

**University of Stirling**

**The Social Practices of Curriculum  
Making**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is concerned with the 'problem' of change in education, an issue characterised in much of the literature as a paradox of innovation without change. The thesis draws upon school-based empirical research, undertaken in the context of the reactions by Geography, History and Modern Studies teachers to the notion of teaching integrated social subjects, set against the wider framework of the Scottish Executive's curriculum policy.

The thesis first sets the topic in its Scottish and wider context, before undertaking a comprehensive review of the themes that emerge from the worldwide literature on educational change. These include the paradox of innovation without change, teacher mediation of change initiatives, departmental and school cultures, the subject centredness of schooling and factors that have been noted to underpin successful change initiatives.

The thesis sets out a theoretical position that draws upon the critical realist social theory of Margaret Archer. This approach posits a centrist approach to the contentious structure/agency debate, suggesting a complex relationship between social structures, cultural forms and individual agency, whereby social reproduction and transformation are played out through continual social interaction. From this foundation of theory, I develop a practical methodology for researching change in school settings.

My empirical work consists of a questionnaire sent to 100 schools, and two linked case studies, where data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observations and analysis of school documents. The research identifies trends in school provision and, through the case studies, the processes of curriculum making are investigated using the aforementioned methodology. The thesis concludes that such processes are ineluctably social practices, and that those seeking to innovate in schools should pay attention to the social dimensions of change – the engagement of people with ideas and the social structures that impede, distort or promote change. The thesis concludes by presenting a set of general principles that might serve to facilitate change promoted by future initiatives.

# The Social Practices of Curriculum Making

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Reform is collectively created within a supportive environment that encourages people to learn about and to work through the change process. Prescriptions rarely help, but neither do laissez-faire approaches (Lieberman & Miller: 1999: 2).*

### **The social practices of curriculum making**

This study is concerned with the problematic issue of change in educational settings. This is a topic that has elicited much theoretical writing, underpinned by a great deal of empirical data. However, it is fair to say that there is much that we do not know with certainty about such change processes, and the outcomes of these processes. Thus Scotland's latest initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*, can be represented in many ways as an exploratory venture, despite the fact that it is surrounded by many of the same debates as were evident with previous reforms such as the implementation of the Munn report in the early 1980s (e.g. Kirk 1982) and 5-14 in the 1990s (e.g. Kirk & Glaister 1994). These debates included issues such as: the balance between a compulsory core curriculum and optional electives; continuity and progression, especially between the primary to secondary stages; balance within the curriculum; and the relative merits of separate subjects versus integrated provision in the junior years of secondary school.

The study focuses on a particular element of the latter issue, namely the application of ideas relating to integrated teaching of a specific curriculum area, the Social Subjects, within a particular curriculum initiative, *Environmental Studies 5-14*. As shall be seen, integrated provision in the social subjects is a controversial topic that has stimulated debate for at least two decades. The study draws upon a set of empirical qualitative data gathered from two case studies, and analysed using a methodology premised upon a set of social theories with their roots in critical realism. Following Lieberman and Miller (1999, above), I see curriculum change as being primarily a social process; within such a view, the school curriculum is made by teachers and other key actors in response to externally driven change initiatives, mediated in the light of social pressures and the ontogenies of the individuals concerned. The study, therefore, focuses on the social practices in which specific groups of human actors engaged when grappling with a particular change initiative in two specific school settings. Throughout the study I have been especially interested in the interplay between such actors and the social milieux within which they find themselves; this calls for analysis of social structures and cultural forms that bear upon social action, and the specific biographies of the actors themselves.

The remainder of this chapter will explore the context of the study, with particular reference to two issues: the general notion of integrated provision in the social subjects, and the historical trajectory of this notion within Scotland's junior secondary curriculum. It will also outline why I have chosen this particular field of study.

## **Integrated provision**

A particular difficulty in conceptualising integrated provision lies in the question of what to call it. Much of the terminology is contested, or misleading, or simply misunderstood and misused by those seeking to enact or oppose such provision. A second issue concerns the attitude of teachers towards such provision; it is a highly controversial approach in many education systems, and is challenged by many teachers who see it as a threat to the integrity of constituent subjects such as History (Benavot 2006). This section will explore some of these issues, seeking to provide a conceptual clarity to inform and illuminate the subsequent discussion throughout the study.

The term integration is widely used to refer to provision that brings the social subjects or the sciences together. According to Beane (1997) this is a widespread misapplication of the term integration. For example, Beane states that social studies is not an example of integrated curriculum, but merely a less fragmented approach to defining disciplines; in effect the boundaries that separate different domains of the curriculum have been redrawn, albeit encompassing a greater breadth of content. Beane employs the term multi-disciplinary to describe this type of provision, although I believe that this is also problematic; it simply does not capture the diversity of approaches that exist within the social subjects in Scotland. As this study does not concern integration in the whole-school sense that Beane describes, I do not propose to use the term to refer to the provision or organisational arrangements that have been put into place for the teaching



of the social subjects in Scotland's secondary schools. Instead, I propose the following typology, which provides a continuum of practice within the social subjects in terms of organisation.

1. *Separate subjects teaching.* The constituent subjects are taught in isolation by subject specialists. The subjects may be taught concurrently or in rotational blocks.
2. *Multi-disciplinary teaching.* The constituent subjects are taught by a single teacher, but remain as recognisably separate entities or modules.
3. *Inter-disciplinary teaching.* Totally thematic approaches to Social Studies which completely blur the distinction between the constituent subjects would fall into this category, as would approaches that provide a mix and match approach (some thematic and some modular). Inter-disciplinary provision differs from multi-disciplinary provision in that there is at least some attempt to blur the boundaries between the constituent subjects, for example teaching using organising themes (e.g. a module on the United States that brings Geography, History and Modern Studies together).

Permutations of these forms of provision are explored in more detail in chapter 5.

However, I shall utilise the term integration to refer to the degree to which links are made between the constituent subjects in terms of content and skills. This is, therefore, a pedagogical rather than an organisational usage

of the term. The above typology conceptualises provision in an organisational sense, and while it is likely that the degree of integration of content will increase as one moves along the continuum, this is not a given. Indeed, there may be developed degrees of integration between subjects that are taught separately. Fogarty (1991) provides a useful model to enhance our understanding of how integration may occur in pedagogical terms, including the following categories.

- *Fragmented* – traditional separate disciplines, taught independently of one another.
- *Connected* - teaching that focuses on making connections within a discipline.
- *Nested* – placing a topic in its wider theoretical context (e.g. linking study of the water cycle to the wider concept of systems).
- *Sequenced* – arranging teaching so that related topics are taught concurrently within different subjects (e.g. allowing the study of the first world war in History to coincide with the study of war poetry in English).
- *Shared* – joint planning of related disciplines (e.g. identifying commonalities between History and Geography).
- *Webbed* – the use of thematic approaches to bring content from different disciplines together (e.g. an Africa week when all curriculum areas focus on this single theme).
- *Threaded* - a cross curricular approach where big ideas (e.g. thinking skills) are coherently planned across the curriculum.

- *Integrated* – this is largely an interdisciplinary organisational approach, but could be a more ad hoc arrangement (e.g. a variation on the Africa week where teachers come together rather than focusing separately on the theme).

While there is clearly some overlap between the organisational and pedagogical dimensions of integration within this model, I propose to draw upon it to establish a two level schema for understanding integration as it occurs in Scottish secondary schools.

1. *As an organisational approach*, involving timetabling and the allocation of teachers to subjects. The typology of separate, multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches captures the complexity of provision in Scotland.
2. *As a pedagogical approach*, involving the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary planning of content and skills. Fogarty's (1991) categories may be used to describe the range of approaches that may occur within the three types of organisation listed above.

Thus, separate subject or multi-disciplinary organisational models may involve the application of shared or threaded approaches to teaching of content and skills, exhibiting a high degree of integration; or they may remain fragmented (even putting one teacher in charge of three subjects does not guarantee that links will be made between them). Interdisciplinary organisational models are likely by their very nature to incorporate high levels of integration, unless of course they are blighted by poor planning.

## **Integration and the social subjects curriculum in Scotland**

The integration/subject debate has long been a source of controversy in Scotland, despite the supremacy of subjects within the secondary school curriculum. This can be construed as a battle of paradigms. On the one hand, primary education has a tradition of thematic teaching, with its roots in the 1965 *Primary Education in Scotland Memorandum* (SED 1965). On the other hand, secondary education is firmly rooted in the teaching of traditional subjects. According to one writer, commenting on the submissions to 1977 *Munn Report* (SED 1977),

it would appear that subjects had become so deeply institutionalised in secondary schools, such firmly established features of the educational landscape, that the case for this mode of curriculum organisation was thought to be self evident (Kirk 1982: 21).

A second dimension of the debate is specific to the social subjects. The emergence of social studies (Wesley & Wronski 1973; Gleeson & Whitty 1976; Barr *et al* 1977; Hill 1994) - a combination of existing smaller disciplines such as History and Geography - as the predominant approach to teaching the humanities and social sciences in the early secondary school is a worldwide trend (Wong 1991; Benavot 2006), with which Scotland and the rest of the UK are largely out of step. There was considerable interest in such approaches in the UK during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Hargreaves 1982; King 1986; Phillips 1986; Whitty 1992), but these often tended to be associated with low ability pupils (Whitty 1992), and largely dissipated in the face of pressures from HMIE and national

curricular developments (Ross 1995). Nevertheless, despite the weak nature in Britain of these ideas about social studies, they existed as an alternative to the separate social subjects, and as a result the idea of interdisciplinary provision in this area tended to resurface periodically when national debates about curriculum were taking place.

The *Munn Report* (SED 1977) clearly identified the problems inherent in a traditional subjects curriculum, namely fragmentation and poor coverage of cross curricular issues. The report eventually fell into line with the predominant view in secondary schools, reaffirming the 'Hirstian subject-based curriculum with a nod in the direction of cross-curricular courses, but only for the less able' (Boyd 1997: 60). However, according to Kirk (1982) the report did not abandon the notion of inter-disciplinarity, but gave strong tacit support to thematic teaching, and was strongly critical of traditional subjects-based teaching. As such it left the door open to future engagement with the notion of inter-disciplinary provision.

These debates were to re-emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the 5-14 Curriculum was developed. According to Macdonald (1994), the publication of the *Environmental Studies 5-14* document (SOED 1993) was delayed by a behind-the-scenes row over whether the social subjects should be taught in an inter-disciplinary fashion. Once published, these guidelines served to keep this debate open. Although some writers (e.g. Adams 1994; Macdonald 1994) believed that the guidelines were implicitly critical of inter-disciplinary teaching, an alternative interpretation is that they gave a steer to such an approach. The use of terminology such as *People and Place*,

*People in the Past* and *People in Society* to replace the traditional subject names Geography, History and Modern Studies may be seen as giving an explicit message to schools about provision, reinforced by their framing as a coherent set of strands, the *Social Subjects*, with common enquiry skills descriptors. This message was reinforced in the 2000 guidelines (LTS 2000) by the extension of an additional set of generic skills (*Developing Informed Attitudes*) from *People in Society* to the other strands. Simultaneously, schools were coming under pressure from HMIE (e.g. 1992; 1999; 2000a) to reduce the amount of contact that young people had with different teachers, albeit through a different mechanism, that of rotations, which would serve to preserve subject integrity. An HMIE report identified that 'it is not unusual for S1 pupils to be taught by between 13 and 16 different teachers each week' (HMIE 2000a: 3). Such fragmentation is largely a consequence of the subject culture that is widely seen as being endemic in Scottish secondary schools (Bryce & Humes 1999). Thus, while HMIE remained largely opposed to inter-disciplinary teaching of the social subjects, its continued identification of the problem of fragmentation, and the persistence of ideas about social studies ensured that inter-disciplinarity remained as a cultural alternative to secondary schools. It is in this context that this study was conceived.

### **The study**

The study provides a number of insights that may be of use at a more general level to different people interested in the problem of educational change. The study applies an under-utilised theoretical perspective to an

ongoing and often intractable problematic; while critical realism (Archer 1995; Bhaskar 1998b) has been explored by some educational writers (e.g. Pring 2000; Scott 2000), it has by no means been applied as a mainstream approach to the problem of educational change. The use of meme theory (Dennett 1996; Balkin 1998) to complement critical realism is, to my knowledge, a new approach to the analysis of educational change. The methodology that underpins this study therefore provides an alternative to more commonplace educational change theorising such as the complexity theory approaches of Fullan (e.g. 1991) and activity theory methodologies advocated by Engeström (e.g. 1999). The study provides a major contribution to the analysis of change in a specifically Scottish context. Scotland, in common with other countries, has embarked on many wide ranging change initiatives in education, and yet there is little literature explicitly addressing the processes of change that must inevitably accompany such initiatives. Therefore, while it is difficult to claim originality in the field of educational change, or in the use of critical realist social theory to explain change, I would argue that this study satisfies two of Silverman's (2000) criteria for originality, in that it makes a synthesis that has not been made before, and that it applies old knowledge to new contexts.

The insights raised by the study may be of use at various strata of the education system. It is useful to view such use in terms of the tri-level model posited by Fullan *et al* (2004). At the level of the state, policy makers are concerned with the difficult balance, alluded to by Lieberman and Miller (1999) in the quotation that heads up this introductory chapter. It may aid them in giving appropriate weight to both centrally-driven policy and school-

based decision-making, and in determining the forms that these should take. At the level of the Education Authority or school district, the study may provide insights to those seeking to coordinate change across a range of schools. At a school level, the study might inform teachers and school managers grappling with the difficult choices raised when enacting new curriculum policy, especially in deciding the balance between managerial impetus and teacher autonomy. Above all, I would hope that my study will help to raise awareness that educational change has a strong social dimension, and that change initiatives that ignore this, focusing simply on linear technical processes, will remain problematic.

### **My own background**

Methodological innovation, the problem of educational change and the related issues of curricular fragmentation and the integration/subjects debate provide contextual reasons for this study. However, they do not explain my interest in this topic, and it is useful to do so before proceeding with the study. It is useful to start such a work with an explicit recognition of the person that I am, and a clear acknowledgement of the preconceptions, assumptions and philosophies that form my thinking on the topics covered in this thesis. The term odyssey is an apt one to describe my personal journey to this point in my life. In the original odyssey, the eponymous hero voyaged through turbulent seas and across dangerous lands, at times driven by purpose, at others buffeted by the vagaries of chance.

My personal odyssey as a researcher shares many of these features, albeit metaphorically, as I have been 'subject to the press of social and cultural



practices, as well as exercising a capacity for independence and self-fulfilment' (Bloomer *et al*, 2004: 20). At times I have been driven by goals and ambitions, at others I have drifted rudderless. As Bloomer *et al* (*ibid*: 39) remind us, 'progression is partly contingent, and not crudely goal-directed'. Throughout the course of these experiences my development has been dialectical. The person that I am today has been largely formed within the crucible represented by the totality of these experiences, and tempered by the nature of my agentic reactions and responses to such experiences.

However, unlike Odysseus, my journey is not teleological. Odysseus aimed to reach the end point represented by his home in Ithaca. In my case, and with hindsight, the destination (like the journey) has proved to be considerably less certain, other than the certainty of the framework provided by the hoped-for Ed.D. qualification. My Ithaca (to develop the analogy further) has changed as I have approached it. The thesis that I envisaged five years ago is not the thesis that is currently developing as I write these words. My thinking has evolved in response to the literature that I have read, and this in turn has affected my choice of subsequent literature, and in turn the further evolution of my thinking. As my thinking has evolved, I have come to see the shortcomings in much of my earlier thinking and the flaws in my methodology and subsequent research practice, and have come to appreciate how the research that underpins this study could (and should) have been conducted differently. These points will be more fully developed in my conclusion chapter. Thus my journey has been an odyssey with often uncertain outcomes. Furthermore, arrival at my personal Ithaca is not the end point of my development; the production of a thesis, and the tying up of

this particular research, marks only a point in my ongoing development or odyssey.

I believe that I hold many radically different views now, in comparison to earlier periods of my life. In a sense my odyssey is well encapsulated by two separate statements made by Seymour Sarason, representing the starting point and current position of my educational thinking. At one end of the continuum is my experience of schooling, as a pupil and to some extent as an undergraduate and teaching student:

I knew nothing, they knew it all; their job was to pour in, mine was to absorb; I had only deficits, they would provide me assets; they were entitled to opinions because they had experience, I was not so entitled because I lacked experience (Sarason, 1998: 27).

The present position is better summarised by a powerful and aspirational definition of education. In Sarason's view, schooling should:

create those contexts of productive learning in which the energies, motivations, and goals of students and teachers are developed to produce a sense of personal-intellectual growth ... it will be a system quite different than the one we have (ibid: 35).

As in Sarason's case, my odyssey has been a movement over the course of time from the first position (as a product of socialisation and social conditioning, combined with ignorance and a lack of understanding), towards a position of greater (albeit incomplete and developing) understanding of the moral and educative purposes of schooling, and the

contexts within which education takes place. While many of my views, dispositions and attitudes have evolved gradually over the years, other changes in thinking have come about relatively quickly, as a result of critical incidents in my life and career. Conversely, many of my views, dispositions and attitudes have been more constant, cemented by experience, and at times rapidly crystallised by counter incidents.

My experiences of my own schooling, and my career experiences have led me to reflect upon the experiences that young people have within our education system. As a teacher of History in England, my development was orthodox, but following a move to New Zealand, and the simultaneous completion of my M.Ed., my eyes were opened to many things that previously I had not considered. As a supply teacher teaching whatever was available (e.g. Science, Business Studies, Social Studies) within a different system, I came to appreciate many things to which I had been previously blind. I also developed a powerful interest in human rights, which has come to influence my views on education. Such reflection has led me to question the value and coherence of a fragmented schooling system that systematically alienates many young people through boredom, exclusion and a lack of relevance. I have since come to critically question many aspects of this system: the arbitrary division of the curriculum into the quasi-disciplines of school subjects; the splitting of the school week into short timetable blocks; the fragmentation of learning into disconnected and decontextualised chunks (even within subjects), passively learned by disengaged pupils; and the tyranny of an exam system that devalues any personal development that is not to be tested and accredited, and which

encourages a wholly instrumental approach to learning. My experiences and much of my subsequent reading have led me to believe that the present system does not adequately prepare young people for the autonomy that they will have to experience later in life (both at university and in the workforce), and that spoon feeding through didactic teaching does not develop essential skills in inquiry and critical decision-making.

