions of teachers and encourage them to govern themselves according to market-driven norms.

Some teachers express a sense of inadequacy and uncertainty regarding their technological skills, particularly in relation to EdTech and emerging tools like AI. The feeling of insufficiency is more clearly expressed by those nearing the end of their teaching careers. This

sense of inadequacy reflects the subtle workings of disciplinary power within the policy ecosystem. As neoliberal ideologies promote the ideal of the "tech-savvy" teacher, those who feel less confident may internalise a sense of personal deficit, positioning themselves as needing to adapt or improve to meet normative expectations. Power operates not only through direct mandates but also through shaping subjectivities and teachers govern themselves by aligning with the dominant discourse that values technological competence (Mauri, 2018). Those teachers (Nisreen and Graeme) who do not see themselves within this normative discursive practice feel increasingly marginalised and out of step with TSN. The evolution of EdTech and AI reinforces governmentality by redefining what it means to be a "good" and "effective" teacher (Waslander, 2010; Ideland, 2021). Teachers are encouraged to embrace new technologies as part of their professional subjectivity, as seen through TSN and Hill College policy texts that value adoption and innovation, even when there is uncertainty about these technological advancements.

Many teachers both resist and accommodate these demands: they negotiate their roles, sometimes expressing ambivalence, while simultaneously adapting their practices to fit within the market-driven expectations of the network (Foucault, 1988; 2008; Gane, 2012). Often, those teachers who are more experienced, such as Simon and Karl, articulate tensions between institutional practices and individual enactment. Dan and Lexi also explore how school policy texts are often framed as initiatives – an enacted form of official TSN policy translated into the local contexts and as such a negotiated positioning of EdTech imperatives. There was also a reframing of practice to align with Hill College normative practices that suggest a need for newer staff to adapt and reframe their subjectivities to be competent and supportive of the EdTech mandates. This interplay of acceptance, uncertainty, and self-regulation illustrates how teachers become disciplined subjects, shaped by and shaping the policy ecosystem. In navigating the complexities of technological change, teachers still express the need to provide an experience that meets the demands of the market.

Key Findings

Drawing upon the discussion of the research questions above and with reference to the literature review and theoretical frameworks, four key strands became apparent:

- Strand One: Private international schools as an example of neoliberal governmentality

- Strand Two: External actors influencing practice
- Strand Three: Policy ecosystems and policy negotiation as power and resistance
- Strand Four: Constrained teacher subjectivities

Strand One: Private international schools as an example of neoliberal governmentality

Private international school networks, like TSN and Hill College, exemplify neoliberal governmentality. Situated within an already existing education market, education is further commodified through the policy ecosystem, creating a normative discourse that values competition and global positioning. Policy texts and discourses construct the network's identity around competition, efficiency and innovation. This embeds neoliberal ideologies deeply into both the network and school governance. TSN and Hill College are themselves shaped by the socio-political context of Hong Kong and, due to their need to capture the market to ensure economic viability, they must situate themselves as attractive to potential 'customers' – parents and students. Neoliberalism here, can be seen as a mode of governance, shaping the policy actions and discourses of TSN and Hill College as they seek to promote themselves to the market.

One way the marketisation of the network and schools can be seen is in the promotion of entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to EdTech and the creation of entrepreneurial subjects (Thorsen, 2010). The policy texts align teacher subjectivities with the market and performativity. Globalised education narratives are responded to by TSN and Hill College, demonstrating the scope of neoliberal ideologies and their ability to reconfigure individual school practices (Ideland, 2021; Venugopal, 2015). In promoting global connectedness and local responsiveness, there is the embedding of teachers and schools within global neoliberal narratives. Across the interviews, there seemed to be an acceptance of the globalised and neoliberal positioning of education and that of the EdTech imperative. Whether this is due to the nature of private international education (as teachers are aware of their funding and salaries being dependent on student enrolment), or due solely to the disciplinary power of the policy ecosystem is less clear. However, the interdiscursive referencing does point to the panopticon function of texts within the policy ecosystem as they frame expected norms of behaviour and thought (Foucault, 2020). Texts such as the CEO Mailshots exert subtle discipline, signalling the expected norms. That these mailshots occur at monthly intervals act to align individual teacher behaviours and reinforce the network wide strategic positioning.

Market imperatives are embedded in policy discourse to the extent that teachers and students are framed as economic assets, with subjectivities shaped accordingly. Ultimately, TSN and Hill College are both disciplined by and disciplinary actors, as they shape their policy texts to meet the demands of the market (Ball, 2018a). Neoliberalism then, as a mode of governmentality, is ongoing, shaping the reality of the policy ecosystem and the participant's experiences of EdTech.

Strand Two: External actors influencing practice

What was also apparent through the analysis was the influence of external EdTech and Edu business actors on teacher practices. This was reflected in the policy ecosystem. Power, viewed as 'self-perpetuating,' is omnipresent, as evidenced by the diffuse network of actors evident within the policy texts (Poorghorban, 2023). By integrating platforms such as Google Suite, MagicSchool AI and enforcing the use of Apple Mac; TSN, Hill College and EdTech companies exercise disciplinary power through platformisation of education (Kerssens and Dijck, 2022). By shaping teachers' experiences and daily practises, the EdTech Businesses exercise a subtle form of stealth marketisation in which they create normative expectations for teachers. As teachers begin to expect that EdTech tools will work compatibly and integrate with the existing platforms offered by Google Suite etc., they self-regulate in line with market driven logics, accessing those technologies that fulfil this logic (Ideland, 2021; Macgilchrist, 2018). The presence of external actors' blurs policy origins, as there is an incorporation of the priorities of these actors within the TSN policy ecosystem. Thus, there is further embedding commercial and global neoliberal interests into local school contexts, extending the commodification of education along business priorities (Williamson, 2019).

EdTech companies exercise disciplinary power through platformisation, surveillance, and datafication, normalising technology use and limiting teacher agency. The growing reliance on a small number of global platforms and companies raises concerns about power dynamics. By only providing support for Apple products bought through the school, Hill College also acts in a similar manner to EdTech Business exerting disciplinary power on parents/students. In this way, neoliberalism becomes an organising principle that becomes embedded within local practices as well as global discourses (Holborow, 2013). The reliance on a small number of global platforms also raises concerns about neocolonial power dynamics, where data sovereignty is concentrated in the hands of a few multinational corporations (Williamson,

2019, 2021a). The growing awareness within teacher and Education Team discourses of data ethics and the commodification of students, suggest that changes are occurring within knowledge contexts of TSN that could enable greater opportunity for resistance in discourse and perhaps, given the role of the Education Team, within policy.

However, the gap between the participants' discourses and the policy ecosystem could suggest that the current policy ecosystem is governed more by neoliberal ideologies and less by moral and ethical concerns, revealing a sense of ethical malleability as warned by Ball (2012). Ultimately, this leads to the sense that due to the external influences of EdTech and Edu business, there is a reshaping of educational subjectivities through the policy discourses. Teachers are governed not only by school policies but also by the architectures and affordances of EdTech platforms.

Strand Three: Policy ecosystems and policy negotiation as power and resistance

The policy ecosystem of TSN and Hill College demonstrates the complexity of power relations and policy enactment. Where policy texts frame neoliberal ideologies and market imperatives there is clear subjectivation of teachers, yet there is also space for negotiation and resistance to exist. Participants negotiate their subjectivities, often framing EdTech and teaching practice through neoliberal expressions of competition and future-orientated success. There is a sense that the purpose of education has become the creation of homo-economicus, rather than a more human-centred view (Sipilä, 2013). By internalising the market demands within their discourses, this research suggests that disciplinary power is prevalent. The policy ecosystem and dominant discourses are centrally ideated, framing the sense of what a TSN teacher is, does, and TSN education being with EdTech. Participants monitor their practice, especially seen in staff new to Hill College who mediate their practices to match those at Hill College. The changes in infrastructure to incorporate Artificial Intelligence begin to constrain teacher practice as the purchase of network wide subscriptions is aligned with disciplinary power; where power operates through regulation, norms, and managing populations indirectly (Foucault, 1982; 2002). Power is not only operated through top-down mandates, but also through the discursive practices of the policy ecosystems which lead to a rationality of self-governance that values EdTech innovation (Lemke, 2012).

Whilst the normative policy discourse reframes teacher practice as being with technology, there are examples where teachers do not use technology and do not fully align their practices with Hill College' performative culture. This is one way in which participants exercise care of the self, negotiating how and when they decide to use EdTech. Alongside this, there is the framing of the self as a moral and ethical subject, in response to the operationalisation of EdTech within the policy ecosystem. Whilst discourse practice shows the internalising of the EdTech imperative and operationalisation of EdTech within the policy ecosystem, there is also ambivalence. In expressing their ambivalence, the discourses support Foucault's idea that power can be productive as well as restrictive (Foucault, 2020). In resisting the commodification of education and by problematising the involvement of EdTech businesses, we can see examples of resistance to neoliberal marketisation (Mirlees and Alvi, 2019). Rather than being present across all participants, the moments of resistance reflect the ongoing negotiation within constrained policy frameworks.

Policy texts and discourses, therefore, create regimes of truth within TSN and Hill College. Knowledge and acceptable practice are that EdTech is essential for future success and acceptable teacher practice should have operationalised EdTech. Within this ecosystem, there are limited possibilities for alternative pedagogies or dissent.

Strand Four: Constrained teacher subjectivities versus teacher agency

Teacher subjectivities are shaped and constrained by the neoliberal governmentality that is embedded within policy discourse. Where these discourses promote EdTech proficiency, adaptivity and entrepreneurial practices, teachers will internalise these neoliberal ideologies of accepted knowledge leading to self-regulation (Foucault, 2002). Policy ecosystems provide a normative framing of teachers as future-orientated and innovative, requiring teachers to continuously adapt to technological changes, reinforcing self-governance aligned to strategic and market logic (Ball et al., 2017; Ball and Grimaldi, 2022). Power operates not only through the discursive mandates of the policy ecosystem but also through the normative practices that shape the subjectivities of teachers within the network (Lynch, 2014). Within the research, self-governance within the teacher' discourses is a repeated feature, suggesting that policy negotiation is a fundamental aspect of teacher's experience at Hill College.

