

**Are Irish Second-level Schools Ready For a Culture Of Reflective
Practice and Professional Collaboration?**

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Irish education is facing a time of unprecedented change. Irish teachers are being and will be called upon to fulfil tasks that will be more complex and more demanding than traditional teaching tasks, and to do so in conditions that will also be without precedent. The changes facing schools are multi-faceted:

- Demographic changes will lead to closures and amalgamations. The total number of second-level schools will reduce from 808 in 1989 to 752 in 1999, and a projected 724 in 2005. (Source: The Commission on School Accommodation, 1999)
- Withdrawal of the religious will mean changed management structures. In the absence of the nuns, priests and brothers, the traditional ethos of many religious-run schools may well be replaced by a vacuum of ‘moral purpose’ (Fullan, 1993). Indeed, some commentators already write of the present moral vacuum in Irish political and economic life. (Sunday Independent, editorial, 23rd April, 2000)
- Dysfunctional families are becoming more common, and less balanced, less secure and less motivated children will attend schools. Backgrounds will include the drug culture as well as lone-parent families. (Martin, 1997, Ch. 1)
- The technological society of the VCR and the Internet is replacing the pulpit as transmitter of values to young people. Inkpen, refers to today’s students as “the multi-media generation” (Inkpen, 1998, p.2)
- Since Investment in Education (D.E.S., 1966), the roles of education and economic development have been inextricably intertwined, with remarkable economic success in the past decade. As Thornhill states, “Education is integral to economic and social development.” (Thornhill, 1998, p.46) This economic success brings immigrants (from emigration of 44,000 in 1989 to immigration of 18,500 in 1999: Central Statistics Office), with Irish families returning as well as the many foreign nationals, whose children will create new diversity in our schools, urban and rural.

- Workers and citizens of the new century will require different skills than heretofore. These include new skills of: basic communication and literacy; thinking and problem solving; well-developed personal qualities; resource handling; interpersonal; information handling; understanding systems; technology handling. (Source: Whetzel, 1992, p.1)
- New syllabi and new courses from the D.E.S. require change of pedagogy.
- Legislative changes will establish a legal framework, hitherto lacking, that will clarify the roles of all partners in education, including greater involvement of parents and children, in parent and student councils (Education Act, 1998). It will also lead to more disaffected students in school for longer (Education Welfare Bill, 1999).

In the midst of all this flux stands the school, the place expected by society to resolve many of its problems and to educate the children of today into the adults of the new century. Fullan quotes from Goodlad, "The school is the only institution in our nation specifically charged with enculturating the young into a political democracy." (Fullan, 1993, p. 8) But schools and the teachers in the schools are part of an older paradigm, from a quieter world than the frenetic global village of today. Schools too, must change, and for schools to change, teachers must change their traditional practices. When Coolahan (1995, p.47) asked if "society is being unrealistic in its expectations of what teachers and schools can achieve" he posed a question that is central to this piece of research.

It is not enough to legislate for a new paradigm of schooling; nor is it enough to decide this must be, and then to expect schools to deliver. As Sarason has argued, "The history of educational reform ... is replete with examples of interventions that either failed or had adverse effects because those involved had only the most superficial and distorted conception of the culture of the schools they were supposed to change." (Sarason, 1990, p.120) This research is an attempt to understand some of the key issues that surround the

new pedagogical and professional practices, and to seek insight into how teachers, from their present culture, their local “learning milieu” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976, p.90) are likely to respond to those issues. Specifically, are second-level teachers willing and prepared to adopt changed pedagogical and professional practices, is the focus of this research.

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CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review the context for the need for changed pedagogical practices in our schools. It will outline the societal need for change, if schools are to fulfil the needs of the citizens of the next century. This will require profound and complex changes for teachers, in that the curriculum of the school will be the core of all that happens in the school, and it will be the responsibility of teachers to design, implement, monitor and evaluate their own curriculum. The need to engage teachers in the new practice will require new methods of working, especially reflective practice and professional collaboration; this will lead to a new professionalism, in which teachers will create and ground their own educational theories in the day-to-day practices of their classrooms. To enable and sustain such change will require pressure and support; and it will be necessary to implement new forms of in-service; it will be necessary to replace traditional in-service assumptions by new in-service assumptions that will underpin the new practices; change will not be easy, there are serious impediments to change. Finally a possible model of new practice will be discussed.

THE NEED FOR CHANGED PEDAGOGY

Across the world society is looking to its schools to prepare the citizens for the new century. From the U.S. Whetzel quotes Brock, the chairman of SCANS (Secretary of Labour's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills), "Our mission must be to bring the progressive forces of this country to bear on those changes in public education which would allow us to meet the stated objective (the life-skills required for the new century)." (Whetzel, 1992, p.3) As with the U.S., the EU also looks to education as key to the future. The European Commission White Paper, Teaching and Learning (1995, p.1) states: "Tomorrow's society will be a society which invests in knowledge, a society of teaching and learning, in which each individual will build up his or her own qualification. In other words, a learning society." The White Paper goes on, "Building up a broad base of knowledge i.e. the wherewithal to grasp the meaning of things, to understand and to create, is the essential function of school." (Ibid., p.2)

Society will turn more and more to education to produce the citizens of the future. Education depends on the individual teacher, working in the local school (Fullan 1993, p.10, and p.135). He quotes Drucker: "The ultimate aim of education is to produce a learning society, indeed a learning globe. The key to learning is the teacher." (Ibid. p. 135) Coolahan (1995, p.45) argues similarly, identifying the "profound social changes" that requires a changing and more complex role for schools and for teachers.

The role of the classroom teacher and the consequent demands are becoming ever more demanding. Life-skills and work-skills for the new century will include: basic communication and numeracy; thinking and problem solving; well-developed personal qualities; resource handling; interpersonal; information handling; understanding systems; technology handling. (Whetzel, 1992, p.1) One wonders how well these skills can be developed in present-day schools, using traditional pedagogical practices. The need for change in teaching pedagogy is urgent and profound. Coolahan (1995, p.47) somewhat ominously raises the question that perhaps "society is being unrealistic in its expectations of what teachers and schools can achieve." He concludes, "An emphasis which would stress the narrow, technician approach to the teacher's work would seem to be wholly inappropriate. More than ever, the conclusion emerges that the teacher as full-scale professional, operating within a liberal tradition of role, is the only one to merit support." (Ibid. p.47) Analysis of this new professionalism, and issues concerning its implementation, are central to this research.

COMPLEXITY OF TEACHERS' NEW ROLES

The nature of the changing role of teachers is complex. Fullan (1993, p.66) identifies seven 'glimpses' of the kinds of tasks that will need to be undertaken by teachers as they address their new and complex role: (1) the best pedagogical solutions remain to be developed, (2) there will be unpredictable and uncontrollable problems and opportunities, (3) there must be a shared sense of purpose for all in the school community, (4) the individual and the group must exist in dynamic tension, (5) the capacity to enter partnerships and form alliances is essential, (6) there will be conflict and disagreement, (7) a spirit of inquiry and continuous learning must characterise the whole enterprise.

This 'glimpse' is far removed from the traditional image of the teacher delivering parcels of packaged syllabus behind the closed door of the classroom.

In her review of the literature on new forms of professional development for teachers, Butler (1993, p.5) draws on the works of Fullan, Bennett, and Rolheiser-Bennett in summarising four key areas of development. They are Technical Repertoire, Reflective Practice, Collaboration, and Research. She writes "The important question is how to integrate and establish the strengths of each of these four traditions in the individual teacher as learner." The new role for teachers will require a profound change of practice from that of the past as he/she attempts to design, understand and implement, monitor and evaluate a curriculum that will educate students into the adults of tomorrow.

The traditional pedagogy, described as the 'banking concept' by Freire (1970, p.45) is characterised by him as having a teacher-student relationship that

"involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalised and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the essential experience of the students. His task is to fill the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality. Narration leads the students to memorise mechanically the narrated content. Worse still, it turns them into 'containers', into receptacles to be filled by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. Education thus becomes an act of depositing. This is the 'banking' concept of education."

In the new pedagogy curriculum is both *what* is taught, and *how* it is taught; it is "curriculum as culture" of the school (Stenhouse, 1975, Ch.7.). Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991, p.17) define school culture as "the procedures, values and expectations that guide people's behaviour within an organisation. The school's culture is essentially 'the way we do things around here'." For example, if the teacher of English dictates a set of notes about a text to his / her class, and expects them to learn by heart for examination purposes, they may very well achieve good results. If that teacher organises discussion groups within the class and has them discuss questions prepared by him / her to explore the text, then the teacher creates the potential for learning how to think, to listen, to

discuss, to consider and respect the opinion of others and to report, as well as learning about the text. The culture encourages the process of learning in that the countless personal interactions that make up the school day, are as important, or perhaps more important than the content of what is taught.

In this culture of new pedagogy the role of the teacher becomes that of mediator, facilitator, model, and coach: mediating through dialogue and collaboration; facilitating learning by creating learning opportunities, modelling the learning process by becoming a learner with one's students; coaching by hinting, giving feedback, questioning and guiding (Tinzmann et al, 1990, p.3). Schuyler (1997, p.1) describes the new teacher role as a "paradigm shift from instruction to learning". In this pedagogy the teacher designs learning opportunities for the students and learns with them as they research, clarify, seek to understand and then articulate their knowledge of the matter under study. The contrast between this new pedagogical style and that of Freire's traditional 'banking' style is stark. It is through teachers creating such a new learning environment that students will develop the skills necessary for their lives in the new century.

Such a change in work practices will require significant shift in mindset for teachers and for schools. Reynolds and Packer (1992, p.179) note that,

"We have concentrated, to put it simply, upon the first dimension of schooling – the formal, reified, organizational structure – without looking in enough detail at the second – cultural and informal – world of values, attitudes and perceptions, which together with the third dimension – the complicated web of personal relationships within schools – will determine a school's effectiveness or ineffectiveness."

This new mindset, informing and underpinning the new practices, is far removed from the traditional one that has been and is being experienced by most of the present cohort of teachers in our schools.

ENGAGING THE INDIVIDUAL TEACHER

The need to engage teachers in the process of changing from the traditional practices to the new ones is at the heart of all educational change. Sergiovanni (1993, p.17) quotes

Fullan: "It's individuals who are going to be the solution to education reform, not systems." Huberman (1992, p.131), reporting on Swiss research, finds that "teachers who ... invested consistently in classroom-level improvements were more likely to be satisfied later on in their career than most others, and far more likely to be satisfied than their peers who had been heavily involved in school-wide or district-wide projects." Prawat and Peterson (1996), in their study of teachers' motivation to reform practice, would suggest similar findings. Huberman (1992, p.138) sums up, "The key lies in ... the necessity of each member actually to experiment in the classroom with the skills or strategies that emerge from discussions and observations." In other words, the key to meaningful educational change lies with the individual teacher in the classroom teaching and learning, working within the collegially owned culture of the school. Motivating, fulfilling and sustaining the individual teacher is at the core of educational curriculum development. The question arises as to how that engagement might be enabled, encouraged and implemented.

Hopkins (1990, p.186) recognises the "most difficult place to effect educational change is at the level of the teaching-learning process in classrooms." Nevertheless, it is here that the engagement must be enacted, and it is through connecting with the issues that exist in teachers' minds (Fullan, 1993, p.128) that the engagement is made. As Cotton has noted (1994, p.8), "research has clearly established that teachers' desire to participate in decision making centres on the school's technical core – its curriculum and instructional program." Hopkins (1990, p.192) cites Stenhouse "that educational ideas should be expressed in curricular terms, because only in curricular form can ideas be tested by teachers." The practice of designing and implementing, monitoring and evaluating their own curriculum is new, and indeed alien, to many teachers. They need pressure and support to change. To enable and encourage the necessary change a supportive culture, implemented through a workable system, will be necessary. A promising development is promotion of the teaching practitioner as reflective practitioner.

POSSIBLE ORIENTATION: REFLECTIVE PRACTICE and ACTION RESEARCH

The concept of the Reflective Practitioner will be a key one for the teacher of the future. Senge (1993, p.192) quotes Schon in his statement that “reflection in action distinguishes the truly outstanding professionals.” Fullan (1993, p.67) also refers to the “spirit of inquiry and continuous learning” in his “glimpse” of the teacher of the future. Burke and Coolahan (1995, p.77) state “Investment in the cultivation of the reflective practitioner is the crucial, strategic commitment at this time.”

Butler (1993, p.5) defines the Reflective Practitioner as “one who makes instructional decisions consciously and tentatively, critically considers a full range of pertinent contextual and pedagogical factors, actively seeks evidence about the results, and continues to modify these decisions as the situation warrants.” For Elliott (1995), reflective practice is synonymous with action research. McKernan (1986, p.41) quotes from Carr & Kemmis when they define action research as “a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of a) their social or educational practices, b) their understanding of these practices, and c) the situations in which the practices are carried out.” McNiff (1992, p.ix) states, “Action research is about learning. It involves us in active, open-ended and vigorous reflection upon our work and its consequences. Doing action research requires us to draw upon our own resources, individual and mutual, as experienced practitioners.”

McNiff (1988, p.57), following Barrett & Whitehead, prescribes six critical questions which “set the scene ready for action:

1. What is your concern?
2. Why are you concerned?
3. What do you think you could do about it?
4. What kind of ‘evidence’ could you collect to help you make some judgement about what is happening
5. How would you collect such ‘evidence’?

6. How would you check that your judgement about what has happened is reasonably fair and accurate? “

The questions underpin the action research process of reflective practice. McNiff (1988, p.58):

- “1. I experience problems when some of my educational values are denied in practice.
2. I imagine a solution to these problems.
3. I act in the direction of the solution.
4. I evaluate the outcome of the solution.
5. I modify my practice, plan and ideas in the light of the evaluation.”