From such reflections I have developed interests in the school curriculum and in the processes of educational change as the means to effect a more equitable, inclusive and relevant experience of schooling for young people. This study can be explained in terms of its underlying ideas, and their importance to national curricular development: interdisciplinary curriculum; educational change; and curricular fragmentation. However, it also needs to be seen in terms of my own personal goals and developing interests and values; ultimately these have shaped the form that the study has taken.

The ensuing chapters will further develop the above themes. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the main themes that emerge from the literature on educational change. Chapter 3 outlines my ontological position in some detail, and develops from this a methodological approach from the analysis of case study data. Chapter 4 is concerned with the design of the study, and chapters 5-7 provide a detailed description of the main findings from the questionnaire and case study phases of the research project. Chapter 8 provides a detailed explanatory analysis of the findings that have emerged from the empirical data, using the theoretical perspective based upon critical realism, as outlined in chapters 3 and 4. Finally, chapter

9 draws together the various conclusions from the study, indicating a range of issues that schools contemplating change may wish to consider.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **SOME REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE: KEY THEMES FROM THE LITERATURE**

There is a voluminous body of theoretical and empirical literature on the topic of educational change, drawing from many diverse standpoints. The sheer scope of this literature means that any review of it can only hope to scratch the surface if it is to remain manageable. This chapter, therefore, aims to sketch out some of the key themes that emerge from this literature, rather than providing a comprehensive overview.

I should note two additional caveats before I commence with the review. First, much of the literature is international in flavour, being especially drawn from the United States. Literature from the UK, especially from Scotland, is far less common, although I have, where possible, sought to cross-reference applicable local literature to the international writing. I acknowledge at the outset the difficulties inherent in transferability, although would also stress that many of the fundamental characteristics of schools are similar enough in the different countries to allow a degree of generalisation.

Second, while there is plenty of debate about the issue of educational change, and substantive agreement on many aspects, there are many areas where we simply do not have the answers (Lieberman 1998). Contexts differ, and managing successful reform is not a matter of following some

preset recipe or formula, but more a case of proceeding by trial and error, and hopefully learning from the mistakes made by others.

Two stark features of educational change stand out clearly from the literature: first, reform attempts are endemic and ongoing; and second, these attempts have been largely unsuccessful in changing the underlying structures and axioms of schooling (Sarason 1990). I shall, therefore, start by undertaking a general examination of these two features of the change literature landscape, before focusing in more depth on how the literature deals with the following: teacher mediation of change, and the factors that promote successful change.

### **An epidemic of reform?**

It is a common view that, in recent years, we have witnessed an intensification in the pace and volume of reform efforts. Many writers have commented on this. For example, Levin (1998: 131) has referred to the constant 'state of change' within the education systems of Anglophone nations. Hargreaves (1994: 6) has described what he sees as 'rampant and remorseless' changes. According to Ball (2001: 265), 'we have experienced processes of educational reform which have had profound implications for almost all aspects of the professional lives and work of educators'. Many writers have characterised this state of change as a widespread, even global, phenomenon (e.g. Brown & Lauder 1992; Helsby & McCullough 1997; Whitty *et al* 1998; Edwards *at al* 1999; Altrichter 2000; Priestley 2002; Ball 2005).

Many reforms have been initiated and driven from the centre. One key theme in much of the literature is an increasing tendency for governments to seek to control education systems. For example, Olson (2002) talks of hyper-state intervention and micromanagement of schools; according to Olson, these tendencies marginalise teachers by leaving them out of the reform process. Education, especially the school curriculum, can be viewed as an arena that largely remains under state control in an era of accelerating globalization (Young 1998; Green 1999; Hodgson & Spours 1999); as such it has the potential to be used as a policy lever, which may help ensure future economic prosperity, when traditional means of economic sovereignty are being ceded to global and regional agencies such as the IMF and the European Community (Reich 1992; 1997; Dale 1999). According to Ball (2001: 266) this results in learning being 'utterly de-socialized and reduced to the production of a more globally competitive workforce'.

Such interpretations are disputed, and of course do not provide the full explanation for educational reform, but nevertheless it is difficult to deny that education is seen by governments themselves as having an important part to play in maintaining international competitiveness. Within the UK, such thinking allegedly underpinned internecine struggles between industrial trainers and cultural restorationists during the Conservative years (Ball 1990; Lawton 1994). It has also been clearly expressed by the policy writers of the Labour Party:

Education is the key to economic success, social cohesion and active citizenship. Our future economic prosperity depends upon the skills



and abilities of our people ... the regular updating of skills and knowledge has become essential to maintaining and enhancing productivity in the workplace (Labour Party 1996: 2).

In Scotland, similar sentiments have influenced curriculum development. For example, *Curriculum for Excellence* (SEED 2004: 10) clearly specifies 'the need to increase the economic performance of the nation' as one of its driving principles.

This review gives a flavour of the commentary on what is widely seen as the global, instrumental, endemic and accelerating nature of education policy and reform. Such trends are well encapsulated by Levin (1998), who has identified several discourses that have been common to the drive to reform school systems across the world. These include the tendency for educational change to be framed in economic terms, increasing criticism of education and training<sup>1</sup>, the tendency to demand improvements without an increase in resources, the promotion of educational change through changes in governance and an increased emphasis on standards, accountability and testing.

### **A failure to change?**

Despite such reform activity, there is a parallel view in much of the literature that the commonly perceived fundamentals of schooling are persistent in the

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<sup>1</sup> This has been described elsewhere as discourses of derision (Ball 1990). In a similar vein Fore (1998) talks of a rhetoric of excellence – the continual attachment of blame to educators, combined with a rose tinted view of traditional approaches - to undermine professional autonomy of teachers.

face of such efforts. Cuban (1988: 86) claims that 'innovation after innovation has been introduced into school after school, but the overwhelming number of them disappear without a fingerprint'. Spillane (1999: 143) describes teaching as a 'technology which appears especially resilient to change', and Tyack and Cuban (1995) suggest that educational reform over the years has been unsuccessful at changing the grammar of schooling; in other words the basic structures and methods that underpin schooling, for example classrooms, didactic pedagogies and the familiar technologies of teaching.

This paradox - constant innovation and reform without change - is captured by Cuban's hurricane metaphor:

Hurricane winds sweep across the sea tossing up twenty foot waves;  
a fathom below the surface turbulent waters swirl while on the ocean  
floor there is unruffled calm (Cuban 1984: 2).

Writing in the context of Scotland's 5-14 curriculum guidelines, Swann and Brown (1997: 91) have drawn attention to the persistent failure of reform initiatives, stating 'past records for curriculum initiatives show extraordinarily modest levels of pedagogical implementation'.

It is commonly held that any such impact is, to a large extent, dependent on the attitudes and values of teachers. For instance, the commonplace centre-periphery strategy, exemplified by the National Curriculum in England and Wales, has been widely critiqued for over-prescription, and because it disregards the power that teachers have to mediate change (e.g. Simon

1988; Brighouse & Moon 1990; Kelly 1989; 1990; Skilbeck 1990; Bowe *et al* 1992; Barber 1993; Irwin 1994; Goodson 1995; Osborn *et al* 1997; Helsby & McCullough 1997; Elliot 1998; Smyth & Shacklock 1998; Codd 1999; Helsby 1999). Proponents of this change model assume an unproblematic relationship between the prescribed, described, enacted and received curricula (Bloomer 1997). The use of terms like 'implementation' suggests that putting a new curriculum into practice is merely a process of getting teachers to do it. However, the literature generally posits a more complex process, suggesting that external reform initiatives develop in a dialectical fashion (Helsby & McCulloch 1997), reflecting the dynamic two-way relationship between the initiative in question, and the context for enactment, including the local change agents. A later section of this chapter will explore these ideas in greater detail.

Seen in this light, the term 'enactment' is more apt than 'implementation', capturing the essence of this uncertain relationship more appropriately, and this term has come to permeate the research literature. For example, Olson *et al* state that 'where teachers have not been significantly involved in the development stages, it is fair to say that they enact curriculum policies rather than implement them' (Olson *et al* 1999: 71). Fullan (1998) also acknowledges this shift in thinking with his specification of three broad periods of his writing on change processes: the implementation phase (1972-82); the meaning of change phase (1982-92); and the capacity for change phase (1992-1998). In the latter case, capacity is defined in terms of two dimensions: what individuals can do to develop their effectiveness; and how systems need to be transformed.

I largely concur with much of the thinking in the above mentioned literature. In my view the failure of many initiatives to impact on practice has been due in part to an unsophisticated understanding on the behalf of policy makers that meaningful change must involve practitioners, and I would agree with Swann and Brown (1997) in their belief that the idea of humans as active construers of policy is not widely accepted in policy making circles. I believe that social interaction is the process via which ideas and structures are mediated, and subsequently reproduced and transformed. Such social interaction is subject to many diverse causal pressures that differ from context to context, thus rendering the notion of implementation highly problematic, and confounding attempts to impose uniform change from above. Cuban's observation that 'schools change reforms as much as reforms change schools' (Cuban 1998: 455) is apt.

Cuban (1984) identifies several stability factors to explain the apparent lack of change in schooling. He suggests that schools are contexts where obedience is prized over independent thinking. He suggests that teachers' practices are determined by the organisational structures of schools; in particular, pedagogy is a practical response to the spatial characteristics of the school. Cuban believes that the culture of teaching is tilted towards stability, and that the existence of survival norms rewards those who avoid risks. He points to the powerful socialisation of teachers through their own schooling. Eisner (1992) provides a similar typology. His nine stability factors include: deeply internalised images amongst teachers about the nature of teaching, gained from years of schooling, and reinforced in the workplace; rigid routines and traditions in school, often strengthened by

teacher isolation and lack of collegial dialogue; societal expectations about the form and function of schooling (again reinforced by people's own schooling); the distance between policy makers and practitioners; and artificial barriers between subject disciplines.

While this sort of analysis contains much that is valid, it is important to note the dangers inherent in interpreting these factors in a deterministic fashion; such an approach ignores the social and political agency of teachers, and potentially leads to the 'quick fix', 'one-size-fits-all' solutions that have characterised much of the failed micro-management of schools that Cuban and others criticise. Indeed Cuban would acknowledge this; his 1984 analysis included an admission that his hurricane metaphor is misleading as it is not calm in classrooms, where there exists a richness and a complexity that categorisation cannot capture (Cuban 1984). In particular we should seek to avoid investing such stability factors with a normative status, as if they are natural laws or regularities in social settings. Such deterministic notions of equilibrium and social homeostasis are redolent of structuration theory (Giddens 1979: 1984). They also permeate complexity theory to a lesser extent (e.g. Fullan 1993; 1991; Hoban 2002). An alternative, less deterministic view of social interaction will be outlined in the next chapter.

Some writers have challenged the prevailing notion that education does not change. Miles (1998) has pointed to what he sees as several enduring elements in the mythology of educational change, including that schools are essentially conservative institutions, which are harder to change than other organisations, and that change needs to be centrally driven, or it won't

occur. Miles acknowledges that there is an element of truth in these myths, as is the case with all myths, but suggests that they are misleading. To disentangle the truth from the myth, it is probably necessary to differentiate between the view expressed by many writers that innovation has a poor rate of success, and the idea that schools are resistant to change. If so, work by Tyack and Cuban gives some support to Miles's views. While they emphasise the enduring character of much educational practice (the grammar of schooling), which they believe to be resistant to externally driven change initiatives, they point to the existence of change in schools, albeit evolutionary change.

At the core of the school - in classroom instruction - change was slow. Reforms took place, but they were largely accretions around that core' (Tyack & Cuban 1995: 9).

Tyack and Cuban believe that institutional practices of schools are deeply ingrained, and that 'congruence with that cultural template has helped maintain the legitimacy of the institution in the minds of the public' (ibid). Their research suggests that teachers tend to have an interest in maintaining the system and they often take practices and structures for granted; where change does occur it is often through a process of hybridisation, as teachers select features of the new and continue with much of the old. Cuban (1984) provides a typology that considers which changes are likely to be enacted by teachers. He proposes that changes fall into two main categories: first order changes are those that aim to improve efficiency without questioning basic structures; second order changes seek to

redesign structures to correct design problems. Cuban believes that the latter are less likely to be successful.

This all suggests a view of schools as organisations adapting to external environments, mediated through the values, motives and experience of their constituent members. I shall explore the literature pertaining to school departments later in this chapter, however will briefly examine here the notion of institutional organisation as a barrier to change. Scott and Cohen (1995) examined school subject departments, defining them as workgroups, typical of social groupings in other complex organisations. As stable, relatively permanent groups and cultural systems, they can act as barriers to change; in Hargreaves's (1994) terms, they can become balkanised and can act against the interests of the wider organisation. Scott and Cohen state that organisations are not constructed like nested Chinese boxes; the reality is more complex, as departments are penetrated by, linked to and defined by other external groups. They are also immersed in their environments, drawing definition from them. Such an analysis is partially at variance with the work of Ball (1987), who maintains that schools are different to many other organisations. He warns of the dangers of drawing too heavily on systems analysis that is applicable to bureaucratic organisations. In Ball's view, a difficulty is the problem of classifying schools as a type of organisation. He draws on a typology developed by Collins (which categorised three types of organisation: hierarchic; membership-controlled; and professional). Ball believes that schools exhibit characteristics of all three. This renders existing analytical categories inadequate.

## Teacher mediation of change

The important role of teachers in mediating change is a key topic for debate in the literature, much of which bemoans the lack of professional engagement in change processes. According to Smyth *et al*,

What should concern us greatly is the fact that many of the changes being introduced into schools around the world with such rapidity, are doomed to almost certain failure because teachers were not involved at crucial points in the conceptualisation of these ideas (Smyth *et al* 1998: 95).

There are two key aspects of teacher agency. One is individual agency and mediation of reform, and the other is the role of school departments and other groupings in interpreting and enacting reform. I shall deal with each in turn; in doing so, I shall give some consideration to how the literature portrays the balance between top-down and bottom-up innovation, although fuller discussion of this will be left until the last section of the chapter. I shall also consider how teacher identity, especially that relating to subjects, has been considered in the literature.

One theme is that teachers tend not to deeply internalise externally initiated reform, even where consultation occurs. Scotland's 5-14 curriculum, which was introduced after a lengthy period of consultation, is a good example of this, and it is worth dwelling for a moment on the research and commentary that accompanied its development. Early research suggested slow progress in implementation. Harlen and Malcolm (1994), in an early analysis of 5-14



in primary schools, found that teachers tended not to have read the guidelines. Other research within secondary schools produced similar findings (Goulder *et al* 1994; Simpson & Goulder 1997); implementation was slow, and many teachers were not familiar with guidelines, and while there was some evidence of a move to group teaching, it was not clear whether this was a result of 5-14 or other developments in Scottish education. Swann and Brown (1997), in their discussion of the implementation of 5-14, suggest that this top-down reform was met in terms of paperwork, but teachers largely continued with existing pedagogical practice, mirroring Cuban's (1984) conclusions about first and second order changes. They found that there was little evidence of internalisation of the ideas within. Feldman (1996) similarly points to the tendency for curriculum changes to be greater on paper than in practice. Simpson and Goulder (1998) found that the number of teachers whose assessments has changed as a result of 5-14 was low (30-40% typically).

Research commissioned by the Scottish Office into the impact of 5-14 in primary schools was more upbeat (Malcolm & Byrne 1997; Malcolm & Schlapp 1998), suggesting changes in pedagogy and procedures as a result of 5-14. However, these latter reports need to be approached with care. They make assumptions about a shared understanding of terms that are ambiguous in nature (e.g. continuity, progression), and there seems to be little attempt to explore what people understand by these terms. A lot rests on the claims made by teachers and managers (e.g. judgements about progress), and it is difficult to see from the report how these claims have been verified. The quantitative nature of the analysis tends to be simplistic

and obscures differences in context and culture between schools. In general, the evidence suggests that the 5-14 curriculum failed to embed because it lacked relevance to the teachers involved in enactment, a factor blamed for a failure of innovation elsewhere (e.g. Eisner 1996; Wubbels & Poppleton 1999).

Of course, teacher apathy is only one of several possible reactions to externally initiated reform. Osborn *et al* (1997: 53) posit several forms of teacher response to externally mandated change, suggesting that 'teachers have the ability to mediate education policy in the light of their own beliefs and the constraints which operate on them in the classroom'. They are critical of polarised accounts of the National Curriculum that position teachers either as passive victims reduced to the role of technicians, or as contesters of policy. They believe that the position lies in between. They see various responses to reform, including compliance, incorporation, retreatism, resistance and creative mediation. According to these writers, teachers filter 'change through their own values, which are in turn influenced by gender, social class, previous experience in the classroom, professional training and other historical and biographical factors' (ibid: 57). They posit several forms of creative mediation, including:

- protective mediation (when teachers strive to protect children from what they see as the worst aspects of a reform);
- innovative mediation (developing new and often novel approaches to working);

- conspiratorial mediation (when teachers work together to actively subvert a new initiative).

According to Osborn *et al*, such mediation can be accompanied by strategic compliance to keep the school inspectors at bay.

Whatever the reasons for, and the form of this mediation, there is much agreement in the literature that teachers have the potential to work in such ways (Cuban 1988; Hargreaves 1997; Helsby & McCullough 1997; Spillane 1999; 2002; Olson 2002). Miles (1998) suggests that we need to:

reject the statement that the user is simply engaged in obedient execution of the instructions on a canned product .. (but) .. is working in a constructivist, sense-making mode to bring coherence to a new idea/practice, during the process of recasting it and connecting it to the immediate working context (Miles 1998: 49).