By internalising the pressure to engage with EdTech and AI, subjectivation becomes a highly individualised process (Foucault, 2011). This research shows that disciplinary power operates through shaping self-perception. Those who struggle to align with expectations risk marginalisation within the network, creating tension between individual agency and network priorities. TSN and Hill College policy discourses constrain teachers, as seen with new staff subjectivities shifting as they adapt to normative practices. Teacher subjectivation is shown to involve self-regulation and entrepreneurial self-management. As Fairclough (1995) states, "power is predominantly exercised through the generation of consent" and in adopting the language of the policy ecosystem, teachers are subjectivising themselves to align with the dominant discourse (219).

In responding to institutional demands, participants are brought into conflict with their moral and ethical selves as they seek to negotiate personal and professional tensions. The ways in which teachers critically discuss the behaviours of EdTech companies and the implementation of AI, reveals resistance to dominant neoliberal discourses. By engaging in such critique, teachers challenge the assumptions and pressures imposed by market logic, demonstrating that power inevitably generates resistance. Even within constraints, these acts of resistance highlight teachers' agency and provide opportunities to (re)negotiate a moral and ethical framing of the policy ecosystem. Recognising that this reframing could shift the focus from market-driven, neoliberal ideologies could support TSN and Hill College to foster a more reflective approach to EdTech use and the involvement of EdTech companies within schools.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

In exploring the policy ecosystem, neoliberal ideologically focused language was evident. By using market-centric language, performativity is centred as the outcome to policy mandates, reducing education to economic outcomes. Reviewing policy text language to ensure an ethical and pedagogical framing would explicitly link decisions to the learning process and equitable educational values. This could reduce the schizophrenic splintering of teacher subjectivities that results from misaligned values. Alongside this, the use of pilot phases and co-design models of implementation for EdTech rollout should focus on auditing the pedagogical impacts of the tools. A possible approach would be to introduce an "Ethics & Pedagogy" sign-off for

any policy or purchase explicitly linking decisions to learning outcomes, equity, and professional values.

As private international schools continue to exist within market driven governance, curriculum and resource decisions may follow competitive logics. Datafication and surveillance risks, often associated with platformisation, create privacy and ethical vulnerabilities that expose teachers and students to the priorities of big tech companies. The growing operationalisation of EdTech and introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into teacher practices can be seen as practices of governmentality "directing human behaviour" (Foucault, 1997, 81). By mandating single-vendor approaches, there is a risk of socioeconomic exclusion and potential for EdTech to be seen as a new form of digital colonialisation. In choosing which platforms and tools are integrated into schools, space should be given to limit data capture of staff and student practices, with insistence on open standards. School networks could look to create data maps and accessible guidance of how data is collected, stored and used by the companies, opting for open-source products to promote equitable access.

EdTech business practices surrounding school data and stealth marketisation are areas of concern. As the work of Williamson (2017, 2021a/b, 2022) suggests, EdTech companies with platformisation and data surveillance are making products out of students and teachers. Whilst there are opportunities to use open-source products, there could be greater oversight of the use of freemium products where the data practices of the companies are covert. Mirrlees and Alvi suggest "the learner's pursuit of knowledge—the social life of learning—is monitored, converted into data, mined for demographic insights and monetized by Big Data" (2019, xi). Schools should consider the ways in which EdTech products are introduced to the school via freemium subscription models. Teachers will need guidance over the ethics of data governance and the practices of EdTech companies that practice platform capitalism. This would help to address concerns over teachers and students becoming the product within marketised education.

Where there is resistance, there are opportunities to change practice and as such, school networks should look to create opportunities for critical discussion. The opportunity to engage with critical perspectives of education, as has been done through this research project, would support staff in developing their understanding of the ideologies and theoretical positionings that influence education. Through CPD sessions, schools could engage with research beyond

pedagogy, exploring education from a critical lens. In doing so, not only is there an opportunity to develop research engaged teachers but also an opportunity to build teachers' care of the self through the reflexive process. In engaging with critical perspectives, neoliberal subjectification can be challenged. Through becoming critical agents, the potential to "challenge and transform a dominant order" is possible, helping to reclaim subjectivities (Postma, 2015, 34).

Opportunities for future study

As EdTech continues to evolve, as seen with Artificial Intelligence, there are many opportunities to continue research in this area. Outlined below are suggestions for further research and discussion:

- In carrying out the study within one school at TSN, there are excellent opportunities to continue the research either within Hill College or through a comparative study between Hill College and one other within the network. Future studies could explore the extent to which normative discourses are present within both schools. Conducting a comparative case study would enable greater tracing of policy practice and enactment. In being able to either revisit or complete comparative research, tracing of neoliberal subjectivation would be enabled. Alongside this, the opportunity to interview different stakeholders, such as the CEO and parents, would add to the completeness of the voices within the study.
- As this study focused on a private international school network, further exploration of how local schools internalise neoliberal ideologies present within Hong Kong Education's Bureau policy texts and promotion of EdTech would be illuminating. Comparing how government and fee-paying schools (re)negotiate globalised policy priorities and frame these normative discourses within school level policies, could help to extend understanding of the ways discipline and governmentality operate within different school systems.
- Similarly, as this study took place during the initial implementation of Artificial Intelligence within the school, further research could help reveal if EdTech developments continue to alter teachers' discourse and subjectivities. Continued research, with a specific focus on the impacts of AI, might require more than one round of interviews to enable longitudinal exploration of how teachers' discourses and responses to the EdTech imperative develop.

- The interviews provided much rich data and were well suited to the research questions. Deeper exploration and the use of multiple interviews across a longer time frame might help draw out nuance regarding perceptions of EdTech and techniques of the self.
- As technology continues to develop and take on more active roles in daily practice, Actor Network Theory (ANT) could provide an interesting discussion of the hybrid societies-natures relationships "in which humans and nonhumans are inextricably mixed up together" (Nimmo, 2011, 109). As participants within this doctoral research have begun to explore Artificial Intelligence, ANT with a Foucauldian lens could extend an understanding of what it is to be human (Nimmo, 2011).

Undertaking further research will deepen our understanding of how neoliberalism is reshaped and renegotiated in new educational contexts. Examining the influence of neoliberal ideologies and EdTech across different types of schools can reveal how power and control operate within education (Foucault, 1994; Davies and Bansel, 2007). This research could ultimately inform more equitable and effective policy strategies that promote ethical practices. Given the increasing interconnectedness of education systems and the growing role of technology companies in education, such critical exploration is essential. Without scrutinising the motivations behind the development of EdTech markets within education, opportunities for meaningful resistance remain limited.

Conclusion

This thesis contributes original knowledge by demonstrating how in the unique context of Hong Kong's international-school market, EdTech policy functions as a technology of neoliberal governmentality that actively constructs teachers' subjectivities. This doctoral research explored the policy ecosystem and discursive practices within TSN and Hill College at a moment when EdTech practice had once again begun to shift due to Artificial Intelligence. The study showed that within private international school networks, neoliberal ideologies of marketisation and competition are seen as a fait accompli, accepted as natural. Without problematising this dominant ideology and discourse, there is a risk that teachers are reframed as being solely entrepreneurial subjects whose worth is measured by how effectively they adapt to the EdTech imperative within their teaching.

This thesis also offers a multi-layered analysis that traces discourses across network-level policies, school-level enactment, and individual teacher negotiations. Within the study, EdTech is often conceptualised unproblematically, as an operationalised practice that supports teachers, rather than in a pedagogical sense. Despite this, there is a sense that education should involve EdTech and to not provide opportunities for students to use technology would be detrimental. EdTech and its associated policies operate as a disciplinary technology within TSN. In revealing how these layers interact to produce, reinforce, and occasionally destabilise neoliberal subjectivities, this thesis shows how teachers feel pressured by the policy ecosystem to incorporate EdTech, against their moral and ethical sense of self. However, opportunities for negotiation exist where networks enable teachers to practice and voice their subjectivities. If opportunities for dissent exist, education's purpose and the role of the teacher can continue to resist its reduction to neoliberal performativity measures. The discourses presented in policy and teacher interviews reflect the complexity of subjectivation, illustrating how power operates through the enacted and operationalised processes of incorporating EdTech in schools.

Methodologically, this thesis contributes to the field by demonstrating the value of applying a policy-ecosystem framework to EdTech research, enabling analysis of how global, network-level, and school-level discourses co-produce teacher subjectivities. By coupling a Foucauldian framing of discourse within the power-knowledge episteme, with a Faircloughian approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this project acknowledges that the grammar of discourse is inherently situated in the politics of discourse. In combining these approaches, the research provides a complex, contextually situated analysis.

The study's findings demonstrate how international schools, often celebrated as innovative, can reproduce global neoliberal logics that significantly shape teachers' identities and practices. In offering new evidence on how teachers negotiate EdTech discourses, sometimes internalising neoliberal expectations, sometimes resisting them; a more complex picture of agency than is typically assumed in EdTech policy literature is presented. Recognising this is essential for developing more ethical, critically informed EdTech policy in schooling systems.

Appendices

Appendix A - Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule for PhD

EdTech Interview Schedule

Intro 5 minutes

Thank you for agreeing to the interview. I'm grateful for your response and your agreeing to take part in this research. For a brief introduction, I am a PhD student at Durham University, based in the Faculty of Education, studying part-time whilst working full time within the school. My research is focused on the roles of EdTech within teacher lives.

Logistics:

- Before we start the questions, I would like to run through the logistics of the interview with you.
- Firstly, thank you for signing and giving to me your consent form. Have you read and understood the information provided? Do you have any questions?
- The interview will be recorded and transcribed for the purposes of my research. If at any time you would like to stop the recording or the interview, please let me know.
- All names, places and details that would make you/those you discuss identifiable will be redacted, removed or changed. Feel free to either use names or withhold them - whichever you are more comfortable with. If you would like a copy of your transcript/excerpts used within the research, I am happy to provide a copy to you.
- When you are ready, I'll start recording.