The process of reflection and action gives a systematic method of thinking and of action, and many might wish to confine themselves to process alone, without exposing their values and beliefs to others. However, the question “Why am I concerned?” provides a powerful linkage between practice in the classroom and the core, motivating values of the teacher. It is an important source of inspiration and renewal of commitment and it leads to what Henderson (1999, p.1) refers to as “intrinsic motivation”. She quotes Weimer: “when motivation to improve (one’s teaching) is intrinsic, ... the effects on instruction are more enduring.” (Ibid., p.1) Lomax & Whitehead (1998, p.456), referring to the work of Moira Evans, claim “ she uses her spiritual and moral values as living, educational standards which she uses to give her life its particular form in her professional practice.” In this way, the individual teacher, and groups of teachers, can seek to sustain their motivation for their work by constantly reflecting on those core values that inspire, inform and motivate action; at school level, they should be articulated in the school Mission Statement. The image is of a professional practice energised and sustained by the practitioner’s moral values, the ‘moral purpose’ urged by Fullan (1993, Ch. 2.) as necessary for the teacher of the future.

While thought and reflection might seem to have connotations of the solitary thinker, the literature is emphatic that reflective practice is rooted in collaboration. Elliott (1994, p.5) writes: “It is often simply presumed that reflection is a largely solitary and private

process ... such an account of reflective practice is totally inadequate.” Butler (1993, p.5), reporting on the work of Fullan, Bennett and Rolheiser-Bennett, identifies both reflective practice and collaboration as key elements of the new professional educators. Senge (1993, Ch.11) argues for the transformation of “individual mental models” into “shared vision” through collaboration and its resultant dialogue. Quoting Schrage, Fullan (1993, p.94) defines collaboration as “the process of shared creation: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own.” The vision emerging is of the individual thinker working in professional collaboration with colleagues in identifying, exploring, testing and evaluating teaching and learning issues and practices, both individual and school-wide.

Hargreaves states (1992, p.216), “Teachers learn from many groups, both inside and outside their own schools. But they learn most, perhaps, from other teachers, particularly from colleagues in their own work place, their own school.” This involves the concept of the ‘critical friend’ of McNiff (1995, p.21), the ‘discursive community’ of Sergiovanni (1996, p.141), the ‘dialectic of collaboration’ of Lomax and Whitehead (1998, p.459), and the ‘ruthlessly compassionate partner’ of Senge (1993, p.202). It is through ‘dialogos’ or exchange of ideas between reflective professionals that ‘metanoia’ or change of mind (education) takes place (Senge, 1993, p.13). As Fullan (1993, p.46) puts it, “you cannot have students as continuous learners and effective collaborators, without teachers having those same characteristics.” This ‘dialogos’ and ‘metanoia’, through professional collaboration with colleagues, is the essence of the new teaching and learning, and development of such a culture in schools could provide a positive solution to the developmental in-service needs of those teachers faced with the new curriculum demands.

NEW PROFESSIONALISM: THEORY IN and FROM PRACTICE

The new model for on-going professional development is based on integrating theory and practice, and on generating theory from practice, and the work is done by the

practitioners themselves. Whitehead (1993, Ch 7, & 1998) has developed the idea of “living educational theory”, which he defines as

“ an explanation by an individual of his/her own educational practice in terms of an evaluation of past practice and an intention to create an improvement which is not yet in existence. The theory encapsulates the experience of ‘I’ existing as a living contradiction in questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ The living theory is created in the description and explanation of learning and educational development that is part of the process of answering the question.” (1998, p.450)

The model described by Whitehead is bridging what Senge (1993, p.202) calls “espoused theories” and “theories in use” when he calls for a linking of concepts and practice. It is this definition of ‘theory’ that is understood in this research. The educational voice thus generated is one informed by ongoing reflection and testing of ideas, experiences and practices; the outcome is more informed professional practice.

If teachers engage in the process of reflective practice and professional collaboration, they will potentially begin the process of answering such questions as “Why am I teaching?”, “What am I trying to do?”, and “How am I trying to do it?”. Fullan (1993, p.145) states “When teachers work on personal vision-building and see how their commitment to making a difference in the classroom is connected to the wider purpose of education, it gives practical and moral meaning to their work.” A culture of such practice could greatly support the individual teacher in his/her daily struggle to cope with the increasing demands of the classroom; it could also promote professionalism among teachers.

In a culture of action research, teachers will reflect on aspects of their practice, with a view to improving and generating greater understanding of that practice. Stieglebauer (1994, p.1) refers to “the applied common sense of the people involved. People know more than they think they know; the problem is putting that knowledge into action, and that means reflecting on or processing what they think and developing a flexible sense of where they are going.” McKernan (1986, p.18) puts it thus: “Theories are not validated independent of practice and then applied to curriculum; but validated through trials and practices. Action research is thus grounded curriculum theory.” The process is one of

self-generating professionalism in practice whereby teachers “commit themselves to transforming their professional culture” (Elliott, 1994, p.2) and become “producers of (educational) knowledge” (McKernan, 1986, p.42).

The vision being developed by practitioners such as Whitehead, McNiff and Lomax is of a process of developing a professional practice that generates understanding and theory of teaching and learning, rooted in the beliefs and values of the individual and thereby promoting both personal and professional development and fulfilment. It is leading towards the personal fulfilment that Senge (1993, p.347) identifies as being part of the workplace of the future. It raises the question of how such a culture might be developed in our schools.

TOWARDS REALISATION: FROM OLD TO NEW IN-SERVICE

The concept of learning on the job is central to the concept of the reflective practitioner, and is also a key issue in teacher training, at the pre-service, induction and in-service stages of the teaching career continuum: Drudy and Ui Chathain (1999, p.7), The University Professors of Education (1996, p.12), Kerka (1998, p.5), Smith and Averis (1998, p.255), Veenman et al (1998, p.413). The research literature advocates the importance of reflective practice and learning on the job as part of the new paradigm of in-service for existing, experienced teachers, especially if reform of the curriculum, and general school reform, is to happen. Dilworth & Imig (1995a, p.3) state, “Action research and professional development ... are among the emerging concepts that support collaboration among faculty, staff, and field-based practitioners.” The picture emerging is of reflective practice and professional collaboration addressing teaching and learning issues and practices, and becoming an on-going spiral of practice that can last and sustain throughout the full teaching career.

A review of Irish Educational Documents conducted by Hyland and Milne (Vol. 2, 1992) reveals the growing concern for quality in-service training for teachers. The 1980 White Paper on Educational Development (Hyland and Milne, 1992, p.369) states, “Further research into the professional needs of teachers is indicated as a first step towards

preparing a comprehensive programme of inservice education.” The 1984 Report of the Committee on Inservice Education recognised the need for “a whole new area of Educational Theory” (Ibid., p.371). It states, “In-service should ... be capable of bringing the teacher far beyond the mere acquisition of new knowledge and skills, to demand a widening of interests and a conversion to new values and attitudes.”(Ibid., p.372) The report also accepted that “inservice courses have all too frequently tended to confine their scope to matters of practice than to questions of underlying principle.”(Ibid., p.372) In 1991 the OECD Review of National Policies for Education in Ireland again reiterated “It is urgently necessary to expand and rationalise the provision of inservice training.” (Ibid., p.385) It advocated an “induction and in-service system using the concept of *the teaching career* as its foundation”(Ibid., p.387), and desires that “Ireland’s excellent teachers stay in the classroom and gain satisfaction from doing so.”(Ibid., p.387) It was the 1984 Report, referring to need for new values and attitudes, new theory and new professional practices, that came closest to the concept under investigation in this study, that of developing a culture of reflective practice and collaboration, as an inherent and on-going part of school practice. The Educational Documents indicate the seeds of thinking about good quality in-service were sown over the past two decades. However, models of good practice seem to be scarce and the questions must be asked as to what degree has good quality in-service become available for teachers, and, if so, to what degree have teachers availed of it, and to what effect?

The traditional model of teacher training, in-service and professional development was set in the context of Freire’s ‘banking concept’ outlined earlier in this chapter. Cook and Fine (1997, p.2) indicate some of the concepts that underlie this view: “the traditional view of teacher’s work is governed by the idea that time with students is of singular value, that teachers are primarily deliverers of content, that curricular planning and decision making rest at higher levels of authority, and that professional development is unrelated to improving instruction.” Dilworth and Imig (1995b, pp.2, 3) outline other assumptions about the traditional training paradigm: it was deficit-based; it led to dependency on external ‘expertise’; it involved replication and transfer of knowledge; learning was discrete, and individual; it was carried out in a central location with one

delivery for all. Fine and Raack (1994, pp.1,2) concur, and add, periodic in-service days were sufficient, and 'pull-out' training was the most effective delivery mode. This system did work, in limited circumstances. Little (1994, p.18) acknowledges the adequacy of the training model for transferring skills and discrete outcomes, but she argues strongly that this "dominant 'training' model of teachers' professional development ... is not adequate to the ambitious visions of teaching and schooling embedded in present reform initiatives." Clearly, a new form of in-service is required to satisfy the emerging needs of the new professional practice.

The concepts that underpin the new practices and the new professional development include: the collective wisdom available in teachers' existing knowledge, skills and experiences are considered assets; more emphasis on reflective practice will lead to greater understanding of teaching and learning; collaboration with colleagues will help to unleash the collective wisdom, particularly when guided by a facilitator (perhaps, a university department) with an overview of the issues under consideration; locally based in-service, responding to the needs and concerns identified by the practitioners at local level is more relevant and more beneficial to the teachers who have themselves identified their own in-service needs; learning is seen as a lifelong process and not a once-off transfer of skills; professional development must be school-focused and embedded in the job; teacher development is essential to school development; the school should be a place of inquiry, of teaching and learning for all who use it. (Dilworth & Imig, 1995a, pp.1-3 & 1995b, pp. 1-3; Fine & Raack, 1995, p.2). The literature in general supports this summary. If these concepts underpin in-service, participating teachers will develop both conceptually and experientially in their professional practice.

If a culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration could be generated in a school, there is enormous potential for professional and school development. Whitehead (1993, p.68) asks the key question: "How can we encourage the conditions necessary for teachers to enter into a dialogue aimed at understanding?" Although taken from a slightly different context, Elliott's (1994, p.5) statement "What is so often missing is any detailed specification of how methodological competence as a reflective practitioner is to be

developed” indicates that realising a culture of professional collaboration in our schools will not be easy. The literature identifies powerful impediments and hindrances to the development of such a culture.

IMPEDIMENT ISSUES

In his initiatives *Schools for Active Learning* (1994) and *School and Curriculum Development* (1997), Callan recognised, “It was important to reach individual teachers through their institutional settings. These settings present the possibilities, the priorities, the needs, the constraints of their work in the classroom.” (SAL, 1994, p.53) Archer (1994, p.92), in his review of the *Schools for Active Learning* initiative, noted that “the facilitators in the schools were the only people expected to promote the initiative.” It would seem that the opportunity for wide-scale professional development was not maximised. Also, Callan (1998, p.6) has argued that the “orientation” in Posts of Responsibility has been on administration, rather than on curriculum development; while the newness of the PCW-based post structures prevents confirmation, one suspects that the orientation remains firmly on administration (ASTIR, Nov. 1998, p.13). The fear is that the focus in teachers’ minds is less on the core areas of professional and curriculum development, and more on maintaining the status quo in pedagogical practices, and on school administration.

The isolation culture of the traditional classroom is perceived as a powerful impediment to change. Fullan (1993, p.106) refers to “The social, intellectual, and professional isolation of teachers.” Hargreaves (1992, p.220) develops the consequences of this isolation, “In the culture of individualism, teachers develop characteristic orientations to their work which Lortie calls *presentism*, *conservatism* and *individualism*.” Callan (1998, p.3) clarifies presentism as “concentrating on short-term concerns for their class”, and as “being caught up in present and immediate matters”. He defines conservatism as “school staffs do not discuss, think about or commit themselves to more fundamental changes which might affect the context of what they do; they avoid raising substantial questions about how and what one teaches.” (ibid., p.3)

Dreeben (1988, p.33) points to one implication of this “inward-looking perspective”, that “teachers are left very much alone to determine what they are doing right and wrong and to discover what they must do to solve their problems and correct their errors at work.” Freedman (1988, p.135) points to another implication: “Their isolation ... has not allowed them to use their unique knowledge of classroom life, which they alone possess, as a basis for determining system-wide, or even school-wide policies.” She develops this argument by showing the weakness of professional development courses planned by others for teachers and “dictated to the teacher whose concerns and opinions are disregarded.” (Ibid., p.135) Clearly, this tradition of isolation is contrary to the collaborative core of reflective practice, yet it is an inherent part of the existing setting in our schools. While isolation does not prevent individual reflective practice, it does remove the individual practitioner from the potential richness and benefits of collaboration.

The traditional school climate was dominated by examination culture. Callan (1995, p.102) quotes Coolahan, “All types of post-primary schools felt the need to direct their sights at successful examinations if they were to retain public confidence and esteem.” Kavanagh (1993, p.91) cites the OECD, “The domination of examinations, particularly at the upper secondary level, ensures that ... teaching and the curriculum are largely determined by the examination requirements.” This examination emphasis meant that the fine ideology regarding new pedagogy of the new Junior Certificate Aims and Objectives (NCCA, 1989) remained largely as theory, as noted by Kavanagh (1993, p.92), Callan (1994, p.10) and Archer (1994, p.51); the practice in the classrooms remained substantively unchanged.

Dreeben (1988, p.27) argues that “Teachers ... lack both a strong craft tradition and a highly developed technology, unlike skilled craftsmen and free professionals.” It might be more accurate to argue, especially in the Irish secondary system, that there is a lack of *educational craft* tradition but it can scarcely be argued that there is not a powerful tradition of ‘getting them through the exams’ and that the respected teacher in this context had highly developed techniques that maximised exam results for his/her

students. The narrow examination focus restricted broader *educational* activities. The need for changed pedagogy to satisfy the educational needs of the new century requires a mind shift in teachers from the utilitarian 'get them through the exam' attitude; union publications such as NUACHT (ASTI, October, 1999) on the proposed review of the Junior Certificate examination system do not suggest that the examination focus of classroom teaching is set to change significantly in the near future.