Lieberman and Miller (1999) similarly claim that state or district policy cannot make change happen, and Acker (1997: 47) suggests that 'teachers respond creatively with a certain amount of agency, rather than mechanically and as victims of forces beyond their control'. Some authors have focused on teachers' use of curriculum texts. Roberts (1997) draws on Barthes's conception of readerly (literal translation) and writerly (open to interpretation) texts, to explain teacher mediation of the English National Curriculum. In his view, teachers tend to take the latter view of curriculum texts, despite the often clear intentions of policy makers that the former should be the case. Eisner (cited in Smyth *et al* 2003: 189) states that 'no

intended curriculum can be followed by teachers as a script'. Smyth *et al* (2003: 189) introduce the notion of the 'teacher-as-improviser', policy providing opportunities for learners and teachers to 'co-author the script' (ibid).

### **The culture of teaching**

What, then, are the influences on teacher mediation of reform? According to Tyack and Cuban (1995), policy makers can ignore the pedagogical past but teachers cannot. They suggest that 'if the aims of reforms are vague, contradictory or unattainable, educators often respond by turning reforms into something they have already learned how to do' (Tyack & Cuban 1995: 64). Bowe *et al* (1992: 28) found that gaps and ambiguities in texts give teachers 'room for manoeuvre'. Teacher agency, in their view, can be constrained or increased by several factors. These include collegial attitudes and shared values, which help promote active stances and make resistance to external direction and active construction of curriculum more likely.

Olson *et al* (1999: 71) believe that 'teacher practices - themselves a reflection of teacher culture - are what bring curriculum ideas into operation'. But what is teacher culture? Smyth *et al* (2003) suggest several aspects of teacher socialisation, positing that many teachers have a default view of teaching that is formed through socialisation. They believe this to be characterised by:

- the abstract division of knowledge into subjects;
- a hierarchy of subjects with maths at the top;

- a hierarchical ordering of knowledge within each subject;
- teacher centred pedagogy;
- individualised learning;
- formal competitive assessment. (Smyth *et al* 2003: 180).

The Practicality Ethic (Doyle & Ponder 1977) suggests that innovations are most likely to be successful in schools if they satisfy three conditions: congruence (changes may be accepted if they are in line with the values of the teachers, including notions of subject identity and pedagogy); instrumentality (how easy are the changes to enact?<sup>2</sup>); and cost/benefit (innovation is more likely to be successful where benefits are perceived to outweigh costs). This last issue has been noted by many writers. For instance, Cuban (1984) comments on the strength of teachers' survival norms, Cohen (1988: 88) notes that teaching is risk-laden and involves survival strategies, and Olson *et al* (1999) talk of survival values, which include factors such as self-confidence and efficacy. As a result, practitioners make decisions to minimise risk, and these may militate against the success of a new initiative.

Hansen (1999) suggests that curriculum implementation must take teacher socialisation into account. The literature suggests several origins of such socialisation. Eisner states that, 'teaching is the only profession I can think of in which professional socialization begins at the age of five' (Eisner 1996: 6). Helsby and McCulloch (1997: 11) suggest that the work environment is a major source of socialisation, and that the position of teachers within

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<sup>2</sup> Of course instrumentality can be manufactured; any reforms may be accompanied by initiatives to create an environment where they will easily bed in.

schools and departments will affect their response to curricular reform. Lang *et al* (1999b: 119) employ Bourdieu's concept 'habitus' - 'the set of tacit and overt dispositions teachers acquire during their professional development' - to explain how teacher socialisation occurs. According to Ball (1987), such socialisation stems from: images of teachers formed as pupils; cognitive and ideological commitments from initial teacher training; experiences of teaching; and broader networks of social and political views.

### **Changing the subject**

It has been widely noted that such processes are especially powerful in respect of the subject identity of secondary school teachers, and I will focus on this for the remainder of this section, particularly as this issue is especially pertinent to research on curriculum provision in Scotland, as has been noted in the last chapter. Olson *et al* (1999) note that the culture of specialist teachers is strongly affected by the approach adopted for their subject (e.g. by subject associations). Many writers note the fragmentation that occurs as a result of the emphasis on subjects in secondary schools (e.g. Eisner 1992; Gardner 1993; Goodson & Marsh 1996). According to Goodson and Marsh (1996), such fragmentation is accompanied by political turf struggles, as funding is often linked to subject status. The pressures of 'the ever present spectre of assessment' (Paechter 1995: 89) and the vagaries of school timetabling and geography increase such tendencies. Hansen (1999), who believes secondary school teachers see themselves primarily as subject specialists, notes that integrated teaching is an innovation that often goes against teacher socialisation, by calling for an

identity based upon pedagogy rather than the subject or discipline. Hansen and Olson (1996), in a study of integrated science teaching, found that science education is a culture with distinctive sub-cultures based on a set of shared meanings. They found that teachers were socialised both by the science discipline and also by practical experience of teaching. They suggest that the subject discipline provides clear boundaries that integration lacks, and that this is tied up with questions of identity.

This in turn encourages notions of otherness, and the discipline thus 'fences ownership' (Hansen & Olson 1996: 676). Paechter (1995) concurs, pointing to the threatening nature of cross-curricular working, especially when teachers make erroneous assumptions about other subjects. According to Bernstein (1975), when teaching is organised around subjects, junior teachers are more likely to have vertical relationships confined to the subject hierarchy. Horizontal relationships will be thus limited to non-task focused contacts (with exception of class management discussions), in part because of the subject-based identities, and because of the resource competition that occurs in schools. Howes *et al* (2005) suggest that, in many schools, (especially large secondary schools) there is a need to weaken institutional boundaries. Siskin (1994; 1995) concurs. Her research found that teachers often have more contact with colleagues in the same subject in other schools, than they do with colleagues in different subjects within their own school.

These conclusions go a long way towards explaining why the implicit emphasis in Scotland's 5-14 curriculum on integrating social subjects did not

catch on in a secondary schooling system that is heavily predicated on the teaching of subjects (Bryce & Humes 1999). Indeed this specific issue has been noted internationally, even in countries like Australia and the United States, where interest in integrated teaching of social studies remains high, and where one might assume subject identity to be correspondingly weaker. For example, Hill (1994) notes the problems of fragmentation and identity that stem in Australia from the continued emphasis on constituent subjects housed in separate areas of the school, and Barr *et al* (1977), writing about the USA, suggest that confusion stems often from conflicting senses of subject identity. Such matters are contestable, but many would agree with McCulloch's (1997) view that teachers' own conceptions of their professionalism play a fundamental role in their practice; policy that rides roughshod over this will cause resentment, lower morale and reduce effectiveness. In the words of Atkin (2000: 83), 'strategies need to be devised that recognise just how deeply projected changes in subject matter itself can challenge the images teachers have of themselves as the custodians and proponents of their disciplines'.

### **Departments and micropolitics**

The above discussion of subject identity implies that such socialisation is situated: in the wider society through teachers' and policy makers' own experiences of schooling; within education structures such as national assessment systems, curricula and inspection regimes; in schools as workplaces; and especially in subject departments. Goodson and Marsh (1996) describe the department as the central unit of organisation for



teachers, with a corresponding influence on the formation of teacher identity. According to Siskin and Little:

subject departments constitute the primary point of reference, or professional home, for most teachers ... the department is the singular entity that most predictably unites teachers with one another, and most deeply divides faculty groups from one another (Siskin & Little 1995: 7).

Siskin (1994) describes departments as fiefdoms, suggesting a high degree of influence, and as 'social worlds' with a 'common technical culture' (ibid: 92) and 'distinct and distinctive set of values and norms' (ibid: 97). She identifies four critical aspects of the department: strong boundaries; its role as a primary site for normative social interaction and professional identity; its micro-political role as an administrative unit; and its epistemological influence over the decisions and actions of those within it. Siskin (ibid) suggests that teachers' material and intellectual interests are tied up in departmental organisation, and that they are rewarded intellectually and organisationally for time spent in departments. Bowe *et al* (1992) also suggest that departments play an important role in mediating between knowledge demands of the wider epistemic community and the institutional demands of the school.

Departments have been shown to vary greatly, this being largely dependent on local membership, although external conditions and environmental constraints also play a role (Siskin 1994). Talbert (1995) notes such variation, suggesting that some constrain and others empower. According to

Talbert, strong departments help mediate the effects of institutional conditions and changes in teachers' working lives. This theme has been developed by other writers. For example, Bowe *et al* (1992) suggest that teacher mediation increases in departments with high capacity (i.e. teacher experience of responding to change and a history of curriculum innovation) and high commitment (e.g. firmly held subject paradigms). Huberman (cited by Siskin 1994) has identified four types of department: bonded (socially cohesive, with high commitment and inclusion); bundled (high inclusion, but low common purpose); fragmented (low levels of commitment and inclusion); and split (high commitment, low inclusion, e.g. dictatorial management). According to Siskin (1994) strong, bonded departments are the most likely to be able to resist or mediate external direction; however such departments are rare, and one is more likely to encounter bundled departments, that are strong, but where individual concerns tend to predominate.

School departments, and schools as wider organisations, are fundamentally political units. Many writers have written about the micropolitics and power relations that are endemic to such social contexts. Sarason states that:

schools and school systems are political organizations in which power is an organizing feature. Ignore (power) relationships, leave unexamined their rationale, and the existing system will defeat efforts at reform (Sarason 1990: 7).

Ball (1987) identifies three aspects of micropolitics: the interests of the actors; maintenance of organisational control; and conflict over policy.

According to Ball, schools are 'arenas of struggle' (ibid: 19). Blase (1998) suggests that during periods of change, micro-political interaction intensifies and becomes more visible; change dynamics provoke this. Several writers posit that conflict is a normal, and indeed desirable element of any change process. According to Achinstein (2002: 422), 'active engagement in conflict, a dialogue of differences, is a normal and essential dimension of a functioning teacher community'.

The role of dissonance as a catalyst for change is well established in theoretical social science (e.g. Archer 1995; Engeström 1999). Of course conflict can be destructive, and inhibit change. For instance, Achinstein (2002: 448) reminds us that 'conflict can be a powerful source of group cohesion through the construction of a common external enemy', and may form the basis of resistance to change. Achinstein believes that critical reflection is the key to stimulating constructive engagement with change and conflict over change:

Critical reflection involves challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions of teaching and schooling practices and imagining alternatives for the purposes of changing conditions. Such reflection fosters alternative perspectives and growth and thus serves to counter myopia and stagnation in communities (Achinstein 2002: 426).

Some writers believe that, in order to make constructive use of teacher mediation, policies need to be developed that take account of the micro-political realities of schools. For example, Altrichter and Salzgeber (2000)

advocate the development of recognition that organisations contain diverse goals and unclear areas of influence and that actors pursue their own interests, combined with special attention to interaction processes in organisations. Fink and Stoll (1998) believe that successful change recognises micropolitics and forms it into positive forces for change.

### **Successful change?**

Educational change is clearly a complex and uncertain business. Approaches that consist solely of centrally driven mandates or school based development are widely seen as unsuccessful or at best only partially successful in inculcating and sustaining change. Many writers have therefore advocated approaches to educational change that combine top-down and bottom-up approaches (e.g. Fullan 1993; Cowley & Williamson 1998). Darling–Hammond (1998: 643) has called for a paradigm shift for education policy; from 'designing controls' for directing the system towards an approach geared to 'developing capacity' to enable schools and teachers to be responsible for learning and responsive to diversity and change. She believes that:

neither a heavy-handed view of top-down reform nor a romantic vision of bottom-up change is plausible. Both local invention and supportive leadership are needed, along with new "horizontal" efforts that support cross-school consultation and learning (ibid 1998: 646).

Skilbeck (1998) similarly suggests that while central impetus and support for change are important, they must combine with the engagement of local

change agents. Recent policies in Scotland such as *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL) and *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) arguably adopt such an approach (Hayward *et al* 2004; Hayward & Hedges 2005; Priestley 2005; Priestley & Sime 2005). Macdonald (2003: 142), writing about Australia, discusses partnerships that recognise the 'problematic nature of the teacher's role as a change agent', developing collaboration between teachers, policy makers and researchers. According to Macdonald, such approaches may still be problematic as they rarely question assumptions about schools, schooling, learning and young people. The remainder of this section will extrapolate from the literature a range of factors said to contribute to successful educational change.

### *Central impetus*

An important aspect of many successful change initiatives could be termed central impetus. This is part of the top-down aspect of innovation. Many authors aver that constructive and coherent policy, supported by good resourcing, is an essential ingredient of change. Hayward *et al* (2004) note the importance of the AifL framework, which provided guidance for schools without being over-prescriptive. Similarly Skilbeck (1998) recognizes the value of the support provided by external agencies in the Schools Cultural Studies Project in Northern Ireland (a project to tackle sectarianism). He believes that while the school is a site of decision-making, ideas often need to come from outside.

The literature identifies several reasons why central policy is important. First, central policies provide schools with a source of impetus, goals and ideas to

kick-start innovation. For instance, Helsby (1999) notes the important role of central impetus in TVEI, even when goals weren't always clear. Higham *et al* (2000), in their comparative study of specialist schooling, note the clear impetus to change provided by government policy in England; in New Zealand, they view the lack of such policy as a barrier to specialisation. Second, policies provide a source of ideas. Van den Akker (1988) notes the importance of the clear and validated materials that tend to accompany well-thought out curriculum initiatives. Third, they provide official sanction for reforms that may appear to be otherwise risky. Priestley and Sime (2005), in their review of a primary school adopting formative assessment, note that teachers welcomed such official legitimisation of practice. Similarly, Scott (2000) comments on the importance of official endorsement of innovation.

### *Leadership*

A second key ingredient is the role of leadership. Many writers have stressed that this is a vital factor in promoting and sustaining change. Sarason (1990), Fullan (1993) and Miller (1998) emphasise the importance of effective leaders in any change process. Allen and Glickman (1998) and McLaughlin (1998) point to the crucial role of the head teacher and, similarly, Ball (1987) highlights the importance of leaders' commitment to change. Skilbeck (1998) suggests that intelligent leadership helps drive reform. Van den Akker (1988) points to active administrative support and leadership at both district and school level as a vital factor in driving change. Much of the organisational learning literature advocates the importance of what is often referred to as transformational leadership (e.g. Geijsel *et al*

1993; Mulford 1998; Sackney 2000) to enhance the capacity for learning and to transform schools into learning communities.

So what constitutes an effective leader? Much of the literature points to a collegial leader rather than an authoritarian figure. For instance House and McQuillan (1998) point to vision, an ability to secure funds, commitment and an ability to bring people together (enablement) as hallmarks of a good leader. They suggest that a good leader provides political permission and official sanction for change. Sackney (2000) highlights the encouragement of shared vision, authentic relationships, collaborative cultures, reflection and risk-taking. Allen and Glickman (1998), writing about the US League of Professional Schools, point to a number of features of effective school principals, who should be enablers rather than fixers, modelling what's important and exhibiting trust and respect for teachers. Much of the literature is clear that facilitative leadership (trust, democratic structures, autonomy, innovation, risk taking) can contribute to teachers' sense of efficacy and involvement (Blase 1998).

District support for initiatives has been shown to be important; this includes the training of teachers and managers, and protection from outside pressures that militate against change (Blase 1998). Spillane (1999) highlights the importance of amplification by district officials and managers, which helps to ensure compliance with reform initiatives. Indeed, Talbert (1995) suggests that district authorities may exert a greater influence on department culture than do schools. These writers refer to American

schooling, but their findings may be applicable to Scotland, where Education Authorities remain influential.

Related to this is teacher leadership - the designation of non-promoted practitioners as leaders of change initiatives. This has been suggested to be a powerful lever for promoting innovation. Many writers talk about the importance of empowering teachers (e.g. Miles 1998; Miller 1998). Blase (1998) advocates teachers' participation in the decision-making process, a conclusion supported by Smyth *et al* (1998) and Cowley and Williamson (1998). Boreham and Morgan (2004) posit the reconstituting of power relationships as a major plank of their organisational learning model. According to House and McQuillan (1998), a key theme of successful change is letting staff make operational decisions. Allen and Glickman (1998) go further in calling for the establishment of leadership teams, elected by staff, with rotating membership. They believe this builds capacity, adds to teachers' voice and helps staff to understand the realities of decision making. Moreover they suggest that such diversity enhances management teams and promotes inter-staff dialogue.

In some cases, the literature points to examples of change where such approaches have been actively fostered. For example, Priestley and Sime (2005) in their evaluation of a primary school's AifL project, found that the roles of two classroom teachers, who led the assessment working party, had given considerable impetus to the project and helped the staff to own the initiative. Smyth *et al* (1998) equate teacher learning with teacher leadership claiming that teachers have a good record of leading that is not incongruent



with their professional roles. They examined a case study (The Gums School) where teachers became actively engaged with curriculum development. Formal democratic structures, including curriculum committees, were major vehicles for transformative change.

### *Teacher autonomy*

A third related theme is teacher autonomy. The rationale for encouraging teacher autonomy has been thoroughly covered elsewhere in this chapter, especially in the section on teacher mediation of change, therefore I will cover it only briefly at this stage. Many successful reforms have succeeded because they engendered professional trust, and a genuine shift in power to those at the chalk face. Miles (1998) calls for the creation of national/large scale projects that are locally grounded, and which draw upon the local expertise of teachers. House and McQuillan (1998) believe that teacher autonomy is crucial to change and Sarason (1990) calls for a change in the balance of power. Many writers advocate a process of adaptation, whereby teachers are encouraged to mediate reforms creatively and constructively (e.g. Cuban 1988; 1998; Kelly 1989; Blenkin *et al* 1992; Cowley & Williamson 1998; Black *et al* 2002; Priestley 2005). This of course requires trust. Darling-Hammond suggests that this is not often forthcoming. Her alternative view suggests that: people are motivated by opportunities for learning, growth and responsibility; they gain satisfaction from being effective; they are more productive when opportunities for collaborative work are available; and they respond to constructive feedback.