Teacher Context and warm-up Questions (5 minutes)

1. How long have you been teaching? How did you come into teaching?
2. What is your current role within the school/organisation? How long have you worked in this role/the school/organisation here? What was your journey into this role?
3. **Could you describe your professional EdTech biography? (E.g. from earlier in career to present)**

- What events led you to view/use EdTech in this manner?
- What has changed about your perceptions of EdTech?
- What has influenced these views/uses? e.g. peer groups, management structures?

Perceptions and role of edtech within teacher lives (15 minutes)

4. When you think of EdTech what/who do you think of?

- Who or what groups are involved in EdTech? What kind of involvement do they have?
- Who or what enabled them to behave/engage this way?

5. What role do you see EdTech having currently in the school? (professional practice, pedagogy, student learning)

a. How do you see this evolving?

6. When you reflect on the role of EdTech within your practice, to what extent is it influenced by our context as an international private school?

a. Is EdTech seen as a requirement within international private education

7. To what extent do your views align with:

a. Colleagues
b. Students
c. Parents
d. Policy (school, national and international)

Wider context of EdTech within context and policy (15 minutes)

8. How would you describe the role of EdTech within Hong Kong Education?

a. How does this compare to your previous experience(s)?

9. **How far do you perceive 'international' and/or 'private' educational factors influencing this? (E.g. Hong Kong use of it and value)**

10. **Describe any of the policies that influence your use of technology in school.** (pedagogy, student learning etc.)

a. Who and how have these policies been presented to you? How have your personal perceptions of the role of EdTech in school been influenced by these policies?

11. What do you know about the way EdTech companies are involved in education? (get access to the classroom)

12. How do you decide which EdTech tools/products to use in your practice?

a. How much freedom/support do you have with these choices?

i. ***(Leaders) How would you describe the involvement of Tech Companies in Education?***

ii.(Leaders) How about in the school specifically? (e.g. how do they get access/bought into etc).

iii.(Leaders) How do you decide which EdTech is invited in? (Quality/fit for purpose) (Price, consultation with stakeholders, market players, etc.?)

iv.(Leaders) What are your perceptions of the public-private involvement of tech companies such as Google and Microsoft in schools?

AOB Q 3 minutes

13. We are now at the end of the questions. Is there anything that you would like to mention about the subject area that we haven't covered?

Appendix B – Anonymised Participant Description

Pseudonym	Role at Hill College	Years Teaching Experience	Years at Hill College	Faculty Area	Other context relevant from interview
Eva	Teacher	15	6	Languages	
Dan	Teacher Leader	28	20	Creative/Performing Arts, Design and Media (Creative Arts)	EdTech Leader within Hill College.
Lexi	Senior Leader	21	16	Humanities	
Becky	Senior Leader	23	4	Science	6 years out of teaching in catering industry
Karl	Senior Leader	28	20	Interdisciplinary	
Melosa	Teacher Leader	25	9	Interdisciplinary	Worked in primary education previously
Joseph	Teacher Leader	23	18	Science	Joined when 1-2-1 laptops were introduced
Madi	Teacher Leader	16	12	Humanities	
Nisreen	Teacher	41	21	Languages	
Tim	Teacher	3	2	Humanities	15 in sports/sports-coaching prior to teaching
Cora	Teacher	6	1.5	Design	
Ben	Senior Leader	12	5	Maths	
Peta	Teacher Leader	12	5	Languages	
Kat	Teacher Leader	12	8	Sports	
Graeme	Teacher	44	2	Maths	Retiring at the end of the academic year
Ruth	Teacher Leader	27	6	Student Support	
Jasmine	Teacher Leader	8	2	Maths	
Sonya	Teacher	14	1	Science	Four years at other TSN school
John	Teacher Leader	11	11	Humanities	Worked in Foreign Development prior to teaching

Eric	Teacher	21	21	Computing	Has taught across different faculties within Hill College. Computing is preferred subject area.
Simon	Teacher	29	16	Humanities	
Aashvi	Teacher Leader	26	12	Humanities	
Connor	Teacher	20	14	Maths	
Emma	Teacher Leader	27	20	Creative/Performing Arts, Design and Media (Creative Arts)	Worked in theatre/dance prior to teaching
Glen	Teacher Leader	11	5	Science	Worked for 3 years in industry
Richard	Teacher	14	2	Languages	
Saira	Teacher	19	18	Humanities	Worked in finance prior to teaching
TSN Education Team			Years at TSN	Faculty Area	
Zan	Education Team		6	Education Team - Digital	Four years at other TSN school
Marc	Education Team		16	Education Team - CPD	
Aaron	Education Team		5	Education Team - Curriculum	Four years at other TSN school; time spent working in finance industry

Appendix C – Questionnaire Uses and perceptions of Educational Technology

For the email:

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to take part in a questionnaire as part of a case-study research that is being conducted as part of my PhD at Durham University.

This study has received ethical approval from the School of Education Ethics Committee of Durham University.

The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Before you decide whether to agree to take part it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully. Please get in contact if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

1. To investigate teachers' discourse and positionality within the educational technology and policy debate.
2. To identify discourses that shape teachers' positionality within the educational technology and policy debate.
3. To explore the ways in which teachers' discourses are influenced by wider technology policy debates.
4. To identify potential implications for educational policy and practice.

Why have I been invited to take part?

1. You have been invited because you are part of the teaching body within the school

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is **voluntary,** and you **do not have to agree** to take part. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any time. Clicking the final 'Submit' button of the questionnaire at the end will constitute you providing consent to participate, in full knowledge of the information in the participant information sheet.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will…

- Complete an online survey, expected to take approximately 20 minutes.
- Be given an opportunity to participate in further research interviews.

A full copy of the participant information sheet is available here for your reference and records:
Questionnaire Participant Information Sheet - F. Percival - Teacher Discourses
A full copy of the Privacy Notice is available here for your reference and records:
Privacy Notice - Survey

Thank you for participating,

Felicity Percival

If you would like to receive further information about the project please do not hesitate to contact me at: f.p.percival@durham.ac.uk

Durham University is committed to sharing the results of its world-class research for public benefit. As part of this commitment the University has established an online repository for all Durham University Higher Degree theses which provides access to the full text of freely available theses. The study in which you are invited to participate will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published open access.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?
If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please speak to the researcher or their supervisor. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please submit a complaint via research.policy@durham.ac.uk .

Section 1 - Personal Profile and personal technology use
The following section focuses on your personal profile as an educator and your use of technology.

1) How many years have you been at your current school?
2) How many years have you been working as a teacher?
3) What position do you hold within the school:
   a) Teacher
   b) Middle Leader (TLR post holder)
   c) Faculty Head or Head of House/Year
   d) Leadership Team
4) Thinking about the past 48 hour period, which of the following did you interact with? (Tick all that apply)
   a) Online school learning platforms (e.g. Google Classroom and others)
   b) Email for work
   c) Email for personal use
   d) Social media for work (e.g. school Instagram)
   e) Social media for personal use (e.g. Facebook etc.)
   f) Use of applications/websites for teaching (e.g. flippity; TES; Cognity etc.)
   g) Web-browsing for work
   h) Web-browsing for personal use
   i) Other uses (please give examples)
5) Thinking about the past 48 hour period, which web based educational technology did you use? (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Classroom, ChatGPT)
   i) Please list them below:
6) In reference to the previous two questions, how did you access these technologies? (Tick all that apply)
   a) Use of personal Smartphone for work
   b) Smartphone for personal use
   c) School provided Smartphone
   d) Personal Laptop/Tablet/PC
   e) School provided Laptop/Tablet/PC
   f) Other (please give examples)

Section 2 - Personal Practice and Knowledge of Educational Technologies
This section focuses on your knowledge and use of educational technologies generally in your day-to-day teaching practice. You do not need to focus on the past 48 hours for these questions.

7) Thinking about your own practice, how do you find out about educational technologies?
   a) Colleagues at school
   b) Colleagues in other schools

c) Online teacher accounts (e.g. Teachers on Twitter/Instagram)
d) Online sources (please give details)
e) Other (please give examples)

8) Thinking more generally about your use of educational technology, which educational technologies do you use within your current practice?
   a) Microsoft Teams
   b) Microsoft Office
   c) Google for Education
   d) Google Drive and associated products (e.g. docs)
   e) Kahoot!
   f) Course Hero
   g) Duolingo
   h) Others (please list)
9) Thinking more generally about your use of educational technology, do you: (tick all that apply)
   a) Use the content/program to replace teacher instruction
   b) Use the content/program to supplement teacher instruction
   c) Use the content/program to replace teacher assessment
   d) Use the content/program to supplement teacher assessment
   e) Use the content/program for independent learning
   f) Other (please specify)
10) Thinking about the impact of COVID-19 has your use of educational technologies:
   a) Increased
   b) Changed (if so, how)
   c) Remained consistent

Section 3 - Technology use and support

The following questions will ask you to focus on your local context, both within the school, the network, and Hong Kong. Please select that statement(s) that most aligns with your views/use:

11) Using educational technology in the classroom
   a) Is required by my school
   b) Is supported by my school
   c) My school is neutral regarding the use of EdTech in the classroom
   d) Other (please explain)

12) Training for educational technology (tick all that apply)
   a) Is provided by school led CPD (e.g. whole school CPD sessions)
   b) Is provided by staff within the school informally
   c) Is provided by the wider school network
   d) Is supported by my school but externally provided
   e) Is self-directed but funded by the school
   f) Is self-directed and self-funded
   g) Other (please explain)
13) Using educational technology in the classroom (tick all that apply)
   a) Is common in my school
   b) Is common within the school network
   c) Is common in international schools locally
   d) Is common within local schools
   e) Not sure
14) Can you name any school/network, national policies that promote the use of educational technology?
   a) Yes (give details)
   b) No

Section 4 - Culture and policies

This section focuses only on the school and Hong Kong contexts. The following questions include direct quotations from a range of policy documents. Having read each excerpt, you will be asked to explore how far the statement aligns with your views of education and educational technologies.