The literature also acknowledges the fact that there is little research about what teachers actually do in the classroom. Dreeben (1988, p.33) acknowledges "the absence of codified knowledge about teaching" which means that the process by which teachers engage students in the instructional proceedings are "not well understood." (Ibid., p.33) Ozga and Lawn (1988, p.328) concur, "we know so little about teachers' work, and what we know is itself fragmented." It is not easy to expose ourselves to our colleagues; it seems it is not common practice of school culture to share methods, problems or even successes with colleagues, at least in any formal and structured way.

Cambone (1994) has analysed the importance of the time factor in any school restructuring or reform, and states "Time, adequate in quantity and rich in quality, is elusive." (p.1) He writes:

Teachers covet their curricular (classroom) time, and many claim they simply close their classroom doors and teach what they think needs to be taught. One reason teachers are reluctant to involve themselves in restructuring activities is that it removes them from teaching and limits their curricular time. Teachers can design their own curricular time instead of having it crafted for them, but it comes at a cost in time that would usually be spent privately or doing other tasks this kind of curricular time is more often found outside of the teaching day or week." (Ibid., p.7)

He further argues that there is "no way that teachers can do all they are asked to do and all they want to do in the current schedules of schools." (Ibid., p.18) Because the demands are too great, they can lead to stress, withdrawal and exhaustion, all of which impede any development of new practices.

Despite the impediments, it is clear that the literature sees the need for and the perceived benefits from a new culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration.

NEW LEADERSHIP

Faced with the possible benefits of the new professionalism and the serious impediments that are to be addressed in initiating and implementing it, the question then arises, “who is to lead such change?” Sergiovanni (1996) and Starratt (1993a) argue for a new kind of leadership, a leadership of ‘what’ rather than of ‘who’. Starratt (1993a, p.43) writes,

”The real source of the leader’s power is not in the leader’s person or position; it is in the vision that can attract the commitment and enthusiasm of the members. The point of leadership is not to get people to follow me; rather the point is to get us to pursue a dream, an idea, a value by which we make a contribution to the world and realise our highest human potential”

Sergiovanni (1996, p.83) states,

“The emphasis in community leadership is building a shared fellowship and the emphasis in building a shared fellowship is not on who to follow, but on what to follow. Leadership in communities is ideas based. And the goal of ideas based leadership is to develop a broad based commitment to shared values and conceptions that become a compelling source of authority for what people must do. In schools, moral connections cannot be commanded by hierarchy or sold by personalities, but must be compelled by helping people to accept their responsibilities.”

It is notable that the new educational language of Sergiovanni (1996) and Starratt (1993a, 1993b) is ‘sacred’ in tone and replacing the language of the ‘effective’ marketplace. ‘Covenant’ is replacing ‘contract’, and the vision created is similar to that of the reflective practitioner motivated by intrinsic values, suggested by the Action Research question, “Why am I concerned?” In this vision, the individual practitioner both fuels and draws energy from the collaboration that enriches the covenantal commitment of all to the teaching and learning in the school community. Values and principles, rather than individual principals, lead the school through a communal commitment (to teaching and learning).

The new thinking is reflected in the literature. Nadeau & Leighton (1996, p.9) write that “principals don’t need to do it all”, “teachers concerns may be better addressed by peers ... empowering teachers to act as problem solvers is often quite effective.” Stiegelbauer (1994, p.4) claims, “The baseline for any change is working with people who will put plans into operation; people who will lead, support, and act as resources; and people who will act as catalysts and energizers.” McPherson et al (1998, p.75) refer to an approach which “uses the insights and voices of all persons in a professional community whose focus is effective learning and teaching.”

In this vision the principal has a new role, and the responsibility for leading curriculum change may well rest on others within the school, with the principal having an overview of the total development of the school. The main task of this collaborative leader is to “nurture a subtle process of enabling teachers to work together to generate solutions.” (Fullan, 1995, p.16). This echoes the view of Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991, p.15) that “empowerment is the purpose of management.” It is the engagement of all in the school that reflects the success of such new leadership, rather than the traditional concept of the all-powerful leader leading from the front, in all aspects of school life. Fullan (1992, p.155) quotes from Hall: “Principals do not lead change efforts single-handedly. Rather, principals work with other change facilitators, who, in most cases, are making a large number of interventions also.” This concept of teacher-leaders offers opportunity for a new model of school-based reflective practice and professional collaboration, led by teachers from within the school as they facilitate and encourage dialogos with their colleagues on matters of curriculum development and issues of teaching and learning in their school.

POSSIBLE MODEL

Lieberman (1996) has identified new roles for teacher leaders in their own schools as teacher leaders, peer advisors, and teacher researchers. The U.S. Career Ladder Plans and the U.K. Advanced Skills Teacher concept are examples of this new leadership role where experienced teachers are facilitated in sharing their experience and expertise in leadership roles with their colleagues, in matters of teaching and learning.

In her review of the literature on teachers leading change in their own schools, Bartunek (1990, p.1) states “opportunities to expand the teaching role while remaining a classroom teacher are achievable through a staff development program ... and capitalizes upon the classroom teacher as a teacher educator.” She continues, “a school-based teacher educator (SBTE) can be responsible for pre-service, in-service, or continuing education at a school or district level, while maintaining a primary work location in the classroom.” (Ibid., p.1) In her conclusion she touches on many of the issues identified in the course of this chapter:

“Opening an avenue of teacher growth through school-based teacher education, the classroom teacher is provided the opportunities to promote and support peer teacher growth, to experience empowerment by facilitating local change, to assume a leadership role without relinquishing the classroom, and to develop teaching behaviours which blend clinical skills with practitioner-translated research and theory. This revitalization of the teaching role with new responsibilities benefits the schooling process and its participants, and is achievable when the classroom teacher becomes a teacher educator.” (Ibid., p.4)

The implementation of such a new leadership role for practising, experienced teachers has been engaged in by Callan in his Schools for Active Learning (1994) and the School and Curriculum Development (1997) initiatives. One essential aspect of these initiatives was that practising teachers were selected and trained to work as facilitators with their peers in school and subject clusters. Many of the facilitators nurtured a practice of reflective practice and collaboration among their peers, in examining both content and processes of pedagogy of curriculum. The reports (Callan, 1994, p82, 1997, p.12; Archer, 1994, p.106; Woods, 1997, p.11, 1999, p.52) show that the facilitation was welcomed by fellow teachers, and by principals.

Despite the success, the indications are that difficulties arose in sustaining the work of facilitation when the initiatives had run their course (Callan, 1994, pp.121-125; Archer, 1994, p.110). Some means must be found to implement and sustain such curriculum leadership on an ongoing basis in our schools, and at local level. In the words of Callan (1994, p.124): “The challenge confronting those seeking change in our schools is to

effect a change from practices, which have a proven public record, to practices whose public credibility has yet to be established.” Generating and sustaining a culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration, supported by all in the school but particularly by senior teaching staff, would seem to offer much potential.

SUMMARY

This review has shown that the traditional classroom practices will not satisfy the educational needs of society as we move into the new century. There is clearly need for new practices if teachers are to cope with, and master, the ever increasing and complex demands made on them. The new form of professionalism will involve reflective practice in a culture of collaboration with colleagues, as teachers seek to design, implement, monitor and evaluate the curriculum of their school. Such school culture will be far removed from the traditional culture of our schools. It will require substantive metanoia or change-of-mind for teachers; but, it must be done. Teachers must develop a recognised, authoritative, educational voice based on a clear commitment to and understanding of their educational practices. To achieve that change, there is need for a new form of in-service, based on the collective wisdom and knowledge of the teachers in the local setting, and responding to both the national curriculum and the local needs. This new culture may be best developed by experienced teachers leading their peers in a structured collegiality, and driven by a shared commitment to the ideals, values and principles that initially attracted them into the teaching career. The critical question now is “*Are Irish second-level schools ready for a culture of professional collaboration and reflective practice?*”

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CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the methodological approaches used to conduct this research. In describing the research design, it will outline the rationale for the study, including the context, the purpose and the population. It will also examine issues of selection procedures for the key informants in the selected population, why the interview method was chosen, and issues relating to the interview method. The chapter will also describe the methodology, it will review the piloting, and how the interviews were conducted. It will describe how the data was analysed. It will also discuss how the validity and reliability of the study was established, and how objectivity and trustworthiness were sought.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Rationale: Chapter Two reviewed the literature regarding the changed form of professional practice that will be required of teachers if schools are to respond positively to the changed demands made on them by society. Certain issues relating to professional collaboration and reflective practice were identified in the literature. These include:

- The need for pedagogical change, and teachers' response to that need;
- The relative involvement of teachers in school administration and in curriculum development;
- The need for new forms of in-service;
- Impediments to change of professional practice and culture;
- Curriculum leadership by teachers, especially by senior teachers, rather than by principal only.

Chapter Two concluded with the question "Are second-level schools ready for a culture of professional collaboration and reflective practice?" Sarason has warned "The history of educational reform, ... is replete with examples of interventions that either failed or had adverse effects because those involved had only the most superficial and distorted conception of the culture of the schools they were supposed to change." (Sarason, 1990, p.120) Since it is the classroom teacher that will be central to the degree of change, or absence of change, in professional practice, it seems appropriate that the teacher's

position with regard to curriculum and professional development should be ascertained. Therefore, this research seems both necessary and timely.

Purpose: The purpose of the research was to seek to ascertain the perceptions of a number of key informants (see below) towards the issues identified in the research literature, in order to attempt to describe and understand:

- 1) their perceptions of the present position of teachers in our schools towards curriculum and professional development,
- 2) their understanding of the views of teaching colleagues towards curriculum and professional development,
- 3) based on 1) and 2), their perceptions of the key issues to be addressed in realising a culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration in their schools.

The purpose of the study was to seek to understand, rather than to seek to change viewpoints, or to change the world! As expressed by Woods (1986, p.134), the purpose of the “basic ethnographic question” is to seek to discover “What is going on here?” The research was also influenced by the view of Bogdan and Biklen “you are not there to change views, but to learn what the subjects’ views are and why they are that way” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p137).

Nevertheless it is to be hoped that the research will contribute in some small way to the promotion of teaching and learning in our schools. To adapt Stenhouse (1985, p.269) slightly, it is hoped that the work will be “of benefit and interest to those people who are studied”, and perhaps it will help improve “the capacity of those who are studied to do their job.” (Ibid., p.269) If the research contributes, even in a small way, towards clarification of the issues concerning the promotion of a culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration, it will have been worthwhile. As Wiersma puts it, it is hoped “to reveal the complexity of educational phenomena, and, in the long run, this should be helpful in improving education.” (Wiersma, 1995, p.278)

Design of Interview Schedule: Each of the five areas suggested by the review of literature was addressed and explored by a series of questions (see Appendix One).

Question 1. Was designed to elicit perceptions about how recent changes in subjects and in syllabi have impacted on matters of teaching and learning, and sought to anticipate how the new syllabi of the new Leaving Cert. might be received and implemented in our schools.

Questions 2 and 3 sought to ascertain to what extent teachers are guided by their own and the school's values and beliefs in their daily work in the schools and classrooms.

Questions 4 and 5 sought to determine the degree to which collaboration presently occurs, and the degree to which teachers lead curriculum development in their schools.

Questions 6 and 7 sought to identify the main promoters and the main inhibitors of changing professional practice in our schools.

Questions 8 and 13 were designed to examine issues relating to the role of principal teachers or other senior teachers leading curriculum development in matters of teaching and learning in their own schools.

Questions 9 and 10 sought to clarify the degree and the nature of teacher involvement in school planning issues.

Questions 11 and 12 sought to examine teacher reaction to in-service, and forms of in-service that would be most acceptable to teachers.

The interview schedule was designed to initiate conversation about each of the five areas under study. The actual format of the interviews was semi-structured to promote more discussion in a more relaxed, conversational atmosphere. This was informed by the advice of Bogdan and Biklen that "even when an interview guide is employed, qualitative

interviews offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview.” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.136) Therefore, it was decided to keep towards the middle of what Bogdan and Biklen call the “structured / unstructured continuum” (Ibid., p.136) and the schedule was used only as a checklist, to ensure that all areas of concern were actually discussed.

Key Informants: Assessing attitude and perception is difficult; the complexities and history of the local context or setting compound the difficulty, as Sarason (1998) has shown. Wiersma writes of the value of ethnographic research in exploring for meaning in such cases; he writes “Ethnographic research emphasizes context, making it especially suitable for inquiry into educational issues that are heavily context-dependent.” (Wiersma, 1995, p.277) The immersion of the ethnographic researcher, with its “considerable time commitment” (Ibid., p.278) was not possible in this study. Therefore it was decided to use the practical experience of a group of key informants from schools, and this would also have the advantage of probing a greater range of informing settings than one researcher in situ in one local setting. The decision was informed by Wolcott’s definition of a key informant as “an individual in whom one invests a disproportionate amount of time because that individual appears to be particularly well informed, articulate, approachable, or available.” (Wolcott, from Wiersma, 1995, p.263)

The decision to use key informants from schools was further informed by Wiersma’s observation that “The phenomenon under study requires observation to be understood; and teachers, part of whose role is of classroom observer, are in an advantageous position for conducting research in the schools.” (Ibid., p.277) He quotes from Kantor, Kirby and Goetz, “Especially promising are collaborative efforts between teachers and researchers.” (Ibid. p.278) Therefore, it was decided to seek to ascertain the perceptions of certain teachers and other key informants, in relation to the research issues.