Policies built upon this theory include efforts to strengthen teacher education and certification processes, to create knowledge-building institutions such as professional development schools, to decentralise school decision-making, to support collegial teacher development, to redesign local assessment practices and to create learning networks among teachers and schools (ibid 1998: 646).

Kirk and Macdonald (2001) have suggested that the teacher's authority in terms of local autonomy is rooted in three dimensions: teachers have knowledge of their students; teachers are the people who apply resources to teach; and teachers understand the practicalities of their work, including issues of power and micropolitics. In this sense, teachers are the local experts and are thus better placed than central policy makers to make decisions relating to teaching and learning.

### *Collaborative working*

Of course teacher autonomy is useless, even unhelpful, if teachers continue to work in isolation, unsupported by ideas and resources, and unused to exercising autonomy. Several themes are evident in the literature in relation to overcoming this issue; they are collaboration, dialogue, networking and teacher learning.

Collaboration is important, creating space and time for generative dialogue and peer observation of teaching (Howes *et al* 2005; Priestley & Sime 2005). As mentioned earlier, Siskin (1994) points to the effectiveness of what she calls bonded departments in facing challenges in secondary

schools, and stresses the need to extend networks within school. Howes *et al* (2005) suggest that internal boundaries in schools weaken when regularly crossed and when communication is enhanced, for example when teachers observe colleagues in different departments. 'In such a process, taken-for-granted assumptions can be and are recognised and questioned, prejudices subject to reflection, and the value of structures questioned and addressed' (Howes *et al* 2005: 135). McLaughlin (1998) and Miller (1998) call for the group rather than the individual to become the change agent. Wubbels and Poppleton (1999) point to the value of collegial support and dialogue, and Fullan (1993) advocates effective collaboration.

Drawing on American research projects, Giacquinta (1998) suggests that strong collegiality and a sense of community has tended to enhance teacher agency and provided a crucible for developing and promoting new teaching technologies. Giacquinta suggests three change strategies in this respect: a change of emphasis from the individual to the group as change agents; making space for dialogue, thus reducing professional isolation; and strengthening local professional communities (when these don't exist change is often superficial). Regular dialogue has been claimed to reduce professional isolation (Cowley & Williamson 1998; Smyth *et al* 1998; Olson *et al* 1999, Spillane 1999). Similarly Helsby (1999) stresses the importance of collaboration and dialogue in the development of TVEI in the 1980s. Dialogue strengthens local professional communities, and allows change to take account of the prior experiences and achievements of teachers (Ruddock 1991). Priestley and Sime (2005: 490) suggest that 'dialogue provides a form of peer scaffolding that helps enable teacher learning'.

Nevertheless collegiality has its pitfalls; many writers have warned of the dangers of what Hargreaves (1994) has termed contrived collegiality and Nias (cited in Allen & Glickman 1998) has called false democracy. Helsby (1999: 86) warns that collaboration can be used as a managerial and instrumental means of 'manufacturing consent for predetermined goals'. Allen and Glickman (1998) believe that genuine dialogue is important to counter this and build shared vision and understanding, and that simple consultation does not achieve this; indeed it can lead to cynicism and key ideas being interpreted differently by different people (Spillane 1999). Another danger, when reflection is limited, is that of groupthink (Fullan 1993; Helsby 1999).

House and McQuillan (1998) point to the importance of networking (for example links with outside agencies and other schools). This was seen as a successful feature of AifL (Hayward *et al* 2004), within which schools on the pilot projects were supported by development officers and university researchers, and came together for regular meetings with colleagues from other schools involved in the project. Many writers have commented that networking is important, and provides opportunities for CPD and an influx of new ideas (e.g. Miller 1998). Outsiders help in this process, as they bring a fresh perspective. Howes *et al* (2005: 140) describe how 'teacher learning in such contexts was stimulated by the generation and social interruption of data'; this becomes the critical incident that stimulates reflection on practice and potentially changes practices. The US Coalition of Essential Schools is a good example of a network that does this (Allen & Glickman 1998). Paechter (1995) highlights the role of cluster meetings and local authority

support in supporting and sustaining change. Brennan and Noffke (2000) suggest that when developing communities, the school boundary is a pragmatic one, but needs to be permeable.

### *Teacher learning and reflective practice*

Many of the writers suggest that the purpose of collaboration, dialogue and networking is to promote teacher learning, a theme developed by much of the literature. For example, Spillane (1999) talks about developing will and capacity to develop and Giacquinta (1998) blames a lack of teacher capacity (knowledge and skill) for the failure of many initiatives. Eisner suggests that capacity is tied up with issues of confidence:

if a bird has been in a cage for a decade and suddenly finds the door open, it should not be surprising if the bird does not wish to leave. The familiar is often more comfortable than the uncertainty of the unknown (Eisner 1992: 615).

Fullan (1998) identifies two aspects or dimensions of capacity: what individuals can do to develop their effectiveness; and how systems need to be transformed (to enable individual and group effectiveness). This is a useful typology that captures elements of individual agency and the structural conditions within which teachers operate. McLaughlin (1998) highlights the often local nature of capacity and will to change. He suggests that change is dependent on these, and that they change over time.

A systematic approach to professional enquiry has been shown in much of the research to be effective in inculcating sustainable change. Reeves and

Boreham (2006), in their study of organisational learning in a Scottish Education Authority, articulate clearly how this can take place. Collaboration, dialogue, autonomous decision-making and professional reflection are part of their model for change. Lieberman and Miller (1999: 62) describe how strong professional communities are built when 'principals and staff pursue a continuous cycle of innovation, feedback and redesign in curriculum, instruction and assessment'. Cowley and Williamson (1998) point to the importance of continuous evaluation of change.

This is not a new approach, as shown by McLaughlin's discussion of the Rand Change Agent Study in the 1970s:

local implementation was revealed as a process of mutual adaptation between program or program precepts and local realities. Sometimes this adaptation meant dilution or derailment of project objectives. Other times these local responses provided important local knowledge and modification (McLaughlin 1998: 73).

This, of course, requires a willingness by policy makers to accept that local adaptation may lead to unexpected outcomes. Many writers believe that the key to successful change is enabling teacher engagement with and reflection on the innovation in question (e.g. Sarason 1990; Fullan 1993; Cowley & Williamson 1998; Helsby 1999; Lieberman & Miller 1999; Olson 2002; Howes *et al* 2005). According to House and McQuillan,

(teachers') beliefs and attitudes about teaching are deeply affected when they experience and reflect upon their own growth: that is, when they

come to understand the impact of an innovation through their own lived experience. In turn, teachers lend a critical degree of meaning and viability to an innovation through their own efforts to make sense of it (House & McQuillan 1998: 206).

Such reflection is needed if reculturing (Fullan 1993) is to accompany a change initiative. Sarason (1990) warns that willingness to embrace alternatives is a prerequisite of any change. He believes, as does Eisner (1996), that many professionals are trammelled by their professional training; as previously discussed professional socialisation is thus a key factor impeding change, and school cultures reinforce this.

The problem inheres in .. (the) unreflective acceptance of assumptions and axioms that seem so obviously right, natural and proper, that to question them is to question your reality (Sarason 1990: 148).

Good CPD is widely seen as essential to support this process of teacher learning (e.g. Fullan 1993; House & McQuillan 1998; Skilbeck 1998; Helsby 1999; Spillane 1999; 2002). The AifL formative assessment pilot (Hayward *et al* 2004; Hallam *et al* 2004) developed one model for achieving this, dispensing with notions of cascade CPD; instead teachers were provided with ideas and encouraged to experiment. Regular recall meetings took place, and dialogue was sustained with colleagues. Funding was linked to the production of action plans and reports.

It is worth noting that some researchers (e.g. Miles 1998) advocate specific training in the management of change. The role of research needs to be

taken into account here. Hammersley (2002) has criticised the tendency of policy makers to use research findings to justify the imposition of practices on teachers; this is a social-engineering conception of the role of research, where research findings are often cherry-picked to justify existing policy. Hammersley advocates a cognitive resources approach to using research findings, whereby practitioners are aware of findings and use them reflectively to inform practice.

### *Time*

A final theme concerns time. There are two dimensions to this. First, change initiatives require a suitably long time scale for enactment. This is a common theme in the research. Miles (1998) advocates an evolutionary approach to change, to enable the development of trust and rapport. Fink and Stoll (1998) suggest that change needs to be paced. Other authors call for long time scales (e.g. Sarason 1990; Fullan 1993; Miller 1998; Howes *et al* 2005; Priestley 2005). This allows teachers to think big, but start small (Imants 2002). Second, there should be sufficient time for professional dialogue during the enactment phase. The literature suggests that sufficient time to think, talk, plan and evaluate change is a crucial factor in any change process. (e.g. Eisner 1992; Goulder *et al* 1994; Paechter 1995; Malcolm & Byrne 1997; Smyth *et al* 1998; 2003; Helsby 1999; Lieberman & Miller 1999; Olson *et al* 1999; Wubbells & Poppleton 1999; Hayward *et al* 2004; Priestley & Sime 2005).



## Conclusions

The above discussion seeks to convey the complexity of the debates in the educational change literature, and to identify some of the key themes that permeate that debate. What is remarkable for me is that, despite differences of emphasis, the majority of the writing is fairly consistent about many of these themes: teacher engagement and autonomy, clear policy guidance and effective leadership, collaboration and collegiality are present in much of the literature. The literature is fairly consistent in highlighting the complexity of social change. It has been said that education papers are written in arcane and abstract theoretical language and do not take account of the 'gritty materialities' (Apple 2000: 229) found in the real world, and encountered daily by practitioners in schools. There may be an element of truth in this, but there are also many valid and useful practical insights to be gained from such papers, which are often grounded in solid empirical research. The papers and books reviewed in this chapter have provided me with such insights, and have allowed me to greatly develop my own thinking on the issue of educational change.

Nevertheless, there are gaps in the literature. As noted at the start of the chapter, the American literature is comprehensive, and covers many of the key issues. Research and writing from the United Kingdom is more sparse. Notable exceptions lie in the work of Ball (e.g. 1997), Helsby (e.g. 1999) and Ruddock (1991). Comprehensive work in this field in Scotland is rarer still, and moreover the published research into 5-14 (e.g. Swann & Brown 1997) is at least ten years old. The contribution of this literature review has

therefore been to provide a foundation for further research and theorising within a Scottish context.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING CHANGE: DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR MACRO AND MICRO ANALYSIS**

#### **Theory and practice**

This chapter is concerned with theory as it applies to educational change. Giacquinta (1998) believes that much of the educational change literature fails to take sufficient account of relevant social theory, and the chapter will start to address how relevant social theory can be used to complement the literature review in the interrogation of my empirical findings. The chapter is thus concerned with making explicit the relationship between theory and practice, to ensure that methodology is firmly rooted in relevant theory. In doing so, it will explore the relationships between ontology, epistemology and methodology, drawing upon a critical realist perspective (Archer 1988; 1995; 1998; 2000; Bhaskar & Lawson 1998; Bhaskar 1998a; 1998b; Sayer 1992; Scott 2005; 2007). I will conclude the chapter by presenting a set of methodological tools to facilitate the analysis of my research data.

A theory/practice binary has been problematic in much social research. For example, Sayer (1992) identifies a dichotomy in the treatment of theoretical and empirical knowledge; this can be variously represented in terms of subject/object, thought/action, mental/material and knowledge/practice. Such thinking is evident in much of the research in educational change. This is problematic as it can encourage the common-sensical analysis of epiphenomena, rather than a deeper inquiry into the ontological bases of

social phenomena; in other words an over-emphasis on practice. An opposite tendency is an over-privileging of theory, for example, as identified by Engeström (1999) in relation to his variant of Activity Theory, the shoehorning of data into an existing theoretical straitjacket. I wish to avoid this dichotomy when analysing my empirical data; as well as drawing on the educational change literature, I therefore seek to ensure that my analysis is informed by relevant social theory, ensuring that it is robust and consistent (making basic ontological assumptions explicit); theory thus provides the building blocks for analysis of social phenomena and practices, and has practical methodological utility.

Moreover there is a dialectical relationship between the various elements of Sayer's dichotomy in the research process; objects of research are not intransitive, as might be the case with a distant star being observed by an astronomer; in social research such objects are subject to change as a result of the research process, which constitutes a part of the ongoing social interaction that drives social reproduction and transformation. There is thus a dynamic, two-way relationship between ontology and epistemology, as the act of describing social objects impacts upon their form and nature; in turn the dynamic nature of social reality means that the conclusions drawn from social inquiry are inevitably fallible and/or provisional, and subject to changed interpretations over time.

## **Realist ontology and epistemology**

Critical realism is predicated on a position of ontological monism, but epistemological relativism (Bhaskar & Lawson 1998). According to this philosophy:

- The world, including the social world, exists independently of our knowledge of it. In other words structures and cultural forms that have an existence independent of the knower.
- The social world is stratified, consisting not only of people but of social objects (i.e. social structures and cultural forms). These may be known to us, but such knowledge may be simply epiphenomenal. Alternatively, social objects may be noumenal and it may even be beyond our ability to guess their existence. Thus what we know is inevitably less extensive than what is.
- Social objects are generated by the interaction of agents with reality. Knowledge production is a social practice. Such knowledge is 'fallible and theory-laden' (Sayer 1992: 5).
- Social objects exert causal pressures on social practices, and are thus constitutive of social reality.

A key feature of critical realism is that it seeks to avoid the tendency to conflate ontology and epistemology, known as the epistemic fallacy (Bhaskar & Lawson 1998; Archer 2000; Scott 2000). Sayer's (1992) distinction between thought objects and real objects neatly encapsulates the differential between reality and our various and diverse perceptions of it. Critical realism posits that our subjective knowledge is gained through our

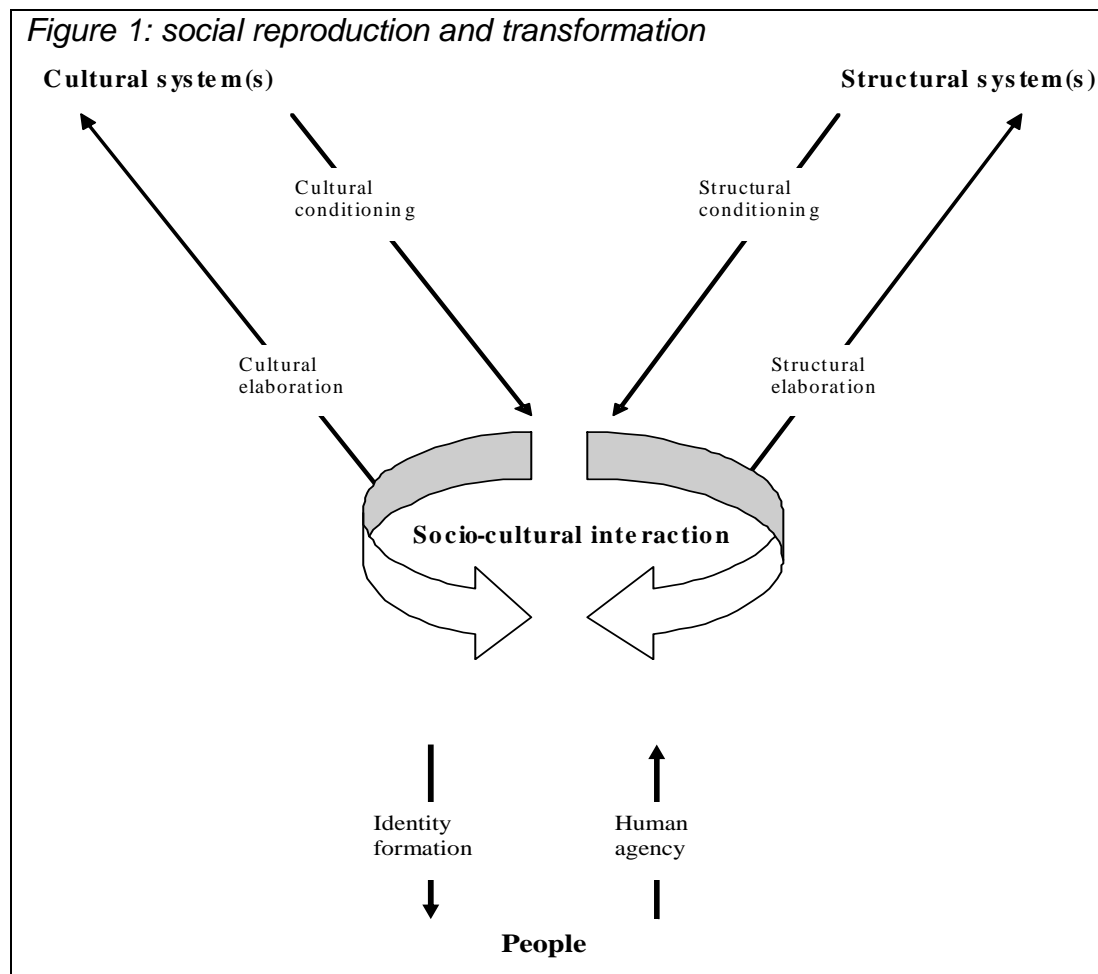
experiences of reality, and that perception is mediated through prior experience and identity formation. Such knowledge is necessarily incomplete and may be flawed. Nevertheless human knowledge may be brought into play (collectively and individually, consciously and sub-consciously), via the medium of socio-cultural interaction, to act back upon and even alter some of the structures and cultural forms that comprise social reality. According to Sayer, it does not matter whether knowledge is true or false; in both cases social practices are dependent on meaning.

The important point is that both misunderstanding and understanding concern meaning, and whether meanings are delusions or correct they can be constitutive of social phenomena, and therefore cannot be ignored in studying society (Sayer 1992: 38).