15) Please consider the following statement:
"...our students have to equip themselves with technological and innovative competence and skills to participate in the Initiative and make contributions to the national development." (ITE4 p5)
Having read the statement, how far does the statement align with your views of education and educational technologies? Please explain:

16) Please consider the following statement:
"Through provision of good quality and user-friendly e-learning resources, relevant cost and teachers' workload could be reduced." (ITE4 p23)
Having read the statement, how far does the statement align with your views of education and educational technologies? Please explain:

17) Please consider the following statement:
"Digital technologies and resources enhance and transform learning and teaching" (TSN Strategic Overview)
Having read the statement, how far does the statement align with your views of education and educational technologies? Please explain:

Thank you for your time. If you are happy to be contacted further please provide your email address below:

Privacy Notice:

F. Percival Privacy Notice v3

Appendix D – Schema used in coding

Adapted from Fairclough (2001, 2013a, 2013b)

Text Analysis What's in the text itself. Language and stylistic features of text.	Vocabulary	1. Formal diction 2. Informal diction 3. Hedging and qualifying words (adverbials) 4. Tech Positive Diction Adverbs and adjectives 5. Tech Negative Diction Adverbs and adjectives 6. Neutral Diction Adverbs and adjectives 7. Modal Verbs 8. Dynamic Verbs 9. Other Verbs 10. Tone/Emotion 11. Common place assertions 12. Metaphors and symbols? 13. Analogies
	Grammar	1. Syntax (e.g. where the main clause is placed) 2. Syntax - Tech positioned as active 3. Syntax - Teacher positioned as active 4. Syntax - Pupils positioned as active 5. Syntax - School positioned as active 6. Active voice 7. Passive voice 8. Agency suggested by pronoun use (I, we, they, us) Is the agency clear through these choices? How do they speak about themselves/others? 9. Sentence modality (statements, questioning, exclamatory, imperatives) 10. Repetition/Reduplication of phrases/words 11. Sentence complexity (documents only)
Discursive practice What other texts, what other discourses it relates to Text, context and other discourses	*Text production and consumption*	*1. Who is the author* *2. Who/what is included or excluded?* *3. Who/what is target (intended) audience* *4. Is content appropriate to the intended audience?*
	Situational Positioning	1. How do teachers position themselves? a. In relation to other teachers? 2. How do they position others? a. School b. Students c. Tech d. Parents
	Intertextual context E.g. specific texts referred to	1. What other texts are referred to 2. How is this text situating itself within other texts/discourses
	Interdiscursivity	1. Language refers to the wider school policy ecosystem (e.g. We're a google school)

		2. Language refers to operationalising of EdTech 3. Language refers to marketisation 4. Language refers to globalisation
3. Social Practice • Explain the discourse in relation to social contexts • e.g. 1-2-1 reference - positioning of the people who join/speaks to a particular group or ideology - implies elite Possible themes: • Marketisation • Policy discourses • Teacher identity/positioning	*Determinants*	1. What norms and commonplace assertions are included 2. What are the power relations 3. Is it trying to challenge/reproduce similar narratives? 4. Are there counter narratives?
	Key Statements	1. What are the key statements? a. Marketisation b. Policy discourses c. Teacher identity/positioning 2. Function of the statements/What is it trying to argue?
	Effects	1. What is the ideological underpinning? 2. What effects of power relations? 3. How does the social context feed into the teacher's self-identity?

Appendix E – Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet 12/06/2023

Project title: **"Exploring Teachers' Discourse and Positionality within the Educational Technology and Policy Debate"**

Researcher(s): Felicity Percival
Department: **School of Education**
Contact details: felicity.p.percival@durham.ac.uk; +85268410855
Supervisor name: Dr. Rille Raaper and Dr. Julie Rattray
Supervisor contact details: rille.raaper@durham.ac.uk julie.rattray@durham.ac.uk

You are invited to take part in a case-study research that is being conducted as part of my PhD at Durham University.

This study has received ethical approval from **School of Education Ethics Committee of Durham University**.

I have previously completed research in Teacher's Digital Practices for the purpose of Masters Level Dissertation. I have been awarded MA Education (Literacy and Learning) through Canterbury Christchurch University and Masters in Educational Research through Durham University.

Before you decide whether to agree to take part it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully. Please get in contact if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

1. To investigate teachers' discourse and positionality within the educational technology and policy debate.
2. To identify discourses that shape teachers' positionality within the educational technology and policy debate.
3. To explore the ways in which teachers' discourses are influenced by wider technology policy debates.
4. To identify potential implications for educational policy and practice.

Why have I been invited to take part?

1. You have been invited because your response to the questionnaire indicated a willingness to be a participant within the further study.

And/Or (Delete to make specific to the individual participant)

2. You have been identified because your role within the school overlaps with the focus on the research.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is **voluntary** and you **do not have to agree** to take part. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will…

- Participate in two semi-structured interviews, one in Term 2 and one in Term 3.
- Each semi-structured interview is expected to last approximately 45 minutes.
- The location will be based on participant choice. Suggested locations included in the invitation to participate include: Online over Zoom; within participants teaching spaces; within neutral meeting rooms within the school.

- Within the interview, the questions used are a starting places for discussion. At any point you can omit any questions you do not wish to answer.
- Within the interview, the researcher will record the audio and make notes. The interview transcript will be used as data for analysis.
- To respect your time commitment, a voucher for coffee/refreshment will be provided for taking part.

Are there any potential risks involved?

- Whilst there was not a perceived risk to individuals in the form of physical harm, there may have been opportunities where reputational harm could occur if comments from participants are perceived negatively within the wider school community.
- Within such a geographically specific area it would be difficult to maintain the anonymity of the education network/school. As such, site specific information will not be included. Participants will be assigned labels identify level of involvement within leadership structures, rather than individual roles within the school, (e.g. Teacher; School Leader).
- Where data has been included that could potentially reveal the identity of an individual, the participant will be contacted again so that they could reaffirm their consent for the data to be included.

What will happen to my data?

- Interview data will be anonymised within three months of data collection and after the transcription has taken place. This allows for participants to have time to withdraw consent and for their data to be deleted. After data has been anonymised, withdrawal is no longer possible.
- No data regarding gender/identity (beyond years of experience, years teaching and general level within school leadership) will be collected.
- No non-anonymised data will be shared outside the research team.
- All audio, written notes, and transcript data will be held securely on password protected/locked storage for up to 10 years after the end of the data collection period, after which it will be destroyed.
- Audio data is collected to enable detailed investigation of the expectations to and
- experiences of the app. For this project, the audio data will be transcribed using either automated speech to text software or via manual transcription. Both techniques will be quality assured for the accuracy of transcription.
- Audio data will be transcribed and deleted within six months of the interview taking place.
- All personal data will be held securely and is strictly confidential. Access to the data will be limited to the research team and software/services approved by the university.
- Data will be stored in pseudonymised form with the research data only identified by a participant ID. The only place the participant ID is linked to your name is on the participation consent form
- Please note that anonymised data/findings will be used in the thesis, publications and presentations.
- Anonymised (i.e. not identifiable) data may be used in publications, reports, presentations, web pages and other research outputs or funding bids.
- Any use beyond this may need further participant consent.

Please be aware that if you disclose information which indicates the potential for serious and immediate harm to yourself or others, the research team may be obliged to breach confidentiality and report this to relevant authorities. This could include disclosure of child protection offences such as the physical or sexual abuse of minors, the physical abuse of vulnerable adults, money laundering, or other crimes covered by prevention of terrorism legislation. Where you disclose behaviour (by yourself or others) that is potentially illegal but does not present serious and immediate danger to

others, the researcher will, where appropriate, signpost you to relevant services, but the information you provide will be kept confidential (unless you explicitly request otherwise).

You can find information about the University's responsibilities for data protection and your rights under data protection legislation in the University's privacy notice.

What happens to my data if I withdraw?

- Data you provide prior to withdrawal will normally be kept and included in the study. If you have any concerns about such use of your data, please contact the researchers to discuss.
- Interview data will be anonymised within thee months of data collection and after the transcription has taken place. This allows for participants to have time to withdraw consent and for their data to be deleted. After data has been anonymised, withdrawal is no longer possible.
- Should you request this, audio files, transcriptions and background information relating to your participant ID will be deleted.

What will happen to the results of the project?

- The results of the project will be used to for the completion of a PhD thesis.
- Data/Findings may also be presented at academic conferences/published in academic journals.
- Results may be used to inform the development of educational technology policy and practice. However, any reports or publications resulting from the study will not identify individual participants or schools to protect their anonymity.
- If you would like to receive a summary of the findings from the project once it is completed, you may request this from the researcher by contacting them at felicity.p.percival@durham.ac.uk

Durham University is committed to sharing the results of its world-class research for public benefit. As part of this commitment the University has established an online repository for all Durham University Higher Degree theses which provides access to the full text of freely available theses. The study in which you are invited to participate will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published open access.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please speak to the researcher or their supervisor. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please submit a complaint via research.policy@durham.ac.uk .

Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.

Appendix F – Consent Form Example

Project title: "Exploring Teachers' Discourse and Positionality within the Educational Technology and Policy Debate"

Researcher(s): Felicity Percival
Department: Education
Contact details: felicity.p.percival@durham.ac.uk

Supervisor name: Dr. Rille Raaper and Dr. Julie Rattray
Supervisor contact details: rille.raaper@durham.ac.uk julie.rattray@durham.ac.uk

This form is to confirm that you understand what the purposes of the project, what is involved and that you are happy to take part. Please initial each box to indicate your agreement:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated **[12/06/2023]** for the above project.	
I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.	
I understand who will have access to information about me and how the information will be used.	
I agree to take part in the above project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	
I understand that my data will be **anonymised** and that **anonymised** versions of my data may be archived and shared with others for legitimate research purposes.	
I understand that interview data will be anonymised within the 3 months of data collection and after the transcription has taken place.	
I understand that after data has been anonymised, withdrawal is no longer possible.	
I consent to being audio recorded and for this audio to be transcribed as part of the research project.	
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, and other research outputs.	
I understand that my data will be kept for up to 10 years.	