The population selected for the interviews was a “purposeful sample” (Wiersma, 1995, p.214) in that they were selected “because of their characteristics relative to the

phenomenon under study.” (Ibid., p. 214) Together with the above principle, the selection of informants was determined by the following criteria.

- Three principals with recent post-graduate work were interviewed; these had both theoretical and practical knowledge of the issues under study.
- Three senior teachers (two with Posts of Responsibility) were included; these may not have had the same depth of theoretical awareness of the issues as the principals, but they were involved in practical aspects of school leadership through their posts of responsibility. The third of these is a Christian Brother who has recently moved out of actual principalship and teaching and into a broader management role.
- Three more junior teachers, with a minimum of five years experience in teaching and with some record of curriculum and professional development, were also included; the five-year criterion was chosen to ensure that the persons would have more than minimum experience of the issues under investigation. Two of these are field officers for the Maynooth initiative, School and Curriculum Development. The purpose of the SCD initiative is “to focus on curriculum, teaching and learning processes in the schools”; its aims include “to develop curriculum teaching, ... so that professional teacher collaboration is enhanced ... to promote curriculum planning as a significant component in school planning.” (Callan, 1999, p.1) Therefore the views of the field officers were thought to be highly relevant to this research.
- In order to obtain another perspective from outside the immediacy of the school setting, but with a close proximity to teacher in-service, the Education and Research Officer of ASTI was also interviewed.

Overall, a key underlying principle in the selection of the key informants was the desire “to understand the issue from multiple points of view. The goal ... is to facilitate efforts to understand ... from multiple perspectives.” (Stetcher & Davis, from Woods, 1999, p.8)

While in this instance gender was not a criterion of selection, in the event five males and five females were interviewed. School type may have had some small, implicit influence

on the interviewees, but was not considered a major factor in selection; in fact two interviewees came from single-sex boys schools; three from single-sex girls; two from vocational schools; two from co-educational Community colleges. Five of the interviewees came from schools within the School and Curriculum Development (NUIM) initiative area.

Interview: For the purposes of this research, the interview method was chosen as the most appropriate in the circumstances. Document analysis of the international literature identified the main issues for research (see Chapter Two). Time and scale prevented the immersion and observation of the ethnographer but the key informants would provide multiple local perspectives. It was necessary to gather data on an area that related largely to attitude and perception in educational matters; as such, the interview component of qualitative research rather than more statistical quantitative research was deemed appropriate. This was informed by the view of the Association of Qualitative Research Practitioners that “While quantitative research tells you the who and the what, qualitative research explains the why and how behind the what.” (AQRP, 2000) It was necessary to survey a range of key informants and the interview, after Malim & Birch, was seen as a form of “oral survey” (Malim & Birch, 1997, p.36) for this purpose. It also allowed for “interactive data collection” (Wiersma, 1995, p.215), in that discussion and probing of certain issues was allowed through the semi-structured format. An interview schedule of questions was prepared (see Appendix One), but was used as a checklist, to ensure all aspects of the study were covered; it was not used in a rigidly structured form, as explained above.

In considering the most appropriate form of data gathering, various problems connected with the interview form of data gathering were considered. One difficulty associated with the interview is that of falsification of the data through faulty analysis, faulty memory, distorted observation or preconceptions of the interviewees (Malim & Birch, 1997, p.37). Woods also identified the danger of an “articulate participant” (Woods, 1999, p.9) carrying undue weight or influence. Bogdan & Biklen also warn “not to defer to them (key informants) completely” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.153). In considering these

possible difficulties, it was believed that the multiplicity of perspectives of the key informants on the same issues would clearly “illuminate” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976, p.84) the thinking behind the perceptions. It was also believed that “convergence” (Wiersma, 1995, p.264) of informants’ perceptions would help ensure reliability and validity of data.

Stake (1967, p.27) was aware of the way in which external researchers could by their very presence influence the climate under review. It was believed the use of key informants from the local setting helped to overcome the distortional effect that might be caused by an external observer arriving into a local setting. However, Woods warned of the problems of too much immersion and noted the need for some degree of ‘retraction’ from too much immersion in local issues (Woods, 1985, p.53). While conscious of the danger of local setting and personal history colouring the perceptions of the key informants through too much immersion, it was believed that the objectivity of the external interviewer, probing the reflective experience and perceptions of the internal, key informants would address this area of concern. The researcher’s awareness of the possible weaknesses informed the conduct of the interviews and was in mind during the analysis of the data; certain observations made by this researcher in the reporting of the findings illustrate this awareness. This will be seen in Chapter Four

Finally, in reflecting on the merits and demerits of the interview methodology, this researcher was conscious of his own work over several years in curriculum and professional development. The concern was to ensure as much objectivity as possible. Hogan has written “the detection and disciplining of our own pre-judgements is perhaps the highest form of objectivity available to human enquiry.” (Hogan, 1998, p.1) Maykut & Morehouse quote Katz:

“Epoche is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least to become aware of prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Epoche helps the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open view without prejudgement or imposing meaning too soon.” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p123)

Awareness of these issues helped the epoche of this researcher in becoming more detached in his descriptions and analysis. The issues for research were identified from the literature, and the literature also informed the questions for the interview schedule. During the interviews, the researcher confined his discourse to questioning and to supportive comment, no personal opinions were made. During the analysis, care was taken to consider the perceptions of the informants only, and not to allow personal opinion to colour interpretation.

The researcher was also conscious of the advice of Woods (1985, p.52) when he recognised the value of the creative mind of the researcher in probing perceptions during interviews, and, during the analysis, seeking to make the necessary links between various bits of data in attempting to reveal the underlying issues. Woods wrote “However detailed and perspicacious the observations, at some stage there must be a ‘leap of the imagination’ (Ford, 1975) as the researcher conceptualizes from raw field notes.” Bogdan and Biklen also recommend “Do not be afraid to speculate. ... We do not suggest that the facts and the data are not important, for ideas must be grounded in the data, but they are a means to clear thinking and to generating ideas, not *the end*.” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.154) It is hoped that the research (Ch. 2), the design (Ch. 3), and the analysis reported in Chapters Four and Five reflects such imagination and analysis.

RESEARCH METHODS

Process: Each informant was contacted by telephone and by letter. A letter of introduction (see Appendix Two) was sent c. one week in advance of the interview; this was followed by a telephone call to seek agreement for the interview, and to agree time and venue suitable to the interviewee. The letter included an overview of the five areas under study, with a request that some thought might be given to them in advance of the interview. This was to help clarify thinking and to facilitate the ease of discussion at the interview. Based on the advice of Bogdan and Biklen about “putting the subject at ease” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.135) it was also designed to help ‘break the ice’ between the researcher and the interviewee, awareness of the key issues making for a more relaxed and purposeful conversation at the interview.

Piloting: The process was piloted with two key informants, other than the final ten. The piloting identified certain problems. The chief problem was that while the interviewees had prepared for the interview along the broad lines identified in the letter of introduction, the researcher made the error of sticking too closely with the list of questions in the Interview Schedule (see Appendix One) in the first interview. This led to some unease in the interviewee and a feeling that he was unable to say all that he had wished to say. This went against the view of Bogdan and Biklen that “the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subject’s own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world.” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.135) In fact, in the course of the interview, at a time when the list of questions was set aside and some unscheduled questions were used to pursue certain lines of interest generated by the initial questions, material of rich quality was gleaned. The researcher also felt too restricted by following too closely to the list of questions. Subsequently, the five broader areas were pursued, and the questions on the interview schedule were used only as reference to ensure that all areas of interest in the research were covered. This process developed an awareness of using a semi-structured interview format. The second pilot and subsequent interviews ran more easily.

Conduct of interviews: This researcher sought to conduct each interview in a relaxed and ‘easy’ manner, so as to promote meaningful conversation and discussion that allowed for “purposeful conversation” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.135). Empathy was expressed through supportive words, e.g. “yes, I understand”, and by supportive gesture such as nodding and with affirming eye contact. The researcher was conscious of not seeming to be interrogative in any ‘threatening’ way. Notes were taken, and in all cases, the interview was recorded. The recording occurred only after the interviewee indicated comfort with being recorded. After a certain time in each interview, the interviewee was asked if he / she was comfortable that the line of discussion was enabling them to say what they wished to express on the various areas outlined in the letter of introduction. At the end of each interview, each interviewee was asked if there were any remaining points they wished to make in relation to the issues under discussion. . All expressed comfort

with the interviews, as expressed by one “I feel very comfortable with everything we’ve talked about.” The interviews were from fifty-five minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes in duration; the majority lasted one hour, approximately.

Analysis of data: In analysing the data, the process recommended by Bogdan & Biklen was used (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, pp.165-166).

Preparation of Data for Analysis: The first step was to sequentially number the pages of notes taken at each interview, e.g. A3 = Interview A, page three. Then the recording of each interview was replayed and the brief interview notes were expanded into transcripts and were indexed on the transcripts by use of the number counter reference of the tape recorder. For example, the statement that the school mission statement “has little resonance for teachers” is indexed as H1, 105, this means Transcript H, page1, and Tape H, point 105, the number on the counter of the tape recorder during Interview H, when the comment was made. The purpose was to facilitate data location throughout the analysis.

(ii) **Unitising the Data:** The data was read three times, during undisturbed time. On the third occasion a preliminary list of coding categories was initiated, and other reflections on the data were also noted.

Codes were assigned to the various issues that began to emerge. The purpose of this part of the analysis process was to “cull for meaning from the words ... of the participants.” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.128). This was done in two ways. As the issues emerged from the research, they were recorded on A3 sheets, called Issue Sheets. Each of the five areas under study was assigned an Issue Sheet, and each interviewee was allocated a separate column. On the series of Issue Sheets where notes of the emerging issues, the “units of meaning” (Ibid., p.134), were recorded, the transcript reference was recorded beside the note. Simultaneously, on the transcript of each interview the code and sub-code for the emerging issue was recorded. For example, the comment made by interviewee F that time lost from classes for in-service was a pivotal issue was noted on

transcript F as C16 (Issue Sheet C, point 16, column F); simultaneously, it was briefly noted and coded F1 on the Issue Sheet C (Interview F, page 1). This process allowed for two-way cross-reference of the pieces of data; together with the tape counter indexing, it also created a clear and permanent audit trail, as recommended by Maykut & Morehouse (1994, p.146). At this time also, key statements to illustrate key points were noted and transcribed for possible use in the reporting of the findings in Chapter Four.

(iii) **Categorising the Data:** In analysing and categorising the data the constant comparison method of analysis was used. The process was as outlined by Maykut & Morehouse: “As each new unit of meaning is selected for analysis, it is compared to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped (categorized and coded) with similar units of meaning. If there are no similar units of meaning, a new category is formed.” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 134). In this way a “funnel approach” (Wiersma, 1995, p.219) helped to focus more on more on the clarifying issues in broad categories. For example, on the Issue Sheet D, dealing with issues of impediments to development, Time was identified across the sheet under every column, whereas student attitude as an impediment was identified under three columns. The next stage of data analysis was that of data reduction. Informed by the Bogdan & Biklen statement “analysis is a process of data reduction” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p166) the process of identifying the converging key issues began. These broad categories were then sub-divided into sub-groups; as Woods has written “the first step is to, identify the main categories, which may in turn fall into groups” (Woods, 1986, p.125). For example, on the issue of **attitude towards curriculum and professional development**, one of the sub-groups, attitudinal impediments to change, was further sub-grouped into personal attitudes and the cultural setting of the school; the cultural setting was itself further divided into local systems and local attitude. When all the data had been categorised and sub-grouped, relationships across categories were sought; this led to linkages under key words or phrases that were later used as headings when the study was written up. The detail of the process can be observed in Chapter Four.

Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness: The issues of reliability and validity are central to the question of data analysis. Wiersma defines reliability as “the extent to which studies can be replicated (in both procedures and findings).” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 272) In seeking to address the issue of reliability, Wiersma advises “a well-organized,, complete persuasive presentation of procedures and results enhances external reliability (Ibid., p222). In addressing the problem of internal reliability (i.e. consistency), he also advocates analysing observations by multiple observers. (Ibid., p.222-223). These considerations informed the design and the application of this research, and the description of the procedures as detailed earlier in this chapter. The findings will be detailed in Chapter Four.

Validity is defined by Malim & Birch as “the test a researcher employs actually measures what it is claimed that it measures.” (Malim & Birch, 1997, p.47) Wiersma defines validity as “the interpretation of the results with confidence and the generizability of the results.” (Wiersma, 1995, p. 273) He states “Validity of qualitative research for the most part is established on a logical basis, and providing an argument for validity requires well-documented research and a comprehensive description." Chapter Two reviewed the literature and identified the five main areas of study for this research. This chapter fulfils the descriptive task; a clear audit trail exists from analysis back to source data, as explained above in the sections on preparation of the data for analysis, unitising the data, and categorising the data. In two instances the results of the interviews were referred to the interviewees to ensure accuracy; they were approved.

Maykut & Morehouse have also identified the problem of what they term “trustworthiness” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 145). They write “The question of trustworthiness essentially asks: To what extent can we place confidence in the outcomes of the study? Do we believe what the researcher has reported?” They recommend four aspects of research processes that enhance trustworthiness: Multiple methods of data collection; a good quality audit trail; working with others; asking research recipients to check if their material is accurately described. (Ibid., pp 146-147). In this research multiple perspectives were sought in the data collection; the audit trail has been detailed

above; while the researcher carried out the work alone, it was carried out by interviewing key informants; a sample of two interviewees confirmed accuracy of transcripts, and the tapes also ensure accuracy of reporting. This researcher believes this study adheres to the guidelines of Maykut and Morehouse in ensuring trustworthiness.