### **Culture, structure, agency**

I see the social world as a triad of culture, structure and agency. These elements can be separated analytically in order that inquiry into social contexts can take place. Interpretive inquiry into human interactions may explore the nature of culture and relationships; from such inquiry, we may be able to infer the existence of deeper underlying structures, and make claims about the causal relationships between the three dimensions of the triad, bearing in mind that epistemic certainty cannot be guaranteed, and that any such claims must be treated as potentially incomplete, inadequate or subject to change (Scott 2007). Figure 1 shows how the triad may be conceptualised. I shall presently explore the relationships between the three elements of the triad, but first I shall briefly explain each aspect, as well as

the nexus – socio-cultural interaction – where these elements come together.



### *Socio-cultural interaction*

According to Bhaskar (1998b), society is not a simple aggregation of individuals, but is rather about the relations that exist between individuals and groups. This is a useful definition that serves to characterise the cauldron of socio-cultural interaction, within which structural and cultural transformation and reproduction occur. Human agents may of course be aware or unaware of such relations. Bhaskar (ibid: 209) illustrates this conception of society by referring to the persistent relations that exist

between 'capitalist and worker, MP and constituent, student and teacher, husband and wife'; such relations depend not only on interactions between autonomous individuals, but are also subject to the causal influences of culture (knowledge and ideology) and structure (e.g. power relations). The nexus at which agency, culture and structure interact is described by Archer (1988) as the socio-cultural level, represented here as the centre of the process. Identity formation, and cultural and structural reproduction and transformation occur because of interactions between individuals and groups at this level.

### *Culture*

In Archer's view (1998; 1995; 2000), human culture does not simply exist in the heads of people; it has an objective reality independent of the knower. For instance, knowledge may be unknown to living individuals; it may be in a book waiting to be found, as would be the case with a rediscovered Bach composition. Such culture pre-exists human actors; as Archer (1988) suggests, the ideas of long dead actors can continue to influence social practices today. In turn social practices influence the form that culture will take in future. Writers drawing upon evolutionary socio-biology to explain social evolution (e.g. Dennett 1996; 2007; Balkin 1998) describe units of cultural transmission as memes, with relatively enduring existence. As with Archer's cultural forms, meme theory suggests that ideas are subject to human activity for their continued existence, being passed virus-like from human to human, society to society and generation to generation by social interaction; their passage has the potential to transform social practices,



enabling or inhibiting social development. Balkin (1998) believes that there are many types of meme, including beliefs, values, norms, ideas and other kinds of information. This is a slightly broader view of human culture than that posited by Archer (1998), and includes the sorts of knowledge that underpin skills.

According to Dennett (2007), memes replicate and transform in the environment of human minds; these are not 'passive receptors of memes .... (but) are active processors and recombiners of the cultural messages they receive from others' (Balkin 1998: 52). I believe that the meme theorists tend to overstate their conception of memes, ascribing a sort of quasi-agency to them; thus, memes are said to compete actively for their places in human minds, for instance 'opportunistically (mutating) ... to increase their chances of propagation and survival' (ibid: 88). This tendency may simply be a consequence of the over-literal use of the analogy with Darwinian gene theory, but it potentially obscures and distorts a useful concept. However, with this caveat in mind, I will henceforth utilise the term meme to refer to the separate cultural forms that make up the cultural system.

Memes combine to form the cultural software (ibid) which both constrains human thought and action, and also enables creativity; memes are encountered, and assimilated into human thought, reproducing and mutating in the process.

The power of human reason, made possible in part by the memes we possess, is also the power to mutate those memes and create something new from something old. We are not simply inheritors of a

zealously guarded patrimony but entrepreneurial producers of new cultural software, which will help constitute future generations of human beings ... a story of freedom mixed with, and paradoxically made possible by constraint (ibid: 52).

### *Structure*

Memes are one type of social reality; another comprises social structures, which may be defined as the emergent properties of 'systems of human relationships among social positions' (Porpora 1998: 339). This definition contrasts with that from Giddens's (1979; 1984) structuration theory which views social structures as rules and resources that govern human behaviour. In Porpora's view,

the causal effects of structure on individuals are manifested in certain structured interests, resources, powers, constraints and predicaments that are built into each position by the web of relationships (Porpora 1998: 344).

Such emergent properties comprise the material conditions within which human activity occurs, although, as with memes, they do not necessarily determine such activity, given that humans are creative, reflexive and reflective, and have the capacity to act counter to such constraints. As well as providing the context for human activity, structures are modified by the intended and unintended consequences of such activity. However this is not the instantiation of structures that is posited in structuration theory. As with memes, structures pre-exist human activity, but are modified by such

activity. In Archer's terms (1995), the emergent properties of structures escape their creators to act back on them. Like memes, they have an objective reality, persisting in time and space; roles and relationships established by long dead actors can thus exert an influence on subsequent generations.

### *Agency*

Human agency is a much debated concept. Psychologists such as Kohlberg and Piaget have ascribed high value to agency in their theories, describing it in terms of rational autonomy (Biesta & Tedder 2006). In neo-Marxist and other critical theory, education is viewed as being an important driver in developing agency; agency is often described in such literature as being about empowerment, emancipation and individual growth (ibid). But what is agency? According to Biesta and Tedder (2006: 11), agency is the capacity of actors to 'critically shape their responses to problematic situations'. Calhoun (in Biesta & Tedder 2006: 5) describes agency as the capacity for autonomous action' and 'the ability to operate independently of the determining constraints of social structure'. Archer (2000) similarly views agency as relative autonomy and causal efficacy.

Such views of agency construe it as:

- The capability to act in the face of the constraints offered by society. Biesta and Tedder (2006) draw on Giddens, suggesting that in the complex conditions of high modernity, agency is both more necessary than previously, and also more difficult.

- Something that can potentially develop over time; indeed the temporal aspect of agency is prominent in much of the literature (e.g. Archer 2000; Emirbayer & Mische 1998; Biesta & Tedder 2006).

According to Archer (2000), personal and social identity develop as individuals interact with their environment (both culture and structure), with the natural environment and with other individuals and groups. Such development is historical but an ongoing process, and has its roots in practice. In Archer's view, 'our sense of self is prior and primitive to our sociality' (ibid: 13), but that the emerging sense of self is heavily influenced by society and by other experiences. Emirbayer and Mische develop this thesis further, seeing agency as:

a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects with the contingencies of the moment) (Emirbayer & Mische 1998: 963).

I see agency in such terms, and would furthermore agree with Archer (2000) that human agents are reflexive and creative and can act counter to societal constraints; agents are influenced by, but not determined by structure and culture. Through inner dialogue (ibid), and 'manoeuvre amongst repertoires' (Biesta & Tedder 2006: 11), agents may act to change their relationships to structures (Emirbayer & Mische 1998), and indeed to society and the world in general.

The above discussion of agency illustrates how agency is interlinked with structure, and especially with culture. Balkin states that:

individuals are creative. They modify skills, combine information, draw inferences, and stretch conventions. To be sure, people always do these things by making use of the cultural software they already possess. But this fact does not make their activity any less creative; indeed, their cultural software enables their creativity by providing thought with a necessary framework for problem solving and innovation (Balkin 1998: 52).

The notion of cultural software – the knowledge, skills and values that individuals possess – is a useful one for understanding how agency can be enhanced or constrained by culture, and has clear implications for policy makers seeking to change practice in schools through the promulgation of new ideas and practices. Balkin (*ibid*: 1) refers to cultural software as toolmaking tools, which we employ to advance our thinking through a process of bricolage. Cultural software exists as both individual capacity and as collective traditions.

In summary, critical realism allows for historicity and reflexive human agency in a way that Giddens's notions of structuration, instantiation and duality of structure and agency do not. Social structures are intertwined with memes (for example as an ideology may be closely associated with power structures), but may be separated analytically to permit inquiry into social interaction (Archer 1988; 1995; 2000; Balkin 1998). This is not a duality, nor is it a binary opposition implying the sorts of separation of structure and

agency and mind and matter, inherent in the Cartesian and Enlightenment thinking that has underpinned many of modernity's philosophical currents; rather, it is an analytical separation which helps us to unpick and understand the ways in which people interact with their social and physical environments, and to analyse the relative weight given to each of the causal factors inherent in any change situation. Within such a world view, structure and culture provide the environment, within which human agency is made possible and/or constrained, but paradoxically are also consequences of such agency.

### **Agency versus society: a much contested terrain**

As implied in the above discussion, the interplay of the three elements of the triad is highly contested. Biesta and Tedder (2006: 5) suggest that 'it can even be argued that the structure-agency debate has become one of the defining discussions of modern sociology'. The next section will touch upon this debate, in order to explain my own position on the issue. Broadly speaking, three archetypal positions can be identified.

1. Positions that ascribe a high degree of individual agency to change contexts.
2. Positions that suggest that society (structures and memes) is more important in influencing or determining social change.
3. Positions which view social change more in terms of an interplay between society and agency.

These three positions should be viewed as archetypes rather than as absolute categories or Durkheimian or Weberian stereotypes (Bhaskar 1998b). For instance, writers advocating the primacy of human agency may also attribute considerable importance to societal structures, although it would be possible to identify their thinking as tending towards one or other of the archetypes.

The first archetype privileges human agency. The Enlightenment, modernist view sees humans as 'self-motivated, self-directing, rational subject(s), capable of exercising individual agency' (Usher & Edwards, 1994: 2). Such thinking underpinned much of the technical rationality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including neo-liberal conceptions of homo-economicus and enlightened self-interest as the basis of social action. Archer criticises this tradition of 'Modernity's Man' (1988: 11), terming it upwards conflation: this is an 'undersocialised view of man' (ibid), where people operate relatively unimpeded by social constraints, and society is epiphenomenal to the agent. Bhaskar (1998b: 212) is also critical of this 'Weberian stereotype of Voluntarism', describing it as comprising actions without conditions.

Such notions have also been attacked by postmodernist thinkers, who have sought to challenge modernity's belief in teleological progress and faith in actors as agents of change (e.g. Popkewitz, 1997; Popkewitz & Brennan 1997). The postmodern critique has sought to negate this view, supplanting agency with structure. According to one thinker, 'many of the wants, values and priorities of decision making are determined by the structural and historical conditions of our institutions' (Popkewitz, quoted by Paechter,

1995: 47). Webster is another writer who has pointed to the influence of social structures in inhibiting change. He offers a deterministic analysis of change, suggesting that:

mechanisms of fixity and persistence in society ... the sheer power of conservatism in social life: the power of custom, tradition, habit and mere inertia - all militate against structural change (Webster 1976: 202).

This sort of world view has also come under attack, by those who see it as a form of social determinism. For instance Archer has criticised what she sees as an 'oversocialised view of man'; someone who is 'shaped and moulded by his social context' (Archer, 2000: 11), an individual who is little more than an epiphenomenon of society. Archer refers to such views, where agency is placed in a straitjacket by structure and culture, as downwards conflation. Again Bhaskar (1998b: 212) echoes such criticisms, referring to the 'Durkheim stereotype of Reification'; in other words a privileging of conditions over actions.

Critical realism posits a centrist position in this debate, suggesting that the cultural and social systems condition (but do not determine) the dispositions, attitudes and behaviours of individual actors in varying ways. This does not automatically privilege either agency or culture/structure in its portrayal of social interaction, reproduction and transformation. Nor does it accept the more deterministic processes inherent in Giddens's (1979; 1984) theory of structuration. Archer (1988; 1995; 2000) refers to structuration as central conflation, where there is no easily discernible distinction between



conditions and actions, and where, in Bhaskar's (1998b) view, a false dialectic between the individual and society is established. Archer raises a number of objections to this approach. For example, she states that the duality of structure and agency in structuration theory 'effectively precludes a specification of when there will be more voluntarism and more determinism' (Archer 1988: 86). It assumes that all actors enjoy an equal measure of transformative freedom. In contradistinction to this, Archer believes that social acts are not equally fettered by the system, and that they do not each have the same degree of effect on the cultural and structural systems; although she cautions that it is not always possible to specify the causal mechanisms that lead to variations in agency, particularly in complex social organisations such as schools, she suggests that analytical separation allows us to at least attempt analysis. Central conflation does not because it denies autonomy to each level. In Archer's view, structuration assumes that the cultural and structural systems have no objective existence, substituting a form of idealism where discourses are contingent on being sustained by social actors through a process of instantiation, and where socio-cultural interaction cannot be analysed independently of cultural and structural systems.

I am in broad agreement with Archer's centrist position in this debate. It posits a sophisticated interplay between the three elements of the triad, occurring through the socio-cultural interactions of people in social settings. Such a view, while accepting the interdependences inherent in such a relationship, also allows for an analytical separation of the various elements, enabling explanatory inquiry into the nature of society, and especially into

the sorts of social dynamics that are inherent in any change situation. The next section further advances this possibility, through the exploration of Archer's (1995) social theories, which are highly relevant to the analysis of educational change.

### **Morphogenesis/Morphostasis**

Margaret Archer's social theory is called Morphogenesis/Morphostasis (MM), the terms referring to social transformation and reproduction, and is predicated upon critical realist foundations. MM posits that there exist varying degrees of agency, by human agents who are active and reflexive. Such an agent is 'someone who has the properties and powers to monitor their own life, to mediate structural and cultural properties of society and thus to contribute to societal reproduction or transformation' (Archer 2000: 19). Personal and social identity are largely formed through interaction with reality, although psychological architecture (Balkin 1998) clearly plays a role. Identity subsequently informs action, as individuals interact with reality, and interactions are subject to reflexive evaluations of cost/benefit and success/failure (e.g. physical danger, failure at work, social rejection). Such outcomes and our assessments of them affect us emotionally, so that subsequent decisions about action are affective as well as cognitive (ibid). Although cultural and structural systems predate socio-cultural interaction, actors being situated within an ideational and structural context, this is not determinism as:

- conditioning may pull in different directions.
- humans have a reflective capacity (discursive consciousness).

- systemic influences are only part of the story; causal relations operating between groups and individuals at the socio-cultural level are also important.

A person is thus both the 'child and parent of society' (Archer 2000: 11) and voluntarism is possible, but restricted by 'cultural conditioning and the current politics of the possible' (Archer 1988: xxiv).

MM views the cultural and structural systems as being parallel but autonomous. They are interrelated without one determining the other and intersect via socio-cultural interaction. Thus:

- social decisions may be conditioned by both material interests and memes.
- the promotion of interests may be enmeshed with an ideology, and come to reflect the ideology.
- alternatively an ideology may come to be identified with an interest group, and be modified by this identification.

Association of memes with interest groups can enhance or diminish both. Memes may be coherent but fail to gain consensus because they run counter to structures (especially power interests). Conversely a meme may be logically inconsistent (or in tension with existing ideas) but be accepted because it gains consensus at socio-cultural level. Morphostasis may occur even when people accept new memes, because of structural stability and the continuation of shared practices that form tradition. According to (Archer 1988: 12), 'individuals live inductively from past contexts to future ones

because they are engaged in unchanging activities'. In this case socio-cultural practices (and underlying social structures) perpetuate old ways of doing things even when ideas change.

Such practices may be the result of the material interests of actors and may be strengthened by manipulation by those who have an interest in maintaining old practices, although even in such cases, absolute stasis is unlikely; small differences of meaning amongst human agents are likely to lead to slow, evolutionary change although this may not be apparent to the actors (Balkin 1998). Lack of change may simply be due to the lack of cultural alternatives (caused for example by a lack of social differentiation), or an absence of the vocabulary and concepts for change within the cultural system. External impetus may of course introduce new memes to a cultural sub-system; in the case of schools, which as open systems may nevertheless have strong sub-cultures, academic research or new policy texts may fulfil this role.

Four key principles underpin Archer's (1995) model, as it seeks to provide a framework for understanding the processes that lead to morphogenesis and morphostasis in the cultural and structural systems of society.

1. There exist logical relations between the components of the cultural and structural systems (e.g. contradiction and coherence).
2. There are causal influences exerted by the cultural and structural systems on the socio-cultural level.
3. There are causal relationships between groups and individuals at the socio-cultural level.

4. The cultural and structural systems are elaborated because of socio-cultural interaction, modifying current logical relationships and adding new ones.

According to Archer's (ibid) social theory, two sets of logical relations exist within the cultural and structural systems, and between different memes and structures. These are complementarities and contradictions<sup>3</sup>. These conditions occur when there are points of agreement or points of tension between or within different memes or interests. Such agreements and tensions are then played out via socio-cultural interaction, and cultural and structural systems are elaborated as a result. For example, complementarities occur where two memes are in tune. In such a case new memes are consistent with the ideas, norms and values that already exist within society. The new meme B is consonant with the old way of thinking, meme A; there is thus little or no cognitive dissonance and society readily assimilates the new notion, providing that it does not provoke dissonance with prevailing structures. Morphostasis is therefore a likely result of such a sequence. Contradictions, where two or more memes conflict, are more likely to lead to morphogenesis, as they create cognitive dissonance and social dilemmas, and lead to intensified socio-cultural interaction. Archer (1988) provides three potential and archetypal socio-cultural consequences of such contradictions within the cultural system.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Archer identifies different types of contradiction and complementarity, depending on whether they occur internally within the cultural or structural systems, or if they are played out at the level of socio-cultural interaction. For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to reduce categorisation to simple recognition of contradiction and complementarity, focusing analysis at the level of socio-cultural interaction (as actors respond to a change initiative).