Participant's Signature_____ Date_____
(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)_____
Researcher's Signature_____ Date_____
(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)_____

Appendix G - Participant Debrief Sheet

"Exploring Teachers' Discourse and Positionality within the Educational Technology and Policy Debate"

Thank you for your participation within the research project. Without your participation, the project would not have been viable. The following debriefing sheet provides you with further information regarding the purpose and outcomes for the research project.

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to explore how teachers' use of language reflects the wider debates surrounding Educational Technology.

The project was guided by the following questions:

1. What and how are actors shaping the policy discourses surrounding the use of technology within Hong Kong international schools?
2. How do the policy discourses position technology as a form of marketisation and what are the impacts of this on teachers?
3. How do Hong Kong international schools and teachers enact the dominant policy discourses surrounding the use of technology?

The project wanted to explore how actors, including policymakers and teachers, are shaping and shaped by the policy discourses surrounding the use of technology in these schools. The project was interested in finding out how these discourses reflected Educational Technology as a form of neoliberal marketisation, and how this marketisation impacted teachers' discourse and identities.

When will the results be available?

The final project will be available to all participants on publication of the thesis, projected date September 2025.
At this point digital access to the thesis will be made available to all participants.

What will happen to my information?

- All audio, written notes, and transcript data will be held securely in password protected/locked storage for up to 10 years after the end of the data collection period, after which it will be destroyed.
- Interview data will be anonymised within three months of data collection and after the transcription has taken place. This allows for participants to have time to withdraw consent and for their data to be deleted. After data has been anonymised, withdrawal is no longer possible.
- All personal data will be held securely and is strictly confidential. Access to the data will be limited to the research team and software/services approved by the university.
- Please note that anonymised data/findings will be used in the thesis, publications and presentations.
- Anonymised (i.e. not identifiable) data may be used in publications, reports, presentations, web pages and other research outputs or funding bids.
- For any use beyond this, the researcher will contact you for further participant consent.

Right to Withdraw

Your participation is **voluntary** and you can withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. Data you provide prior to withdrawal will normally be kept and included in the study. If you have any concerns about such use of your data, please contact the researcher to discuss.

Who to contact if the participant would like further information.
If you would like any further information about the study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher at:
felicity.p.percival@durham.ac.uk

Appendix H – Open-Ended Questionnaire responses

Q15 "...our students have to equip themselves with technological and innovative competence and skills to participate in the Initiative and make contributions to the national development." (Taken from ITE4 p5)

to some extent of course it is required and needed for their future and the world they live in however I don;t necessarily believe this all has to be done through learning at school, they develop skills in this area outside of schools too
To a large extent. Sometimes the contributions might not be necessary to the national development, but it could.
Students would need to be guided and educated about the tech competencies and skills needed - this should be part of the School curriculum and embedded across subject areas.
I think it is more making contribution to the city they live, and the worlder occasionally, but I wouldn't say to the national development specifically.
I'm torn on this, the first half of the statement I somewhat agree with in that students do need established skills to prepare them for the future world of work. That said, what that looks like is also dynamic and ever changing so inter (and intra) personal skills, resilience and openness to adapt are equally as important. Don't like the 'contribute to the national development' part, hardly motivational.
Edtech skills contribute to economies including national economies and innovation within this context is hugely important, however as a school, we ascribe more towards making a difference with EdTech and the importance of digital citizenship.
Yes, to the extent that national development will include the use of technologies for/of the future, therefore students need to access this when in education.
The first half of the statement aligns with my views but the purpose "to contribute to national development" does not. As society moves toward norms of using technology, people will adapt and use them without the need of teachers to teach them. What we do need is for schools to develop the skills to think critically about what they see and consume.
Agree - if the individual and country want to remain competitive/prosperous in an increasing global environment, then it is essential young a digitally competent.
I agree in that students are advantaged if they are able to to use a wide range of technology. I'm not this is solely their responsibility. These skills will also give them personal gains, not just allow them to "make contributions to the national development."
I agree that students will need to have technological skills in order to participate fully in society.
First phrase, certainly agree; second phrase, not sure of the intended meaning (" have to? make contributions to the national development)
I agree that students should be equipping themselves with these skills and we should be encouraging their development. All countries encourage civic education and national pride; I have no problem with this as an aspiration.
Yes I agree. Everything is digital now and so in order to compete in a greedy job market, students need to be literate in the digital world.
I agree with this statement - it reflects my views
I strongly agree with this as we are moving so fast in the innovation that is coming out of tech., that if our students are going to be equipped to future jobs they need to be equipt with the skills to engage in these developments.
Completely agree, the world is evolving and the competencies needed for future success are changing rapidly.
Yes, I agree. In a Hong Kong context, it would be negligent to teach without using technology as our students are clearly going to need these skills in their adult lives.
Partially agree - very important to acquire tech / innovation skills in the modern age, but ways to equip and contribute should be optional, not mandatory.
it is our role as educators to equip students with these skills at school
I feel that this is something that is becoming increasingly important and it is becoming an expectation that people can pick up any new application and be able to use it.
I believe that this is why the use of technology (but also learning skills over knowledge) is really important in schools. Do we do a good job of this? Perhaps not. A lot of our motivation to use Ed Tech tools is to save us time, not to develop students' innovation and use of technology.
Well aligned. We need to make sure students have access to the latest technology and know how to use it intelligently and critically in order to make sure they can succeed in the world.
Strongly agree that students should have technological and innovative competence to be able to participate.

Aligns to some extent. The quote refers to forward thinking. We're preparing our pupils for jobs that don't yet exist. The tech stuff and equipping the students with the skills to harness it is along the same lines
I agree, technology is more and more important and students need to work, use and understand it at school.
Agree. In general, students of today will not be able to survive without technological skills. It is part of our way of live now. However, contributions to a nation's development can still be done in other ways.
Not especially. Students are focused on personal rather than national development.
I partly agree with this statement. I think students are quite proactive and seldom learn about emerging technologies, however as educators we do teach them how to use specific technologies too,
Yes, computer literacy is vital for the modern day person in terms of careers and everyday life.

Question 16 - Through provision of good quality and user-friendly e-learning resources, relevant cost and teachers' workload could be reduced." (ITE4 p23)

100% - more emphasis needs to be placed on CPD and sharing this is the best form of CPD
Totally.
Totally agree.
I agree that teachers' workload could be reduced in a way. the relevant cost will be reduced? I am not sure, most of the good resources, we have to pay. The school doesn't necessarily financially support individual teacher's needs, everything goes to a complicated approving system, which demotivated the teachers to apply for reimbursement, and they have to pay themselves.
Priority should never be to reduce cost / workload but to enhance teaching and learning. If savings are made as a byproduct of this then great, double bubble.
Agreed. We can work more efficiently and SMART with technology including the use of AI although e-learning resources seem slightly arachaic as an umbrella term.
Yes - providing there are the support structures that allow greater student agency.
Good quality user-friendly resources only depends on how much time a teacher is willing take to learn about them, try them out and plan how they can be best implemented in their lessons. I don't think that workload could be reduced.
This would be nice and the ideal, but the ever changing nature of educational technologies means that teacher workload is likely to increase rather than decrease in the near future as time and CPD is required to keep up with these changes.
I agree that tech can be used to reduce teacher workload. However, provision of the resources isn't enough, good/timely training and adequate time to get used to the platforms is also needed.
I agree that e-learning resources can be convenient and helpful for teachers due to the speed and ease of using them.
It's just a different set of resources ; there are plenty of mathematically incorrect / misleading " resources " , widely available so I think it's part of my job to discriminate , even to highlight errors . I'm not aware of this reducing workload . Cost of producing resources decreasing but who benefits from cheap inaccuracies ?
I think such provision can shift use of teacher time to be used with greater focus on individual student development.
Yes agree. The AI marking tools and the live marking can save time.
I am unsure - too many can be confusing and especially if they do not align or repeat the same information
I'm not sure that costs and workload is reduced, so I'm not fully aligned with this statement.
Agree, I have first hand experience of using e-learning resources that have significantly helped reduce workload.
Yes, agreed. High-quality digital materials can offer a broad range of functionalities.
Strongly agree - educational technologies can and should be used to reduce planning and assessment loads.
if well implemented, focussed and supported very much so
This depends. ICT tools can help to save time, but often systems can generate more work if not used efficiently by people. People can get lazy when there are e-systems in place resulting in inefficient work habits. However, if systems that work well are utilised properly by well trained staff then workload can definitely be reduced.
I agree in principle and there are many tools I use that save time and money. With so many new tools being made available all the time, we have to be careful not to commit financially to too many tools and spend too long exploring the minute differences in what they can do.

Agreed - but depends on how the school uses it and whether parents support e-learning technologies. Certainly the admin load of teachers could be reduced with savvy use of technology.
I agree that teacher's workload can be reduced through the use of technology and e-learning resources
Agree re workload. Cost of what? Unclear.
Yes, it is true especially with new technology such as AI.
Disagree. My workload is more now because of technology - I'm not a digital native, I spend a lot of time searching for the appropriate resources, I spend a lot of time creating / sharing lesson plans and making sure the google classroom in up to date, I spend lots of time staring at a screen marking work online (which for me takes longer) rather than marking paper.
With regard to teacher workload, it certainly hasn't reduced it - probably the opposite. Teachers are expected to work from anywhere now and always be available. With a wider range of technologies available, there is pressure to be more creative and increase the level of differentiation for our students. In short - we work harder than before, although technology does make the job easier in some respects.
Agreed.
Provision of resources is good and it aligns with my views on the topics, however it must be noted that 'user-friendly', in other words, easy-to-use is not an objective term. Even if all teaching staff considers an e-learning resource to be 'user-friendly', the PD for the implementation of these in teaching practice should be considered. Without proper training using these resources, may in turn, increase workload instead.