Reliability, validity and trustworthiness of this research were also ensured by the use of triangulation through the multiple perspectives of the key informants. By seeking to gain insights from the viewpoints of principals, senior teachers, and more junior teachers, plus the external viewpoint of the ASTI interviewee, it was planned to enhance the possibility of corroboration or “convergence of the information on a common finding or concept.” (Wiersma, 1995, p.264) Wiersma states “Triangulation is qualitative cross-validation. It assesses the sufficiency of the data according to the convergence of multiple data sources.” (Ibid., p.264). The review of literature also helped the process of ensuring trustworthiness, in that the general key issues were identified from much research, and from many sources (see Chapter Two). It will be shown in Chapter Four that there was indeed convergence into common issues from the literature and from the key informants.

Finally, and following Wiersma’s advice that in the absence of controls, “the naturalness of the data enhances validity.” (Ibid., p.274), the study opted to use the interview method with key informants (as outlined above) who fitted ‘naturally’ into local settings in seeking to ensure the necessary trustworthiness, reliability and validity. Also, each of the interviews was conducted in a relaxed, informal and conversational manner; at no time was there any form of aggressive questioning; an atmosphere of trust was generated between the interviewer and the interviewee.. Each of the interviewees confirmed their ‘comfort’ with the process of interviewing, and with their articulation of all they wished to communicate on each of the issues of discussion.

Summary: This chapter has described the Research Design and the Research Methods used in this study. The section on Research Design has indicated the rationale and the purpose of the study. It has shown the thinking behind the questions used in the

interviews, as well as the rationale used in selecting the sample population of key informants, and the rationale for choosing the interview as the mechanism of research. In the section on Research Methods the process of piloting, of arranging and conducting interviews, and of analysing the data is described. The chapter has also shown how the issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness were addressed. This researcher believes that the rationale and the process were both guided by and ensured that in qualitative research “the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and available to expression.” (Leader & Boldt, 1994, p.21), and the reflections of the target group were “represented as completely and as transparently as possible.” (Ibid., p.21).

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CHAPTER FOUR: KEY INFORMANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ISSUES SURROUNDING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

This chapter will present the results of the research conducted among the key informants. In relation to the culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration, the issues identified for study in the review of literature, and pursued through the research process include:

- The need for pedagogical change, and teachers' response to that need;
- The relative degree of involvement of teachers in school administration and in curriculum development;
- The need for new forms of in-service;
- Impediments to change of professional practice and culture;
- Curriculum leadership by senior teachers, rather than by principal only.

This chapter will summarise the findings of the research under each of the above headings. It will also lead to the following chapter, which will discuss the findings in the light of the literature research, and identify areas for further research or development.

The need for pedagogical change and teachers' response to that need: The view among all interviewees was that the pedagogical changes anticipated in the Guidelines to the Junior Certificate (NCCA, 1989) did not materialise, it has had little impact on teaching practices. Within that context of failure, there was some variation as to the degree of failure. Some believed there was "no change", "no shift at all", and that the teaching force is still "muddling along" with its traditional pedagogical style, "we muddle on by ourselves, because we don't have time and proper in-service, and we don't have time to work together". Others thought there has been some change with some teachers. However, all were in agreement that "the potential (of the Junior Cert.) hasn't been realised", and "there has been no great change in methodology".

One interviewee argued that "as an educational exercise, while it (J. Cert.) was worthy in theory, the context in which it was introduced was one of the most inappropriate contexts ever". Another believed that the reason for the failure was "the basic principle of bringing

in a whole new attitude to teaching a course never actually happened for the Junior Cert.” The same person developed her view “the principle behind it was right but I don’t think there was enough consultation with the people that were going to be involved in the thing”, and while “there was token respect to active learning, there was very little input in genuine active learning methods.” All believed that the quality of the in-service provided for the introduction was poor, to the extent that one informant stated it actually provoked resistance in some teachers.

The above reactions to the introduction of the new Junior Certificate remind one of Sarason’s questions:

“How and by whom were these policies disseminated and implemented throughout a school system, and with what translations and transformations? How well did teachers comprehend and implement these policies and with what degree of uniformity?” (Sarason, 1990, p.53)

Perhaps Sarason’s observations illuminate the reasons for the negative response to the new Junior Certificate reported by the informants.

However, despite the failure of the Junior Cert. to promote change in teaching and learning in the schools, it was believed that change is slowly occurring, promoted by a variety of forces. In the words of one principal, “there is a number of cultures at work in schools ... there is a huge transition happening.” The forces identified by the informants include:

- New subjects and new courses, and the new pedagogies required in teaching them; SPHE, CSPE, Transition Year Option, LCVP, and the new Leaving Certificate courses were instanced. Four of the interviewees also pointed out that some subjects (such as English) lend themselves more easily to change of pedagogy than do others (such as Maths.).
- Advent of School Plans and Whole School Evaluation; these will require more and more collaboration among teachers, and in the words of one principal, “anything that gets the teacher out of the traditional mode eventually helps to bring about the culture

of collaboration.” Another principal advocated the benefit of “groups of people constantly discussing change, constantly discussing things that need to happen.”

- Changes in society, and in the nature of the modern student population; one principal identified the decline in student population, and consequent competition between schools, being a catalyst to force evaluation of where the school is going, and what it is doing. Two senior teachers identified the changing nature and expectations of the students as factors that encourage teachers to change pedagogies to meet changing needs. The present availability of jobs was also identified as an attractor away from the school for many students; the teachers must respond if they are to maintain numbers and classroom discipline. One informant argued that societal change means that change will inevitably come, albeit in the long term.
- New forms and models of in-service and professional development opportunities; the SCD (School and Curriculum Development, NUIM) model and the newer D.E.S. (Department of Education and Science) models were complimented by all informants as models of good practice. Aspects of “good practice” in relation to in-service will be reported later in this chapter.

The changes were evidenced in the views that teachers are “busier”, there is “less chalk and talk”, there is more collaborative planning and team teaching, more active learning methods are being used. The changes reported were considered small, patchy, and “very slow”. The changes provide some hope that with a “greater body of expertise” now available in the schools, the new Leaving Cert. syllabus will bring change of pedagogy. Nevertheless, despite the small optimism, the overall view was that “course change will not change methodologies” and unless there is change in examination format (“if the exam system changes, the teachers will change”) any changes in teaching practices will be minimal. It would seem we are still governed by the examination culture (Kavanagh, 1993, p. 91), (Callan, 1994, p.10).

With regard to the relative degree of response to change among senior and junior teachers, five of the informants were of the opinion that senior teachers were less likely to respond and change their practices than were more junior teachers. One principal reported it was “easier to talk to new teachers than to older teachers about their classroom methods”. Reasons for this included older teachers “counting down to retirement”, imitation (“the only experience he has of teaching is the way he was taught himself”), and a fear of and lack of training in newer methods: “the bulk of the profession is composed of people who have not had a sustained process of maintenance of their knowledge base.” On the other hand, three informants commented that more junior teachers were more likely to use reflective practice and to collaborate. One principal commented

“It’s the younger teachers who are actually changing the cultures of the schools ... if you can get two or three young teachers into a subject area they will actually bring about a bit of a change which will involve some of the older ones, but if the subject is more or less dominated by two or three of the older ones you won’t get much change there.”

One junior teacher referred to the culture clash she saw when a young teacher entered the world of the school, “we’ve always been taught when we were doing our H. Dip. that we were leaders in our own classrooms, but we were within very strict guidelines at the same time, we weren’t actually autonomous”. Another junior teacher developed the same point: “Some new teachers ... their biggest concern is discipline, getting a permanent job, keeping them (students) quiet”. The same teacher went on to say “I find it’s the teachers that are teaching maybe four or five years that have developed techniques and then are willing to try new methodologies.” On the other hand, another junior teacher argued that the status of being a senior or a junior teacher was not a major factor in promoting change; in this case it should be noted that while a junior teacher, her school is in a state of rapid expansion and she is very much part of the culture of change and expansion in that school.

With regard to teacher collaboration for curriculum and professional development, the picture painted by this research was that where it does occur it happens on an ad-hoc and informal (un-timetabled) basis, and it is based on teacher need. In the words of one interviewee, “collaboration is not a feature of our school culture.” Six interviewees

believed it did happen where new syllabus provoked a need among teachers to meet (“change of syllabus led to collegiality”), but when the need was satisfied, teachers tended not to collaborate any further. In the words of one senior teacher, “At the beginning (i.e. the introduction of new courses) I would think there was collaboration because when people aren’t too clear about how they’re to progress ... I would say there is very little collaboration going on now.”

None of the interviewees reported awareness of formal, timetabled, collaborative meetings of teachers to discuss matters of teaching and learning. Three did acknowledge varying degrees of such collaboration in schools among subject departments. However, it occurred on an occasional and unstructured basis and concerned matters of arrangements for examinations, school visits and orals; there was no discussion of pedagogy.

Summary: Change of pedagogy and teaching practices has been minimal, piecemeal and slow, but it is happening in small and ad-hoc ways. There is a growing recognition that change is inevitable, but there is no systemic mechanism to promote a culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration to facilitate implementation of national ideas at local school level, and to sustain such a culture of change. Even if such a mechanism existed one wonders would the existing culture of schools accept, promote and sustain the culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration that would support a change of pedagogy.

Teacher involvement and motivation in school works: All informants reported that the focus of Posts of Responsibility was on matters of administration and discipline and not on matters of teaching and learning. One informant explained this, “the PCW agreement ... the whole emphasis was on sharing the administrative load through the revamped Posts of Responsibility, and that’s what coloured it more than trying to get curricular input into it.” One senior teacher posed the questions, “Is this right?” (i.e. that P.O.Rs should be focused on administration), and asked “But who else will do it? (i.e. the administration).” Two also referred to the historical or traditional role of the P.O.R’s in the school making it difficult to generate much change. However, one principal who has

recently led a restructuring of post-holders' responsibilities in his school made the point that "all the posts in the school ... are related to people in the organisation" in that all posts are ultimately related to administering the paperwork necessary to the needs of the people in the organisation. Nevertheless the picture clearly emerged of how little focus the schools' posts structures have on matters of teaching and learning pedagogies. The findings indicate that Callan's belief that P.O.Rs were focused on administration was all too true. (Callan, 1998, p.6)

With regard to teacher involvement in whole school planning, seven of the informants reported much involvement of teachers in the school planning process, and all recognised that "for successful planning, all must be involved". Three principals, one senior and one junior teacher believed that staffs that had been "repressed" under previous managements were quite happy to have the opportunity to become involved in matters of school planning. More negatively, one senior teacher commented that in his experience "schools form a planning committee who do the work and then get their ideas rubber stamped by the staff", another senior teacher was of the opinion that up to recently teachers had a negative view of School Planning and equated it with inspection, and one principal reported that involvement was "not as much as I would like". While the degree of involvement was high, the focus of school planning was not on matters of teaching and learning pedagogy, but on matters of general policy. However one principal did report some degree of discussion of matters of teaching and learning during discussion of the School plan in that the curriculum design of Transition Year came up for review, after the T.Y.O. had been in the school for twenty years.

The focus of teacher involvement on administration and on policy-making, rather than on teaching and learning issues, is cause for concern in the light of the findings of Prawat & Peterson (1996). They found that teachers who involved themselves in pedagogy were more satisfied in their work than those involved in school administration. The issue will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

One senior teacher was concerned that “superb teaching” was not necessarily rewarded by promotion to P.O.R’s; rather the “whiz kids” who got involved in high profile activities with School Planning committees were the ones who got the promotions. This reflected more on the particular school’s culture and attitude to curriculum development than it did to school policy.

Perception of the impact of the school Mission Statement on teachers varied considerably among the informants. One informant stated the M.S. held “little resonance for teachers”. One senior teacher referred to the M.S. as “a joke” with “no relevance at all” to the daily interactions of the school. Another stated “a lot of them (teachers) have never examined their own beliefs sufficiently, so are very unsure of taking a position on anything controversial”. The same informant bluntly stated “teachers are more interested in pay and conditions than in making their school an interesting and rewarding place to work”. Five informants were more benign in their explanation as to why there is little interaction under the school Mission Statement. They pointed to the pressing nature of immediate classroom problems forcing to the background perceived longer-term matters like curriculum design. It would seem that the culture experienced by teachers is more akin to that described by Lortie (immediacy, presentism, conservatism) (from Callan, 1998, p.3) than to that desired by Fullan (moral purpose) (Fullan, 1993, Ch. 2)

On the other hand, it was notable that the three junior teachers thought “most teachers care, and students like to see that caring attitude”. One junior teacher talked of how the M.S. had “evolved from the ethos of the school”; another one stated “the new M.S. is based on how we always felt about our students and our school.” Five informants did believe that the school Mission Statement tends to implicitly, rather than explicitly, reflect the motivation of the school. One junior teacher commented that teachers tend to work from a sense of personal commitment rather than from a sense of school community commitment, guided by a Mission Statement.

Nine of the informants reflected the view expressed by one senior teacher: “If the school Mission Statement is personally owned by each teacher, the teaching methods as well as

all school activities will be discussed and evaluated by the staff.” He added, “When a teacher does not feel that he/she has ownership of the Mission Statement he/she will only be interested in their own classwork experience and will see no value in discussing their teaching methods with others.” Overall, the principals and the senior teachers were less optimistic than the junior teachers about the link between the school Mission Statement and school practices.

On the theme of collaboration on matters of pedagogy, one senior teacher commented “if they are discussing their teaching at all, it’s probably in a way of letting off a bit of steam”; he added “as staff we’re not given to discussing our methodologies.” One informant said

“Teachers are more comfortable going down the idea of planning other things, other than curriculum, somehow it doesn’t impinge on you, you’re not opening up. If you’re involved in planning how we have mock exams, that’s a structure, so we’re all very comfortable doing that, or planning issues like the lockers, ... but discussing how we teach and how students learn, we’re not comfortable with that. We need to open up to the fact that there are other ways of doing things, maybe they involve issues that we’re not comfortable with ... showing a part of ourselves, and we’re not comfortable with that.”