1. B (the new meme) is corrected by A (the existing meme) so that B becomes consistent with A. Balkin (1998) suggests that some memes act as filters to prevent the assimilation of new memes. In such a scenario, the new meme does not affect the status quo, but is modified (or mutates) to fit with existing ideas, norms and values, and change does not take place: this is morphostasis.
2. The new meme highlights inconsistencies/problems in the old, which is modified. B corrects A so that A becomes consistent with B. Existing ideas, norms and values are thus modified to fit with the new memes, producing a form of morphogenesis. While this may occur in some areas of society, where a new invention or discovery renders old knowledge manifestly obsolete and occasions a paradigm shift, this would appear to be an extreme archetype in the context of schooling where established patterns are persistent; it would be rare for teachers to completely transform their practice in response to a new initiative.
3. A and B are both corrected so they can coexist with some degree of coherence – new memes correct existing memes, but are modified themselves in the process. This is a dialectical process that leads to cultural elaboration. A and B become A<sup>1</sup> and B<sup>1</sup> – different but related to the originals. Morphogenesis occurs, and socio-cultural interaction leads to elaboration of the cultural and structural systems. Research suggests that much educational change fits this pattern, as teachers mediate change to fit with existing practices, while changing those practices in response to the new initiative (e.g. Osborn *et al*, 1997).

In all cases, these processes occur over time, and are subject to socio-cultural interaction, which explores gaps and inconsistencies, attempts to resolve them and develops language (often technical) to explain ideas. Archer (1988) believes that as systems become more complicated, it becomes harder to assimilate new memes without major disruption; in other words complex systems tend have an inherent conservatism and require disruption to foster large scale change. As systems become more complex even small modifications may be problematic, and a negative feedback loop results which discourages morphogenesis. However, this is not to say that change will not happen as systems become more complex; the existence of more ideational alternatives means greater choice and increased potential for repertoire manoeuvre (Biesta & Tedder 2006) for actors. Nor does it mean that society will remain static if there is a high degree of cultural homogeneity. The existence (or absence) of ideational choice is only one of several factors that determine whether change will occur.

### **Theory into practice**

House and McQuillan (1998) have pointed to the tendency for scholars to use abstract and idealised models that ignore the complexity of the real world. The validity of the model for understanding change, outlined in the previous section, must, therefore, lie in its applicability to real world issues. An essential question in this case is whether the theoretical model outlined in the last section can be usefully and validly applied to education settings, especially those concerned with the analysis of change, in the light of a new curriculum initiative containing challenges to existing practices. I contend

that the theories provide a useful and relevant set of epistemological assumptions to underpin the analysis of the change initiative that forms the basis of this study.

As discussed in chapter one, the 5-14 Social Subjects curriculum statement establishes a potential mechanism for inter-disciplinary teaching of Geography, History and Modern Studies. A number of features of the framework might encourage such an approach by providing challenges to the traditional means of teaching them as separate and often disconnected subjects, including the adoption of the epithetic synonyms *People and Place*, *People in the Past* and *People in Society*, grouped together as the Social Subjects, and the designation of a common set of core skills (*Enquiry* and *Developing Informed Attitudes*). This new cultural innovation can be characterised crudely as coming into conflict in many secondary schools with existing culture (e.g. prevailing memes about the hegemony of the separate subject and the nature of knowledge encapsulated by school pseudo-disciplines) and structures that emerge from school systems (e.g. political units represented by separate school departments) that are significantly at odds with the new memes. Such contradictions may stimulate cognitive dissonance, and encourage morphogenesis.

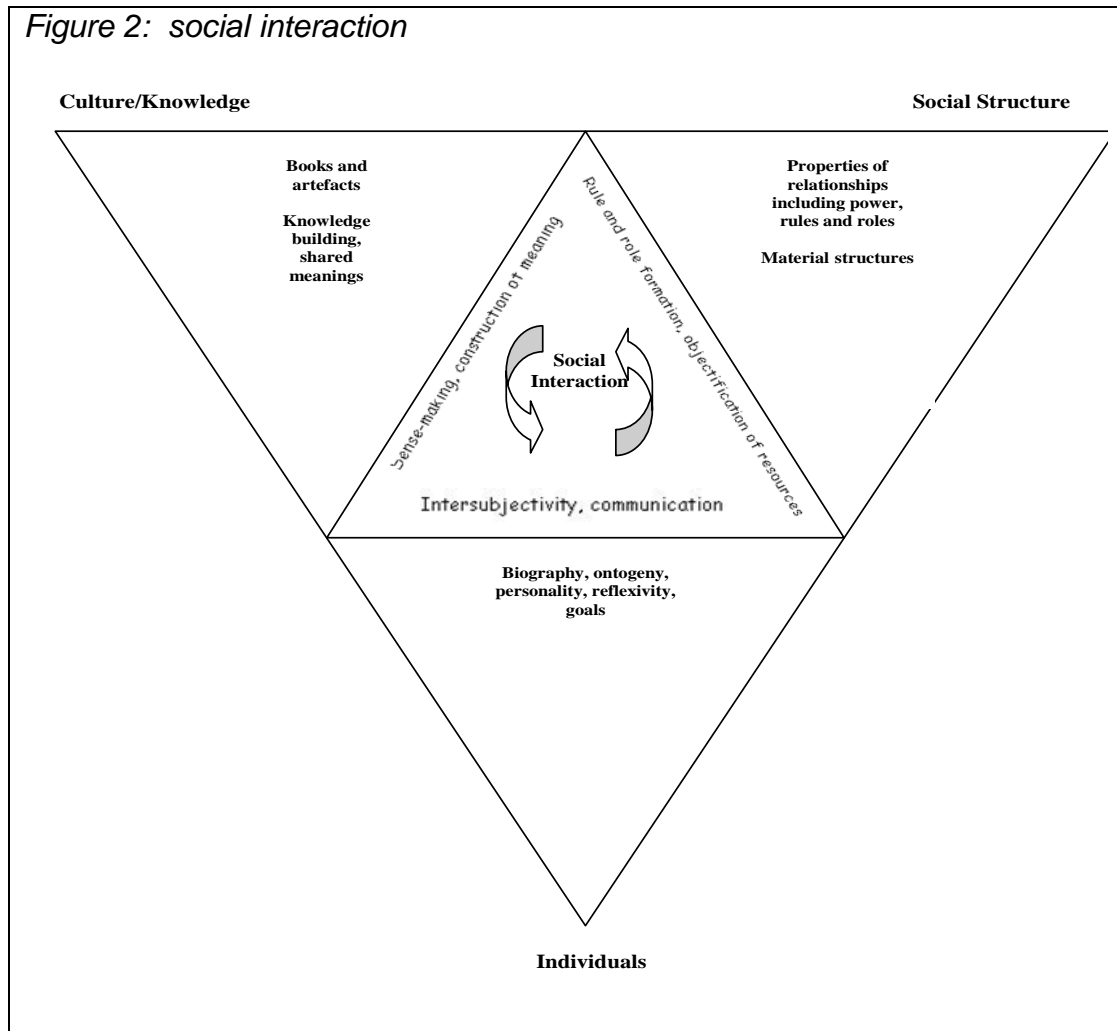
Archer's model thus allows us to begin to analyse the interplay between culture, structure and agency at the nexus where it occurs, socio-cultural interaction, or the lived realities of individual actors within their social settings. I would concur with Scott that the 'methodological point of entry into this process is the relationships between the agential and structural



objects' (Scott 2007: 152). The outcomes of these are personal and social identity formation (in the individual), and reproduction and transformation of the cultural and structural domains (cultural and structural elaboration). Analytical separation of the dimensions of the triad permits inquiry into historical cycles of morphogenesis and morphostasis, as well as the relative roles that each dimension plays in these processes. MM accounts for systems thinking and the complexity inherent in dynamic open systems (Senge 1990); as such it may provide a non-linear view of causality that helps us to understand the complex interactions that take place within any ecological system where change occurs. Finally MM allows us to consider the role that cognitive dissonance plays in stimulating the socio-economic interactions that lead to societal reproduction and transformation.

Nevertheless, elements of MM remain problematic in my view. At a macro/theoretical level, the definition of culture as knowledge is quite narrow, and does not easily allow for knowledge related aspects of culture such as values and skills to be encapsulated. As previously stated, meme theory's wider conception of culture addresses this issue, while being compatible with Archer's overall grounding in critical realism. At a methodological level I believe there are limitations in the use of the model for micro analysing the processes of educational change. The theories allow for the possibility of micro analysis of specific social settings, but do not provide the means for looking in detail at socio-cultural interaction. To use Balkin's (1998) toolmaking metaphor, the model provides the tools to make the tools, but the tool making is left to the user. Indeed Archer (1995: 159) admits this, stating that MM provides toolkits that 'presume that practitioners

have to do considerable substantive work with them'. This is justified because 'how specific analytical cycles are carved out historically depends upon the problem in hand' (ibid: 154).



For example, Archer's theories may allow us to account for the possibility that some schools will interpret the 5-14 curriculum guidelines for the social subjects in terms of subject integration, and allow us to identify causal mechanisms in broad terms, for instance prevailing cultural forms, different structures and the existence of different social groupings. They do not provide us with precision tools to easily analyse in detail the day-to-day

interactions between groups, and the varying influence that the different components of the cultural and structural systems will have on individuals within the groups and on the groups themselves.

The challenge then is to develop tools to get inside socio-cultural interaction. Any framework for micro analysis needs to be sufficiently flexible to account for the relative causal strength of the many and variable factors that are specific to given social interactions. The analytical separation enabled by Archer's model provides a starting point, from which I have developed a process for interrogating these interactions and bridging the gap between critical realist epistemology and methodology. Figure 2 (previous page) shows how this might be represented.

It is useful to illustrate how this may be applied in practice. Figure 3 (overleaf) exemplifies the sorts of generic questions that might be posed when inquiring into the processes of change within a particular education context. These questions are based upon the epistemic assumptions of my critical realist perspective: that morphogenesis and/or morphostasis will occur as a result of the interplay between culture, structure and agency via social interaction; that memes and social structures are social realities with causal properties; and that individuals exercise discursive consciousness in their interactions, choosing reflexively between a repertoire of possible actions in any given social situation. They enable the analysis of complex morphogenetic and morphostatic cycles within, for instance, school departments grappling with innovation, through both exploration of the meanings that individuals construct in respect of their social environments

and the memes that they encounter, and inference regarding the existence of social structures that emerge from the relationships experienced by these individuals.

*Figure 3: generic questions for analysing social interaction*

| <b>Social Interaction</b>  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do teachers and managers react to the new ideas?</li> <li>• Do the new ideas stimulate dialogue?</li> <li>• What new systems and structures develop as a result of the new ideas?</li> <li>• How is new knowledge constructed as a result of the engagement with the ideas?</li> <li>• How do individual motives translate through interaction into group goals?</li> <li>• What new artefacts develop as a result of such engagement?</li> <li>• What constraints do school and external systems place upon social interaction?</li> <li>• How do relationships between the various actors impact on enactment?</li> </ul> |   |  |
| <b>Culture/Knowledge</b>   | <b>Individual/Agency</b>  | <b>Social structure</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What existing notions of practice exist in this area?</li> <li>• Do these constitute a collective tradition?</li> <li>• What new ideas does the change initiative introduce?</li> <li>• To what extent do new and old memes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ have internal consistency?</li> <li>○ concur and conflict with other current memes?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which individuals interact within the change context?</li> <li>• What views do teachers and managers hold about teaching and learning?</li> <li>• What biographical details of individuals might influence the reception of the new ideas?</li> <li>• What motives and goals do individuals have?</li> <li>• How much knowledge do individuals possess about the issues involved?</li> <li>• What capacities do individuals have for self-reflection and reflexivity?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What relationships exist within the change context (roles, internal and external connections)?</li> <li>• What existing systems may influence enactment of the new ideas (including external systems such as exams)?</li> <li>• How might classroom and school geography affect enactment?</li> </ul> |

Clearly there are some caveats here. These questions are necessarily generic, and interrogation of research data from any specific school context will raise additional questions, both generic and more specific to the particular context. Nevertheless they potentially serve two purposes. First, they provide a useful starting point for generating more context specific research questions, conceptual frameworks and interview schedules for researching particular issues within particular educational change contexts.

Second, they may be used, once data has been generated, to interrogate it and to draw conclusions from it, and to engage in theory building. The final chapters of the thesis will do just this, taking as their starting point the key themes generated through data analysis, to develop a generic model for the explanation of curriculum change in Scottish secondary schools.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **MY RESEARCH PROJECT**

The previous chapter outlined my theoretical framework in some detail, and developed a methodological basis for practical social inquiry from this. This chapter has a different focus: to identify the 'intellectual puzzles' (Mason 1996: 14) or research questions that are at the heart of the empirical component, and to further outline methods to tackle these puzzles. The chapter will spell out the aims of the research and the research questions before describing the design of the study, justifying the chosen approaches in the light of the discussion of the previous chapter. In particular, I will set the parameters for the study, describing the 'data generation' (ibid: 35) and data analysis methods used in the study, and outline ethical issues.

#### **Research aims**

This research is structured around three general aims and two specific objectives:

##### *Aims*

- To contribute to understanding of the processes of curriculum change.
- To generate knowledge about how Scottish secondary teachers respond to externally directed curriculum change, in particular the 5-14 *Environmental Studies 5-14* guidelines.

- To investigate the influence that subject identity and teacher beliefs have on the capacity and will of Scottish secondary teachers of the Social Subjects to respond to innovation.

### *Objectives*

- To develop a model for reflection that may inform school-based curriculum innovation and the management of change in schools.
- To inform future policy-making in Scotland in respect of facilitating change in schools.

### **Research questions**

The research addressed the following questions:

- 1) What forms of social subjects provision exist in Scottish secondary schools?
- 2) How is externally driven curriculum change constructed at a school level:
  - a) by individual teachers?
  - b) collectively within departments?
  - c) by senior managers?
- 3) What memes influence the construction of curriculum?
- 4) What social structures influence the construction of curriculum?
- 5) How do teachers' professional knowledge and skills, beliefs and values influence the construction of curriculum?

For practical purposes these questions will be developed further later in the chapter when data generation is discussed in detail.

## **The design of the study**

The research took the form of a naturalistic inquiry, employing qualitative methods. According to Denzin and Lincoln,

qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter ... qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln 1988: 3).

In this case, the natural settings were two schools, or more specifically the clusters of social subjects departments within their wider school settings. The teachers within the schools formed a series of linked case studies with intrinsic interest (Stake 2000), but also with the potential to generate transferable theory that is applicable to other settings.

Qualitative research is consistent with critical realism, which posits ontological monism, but epistemological relativism. Qualitative research allows me to access the perspectival spectra of meaning that are constructed by people in the course of their daily interactions. It allows me some access to individual points of view - representations of reality rather than reality itself - and generates rich data or 'thick descriptions' (Geertz cited in Stake 2000: 439) of such meanings. I believe that the meanings constructed by actors are constitutive of social reality, and that interpretive researching of these meanings potentially gives us insights into the different strata of social reality. This is consistent with the views of many other



researchers who subscribe to a realist philosophy: for example Hammersley (1992: 52) talks of a 'subtle realism'; Altheide & Johnson (1998: 292) posit 'analytical realism'; and Huberman and Miles state their transcendental realist position explicitly:

Fundamentally we believe that social phenomena exist not only in the mind, but in the objective world as well, and that there are lawful, reasonably stable relationships to be found among them (Huberman & Miles 1998: 182).

Social research predicated on critical realism aims to describe and explain patterns of relationships, and the emergent properties of these relationships; these might include power differentials and organisational roles. Huberman and Miles believe that:

qualitative studies are especially well suited to finding causal relationships; they can look directly and longitudinally at the local processes underlying a temporal series of events and states, showing how these led to specific outcomes, and ruling out rival hypotheses. In effect we get inside the black box; we can understand not just that a particular thing happened, but how and why it happened (Huberman & Miles 1998: 191).

An issue facing me in the course of qualitative research is the need to secure a balance between particularity (thick descriptions) and generality (theory generation). An emphasis on the latter can obscure the former (Stake 2000). My research has contributed towards the development of

generic principles that may be used by teachers, local authorities and policy makers interested in promoting sustainable change in schools. However such an outcome should not obscure the often idiosyncratic and socially contingent nature of schools. Put simply, what drives change in one school may be completely irrelevant in another. The main focus of my research was to provide an in-depth understanding of the multiple meanings (Gubrium cited in Silverman 2000) and multiple trajectories and social epistemologies (Popkewitz 1997) that apply in any given situation. Once this had occurred, careful comparison of the case studies enabled the identification of common patterns, themes and questions arising from these social settings that may be transferable to other contexts.

#### *Overview of the research*

My research can be broken down into three distinct phases as follows:

1. The collection of data about school social subjects provision by questionnaire. This was a pre-research phase in some respects, as it enabled the development of subsequent methodology and the selection of case studies.
2. Initial site visits to each of the case study schools to explore school and departmental culture and teacher attitudes in general towards teaching and learning and curriculum change.
3. Follow up site visits to explore the issues that arose at the planning and enactment stages of the 5-14 social subjects guidelines.

I have chosen to adopt a mixed method approach to this research, comprising basic quantitative analysis of questionnaire data, and qualitative analysis of interview and other data from the case study schools. I do not subscribe to the view of some researchers that qualitative and quantitative research fall into the different opposing paradigms or 'rival armed camps' (Silverman 2000: 85). Instead I believe that the two methodologies can be complementary, and that selection of method should concern decisions about fitness for purpose (Gorard 2002). I concur with Robson that a useful approach is:

the view that the differences between the two traditions can be best viewed as technical, enabling the enquirer to mix and match methods according to what best fits a particular study (Robson 1993: 20).

The following methods were used to generate data.

1. *A simple questionnaire, sent to 110 secondary schools, mainly in the central belt of Scotland.* This had a dual qualitative purpose: to categorise schools according to a pre-specified typology (Stake 2000); and to identify suitable case studies. It also enabled some quantitative representation of data. One issue faced by qualitative researchers investigating a huge field such as secondary schooling is 'representativeness' (Silverman 2000: 102). This has a knock on effect on research validity, particularly if the research is to be used to make general claims about causation, or to establish general principles that may be applied to other similar settings. The quantitative data gathered using the questionnaire allowed for the categorisation of schools in

different ways (type of provision, size, etc.), and this provided a basis for sampling, enabling me to make some generalisations from the quantitative data. The data gathered in this phase provided much of the basis for the organisational typology outlined in chapter one.