Q17 - “Digital technologies and resources enhance and transform learning and teaching” (TSN Strategic Overview)

can do like all things in teaching it depends how it is used and implemented
Yes, 100%
They absolutely do and are proving more and more transformational at a very fast pace. Teachers are not always able to keep up pace with upcoming digital technologies implying sessions on Digital EdTech need to be far more frequent for teachers as for students.
i agree, if the educator knows how to use it appropriately.
Agree, when used well, with purpose to supplement more traditional teaching and learning methods.
This is possible but needs to go hand in hand with pedagogy and lesson objectives. Sometimes transformative learning does not require tech at all, sop it really depends on the context of the learning and teaching.
Yes - it makes education engaging, interesting, adds dimensions that are not accessible by other means.
Yes it can transform how something is taught to make it more accessible but requires a lot of effort for teachers to learning about the tech and apply it in their lessons.
Absolutely, digital technologies increase student engagement and allows increased support of students learning. Digital technology also ensure that students have access to learning even if they are not present in the classroom.
I agree that technology enhances learning especially independent practice, creation of resources and online language tools. However, there are other elements that "transform" teaching also - engagement with a teacher, relationships, peer interaction.
I agree that they enhance learning. I have some reservations about 'transforming' learning, as learning is a process within the brain - technology can help with this must can never replace what learning actually is.
Already true , especially in areas where one - to - one teaching / learning opportunities are limited , so not really the case for HK , although teachers' exodus may change this situation
I think they can support evolution of learning and teaching, rather than transform it.
They are good, but they should not replace paper learning or face-to-face
agreed
Yes I do align with this statement as we are able to access students with different ways to delivery and assessment that suits different learners and how they want to access information.
Somewhat agree. The opportunities are boundless, yet there is still value in traditional resource and methods, such as using books and writing with pens.
Again, agreed. Technology can support more engagement and collaboration through the use of different mediums and applications.
Yes, digital resources increase speed and quality of learning and help to keep students engaged through a range of learning methods. Over-reliance leads to stagnation of certain skills too though.

not sure how transformational but lends to a greater variety of strategies that can be used to teach and assess
Again, this depends. This is most certainly possible for some people. I feel this is very much dependent on the individuals. Some people get easily distracted by technology and the opposite happens.
This is very true. If we think back to education 5 / 10 / 15 years ago, some curriculums have stayed more or less the same but our approach to teaching them has changed significantly. To fully transform learning and teaching some curriculums need to make changes.
Agree wholeheartedly. There are amazing resources available to teachers and students - but it is just a matter of finding out about them and being given the time to learn and experiment with them that most schools find difficult to achieve.
I strongly agree with this. We need to adapt our teaching and use technology to help us.
I think these types of tech have enhanced and transformed learning and will enhance and transform teaching for those teachers that engage with it....there will always be those types who stick to what they've always done though.
It transform it, that is why it is important to understand it as teachers and educate our students to use it well. The limit here is how to reduce off task on lap top. It would be interesting to vary work on lap top and exercise book.
They can do but learning and teaching can still be effective without them.
Agree to a large extent, although the availability of these technologies raises the expectations of school leaders and of the students, so in may ways, it makes the job more challenging.
Agree, we need to ensure our students are competent and confident in using technology as they develop in their educational journey to the work place. However, it is also important for students to learn to not be reliant on technology and are able to do things using 'old school traditional methodologies'.
Strongly agree. Expands teaching practice through providing a different method for learning and teaching to take place. Increases accessibility

Appendix I - Extracted Questionnaire Data – closed questions

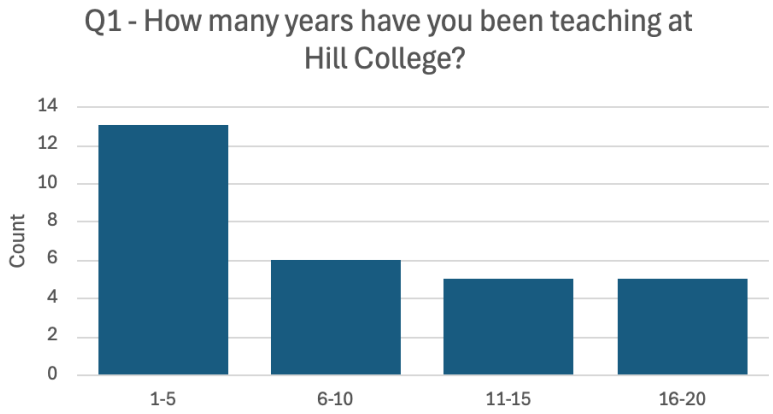


Figure 7. Questionnaire Q1 - Years at Hill College

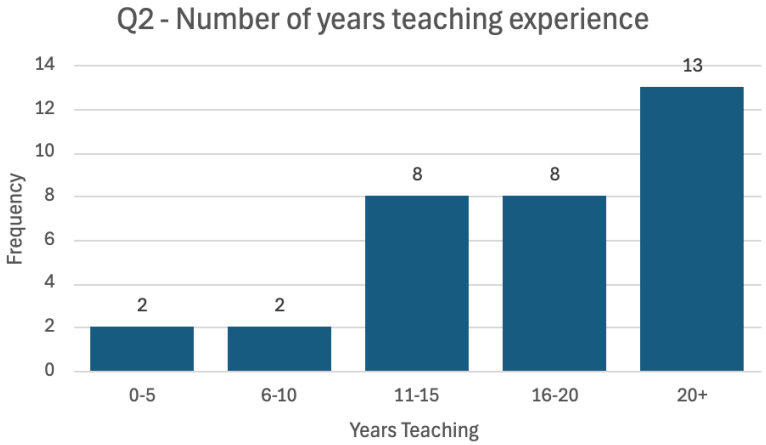


Figure 8. Questionnaire Q2 - Teaching Experience

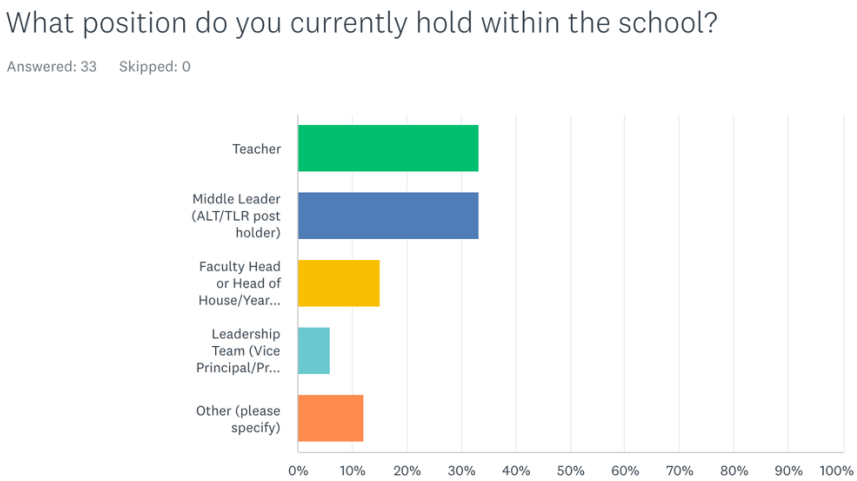
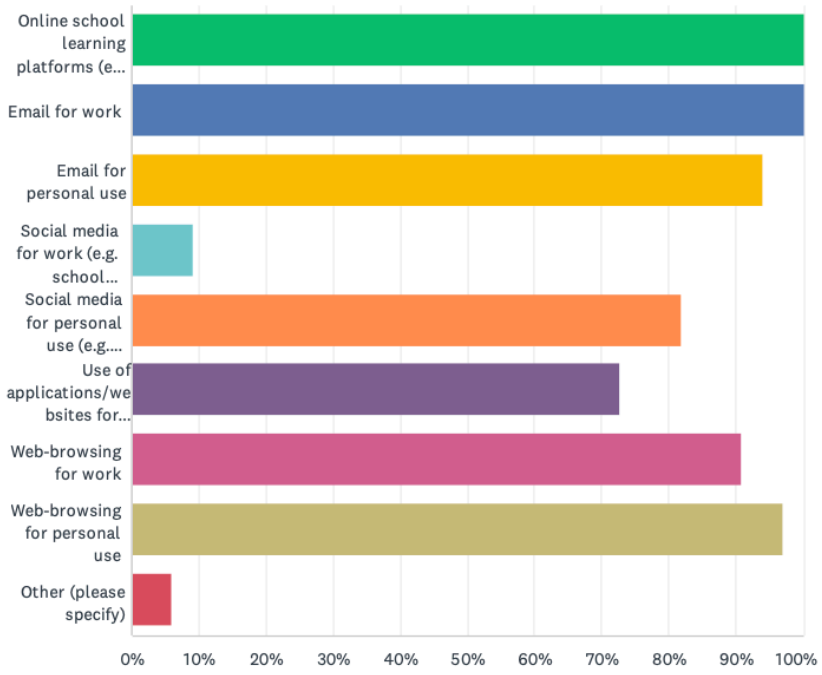


Figure 9. Questionnaire Q3 - Role at Hill College

Q4 Thinking about the past 48 hour period, which of the following did you interact with? (Tick as many that apply)

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Online school learning platforms (e.g. Google Classroom and others)	100.00%	33
Email for work	100.00%	33
Email for personal use	93.94%	31
Social media for work (e.g. school instagram)	9.09%	3
Social media for personal use (e.g. facebook etc.)	81.82%	27
Use of applications/websites for teaching (e.g. flippity; TES; Cognity etc.)	72.73%	24
Web-browsing for work	90.91%	30
Web-browsing for personal use	96.97%	32
Other (please specify)	6.06%	2
Total Respondents: 33		

Figure 10. Questionnaire Q4 - 48 hour Teacher use of Technology

Q5 - Thinking about the past 48 hour period, which web based educational technologies did you use?