When asked about teachers expressing their personal beliefs in their teaching, the general view was that “teachers are not comfortable with articulating their own values” and that they tend to focus on teaching their subjects only (the prescribed syllabus) and do not expose their personal beliefs, or their personalities. Four informants were of the view that teachers tend to stick rigidly to the set course and therefore appear “one-dimensional” and somewhat dehumanised to their students. Appearing as ‘person’ rather than as ‘teacher’ tends to create better rapport between teacher and students, as summed up by one principal: “link the course to life and your own personal values and beliefs come into it.” On the same issue, one senior teacher argued that good practice of punctuality, preparation, examinations and regular reporting about results, was the best way to show care and belief in one’s values as a teacher.

Summary: The review of the Post of Responsibility structure under the PCW has resulted in much more involvement of teachers in administration and discipline in schools

but it has not involved them in matters of curriculum and professional development. The advent of Whole School Planning has also engaged many teachers in matters of discussion about their schools; however, most discussion is about broad policies and not about matters of curriculum and professional development. The school Mission Statements that might have a profound influence on curriculum and professional development in the schools, in fact have little or no influence, unless of an implicit nature. It would seem that while the culture of schools is changing to accept collaboration and reflection in matters of administration and of policy-making, there is little sign of school culture supporting discussion of pedagogy. There is no tradition of teachers discussing matters of pedagogy, or their personal or professional values and beliefs. The absence of a culture guided by a Mission Statement indicates there is some distance between the reality as perceived by the informants, and the ideal described by writers such as Fullan (1993), Sergiovanni, (1996) and Starratt, (1993a, 1993b), who argue for the need for “moral purpose” (Fullan) and “covenantal commitment” (Sergiovanni) in our schools. The implication of these findings in regard to school culture will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Attitudes to in-service: The perceptions of the informants in regard to the limitations of the older form of in-service were largely in agreement with the views of Cook & Fine (1997, p.2), and of Dilworth & Imig (1995b, pp. 2,3) as detailed in Chapter Two. There was widespread criticism of the older form of in-service that had been used during the introduction of the Junior Certificate. Described by one senior teacher as a “waste of a day” the informants criticised the format for a variety of reasons. The meetings were too large, of a conference / lecture style, rushed, presented by part-time presenters, an information delivery system, and failed to focus on pedagogy. One principal who was one of the Department presenters commented “emphasis was completely on delivery of content ... it was rushed, done in a few days, in a rushed job, by part-time presenters. The method of in-service did not introduce new methodologies.” Another informant claimed the poor quality actually contributed to resistance towards in-service among teachers.

Seven informants identified the essential need to have in-service relevant to the local needs of teachers, and the older form of in-service failed to satisfy this need. One principal clarified the problem:

“If external change is in any way married to the local internal development then you’re going to get teacher development, leading to school improvement, but if external change isn’t married to local internal development, you’re not going to get any significant improvement. That’s where in-service has failed because it hasn’t brought the change into the local school. People should have been given the syllabus and people should have been allowed explore how that new syllabus can be applied in their own schools.”

One is reminded of Fullan’s concept of “Top-Down and Bottom-Up” (Fullan, 1994), where the national ideas and the local implementation are mutually supportive.

When asked if teachers pro-actively seek in-service, one senior teacher said “most teachers feel that they are qualified and self-sufficient”. One principal said “teachers are generally not proactive in seeking in-service”, and “teachers may see their role in quite a limited way, I think it’s a pity that sometimes they’re not as alert to the wider implications of what they’re doing at times”. However, four informants expressed the view that there is growing awareness of the need for good in-service. One commented on how teachers notice the growing trend in industry for in-career re-training; two principals commented on teachers’ attitude towards in-service as being “warm”; another informant with wide experience of teacher in-service referred to the need for in-career development being recognised by teachers.

The informants painted quite a comprehensive picture of what might constitute a good model of in-service. The picture described was very similar to that described in the literature by Dilworth & Imig (1995, pp. 1-3) and by Fine & Raack (1995, p.2) The NUIM School and Curriculum Development model was frequently referred to as a model of good practice, as were the new D.E.S. forms used with subjects such as English, and new courses such as the LCVP and T.Y. They were seen as giving a structure and format that enabled collaboration that in turn identified issues of concern for teachers, and led to changes in resourcing and timetabling that enhanced teaching. One senior teacher who had experienced the NUIM Schools for Active Learning (Callan, 1994) in-service

referred to it as a “life-saver” in that it provided him with training and education in a range of the new pedagogical forms required or desired by the new courses and syllabi. However he was the only one who specifically mentioned classroom pedagogy as the content of in-service.

Specific issues were identified as important components of good in-service:

- All interviewees agreed it should be based on and relevant to local needs. As expressed by one informant, “every school is different and I think that things to be organised within your own school have to meet the needs of your school or else they’re irrelevant, they’re a waste of time.” This echoed the view of Sarason about how important it is “to understand the culture of the context” in which any action takes place (Sarason, 1990, p.130). All principals were unanimous that in-service organised by them was based on consultation with staff, although one senior teacher believed themes for in-service were “chosen by the principal and then sold to staff.”
- It should be conducted in small groups, and not in large gatherings. This would allow for interactive discussion between participants. The small groups should be from local clusters of subject teachers, or from within the same staff; Eight informants commented on the potential value of collaboration between colleagues, one seeing the local cluster as an untapped resource: “There’s an awful lot to be learned from interacting with colleagues from other schools ... one of the great untapped resources, something we’re not really doing as much as we should be doing is looking at how people address similar problems to ours in other schools.” A senior teacher referred to the potential of the “shared expertise within the staff”, and a principal spoke of sharing ideas with colleagues leading to professionalism. The views about the potential benefits of collaboration echoed those of Hargreaves (1992, p.216). However, one wonders about the content of discussions: collaboration about administration and policy is one thing, collaboration about how we teach in our classrooms is another item entirely.

- It should be of interactive format. Three informants made the point that the small group format helped interaction and encouraged more airing and discussion of issues of concern, as well as permitting more exchange of ideas.
- It should link theory with practice. In the words of one senior teacher “That’s the kind of in-service that I like, where, instead of the whole time focusing on theory, there’s a link-up between the theory of it and the actual practice; that’s what makes it worthwhile.” This value of linking theory and practice reflects the views of Elliott (1994, p.2) and of McKernan (1986, p.18), as outlined in Chapter Two.
- It should be an on-going process, with built-in evaluation. Eight informants made the point that follow-up after an in-service session is essential. One principal described the concept of a once-off session as a “waste of time”; another principal stated the older D.E.S. format failed because it did not include any follow-up. The kind of follow-up envisaged is within the local school, where the participants at an in-service come back to the school, report on their experience, and seek ways to apply the benefits of the in-service to their own school. They then regularly meet to evaluate progress. One senior teacher developed the point: “There has to be follow-up, or else it will die a death. It’s very hard to stop the way we have been doing things; if you go to in-service, even if it’s good, you’re going to come back into class and at the first difficulties you’re going to revert, and there’s no thing to put pressure on you to keep trying.” He went on to state the need for a support system of on-going evaluation “within the school and very regularly”. These findings mirror the work of Butler when she wrote

“Joyce and Showers (1988) report that follow-up coaching results in teachers generally using new instructional strategies introduced in staff development programs more often and with greater skill, using them more appropriately, exhibiting better long-term retention of knowledge about and skills with strategies, being more likely to explain new models to students, and having generally clearer understanding of the purposes and uses of new strategies.” (Butler, 1993, p. 9)

- It should be well supported with documentation. One informant made the case for good handouts being available for the participants to bring away with them, back to their colleagues.

The value of good in-service was summed up in the words of one informant: “Good in-service is something that makes the job more satisfying.”

One key informant addressed the idea that the school as a collegial body of teaching professionals, and not the individual teacher, needs in-service. She argued

“The absence of collaboration among teachers is one of the reasons why we have certain resistance in the profession to proposals for innovation. There really is a dearth of opportunity for people to talk to like-minded people. Schools need to have more systemic planning processes in place; I think that will come with the School Plan where they will identify their strengths and weaknesses, their ambitions in the short and long term. We need to focus on the school as the agency that needs the in-service as distinct from the individual teacher. There isn’t a rationale of what they’re about, that sense of community underpinning the whole exercise.”

This view seems to reflect that of Fullan (Fullan, 1993, p.66) that “a spirit of inquiry and continuous learning must characterise the whole enterprise”, and it also echoes the concept of the “discursive community” of Sergiovanni (1996, p.141). The view does not identify what the content of that inquiry and collaboration should be.

It was notable that the principals, like Cambone (1994) all focused on Time for in-service as being a major concern. One expressed the problem:

“They (in-service) all have to happen outside the class contact hours, otherwise ... we’re training people but at what cost? We’re taking them out of the classroom. Teaching happens in classrooms, in interactive situations ... it happens when there’s children and a teacher together ... if you take the teacher away from the children, you’re threatening good teaching and learning ... the training is done at a most inappropriate time; you’re training a profession out of their professional context.”

For him, a “pivotal” issue was “the real losers in the erosion of the school year (through much in-service and other teacher absences) are the weak pupils.” Another principal

commented “it’s harder and harder to ask a staff to give up a half-day to just do something which some of them might have a question mark about”. The third principal took a similar view: ”Teachers look on their job as teachers, and a day or a half-day spent doing something else ... sometimes people say ‘I could have been teaching my honours Maths class, or getting on in my syllabus, and it would be worth more to me than this.’”

Summary: Despite antipathy and even hostility towards the older form of in-service, there is growing awareness of the need for, and warmth towards good in-service. Good in-service should: be based on and relevant to local needs; be conducted in small local groups; be interactive; be on-going, with built-in evaluation; link theory with practice; be supported with documentation. Appropriate time for in-service emerged as a major concern, both for principals and for teachers. There was an underlying assumption that a good system of in-service would somehow produce change in the schools’ pedagogical practices; however, there was little evidence that this would actually be so. Senge’s warning seems particularly relevant: “the level of systemic structure is not enough. By itself, it lacks a sense of purpose. It deals with the *how*, not the *why*.” (Senge, 1993, p.354)

Attitude towards curriculum and professional development: Two of the informants specifically identified the need for and the absence of any systemic mechanism that would link national ideas to local action, in terms of curriculum and professional development.

Impediments to change of professional practice identified by the informants covered a wide range of issues, but can be broadly grouped under five headings, 1) physical impediments, 2) attitudinal impediments, 3) examination culture, 4) time, and 5) students.

1) Physical impediments: This can be further sub-grouped into material and personal physical impediments.

Material: Six identified lack of resources as being an impediment, although one principal spoke of the textbook as a “prop” that inhibited the teacher from being more

creative in designing curriculum. Two senior teachers mentioned the cost of fees and transport. Two informants mentioned the difficulty of locating and engaging people of good quality to give in-service, “where would one go?” One informant referred to class size. Another referred to the problem of a sudden surge in teacher numbers in a growing school and the difficulty in communications in such a situation.

Personal: Five informants referred to the increasing workload, and four mentioned lack of energy. Five informants identified the age of the teacher as being important in impeding change of practice, with older teachers being less likely to change. Three principals referred to family commitments as impediments. One mentioned the physical health of the teacher

2) Attitudinal impediments: This area of response could be further sub-grouped into personal attitudes and the cultural setting of the school.

Personal attitudes: Five informants referred to the sense of being comfortable with a set and trusted routine; as expressed by one, “if what you’re doing works, why change?” Linked to this attitude is that of security, and of insecurity. Five identified the security of habit and nine spoke of the lack of confidence of teachers when faced with the unknown territory of curriculum innovation. One principal expressed it thus: “People are fearful that if they have to bare their souls, to discuss their feelings about a subject, it might reflect upon their own inadequacies. They’re not comfortable with anything more than the superficial.” A junior teacher commented “I don’t think Irish teachers have an awful lot of confidence in their ability outside of a classroom ... we have plenty of knowledge but there is quite a lot of Irish teachers who are not comfortable with stepping outside those boundaries.” One is reminded here of McNeil’s paper on “defensive teaching” as a form of control and of personal protection. (McNeil, 1983, Ch. Five)

Seven informants referred to a lack of enthusiasm, and even cynicism, among teachers towards curriculum and professional development, articulated by one principal as “we’re not paid to do this”. Two saw stress as contributing to this attitude. Three spoke of imitation as an impediment, with teachers teaching as they themselves were taught; this

includes younger teachers, “do young teachers teach any differently to their own school days” asked one older teacher.

Cultural setting: This could be further sub-divided into local systems and local attitude.

Local systems refers to the support systems and processes implemented in the school, including: allocation of resources (time-tabling, room allocation, textual materials)(five informants); follow-up / evaluation systems (three informants), “with poor support systems, there’s no point” in trying to bring about change; the communication system (two informants); and systems of recognition and affirmation (one informant). Absence of or weakness in these systems was seen as impediment to change.

Local attitude refers to the local politics (internal and external), to the traditions of the school, to the cultural assumption of what makes for good teaching; the views echoed the work of Sarason (1998) on the importance of local setting and context. Four referred to the importance of the local history and the attitude resulting from it. Two informants spoke of the need for young teachers to seek the respect of their peers, and this might inhibit any form of active learning methods that involves noise; even the use of video might be perceived as “dodging” by the traditional “chalk and talk” mentality. One principal referred to the danger of one or two teachers with a negative attitude dominating, especially if younger teachers were “frightened” by the older ones.

Seven informants spoke of the culture of isolation and of classroom independence that permeates our schools. One senior teacher said “teachers view their classrooms as private places ... teachers generally have the attitude that no one should interfere with my teaching or talk to me about my teaching style except the principal.” Even in that context, one principal spoke of “the delicate nature of asking too many searching questions of the teacher about the classroom work”, and he went on to say “actually sitting down with some experienced teacher and more or less asking them to account to me what they’re doing is light years away.”