2. *Semi-structured interviews with teachers and managers.* These enabled me to discover and articulate some of the meanings that teachers give to curriculum change; such meanings help to shape the real world practices. I am interested in the extent to which teachers assimilate new memes into their pre-existing schemata, and especially the factors that might hinder or facilitate the enactment of the new curriculum in respect of subject integration. Interviews formed the main method of data collection for this study. These were loosely based on the hierarchical focusing method (Tomlinson 1989); rather than going into interviews with a blank sheet, the interview schedule was mapped in advance into broad themes, further subdivided into more specific issues. The advantage of this technique is that interviews can begin as open conversations, allowing for progression to a more closed framing of the subject matter if the respondents do not refer to particular key issues. This approach will be developed in more detail in the data sources section of this chapter. I initially considered running student focus groups, and indeed undertook one on the first site visit; however these proved to be of limited value in the generation of data regarding departmental culture and teacher decision-making about curriculum enactment, so this method was dropped on subsequent site visits.

3. *Non-participant observation of teaching and meetings, and participant observation of the daily life of each subject department.* This approach was adopted to complement rather than supplement the interview data. First, I saw this as an opportunity to improve my knowledge of each context, enhancing my understanding of the 'sub-cultures' of each case study (Silverman 2000: 90). Adler and Adler (1998: 81) describe this as a process that 'draws the observer into the phenomenological complexity of the world' being researched. Second, it gave me the opportunity to start to develop shared frames of understanding of meaning with the people being interviewed. Third, the process allowed me to build relationships with the teachers in each department, facilitating open discussion in the interviews. In Fontana's and Frey's (1998: 57) terms these are the processes of 'presenting yourself', 'gaining trust' and 'establishing rapport', that are so important in facilitating a successful research project. A final reason for observation lies in its use to instigate a limited form of stimulated recall; thus discussion of critical incidents in observed lessons could be used as the foundation of conversations about teaching and learning.
4. *Analysis of relevant documentation.* I was acutely aware of the need for care in interpreting such documents. They differ from school to school, both in their content and form, and in the uses to which they are put. They are not transparent representations of practice, but merely indicative of school culture and practices. As such they were not analysed in detail, but read carefully to add to contextual knowledge.

The latter two methods are not methods of triangulation; I agree with Silverman (2000; 2001) that the use of triangulation to settle validity questions is problematic. For example, combining data from interviews and observation could be used to identify where there are significant gaps between the described and enacted curriculum (thus contributing to validity judgments). However such an approach is problematic in these circumstances, largely due to the limits to the amount of data that can be collected by either method. A particular observation may be of a lesson that is atypical, or that is altered because of the presence of an observer; as such any inferences that may be drawn may lack validity in respect of comparison with data collected in interviews. Nevertheless, for reasons described above (e.g. familiarity with context, shared frames of reference) observations can be said to enhance validity, as discussed later in this chapter.

Nor is the multi-method an attempt to build the full picture. Hammersley and Atkinson (cited by Silverman 2000: 99) suggest that 'one should not adopt a naïvely optimistic view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture'; such data may conflict with other data necessitating difficult interpretivist judgments. It is perhaps more apt to describe the multi-method approach as adding to the richness of the data rather than its completeness.

The analysis consisted of interpretive coding of the interview data, supported by the use of the NVIVO qualitative software package. Seale (2000) lists several advantages of using such a package, including rigour,

avoiding the selection only of examples that support the researcher's hypotheses, and facilitating the selection of negative or contrary cases. Clearly such advantages are dependent on the researcher, but such computer packages add power to analysis, enabling the well-meaning researcher to more easily attain these goals. Analysis of interview data started with coding. Initial open coding was undertaken using the smallest case study; the codes were then applied to the remainder of the interview data, and emerging further themes elaborated in the light of complementary and contradictory cases in the data. This 'progressive focusing' (Parlett and Hamilton in Stark & Torrance 2005: 35) allowed me to determine if there were grounds for generalisation or transferability - 'extrapolation' in Alasuutari's terms (Silverman 2000; 110) - through comparison of case studies. This is a deductive/inductive approach, where initial categories may be deductively obtained, but where subsequent theory generation is inductive and emerges from the research.

Such an approach shares features with grounded theory; however I am not proposing the objectivist/naïve realist version of this as expounded by Glaser and Strauss (cited in Silverman 2000: 62), where a researcher can approach a context with a blank sheet and discover the facts. Instead I recognise that all research necessarily starts with some theory, even if it is tacit and undeveloped; this may involve local knowledge of context, or be grounded in relevant literature and/or relevant social theory and philosophy. Moreover, the nature of the theoretical starting point will influence the nature and extent of the knowledge subsequently generated. In my case, I saw the generic questions developed in the previous chapter from my critical realist

position (involving individual agency, memes/culture, social structure and social interaction) as a useful starting point for the research design in general and the research questions in particular. Theory thus influenced the form that data generation took. The use of open coding to initialise data analysis ensured that theory did not become a straitjacket; only once codes had been generated and themes identified was the theory once more overtly utilised and at this point there was considerable potential for contradictory cases to challenge and indeed amend the theory. This approach allows for the application of existing theories and knowledge, while avoiding placing data in a theoretical straitjacket. Thus it can be used to generate questions that can be used to develop new theory, or theory that is specific to particular social settings, by a systematic process of interrogation of data. It can ensure that the coverage of data is rigorous and representative and that contrary cases are taken into account.

There is much debate in the literature on the need (or otherwise) for measures to ensure that research methods are reliable and conclusions about data collected are valid. Indeed a criticism of qualitative research by advocates of scientific, quantitative approaches is that it cannot, by its very nature, ensure reliability or validity, as it lacks scientific rigour. In line with many writers (e.g. Adler & Adler 1998), I would reject such criticisms; the criteria for reliability and validity used to validate quantitative research are meaningless when simply applied to qualitative methods. Validity has been claimed to be improved through the use of multiple researcher perspectives, checking data for negative cases and verisimilitude, a style of writing that draws readers deeply into the world of the researched through the



exploration of rich data (ibid). Hammersley (1992) suggests that subtle realism has four main criteria for validity: plausibility, credibility; relevance; and importance.

There is clearly a need to ensure that methods are reliable and conclusions are valid. According to Fontana and Frey (1998) two problems commonly faced by qualitative researchers conducting and interpreting interviews are the tendency for respondents to say what they think the interviewer wants to hear, and to omit important information. A further charge is that qualitative researchers tend to cherry-pick findings that support their initial hypotheses.

A related issue concerns the impact of my role of researcher on the research context and those within it. I was aware when visiting schools that my personal position on the issue of integrated social subjects may differ considerably from the opinions held by teachers in the schools. According to Fontana and Frey (1998: 36), the interview is 'not a neutral tool ... (but) is influenced by the personal characteristics of the researcher'. I therefore sought to minimise the extent to which my personal views would be communicated via both the interview questions and through my informal interactions with the department. Nevertheless, it is clearly not possible to present an entirely objective face in such circumstances, nor is it possible to merely 'let the data speak for themselves' (ibid: 69) in interpreting research findings.

However, I would agree with Silverman (2000) that, while absolute reliability and validity are impossible to attain, reasonable steps can be taken to improve them. Silverman (2000) suggests that validity will be enhanced if

the research allows for the systematic analysis of deviant cases. In a similar vein Fontana and Frey (1998) advocate the acknowledgement of discontinuities and omissions. My research has taken this approach into account, through the identification of complementary and contradictory cases while coding dating. Such an approach enhances the plausibility and credibility of conclusions drawn from data. Many writers agree on a need for personal reflexivity and continual reflection in relation to the findings of research (e.g. Stake 2000). Altheide and Johnson (1998) suggest that as all knowledge is perspectival, we therefore need to acknowledge our own perspectives. According to Garrison (in Schwandt 2000: 195) 'the point is not to free ourselves of all prejudice, but to examine our historically inherited and unreflectively held prejudices and alter those that disable our efforts to understand others and ourselves'. Again, I have striven to meet such standards of reflection and reflexivity in undertaking this research, in particular foregrounding my ontological beliefs and my views about the integration of the social subjects.

At the level of data generation, the researcher can take practical steps to enhance the reliability of methods. A key part of my approach, while gathering data (as detailed elsewhere), was concerned with establishing relationships; This has been posited as a useful strategy to counter tendencies by some interviewees to omit or distort data (Fontana & Frey 1998), by mitigating status differences and promoting trust. Linked to this was my concern to gather rich data about each of the research settings, as I agree with Altheide and Johnson (1998) that good tacit knowledge of a

setting enhances the validity of conclusions about research findings, thus increasing the possibility of research being reliable.

## Data sources

*Figure 4: research questions*

| Research question  | Data sources  | Methods   |
|--|---|---|
| What forms of social subjects provision exist in Scottish secondary schools?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headteachers</li> <li>• Teachers</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple questionnaire; interviews</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>  |
| How is externally driven curriculum change constructed at a school level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by individual teachers?</li> <li>• collectively within departments?</li> <li>• by senior managers?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom assistants; teachers; senior managers.</li> <li>• Field notes</li> <li>• School and departmental policy documents</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Non-participant classroom observation</li> <li>• Participant observation of day-to-day school and departmental operations</li> <li>• Analysis of policy documents</li> </ul> |
| What memes influence the construction of curriculum?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom assistants; teachers; senior managers.</li> <li>• Field notes</li> <li>• School and departmental policy documents</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Non-participant classroom observation</li> <li>• Participant observation of day-to-day school and departmental operations</li> <li>• Analysis of policy documents</li> </ul> |
| What social structures influence the construction of curriculum?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom assistants; teachers; senior managers.</li> <li>• Field notes</li> <li>• School and departmental policy documents</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Non-participant classroom observation</li> <li>• Participant observation of day-to-day school and departmental operations</li> <li>• Analysis of policy documents</li> </ul> |
| How do teachers' professional knowledge and skills, beliefs and values influence the construction of curriculum?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom assistants; teachers; senior managers.</li> <li>• Field notes</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Non-participant classroom observation</li> <li>• Participant observation of day-to-day school and departmental operations</li> </ul>   |

As previously explained, this project employed a range of data generation methods. Figure 4 (previous page) shows how these methods relate to the research questions.

### *Phase one - questionnaires*

The first stage in the research consisted of a simple questionnaire, sent to 110 schools in the central belt of Scotland in September 2002. The questionnaire was initially sent to headteachers with a request that it be forwarded to relevant people in the school, usually Principal Teachers of the social subjects. This questionnaire (see appendix one) was short (two sides of A4); it asked for basic information about the schools (e.g. size of school, number of teachers), and for more detailed information about the provision of the social subjects (Geography, History, Modern Studies). In particular I was interested in the types of provision of these subjects in school years S1 and S2, which are subject to the 5-14 curriculum guidelines. Drawing on anecdotal knowledge of Scottish schools, the questionnaire introduced a basic typology of different forms of provision, comprising four broad types of provision as follows:

1. The teaching of the separate component subjects as discrete entities running concurrently. Typically such provision would involve classes seeing teachers in each of the subjects for up to one hour per week throughout the school year. This approach has been criticised as being fragmentary (e.g. HMIE 2000a).
2. The teaching of the separate component subjects as discrete entities running in rotation. For instance a class may see a teacher for

History for a block of a few weeks then rotate to Modern Studies for a second block, before completing the cycle with Geography. Rotation periods are typically 6-8 weeks but can be as long as a term or as short as 4 weeks. Many schools adopted this approach as a response to criticisms from HMIE (ibid) about the fragmented provision, typical of the first approach outlined above.

3. The third form of provision is what is widely known as an integrated approach to the teaching of the social subjects. When designing the questionnaire, I had in mind a theme-based inter-disciplinary approach along the lines of the social studies courses taught elsewhere in the world; I knew that this approach was adopted in some Scottish secondary schools. However, this assumption proved to be problematic, and at odds with the understandings of this term in the minds of many teachers, as will be discussed in the next chapter.
4. I asked the school to specify on the form where provision entailed a mixture of the above forms of organisation within a particular year of schooling. For example, in some cases where schools adopt a separate subject approach, only History and Geography are taught, and not Modern Studies. The 5-14 guidelines have increased pressure on schools to tackle all three subjects in S1-2, and in some cases the strands of the People in Society (Modern Studies) attainment outcome are divided amongst the other two subjects. Thus there is a measure of inter-disciplinary teaching, but such provision is likely to be reactive, driven by a need to fit new guidelines to existing modes of practice. Another possible model is rotation for two of the

social subjects with the third being taught separately throughout the year.

I was conscious when designing the questionnaire that provision varies in many schools between S1 and S2. For example, teaching may be integrated in the first year of secondary schooling (S1), with a move towards the teaching of discrete subjects in S2. With this possibility in mind, I asked schools to indicate separately how provision occurred in both S1 and S2.

It is important to note that the typology above was a first attempt to establish a framework for understanding provision at an organisational level. At this stage of the research, I had not appreciated the complexity of this issue, nor had I fully realised that pedagogic integration can occur quite independently of organisational integration. The questionnaire returns, combined with further reading around this topic and the data from the case studies, have subsequently prompted me to develop the more sophisticated two level model outlined in chapter one. Thus for example, integration may take place through an organisational structure that brings subjects together (although this does not guarantee that integration will take place), or within a framework of separate subjects through, for example, shared and webbed approaches (cf. Fogarty's 1991 typology).

As outlined in the *Research Design* section above, there were two purposes of the questionnaire:

1. To enable me to build an accurate and fairly comprehensive picture of the types of provision of the social subjects in a large sample of Scottish schools.
2. To facilitate the choice of schools for the interview phase of the research study. The questionnaire invited schools to indicate their willingness to participate in the research, as well as providing categories of provision for subsequent comparison.

The questionnaire data will be analysed in greater detail in the next chapter. At the moment it suffices to say that the data were used to select cases that I believed to be both representative of the types of provision found within the sample, and which provided intrinsic interest as case studies, as detailed opposite (despite the obvious potential for tension that has already been noted between these two goals).

The questionnaires identified five schools, in which the teachers would be willing to participate in further research, and which provided evidence of engagement with the integration meme. I selected four of these as suitable cases studies following discussions with key staff. Research in one of these schools subsequently proved to be problematic for organisational reasons in the school, and a second provided data that did not provide significant insights into the change processes that I was researching. Moreover, I realised that the sheer volume of data provided by four case studies was limiting the amount of analysis that I could undertake, given the constraints of the word limits of the study. I therefore took the decision to focus in depth on the two most interesting case studies; in Silverman's (2000: 100) words, I

have attempted to write 'a lot about a little', providing rich and in-depth treatment of a small number of case studies, rather than superficial treatment of several.

The chosen case studies are described below (pseudonyms have been used to obscure the identity of the schools and teachers). I will say more about the particular circumstances of each of the schools when analysing the data in the subsequent chapters, where I offer a detailed vignette about each school.

- *Hillview School* is a small rural school set in a small town, with a mixed socio-economic profile. Each cohort contains less than 50 students. At the time of the research, the social subjects were taught by one specialist teacher of Geography and one specialist teacher of History. These teachers shared the teaching of Modern Studies between them. The school operated a system of rotating blocks of teaching (7 weeks). The questionnaire return indicated a strong opposition to the integrated teaching of the three social subjects.
- *Riverside High School* is a large denominational school with a mixed socio-economic profile. It serves a wide geographical area. Each cohort contains more than 150 students. At the time of the research, the social subjects were taught by three specialist teachers of Geography, two specialist teachers of History and three specialist teachers of Modern Studies. The school operated a system of rotating blocks of teaching for the three social subjects in S2, but there was an unusual form of provision in S1. Students in their first



term undertook an inter-disciplinary course on the European Union, designed to develop social subjects skills, and delivered in each case by one teacher. Subsequently there was a 'one teacher, three subjects approach' for the rest of S1.

*Phase two – initial site visits and interviews*

Phases two and three of the research project were set up to run during the 2003-4 academic year. In both cases, phase two took place in the autumn term and phase three in the spring term. The eventual number of case studies was two, as detailed above. This was school-based research which took several forms. Participant observation of the life of the school was part of this. I spent at least 2-3 days of phase two in each school. Some of this time was spent in formal data generation activities, as listed below; for the rest of the time, I became well known to members of staff, joining in with social conversation, and generally listening to people. Teachers were able to become familiar with the nature and goals of my research. As explained previously, this was part of a process of relationship-building and the establishment of trust. The research involved the following formal methods at this stage.

1. *Pre-interview non-participant observation of teaching.* This had two purposes:
  - a. To provide me with preliminary information about practices at departmental and classroom levels, as previously discussed in the study design section.

- b. To provide a common set of experiences from which to initiate interview conversations and aid communication, thus helping prevent misunderstandings between interviewer and interviewee.