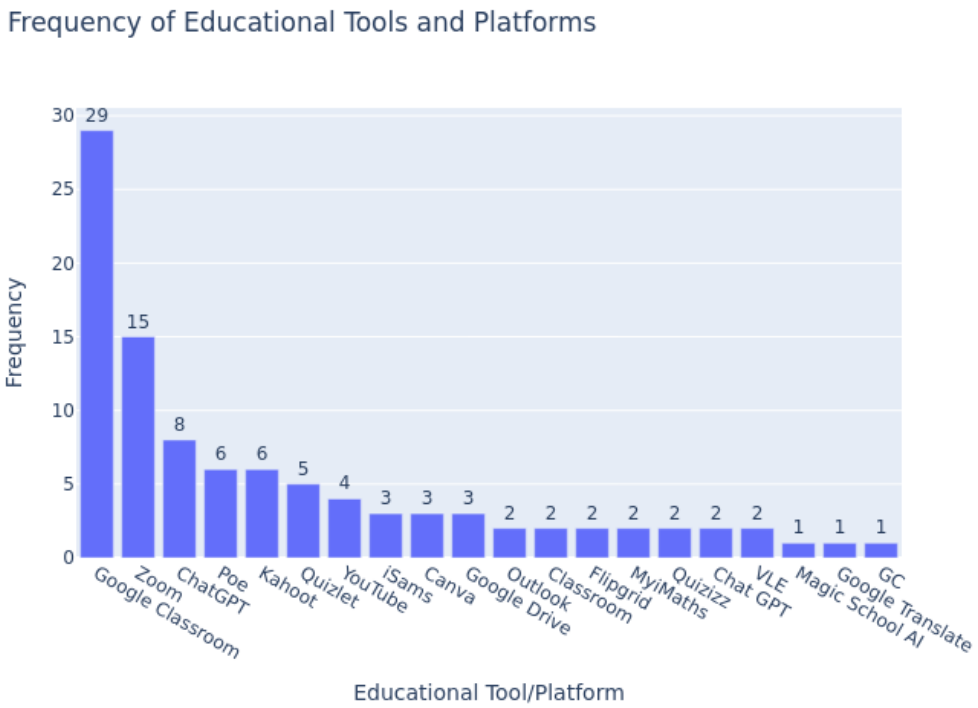
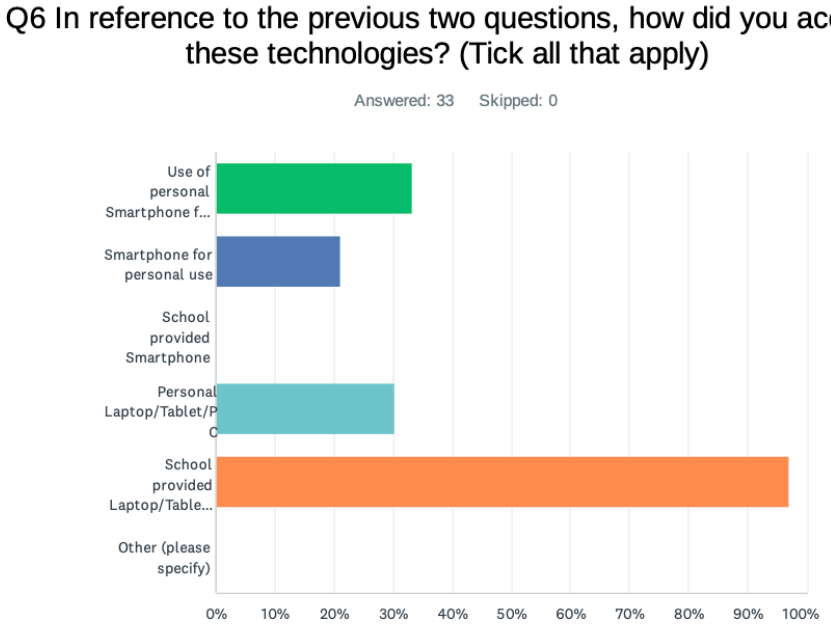


Figure 11. Questionnaire Q5 - Operationalisation of EdTech in 48 hour period



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Use of personal Smartphone for work	33.33%	11
Smartphone for personal use	21.21%	7
School provided Smartphone	0.00%	0
Personal Laptop/Tablet/PC	30.30%	10
School provided Laptop/Tablet/PC	96.97%	32
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 33		