With regard to the junior teacher, one said, “when you start in a school, the door closes and you’re kind of left there by yourself.” When invited to comment about peer leadership and the isolation of the classroom, four informants were wary of a reaction such as “who is she to tell me how to teach!” and another said “teachers are very proud professionals ... they bridle sometimes at the idea of a colleague being in charge of them.” Like Dreeben (1988, P.33), Freedman (1998, p. 135), Hargreaves (1992, p.220), and Fullan (1993, p.106), the informants saw the culture of isolation an impediment restricting change towards a more collaborative culture in schools.

3) Examination culture: Like Coolahan (from Callan, 1995, p.102) and the OECD, (from Kavanagh, 1993, p.92), six of the informants identified the examination as inhibiting change in teaching pedagogy. The examination was perceived as being the central focus in our schools, “the examination is as it has always been, *secula seculorum*.” The “examination driven curriculum” means that there is “little time to test new methods” in the classroom. One informant pointed to the fact that it is easier to teach from a set syllabus and from the textbook, without having to expend energy in creating one’s own curriculum. A principal stated

“If the exam system changes, the teachers will change. Where a teacher has to sit down and write their own course, it promotes that extra little bit of collaboration. A teacher has to have courage to be prepared to say ‘well I’m looking at the syllabus and I’m converting it into this set of worksheets which I know will deliver the syllabus.’”

4) Time: All interviewees identified time as of “major importance” as an inhibitor of change. Not one referred to any school where teacher meetings were formally timetabled to discuss curriculum or professional development. Where such meetings did occur, it was on an informal and mostly ad-hoc basis, and occurred on top of the already crowded working day. The types of time identified were for collaboration, for reflection, for evaluation, for consultation, for new courses, for in-house exams, for paperwork. The findings are practical evidence of the issues identified by Cambone (1994) in his study of the relevance of time in educational planning and practices.

5) Students: Three teachers, two seniors and one junior, saw students as being impediments to change of pedagogy. One senior teacher referred to what he termed the “donor culture” of the classroom, whereby the syllabus is broken down into sections in textbooks and is then fed in parcels to the students; because they become accustomed to this, any departure to newer methods seems strange and, as expressed by another informant they ask “is this really class?” and resist change.

When asked to identify what might promote a culture of change in schools, the informants produced a range of ideas. Five mentioned making time available as being important. This included more formally structured time on the timetable to meet, to reflect, to collaborate, to plan and prepare. In the words of one junior teacher, “if you don’t plan, how can you evaluate?” One informant mentioned the importance of resourcing any change, another referred to the importance of how communication is implemented in the school, and two informants spoke of the need for small gestures of recognition and affirmation by management. A senior teacher spoke of the possible advantage of having a trained facilitator working in the local school. Two informants spoke of the importance of a well-organised programme. One talked of the need for paid study leave.

It is notable that there was much clearer understanding of impediments to change than there was of what might promote change.

It was also notable that only two principals, and no other informant, had ideas or had initiated some degree of movement towards a change process in their schools. One principal had a system where small teams from staff were facilitated with a ‘free’ class to pursue lines of research; another principal places a slot on the agenda of each staff meeting where each post holder reports on their area of responsibility and chairs discussion on that matter.

Summary: The informants were very clear about the variety of factors that impede curriculum and professional development, but were not nearly so clear or comprehensive

in identifying factors that promote such a culture. Nevertheless a sense of recognition of the need for the promotion and sustenance of such a culture permeated the interviews. An absence of models of good practice was reported; however whether it is this absence of models, or whether it is a lack of awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding the need for changed pedagogy and practices is a question that needs further consideration.

Issues relating to the leadership of change: While all informants believed that the task of management is to create a culture of growth and personal development in the school, and all saw the principal as a key figure in creating that culture, seven commented on how impossible it is for principals to do it all alone. As one senior teacher put it, “how could they?” with the extreme workload, and with insufficient or inappropriate training; the findings were in agreement with those of Leader & Boldt (1994) and of Fullan (1992, p.155, and 1995, p.16) in this regard. Eight informants commented on how important it is for the principal to keep in touch with the reality of life in the classroom, but they were aware of how easy it is to become “remote”. In the words of one senior teacher, “A teaching principal is a thing of the past. Principals are now more confined to their office and to school administration and depend more on the teaching staff to get on with the classroom teaching.” Clearly, some other means must be found to lead curriculum and professional development.

One junior teacher pointed out the danger of attempting change when the educational authority is remote from the daily life of the school. She perceived this to be a problem within the V.E.C. structure, where the governing body is remote from the day-to-day life of the school, and she believed the Board of Management structure of other schools might be easier to communicate with. The underlying issue seems to be the need for what Fullan (1994) called “Top-Down and Bottom-up” communication systems, to promote greater understanding among all involved in the school.

Some informants were aware of schools who had appointed a Curriculum Development Officer as part of the Post of Responsibility structure. One junior teacher saw this as

indicative of change, but two principals warned of the “danger of the perception the buck stops with the C.D.O. because ‘that’s his job’.” In the words of another principal, appointment of a C.D.O is “not a good idea” because there is need to involve all or most of the staff in curriculum development. One is reminded of Archer’s S.A.L. report, which found “the facilitators in the schools were the only people expected to promote the initiative” (Archer, 1994, p. 92)

When asked about likely response to a culture of team leadership, where teachers of all ranks, but especially senior teachers take responsibility for the promotion of curriculum and professional change and development, led by senior teachers within the school acting as facilitators (Bartunek, 1990), there was positive response from nine informants; one junior teacher thought such change could be led by any teacher, senior or junior. Among the reasons put forward to support the idea were: senior teachers were more likely to enjoy the confidence of the principal; peers would be less “threatening” than the principal; they would have less of an ‘agenda’ than a principal; they could have important influence on the induction of new teachers; and, such leadership would be more popular than leadership from “on high”. However, one informant did warn of the need to avoid jealousy, if such were leaders were perceived as getting extra pay or benefits for their input. One of the benefits likely to accrue from such teamwork is the blend of energy and new ideas from the younger teachers and the experience and wisdom of the older teachers.

While some informants were aware of D.E.S. presenters working in their schools, one principal ironically commented that in his school one such presenter was one of the most conservative in pedagogical style; another principal commented somewhat wryly that in his experience leadership of pedagogical change by DES presenters seemed to be exercised outside rather than inside the presenter’s school. There seems to be absence of culture whereby trained facilitators bring their expertise to bear on the culture of their own schools. It is notable that both principals come from schools outside of the SCD area.

While the concept of senior teachers being trained and acting as facilitators for curriculum and professional development in their own schools was warmly welcomed by the informants, there was recognition that Irish schools are some way from achieving the culture of community ownership and communal leadership of curriculum and professional development as advocated in the literature by people such as Fullan (1993), Sergiovanni (1996) and Starratt (1993a, 1993b). As one informant put it, “the notion of the school as a community is not there.” One informant reflected on the need for macro political consensus of teacher unions, D.E.S. and J.M.B. (Joint Managerial Body) about such leadership, and how there “is need for the unions to educate teachers about the need to change and diversify their practices, and to develop a reputation for so doing.”

Another factor referred to in the matter of leadership was that of the external facilitator or expert. Five of the informants, including two principals made the point that the connection with the broader view, with the national issues, was essential. This connection might come through places such as NUIM, or for schools further removed from the universities, through the local education centres.

When asked what skills and training might be necessary for facilitators, the informants' views could be grouped in two areas, personal skills and training needs.

Personal skills: the informants believed that peer leaders should be personable, good listeners, patient, with initiative, capable of seeing the bigger picture, decisive, trustworthy, sincere, empathetic, able to stimulate talk, good planners and thorough. . Their peers should respect them. They should not be of dictatorial nature.

Training and preparation: The informants thought that facilitators should be well briefed and aware of local issues, should be trained in adult learning methods, group dynamics and in handling people.

It is notable that there was vagueness and lack of depth of perception in the responses to this question, possibly indicative of the absence of thought and experience in this area, because no such culture exists in the schools.

Summary: All informants agreed that while the principal is vital to any change of culture in a school, the principal cannot do it all alone. There is need for a different form of leadership. The concept of suitably skilled and trained senior teachers acting as facilitators of curriculum and professional development in their own schools was welcomed by the informants. They also confirmed the need for continued external support. There was absence of ideas as to how such a culture might be implemented and sustained in the schools, possibly because there is no model of good practice within the experience of the informants, or possibly because the role of leadership of curriculum and professional development by senior teachers has not been considered, and no such culture formally exists in our schools.

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CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS IN THE LIGHT OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter Four reported on the findings of the research. This chapter will reflect on those findings in the light of the literature review, described in Chapter Two. It will address the five areas of concern of this research, and will attempt to assess the position of Irish second-level schools in relation to each area of concern, in the light of the perceptions of the key informants. Following this assessment, it will suggest a response provided by this research to the question articulated at the end of Chapter Two: “*Are Irish second-level schools ready for a culture of professional collaboration and reflective practice?*” The chapter will also identify some challenges now facing Irish educationalists, in the light of this research.

While the issues of concern in this research are dealt with discretely, it is not to suggest that they are discrete areas in the “learning milieu” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1976, p.90) of the local school. Rather, they form a tapestry of inter-related and complex weave that reflects the multiplicity of pressures and interactions that form the life of the schoolteacher.

The demand for pedagogical change, and teachers’ response to that change: The literature indicates that societal demand for change will inevitably lead to change of pedagogy in schools as they respond to the new roles and tasks necessary to fulfil the needs of the students and the citizens of the new century. Teachers will undertake more demanding and complex tasks, and, according to Butler, will need to develop in four key areas: Technical Repertoire, Reflective Practice, Collaboration, and Research. (Butler, 1993, p.5)

The findings of this research indicate there is a growing recognition that change is inevitable in Irish second-level schools, but while there is evidence of more involvement of teachers in areas of administration and of broad policy making, there is little evidence of involvement in pedagogical change in matters of teaching and learning. The picture

painted by Freire (1970, p.45) of the teacher as “banker” would seem to still dominate most Irish classrooms. The active learning methodologies anticipated in the Junior Certificate Guidelines (NCCA, 1989) have not happened in the classrooms, at least to any significant degree. Indeed, it would seem that most Irish teachers are far from achieving the level of satisfaction of those teachers referred to by Huberman who “invested consistently in classroom-level improvements” (Huberman, 1993, p.131), and, as Fullan argues, if change in teaching and learning is to happen, it is in those classrooms that it must occur (Fullan, 1993, p.128).

This study found informants perceived an absence of any systemic mechanism to promote and record a culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration to facilitate implementation of national ideas of curriculum development at local school level, and to sustain such a culture. However, as Senge warns, “the level of systemic structure is not enough. By itself, it lacks a sense of purpose. It deals with the *how*, not the *why*.” (Senge, 1993, p. 354) The fact that initiatives such as the MIE Action Research Project (McNiff & Collins, 1994), the NUIM School and Curriculum Development, and the new DES training ones are happening and are well regarded, and yet interviewees perceive that little enough change is happening in the classrooms, suggests that perhaps there are other factors inherent in the schools that inhibit the anticipated changes in pedagogy and professional practice. As Sarason has argued, “the history of educational reform is replete with examples of interventions that either failed or had adverse effects because those involved had only the most superficial and distorted conception of the culture of the schools they were supposed to change.”(Sarason, 1990, p. 120) It is hoped that some of those cultural issues are illuminated in this research.

Teacher involvement and motivation in school works: The fear expressed by Callan (1998, p. 6) that the orientation in Posts of Responsibility has been on administration, and not on curriculum development, would seem to be confirmed by this research, which indicates the review of the Post of Responsibility structure under the PCW has resulted in much more teacher involvement in administration but it has not involved them in matters

of curriculum and professional development. However, more detailed and comprehensive study in this regard would be interesting.

The findings also suggest the advent of Whole School Planning has engaged many teachers in matters of discussion about their schools; however, most discussion is about broad policies and not about matters of curriculum and professional development. One thinks of the warning implicit in the work of Prawat and Peterson (1996). They reported on the effects of involving staff in Total Quality Management, as distinct from involving staff in matters of curriculum. While TQM had the perceived advantage of “opening up the management process”, it “did not mean opening up the learning process” (Prawat & Peterson, 1996, p.444). They went on to report that within a short time the “TQM process had all but broken down” (Ibid., p.454), probably because of overload, and went on to argue that the fundamental flaw in the TQM process was that it ignored Dewey’s view that “people work hardest to understand the phenomena that they consider to be of greatest personal interest to them in their daily lives.” (Ibid., p.460) In the case of most teachers, the “greatest personal interest” must be the daily teaching and learning processes of the classroom. The findings indicate cause for concern that teachers may be drawn into areas of administration and of policy making, and away from the core area of teaching and learning.

This growing involvement, even if in areas other than the core area of curriculum teaching and learning, may yet turn out to be beneficial. At least, it is movement, and, as expressed by two informants in this research, “the absence of collaboration is one of the reasons why we have certain resistance in the profession to proposals for innovation”, and “anything that gets the teacher out of the traditional mode (of isolation) eventually helps to bring about the culture of collaboration.” If a culture of collaboration can be established, the content of that collaboration can then be determined and in time may include matters of pedagogical and curriculum development.

The view of Reynolds and Packer (1992, p.179) that schools have concentrated on organisational structure rather than on school culture and the personal relationships

established within the schools were affirmed in the findings. There would seem to be need to clarify roles within schools with such questions as “Whose job is it to teach?” and “Whose job is it to administer?” There would also seem to be need for widespread collaboration and reflection on more sensitive and personal, yet fundamental questions such as “Why am I teaching?”, “How am I teaching?”, and “What is the purpose of this School?”

Writers like Sergiovanni (1996) and Starratt (1993a, 1993b) paint a picture of the individual teacher working as part of a community, contributing towards and energised by “shared ideas and ideals”. (Sergiovanni, 1996, p.48) Sergiovanni calls these “moral communities” (Ibid., p.57) and develops the view:

“Schools have job-like dimensions, but are capable of transcending these dimensions morally by calling principals, parents, teachers, and students to serve ideas and ideals that are considered to be virtuous. To be called to serve is to be motivated by inner urges, by feelings of obligation and commitment, and by norms that speak as a moral voice. If a secret exists that accounts for the power of community, it is the moral voice that community provides.” (Ibid., p.59)

In schools, this moral voice is articulated by the school Mission Statement. This research indicates recognition that the school Mission Statements, which could have a profound influence on curriculum and professional development in the schools, in fact have little or no influence, unless of an implicit nature on individual teachers.

Henderson writes of the importance of “intrinsic motivation” (Henderson, 1999, p.1) as a source of motivation for the individual teacher. Lomax and Whitehead have shown how a person’s “spiritual and moral values as living educational standards” (Lomax & Whitehead, 1998, p.456) can shape one’s professional practice. However, this research suggests there is no tradition of teachers discussing matters of pedagogy, or their personal values and beliefs. In his study of Catholic schools McCann (1997) has shown the value of a moral voice as a driving force in a school community. He posed a key question that is pertinent to the visions of

McCann, Lomax, Whitehead, Henderson, and Sergiovanni when he asked “What then happens when ... the authority of Christian community is discounted by personal authority?” (McCann, 1997, p.11). In other words, what happens when neither the school nor the individual teacher is guided by any clear “moral purpose” (Fullan, 1993, Ch 3)? The findings of this study suggest this is a pertinent question at present.

Attitudes to in-service:

There was remarkable correlation between the views articulated by the informants and the views outlined in the research literature about the older form of in-service. The limitations of the older forms, summarised by Cook and Fine (1997), by Dilworth and Imig (1995), and by Fine and Raack (1994) (see Chapter Two) were similar to the comments of the informants. Even Little’s recognition of the value of the older form for “transferring skills and discrete outcomes” (Little, 1994, p.18) was echoed.

Despite antipathy and even hostility towards the older form of in-service, this study found growing awareness of the need for, and warmth towards good in-service. The qualities of good in-service, as outlined by Dilworth and Imig (Dilworth & Imig, 1995a, 1995b) and by Fine & Raack, 1995) are also mirrored in the comments of the informants. The NUIM School and Curriculum Development model, and the newer DES in-service models were instanced as models of good in-service. However, how the in-service is impacting on the daily work of the classroom was not clear from this research. An underlying assumption that a good in-service system would solve many problems seemed to permeate the interviews. However, the content and the purpose of in-service was not addressed, except to say it arose from staff needs; perhaps *what* should be added to Senge’s *how* and *why* (Senge, 1993, p.354)? While the in-service might well deal with the skills of what Fullan (1993, Ch. 2) calls “change agency” (Senge’s *how*), it seems to lack the sense of “moral purpose” (Senge’s *why*) that is also essential. The perception is that the potential of available in-service is not being maximised in teaching and learning practices in the classrooms. How to maximise this potential remains problematic.

One notable observation of difference between the findings and the literature lay in the view of Fine & Raack that “the school should be a place of inquiry, of teaching and learning for all who use it” (Fine & Raack, 1995, p.2). The evidence of the research did not suggest that Irish schools are at a point where this concept of on-going learning is recognised and practised.

The problem of time in regard to attitudes towards in-service was widely mentioned in the research. The findings are in total agreement with the views of Cambone that “time, adequate in quantity and rich in quality, is elusive” (Cambone, 1994, p.1). Appropriate time for in-service emerged as a major concern, both with principals and with teachers. This problem must be addressed in some way if the areas of professional collaboration and reflective practice are to be meaningfully engaged as part of school culture.

One further need emerged from the study. In-service should extend into educating participants beyond the mere technicalities of training. In this regard there may be need for a macro-political consensus between the teacher unions, the D.E.S. and the J.M.B. with regard to the essential value and purpose of in-service, and into joint and sustained advocacy by those bodies, as well as active support for continuing, good in-service. Such a “top-down” support, together with the “bottom-up” (Fullan, 1994), growing regard for in-service among teachers could inform and support a new attitude towards professional development in the teaching profession.

Attitude towards curriculum and professional development:

It was in this area that the greatest discrepancy between the research literature and the research findings occurred. In Chapter Two I noted, with regard to the new professionalism:

“The process is one of self-generating professionalism in practice whereby teachers “commit themselves to transforming their professional culture” (Elliott, 1994, p.2) and become “producers of (educational) knowledge” (McKernan, 1986, p.42). The vision being developed by practitioners such as Whitehead, McNiff and Lomax is of a process of developing a professional practice that generates understanding and theory of teaching and learning, rooted in the beliefs and values of the individual and thereby promoting both

personal and professional development and fulfilment. It is leading towards the personal fulfilment that Senge (1993, p.347) identifies as being part of the workplace of the future. It raises the question of how such a culture might be developed in our schools.”

The findings suggest there is a sense of recognition of the need for the promotion and sustenance of such a culture of professional practice. The informants reported positive attitude among teachers towards collaboration, even though where collaboration had occurred, it was chiefly in areas other than dialogue about teaching and learning pedagogy. No formal “discursive community” (Sergiovanni, 1996, p.141) was reported in matters of pedagogy that might harness the experience of older teachers with the new ideas and the energy of younger teachers in discussing matters of teaching and learning. Discussion of matters of teaching and learning is not part of the culture of our second-level schools.

Moreover, while the informants were very clear about the variety of factors that impede curriculum and professional development, they were not nearly so clear or comprehensive in identifying factors that promote development of a culture of curriculum and of professional growth. It would seem from this study that much work will be necessary to clarify Sarason’s questions (Sarason, 1990, p. 53) in order to promote awareness and understanding of the need for and of the issues involved in initiating, implementing and sustaining a culture of reflective practice and professional collaboration in our second-level schools.

Issues relating to the leadership of change:

All informants agreed that while the principal is vital to any change of culture in a school, the principal cannot do it all alone. There is need for a different form of leadership. In this regard the findings were in complete agreement with the views of Leader & Boldt (1994), and of Fullan, who wrote “Principals do not lead change efforts single-handedly. Rather, principals work with other facilitators who, in most cases, are making a large number of interventions also.” (Fullan, 1992, p.155) The study did indicate more involvement of teachers in school issues, and indeed in leadership of peer groups within

the schools. However, the focus of such leadership was in the areas of administration and policy, as part of Posts of Responsibility and of Whole School Planning. While such planning is essential to schools, and while it is notable to see teachers coming to the fore in leading reviews of these issues, it is also notable that little or no evidence was forthcoming about teachers leading discussion of matters of curriculum and professional development, at least in any formal, time-tabled way.

The concept of suitably skilled and trained senior teachers acting as facilitators of curriculum and professional development in their own schools (Bartunek, 1990) was welcomed by the informants. They also confirmed the need for continued external support, through University or teacher centre personnel. There was absence of ideas as to how such a culture might be implemented and sustained in the schools; more research would be welcome in this regard.

Are Irish secondary schools ready for a culture of professional collaboration and reflective practice?

The answer to the central question of this research is complex, reflecting the complexity of the schools themselves. If 'ready' means 'willing' and 'inclined', then the answer would seem to be 'yes', in terms of administration and policy, but 'no', or perhaps 'maybe', in terms of pedagogical dialogue and curriculum development. If 'ready' means 'prepared', then the answer is 'no'; there is no systematic structure to incorporate professional collaboration and reflective practice as part of the structured, formal working lives of teachers. Perhaps more importantly, there seems to be absence of a culture that substantively and conceptually would support and promote such practice.

The concept of peer leadership, in which senior teachers facilitate colleagues in discussion of pedagogy, linking national aims with implementation practices in local classrooms, in reviewing and evaluating the outcomes of the implementation, in sharing publicly and in local clusters the results of their reflections, and thereby developing a new form of professionalism for Irish teachers would seem to offer a positive way forward in responding to the requirements that will be placed on schools in the future. How teachers

and all other partners in education move to develop such a culture will have enormous consequences for teachers, for society, and most importantly, for the students in the schools. It behoves Irish teachers individually, at local school level, and nationally, to face the challenges now looming before them, and to turn those challenges into opportunities to forge a new professional culture for themselves, for their students, and for their ancient profession.

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX ONE

Interview schedule:

- Q1.** In what ways do you think have the Junior Certificate curriculum changes, and other new subjects, impacted on teaching methods among your teaching colleagues? Do you think the new Leaving Certificate courses will promote any changes in teaching methods?
- Q2.** Do you think that teachers frequently (or at all) discuss their teaching in the light of their school Mission Statement? If no, why do you think this is so?
- Q3.** Do you think that teachers in general are practised in and comfortable with articulating their personal values and beliefs in their teaching? Why do you think this is so?
- Q4.** Do teachers in your school often meet to plan (together) specific school-based programmes of education for their students? When? How often? What topics do they focus on? If no, or seldom, why do you think this is so?
- Q5.** Are many/any teachers involved in leading curriculum development in teaching and learning in your school? If no, why do you think this is so?
- Q6.** What do you think are three main forces that might promote change in teaching methods and increase teacher involvement in curriculum development in their schools?
- Q7.** What do you think are three main factors that might inhibit change in teaching practices and more teacher involvement in curriculum development in their schools?
- Q8.** How close is the link in your school between Principal and the classroom teaching and learning activities? How is the linkage between principal and teaching and learning activities developed and sustained?
- Q9.** What is the extent of teacher involvement in school planning in your school? What focus is taken in this planning? What considerations are there for curriculum, teaching and learning issues in this planning?
- Q10.** What tasks are associated with Posts of Responsibility in your school? Do you think most posts of responsibility are focused on curriculum development, rather than on administration? If no, why do you think this is so?
- Q11.** How often do teachers in your school experience staff development (in-service) days? What were the themes of the last two development days? How and by whom were the themes chosen?
- Q12.** Do you think that a majority of teachers pro-actively seek in-service courses? Why do you think this? Are certain types of in-service (by way of structure and content) more popular than other types? Please explain.
- Q13.** Do you think that a new form of in-service led from within the school by senior teachers other than the principal would be acceptable to teachers? Please explain. What might promote such a practice? What might inhibit such a practice?

Interview schedule for ASTI:

Q1. In what ways do you think have the Junior Certificate curriculum changes, and other new subjects, impacted on teaching methods? Do you think the new Leaving Certificate courses will promote any changes in teaching methods?

Q2. Do you think that teachers frequently (or at all) discuss their teaching in the light of their school Mission Statement? If no, why do you think this is so?

Q3. Do you think that teachers in general are practised in and comfortable with articulating their personal values and beliefs in their teaching? Why do you think this is so?

Q4. Do you think teachers often meet to plan (together) specific school-based programmes of education for their students? When? How often? What topics do they focus on? If no, or seldom, why do you think this is so?

Q5. Do you think many/any teachers are involved in leading curriculum development in teaching and learning in their schools? If no, why do you think this is so?

Q6. What do you think are three main forces that might promote change in teaching methods and increase teacher involvement in curriculum development in their schools?

Q7. What do you think are three main factors that might inhibit change in teaching practices and more teacher involvement in curriculum development in their schools?

Q8. How close is the link between Principal and the classroom teaching and learning activities? How is the linkage between principal and teaching and learning activities developed and sustained?

Q9. What is the extent of teacher involvement in school planning? What focus is taken in this planning? What considerations are there for curriculum, teaching and learning issues in this planning?

Q10. Do you think most posts of responsibility are focused on curriculum development, rather than on administration? If no, why do you think this is so?

Q11. How often do teachers experience staff development (in-service) days? What are the main themes of such days? How and by whom are the themes chosen?

Q12. Do you think that a majority of teachers pro-actively seek in-service courses? Why do you think this? Are certain types of in-service (by way of structure and content) more popular than other types? Please explain.

Q13. Do you think that a new form of in-service led from within the school by senior teachers other than the principal would be acceptable to teachers? Please explain. What might promote such a practice? What might inhibit such a practice?

APPENDIX TWO:

Draft letter of introduction:

A chara,

I am at present doing research as part of a M.Ed. degree course, through NUIM. Part of the course is a study in how teachers are responding to the changing educational environment in which they work. I hope you will be able to assist me by reflecting on the issues listed below, and by granting me time (that rare commodity for teachers!) for a personal interview on those issues. I expect the interview will take c. 60 minutes. I assure you of total confidentiality.

The purpose of this research is to explore your own perceptions, and your understanding of attitudes among teachers towards matters of teaching and learning, and towards matters of teachers' professional development. The interview will cover areas such as:

1) The demands for change in teaching methods and practices; what is the response from teachers to changes or proposed changes in syllabi, and do they tend to work together or in isolation in response to those changes?

2) The degree of teacher involvement in school administration; are teachers more involved in school administration than they are in curriculum development? If so, why?

3) Teachers' attitudes to in-service; how and by whom are the content and the methodology of in-service courses determined?

4) Problems facing teachers in their own schools in promoting their teaching and the learning of their students; what difficulties do you see that teachers might have in promoting new ways of teaching and of developing course programmes in their own schools?

5) The roles played by teachers (other than Principal and Deputy-Principal) in curriculum leadership in their schools; do teachers, especially senior teachers, play an active role in leading developments in their teaching methods, what conditions might encourage such leadership, what kind of qualities and training should such teachers have?

I am outlining these areas in advance of my visit so that you may give some consideration to them. I look forward to meeting with you and discussing these issues.

I will contact you on XXXXXX, to clarify any questions you may have, and hopefully to arrange a time and venue for the interview that will be suitable for you.

Mise le meas,