Figure 12. Questionnaire Q6 - Hardware used to access online tools

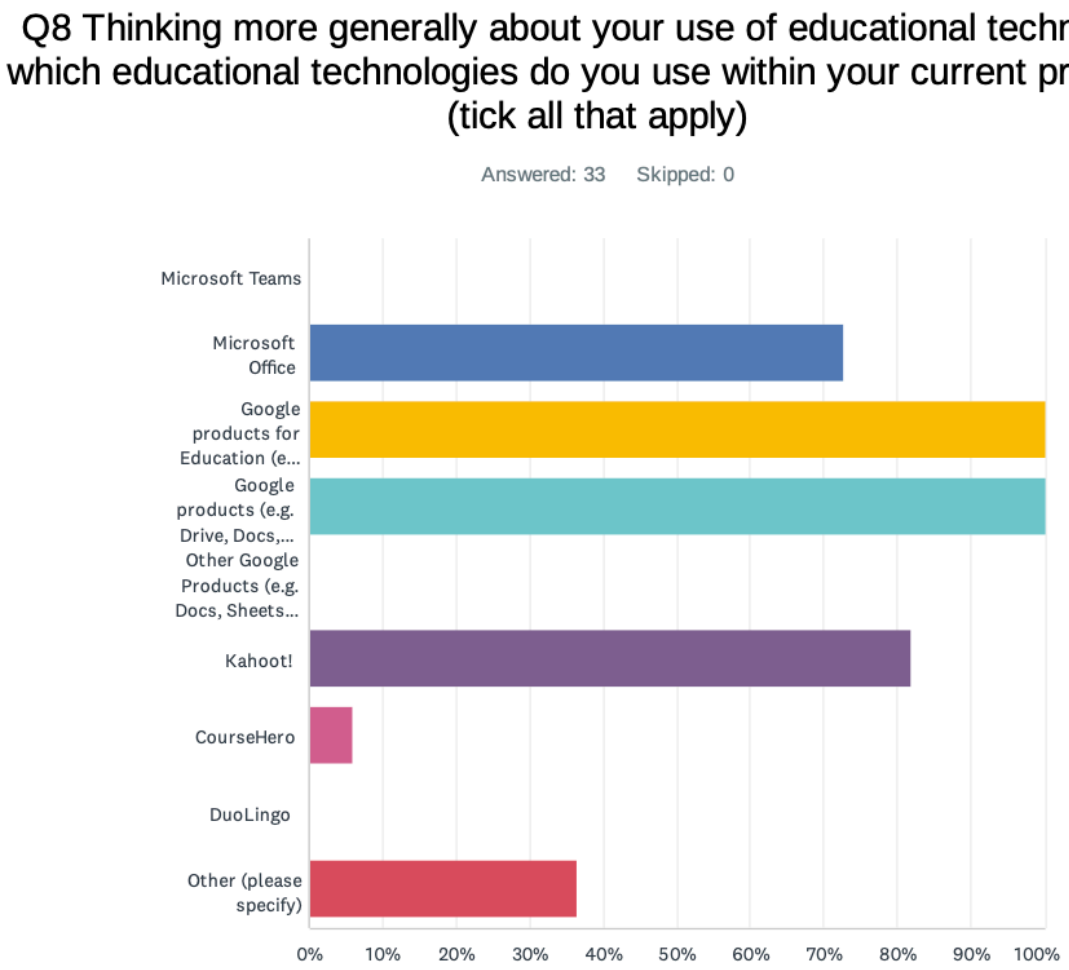


Figure 13. Questionnaire Q8 - Current Platforms engaged with

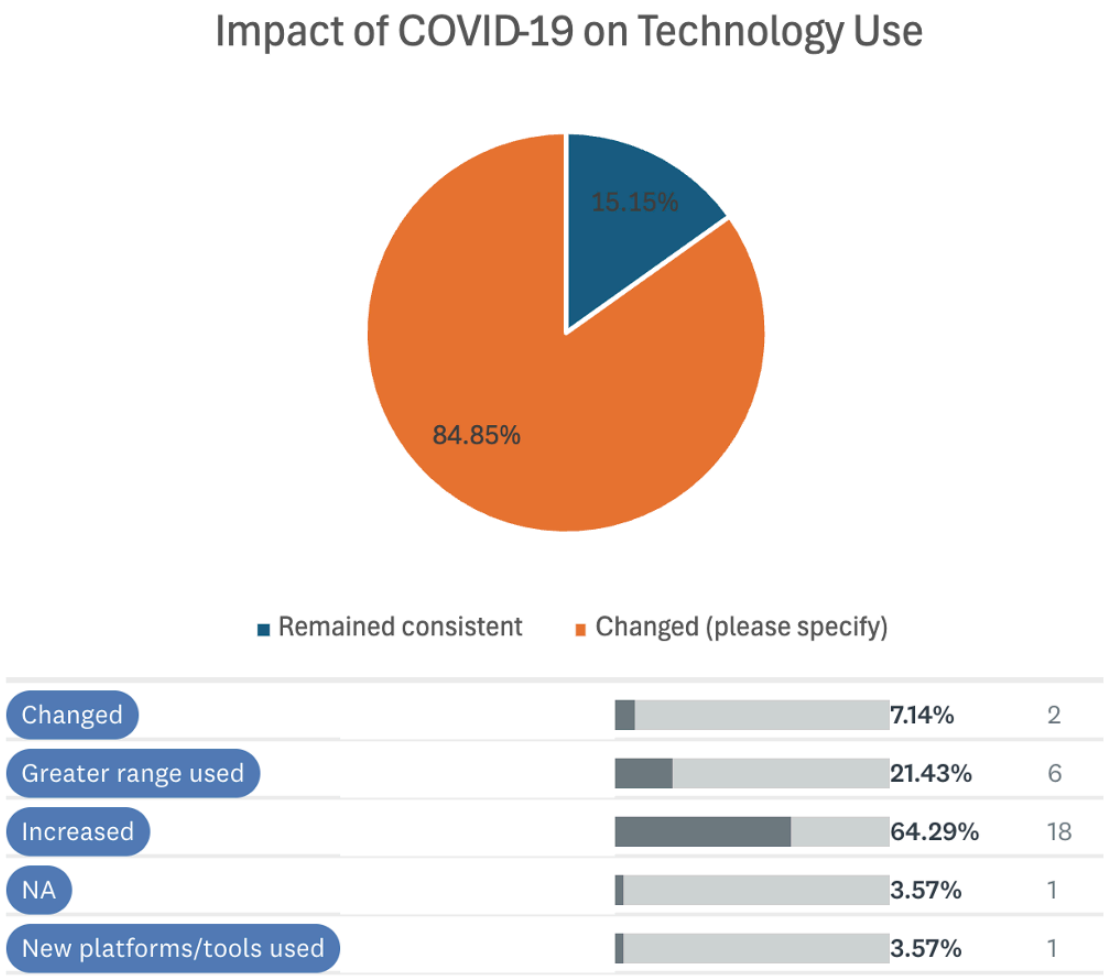
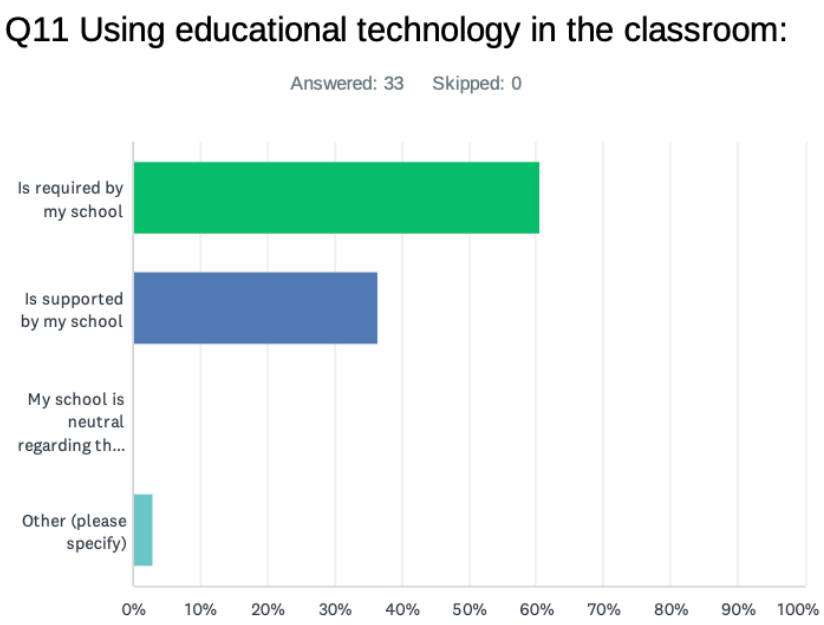


Figure 14. Questionnaire Q10 - Impact of COVID-19 on Teacher's Technology use



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Is required by my school	60.61%	20
Is supported by my school	36.36%	12
My school is neutral regarding the use of EdTech in the classroom	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	3.03%	1
TOTAL		33

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	We are a 1-1 laptop school so some degree of EdTech use is essential. However, the degree to which EdTech is used depends on the learning objectives.	11/8/2023 11:03 AM

Figure 15. Questionnaire Q11 - School Requirement of EdTech in Classroom

Appendix J – Nodes used within Quirkos

Appendix K – Description of Policy Texts

Table 12. TSN P/policy texts

TSN Wider Network Texts 2023-24				
Policy Name	Scope	Purpose of text	Intended audience	Description of policy text
TSN 5 Year Strategy 2020-25	Current strategic plan for all Schools in the network Given to all school leaders	Policy setting, information, governance and accountability.	Governance body, policymakers (within school), leadership and teachers, wider school community.	Outlines the strategic priorities for TSN and network schools. Identifies nine strategic areas related to human infrastructure; wellbeing; DEI; financial planning; student voice; digital strategy.
TSN Strategic Planning Overview (SPO)	School Evaluation prompts to be used in planning and reviewing school improvement planning	Policy setting, information, governance and accountability.	Governance body, policymakers (within school), leadership and teachers.	Aims to provide "Guidance to support School Improvement Planning". Articulates the priority areas for the organisation and categories under which schools should focus their attention. Acts as a guiding policy and shaping the direction schools take. The positioning of the document in the introduction section, places it as an active participant in the discussion of school improvement plans, working interdiscursively with said plans "it aims to assist you in that process" but also acts as an evaluative agent "gives you indicators of success and poses some questions". The role of digital and modernisation is clearly detailed in the Strategic Planning

				Overview which aims to provide "Guidance to support School Improvement Planning". By articulating the priority areas for the organisation, and therefore the categories under which schools should focus their attention, it acts as a guiding policy and shaping the direction schools take.
TSN Strategic - Engagement Toolkit	School Evaluation prompts to be used in evaluating engagement with stakeholders	Document aims to assist with reviewing most effective tools for stakeholder engagement	School Leaders and Middle Leaders	A reflective prompt document that aims to explore the ways in which TSN and TSN schools can engage with the wider community of stakeholders.
TSN Technology Integration Roadmap	Strategic planning for EdTech implementation.	Strategic, governance, accountability	Governance body, policymakers (within and outside school), leadership	A strategic roadmap that aims to explore the ways in schools can develop policies and practices for EdTech integration.
TSN Annual Report 2022-23	Published on TSN website to public view	Evaluative review and reporting. Policy setting, information, governance and accountability.	Governance body, policymakers (within school), leadership and teachers, wider school community, Prospective staff/students	Publicly document the institution's commitments and progress. Communicate ongoing cycles of innovation and adoption and construct an institutional narrative of how strategic goals are operationalised.
TSN Annual Report 2023-24				
CEO Mailshots	Sent whole network Saved all from past academic year with	Information Internal correspondence Policy ecosystem Culture setting	All staff at network	Aims to provide a snapshot of events at TSN over the past month. Articulates the themes of TSN and strategic priorities. Written by the

	EdTech reference	Advertising		CEO, it provides a ‘voice’ for TSN.

Table 13. Hill College P/policy texts

HILL COLLEGE School Texts 2023-24				
p/Policy text	Scope	Purpose of text	Intended audience	Description of policy text
Digital Literacy	All stakeholders	Promotional Pedagogical	Parents, students, teachers, Prospective staff	Frames technology within school and teacher practice present on the school's website. Made up of six paragraphs, the text aims to define what is meant by the term "Digital Literacy" and the school's approach to digitally situated education.
1-2-1 Laptop Programme	All Stakeholders	Promotional Pedagogical Infrastructure	Parents, students, teachers, Prospective staff	Focuses on the operationalising and technical requirements of the programme. Explicitly positions the school's direction and use of educational technology. Identifies EdTech companies used within the school.
Responsible Use policy	School based policy shared with all stakeholders	Pedagogical Infrastructure	Parents, students, teachers, Prospective staff/students	Guidelines for staff and students to govern the effective and accepted use of technology within schools. Sets out the expectations and rules that govern student use of technology.
Digital Leaders Council (DLC)	All stakeholders	Promotional Pedagogical Infrastructure	All Stakeholders	Describes the role and scope of the Digital Literacy Council within the school. Highlights areas of focus and initiatives the school and DLC engage with locally and globally.
iSAMs App	Parent	Promotional Infrastructure	Parents, students, teachers, Prospective	Information and guidance about systems applications required by parents to access and interact with school systems such as reports, absence, timetables etc.
New Staff	New staff information	Promotional Pedagogical	Parents, students, teachers, Prospective staff/students	Identity and expectation formation. Promotes aspects of the school's technology infrastructure.
What we expect of staff	Information regarding school expectations.	Promotional Pedagogical	Parents, students, teachers,	Identity and expectation formation. Promotes aspects of the school's technology infrastructure.

			Prospective staff/students	
Facilities	School based website information featuring EdTech Information and culture setting.	Promotional Pedagogical Infrastructure	Parents, students, teachers, Prospective staff/students	Advertises school facilities including aspects of the school's physical, human, and EdTech infrastructure.
Strategic Development Plan	Published to community, 3-year scope	Pedagogical Accountability	Governance body, policymakers (within school), leadership and teachers, wider school community	Outlines the strategic priorities for Hill College. Covers areas including
Annual report	Annual report published on HILL COLLEGE website	Pedagogical Accountability	Governance body, policymakers (within school), leadership and teachers, wider school community	The Annual Report, issued in August 2024 for the previous year 2023-24 (the period of data collection) provides a clear summary of the school's positioning regarding EdTech providing examples of the interdiscursive nature of policy texts within the school and in relation to the network. Within the annual report there is an identification of both internal and external actors who influence the perceptions of EdTech through how they engage with the school community.
Principal Newsletters	Published to school website, sent to staff, parents, council.	Pedagogical Promotional Accountability	Parents, students, teachers, Prospective staff/students	Aims to provide a snapshot of events at Hill College over the past month. Written by the Principal and Leadership team, it provides a 'voice' for Hill College.

Appendix J – Ethical Approval Confirmation email

Dear Felicity,

The following project has received ethical approval:

Project Title: *Exploring Teachers' Discourse and Positionality within the Educational Technology and Policy Debate;*
Start Date: *01 August 2023*;
End Date: *31 May 2025;*
Reference: *EDU-2023-06-06T20_12_13-hccc76*
Date of ethical approval: *04 July 2023*.

Please be aware that if you make any significant changes to the design, duration or delivery of your project, you should contact your department ethics representative for advice, as further consideration and approval may then be required.

If you have any queries regarding this approval or need anything further, please contact ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk

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If you have any queries relating to the ethical review process, please contact your supervisor (where applicable) or departmental ethics representative in the first instance. If you have any queries relating to the online system, please contact research.policy@durham.ac.uk.

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