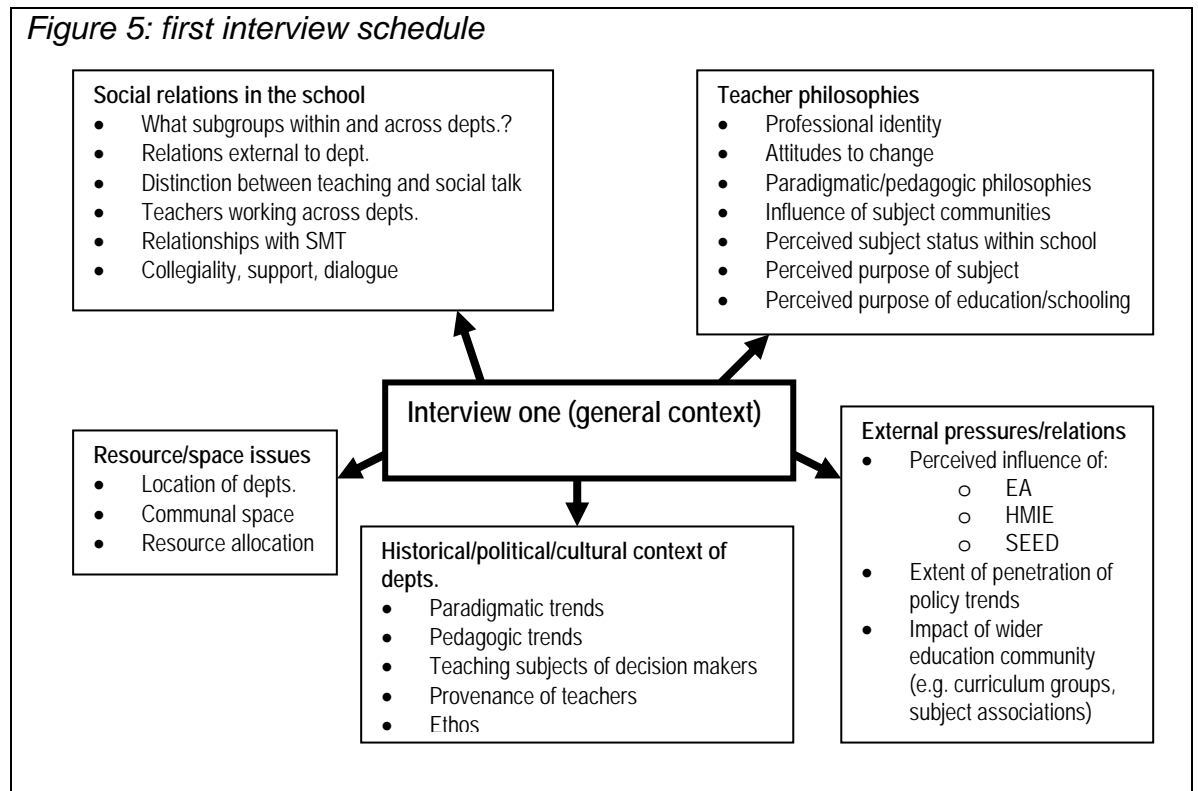
2. *Interviews with senior management, principal teachers and teachers.*

With the exception of the senior management, the teachers interviewed were volunteer social subjects teachers. The phase one interviews explored school and departmental culture and teacher attitudes in general towards teaching and learning and curriculum change, and specifically towards the issue of integration.

The number of interviews varied from setting to setting according to the nature of school organisation and the numbers of available teachers. The following people were interviewed during the second phase of research: the Headteacher; the member of senior management with responsibility for curriculum development; the Principal (or responsible) Teacher in each of the subjects covered by the curriculum; and a range of teachers involved in teaching the social subjects (both specialist and non-specialist).

In Riverside High School, I also had the opportunity to interview a group of support assistants, who provided a valuable insight into the life of the school. Interviews lasted from 30-45 minutes. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. As previously indicated, the hierarchical focusing technique (Tomlinson 1989) provided a basis for this structure. The questions were used to derive a concept map of the interviews (see figure 5 overleaf), which started off as general semi-

structured conversations. This was used to focus interviews if I felt that important topics were not being raised; missing themes could be thus raised at the highest, or most general level, with progressive focusing where necessary to home in on relevant topics. Appendix two shows the complete interview schedule/checklist that I used while interviewing.

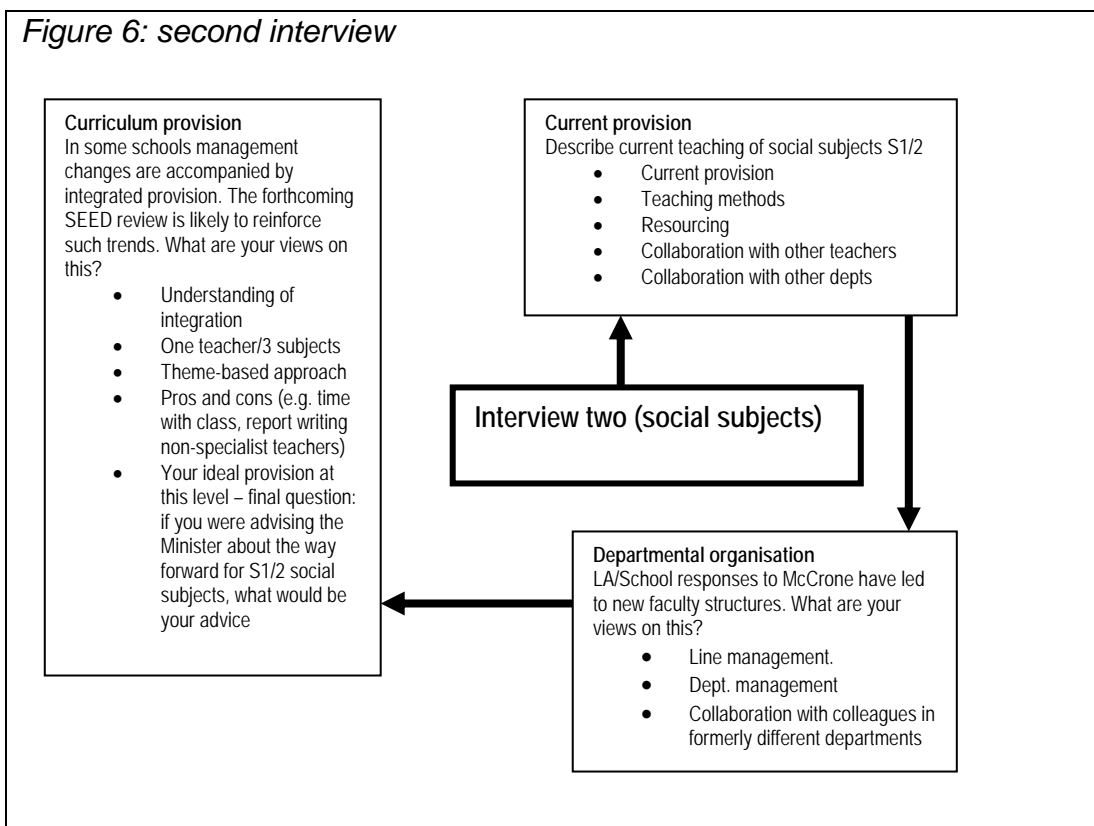


3. *Analysis of curriculum development documentation at a school and departmental.* These included schemes of work, school policy documents and handbooks and student work materials, which were examined in order to build a richer picture of practice and provision.

*Phase three – follow-up site visits and interviews*

The second set of site visits occurred a within a few months of the first. The primary purpose of these was to conduct interviews to explore the issues

that arose at the planning and enactment stages of the 5-14 curriculum guidelines. At this stage I also took the opportunity to renew acquaintances with teachers. The schedule overleaf was derived from the research questions to structure the interviews (figure 6).



The interviews were again based on the hierarchical focusing technique. However in this case, there was less emphasis on a move from loose to tight framing of themes, and the interview format was more linear. This was due to the more tightly focused nature of the interview topic. Nevertheless the interviews remained as semi-structured conversations rather than a rigid list of pre-specified questions. In this case the interviewees consisted of teachers (including curriculum managers); there were no interviews with senior managers. Interviews lasted around 30 minutes. As in phase two, all

interviews were recorded and transcribed. Appendix three contains the complete interview schedule/checklist.

## **Data analysis**

Chapter 5 summarises and analyses the questionnaire data. The chapter draws upon quantitative analysis of the data, using spreadsheets and charts to generate and illustrate key trends. I explored various aspects of the data, including proportions of schools operating the different forms of provision, across year cohorts, and before/after the release of the 5-14 guidelines. This chapter also explores provision and responses to change by local authority and size of school.

Initial analysis of interview data was conducted using the Hillview Community School data. Starting with this small case allowed a manageable approach to open coding, enabling the development of an embryonic framework for analysis of the rest of the data. Once the initial coding was established, I then applied this coding to the rest of the data. Attention was given to the following aspects:

- Complementary cases. Where there is sufficient evidence that a particular theme was common to all or several of the teachers across the case studies, consideration was given to the possibility of generating transferable theory from this.
- Contradictory cases. In such cases, careful consideration was given to discovering whether these were due to particular or idiosyncratic factors of the case in question, or whether they could be examples of

generalisable findings that were simply absent (or not apparent) in analysis of the initial case.

In the case of contradictory findings, new codes were applied to the data, and the first case study was re-examined for instances of the issue in question.

Where transcripts looked to be interesting or controversial (for example if there was difficulty articulating a point), I revisited the original recorded data to examine whether analysis of speech (pauses, hesitancy etc.) might shed any additional light on the data. Data were managed and codes were applied using the NVIVO qualitative data analysis package. This allows for the grouping of coded data and the insertion of detailed memos; as such it is a powerful tool for generating theory from data.

The emphasis throughout the data analysis phase was not to produce hard and fast generalisable findings but to raise questions to inform future inquiry, and to extrapolate themes from the case study data that may have applicability in other similar settings. This is a cognitive resources (Hammersley 2002) approach to the use of educational research.

Chapters 6 and 7 provide an overview of each case study, drawing themes from the coded data, and illustrating these through the use of extracts from the interview transcripts. Detailed analysis of the themes emerging from the data is undertaken in chapter 8. The starting point for this was the generic questions identified towards the end of the methodology chapter:

- *Questions concerned with culture and knowledge.* These largely relate to the kinds of knowledge that inform everyday practice, and shape teacher values.
- *Questions concerning social structure.* In other words, what are the webs of internal and external relationships in which teachers are involved, and what are the emergent properties of these relationships?
- *Questions relating to individual ontogeny.* For example, what biographical factors affect the teachers and their practices?
- *Questions relating to social interaction.* In other words, how do the above factors come together within the social settings that constitute the school to enable and constrain change?

Application of these generic questions (relating to morphogenesis and morphostasis) enabled the generation of codes to reflect the various themes that were evident in the data in relation to change and stasis.

## **Ethics**

While much of the data provided by teachers in the course of this research was not especially controversial or contentious, and while the research took place with the full blessing of both of the schools, there is clearly potential for research of this nature to expose participants to some risk, particularly as full protection of anonymity is often not possible when working with small case studies. Consequently all reasonable efforts were made to ensure confidentiality of data and to protect the anonymity of the school, teachers and pupils. Pseudonyms have been used in all research outputs to protect

respondents, and gender randomly reassigned in some cases. All respondents had the right to withdraw from the project at any time. These conditions were clearly outlined in an ethics statement (see appendix four), which was drawn to the attention of all respondents.

According to Cohen *et al* (2000) there are four aspects to informed consent. These are competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. I made the assumption that the first was satisfied with teachers, provided that steps were taken to meet the latter three criteria. This research has accounted for these at each step of the way.

- Initial consent was obtained from each of the relevant local authorities. Local authority managers were provided with a full copy of the research proposal outlining the aims and methods of the research, and an ethics statement.
- Secondary consent was obtained from the Headteacher of each school. Again they were provided with a copy of the research proposal and an ethics statement.
- All participating teachers were given a copy of the ethics statement and a summary of the research prior to each interview. Their attention was drawn to the ethics statement (particularly the clauses about anonymity, confidentiality and withdrawal). As anticipated, many teachers had not been given full details of the research proposal by the school management before agreeing to be interviewed, so this additional information proved to be a sensible and necessary step in establishing and maintaining informed consent.



- Pupils participating in the focus group (solely in phase one at Riverside High School) were asked to read the ethics statement, and it was clearly stipulated that they had the right to withdraw at all times and that any input would be confidential. The aims and methods of the research project were clearly explained to them. Parental consent was obtained by the school. As previously explained, these interviews produced little of value, and the ensuing data has not been transcribed or analysed as part of the research.

This research study complies with BERA's Ethical Guidelines (<http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/ETHICA1.PDF>), which were adhered to at all times during the life of the project.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PROVISION IN SCOTTISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS: ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA**

This chapter is concerned with the analysis of the returns to the questionnaire sent out to 110 schools in September 2002, to begin to address the first research question that inquires into forms of social subjects provision existing in Scottish secondary schools. Some of the emerging themes will be further examined later in the thesis in the context of analysis of the case studies. As stated in the previous chapter, I had formed some views about the types of provision before sending out the questionnaire. Indeed, such tacit theory informed the design of the questionnaire, especially via the articulation of differing forms of provision, and was informed by my prior experiences of interacting with teachers in school settings.

#### **Provision: emerging issues**

The return of data proved to be problematic in one respect. This concerns the typology of provision that was presented on the questionnaire.

1. Separate subjects taught concurrently
2. Separate subjects taught in rotation
3. Integrated teaching
4. Hybrid approaches

The typology reflects my thinking at the time of the questionnaire, construing integration entirely in organisational terms, conflating the two level model posited in chapter one. Moreover, even within this limited conceptual frame, the typology did not encompass the full range of possibilities for organisation of teaching. The inclusion of the third form of provision, integrated teaching, was predicated on an assumption that schools would see this in terms of integrated content. With my background in the teaching of Social Studies, I had in mind a thematic social studies approach to teaching content and skills from all three strands of 5-14. However, what started to emerge, from informal conversations with schools that followed the initial analysis of the questionnaire, was a realisation that many of the teachers' returns encompassed a quite different definition of the word 'integrated'. This is a form of provision that I had not been aware of when constructing the questionnaire, where one specialist teacher (e.g. History) is timetabled to teach separate modules of the social subjects, operating like rotations, but with a single teacher throughout the school year. The rationale for such provision is to reduce the number of teachers with whom a pupil has contact through the school year. Quite simply, we were talking at cross purposes because of different understandings of the term integration. This clearly had implications for the analysis of the data.

From my research, and as outlined in chapter one, several common organisational approaches to the teaching of the Social Subjects in S1-2 are evident in Scottish schools. It should be borne in mind that in many schools provision varies between S1 and S2, and that some schools offer a hybrid

model of variation within a particular year (e.g. an inter-disciplinary introductory module followed by rotations):

1. Separate subjects (2 or more social subjects). I have divided this form of organisation into two discrete variants for the purpose of questionnaire data analysis.
  - a. concurrent provision
  - b. rotation
2. Multi-disciplinary (modular one teacher-three subjects provision)
3. Inter-disciplinary (e.g. thematic approaches to Social Studies).

Simply transposing this expanded typology onto the questionnaire is problematic, as it is not clear from the returns what schools meant by integration. I therefore chose to conflate inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches for the purpose of analysing the questionnaire data (indeed the two appeared to be the same in the minds of some of the teachers to whom I talked), and I resolved to explore the issue in greater detail within the chosen cases studies. Thus it is worth reiterating that, throughout the analysis of the questionnaire data, I follow the teachers in utilising the term integration to refer to any form of provision where the social subjects are taught by one teacher. Notwithstanding this difficulty, the issuing of the questionnaire proved to be a successful exercise in two respects. First, it allowed me to identify and select willing volunteers for further participation in the research project from a substantial pool of suitable cases. Second, it provided useful background information to inform the subsequent development of the study; much of the data is intrinsically

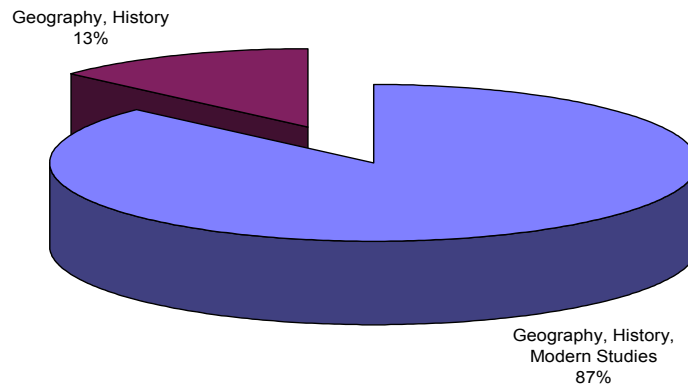
interesting, and the remainder of this chapter reports and analyses this in detail.

Initial response rates were high, and following the issue of a reminder and second copy, the questionnaire ultimately elicited a large response rate of 90%. Schools provided general information about: size of the school; size of cohorts; and basic socio-economic information. At a more specific level, the questionnaire returns included information about: the numbers of teachers in each of the social subjects, including the use of non-specialist teachers from other subjects who contributed to teaching in this area; which social subjects were taught in S1/S2; the type of provision (as identified in the typology, with additional space for comments); and any changes to the teaching of the social subjects that had occurred as a result of the 5-14 curriculum revised guidelines for the social subjects (LTS 2000).

### *Subjects*

One significant finding was the continued steady growth of Modern Studies as a subject. Modern Studies developed in the 1960s as an idiosyncratic Scottish response (within a culture of separate subjects) to a perceived need to develop political and social literacy in young people. By the early 1990s, according to HMIE (1992), the subject was still a comparative newcomer, struggling to maintain its place on the school curriculum, with about one-third of secondary schools teaching it in S1 and just over 50% in S2. By 1999 HMIE (1999) reported a far greater prevalence of Modern Studies, perhaps largely as a result of the 1993 introduction of the 5-14 Curriculum, with its quasi-mandatory strand *People in Society* (SOED 1993).

Figure 7: prevalence of Geography, History and Modern Studies in Scottish secondary schools (S1-2)



These findings are backed up by my questionnaire data, which shows that 87% of schools in the sample were teaching all three subjects in some form or other at 5-14. Most schools taught it as a separate, standalone subject in similar fashion to Geography and History; in some cases, Modern Studies was allocated less time than its social subject counterparts. Other schools opted for a form of integrated provision which saw the *People in Society* outcomes covered within existing Geography and History courses. Presumably this was an attractive option where there was a shortage of specialist Modern Studies teachers, although it does raise important questions about the integrity of the latter two subjects; this is especially the case given the generally controversial nature of integrated approaches amongst teachers of the social subjects, as was evident in some of the comments on the questionnaire, and in the legitimating rhetoric of subject associations (e.g. MSA 2002; Toms 2006).

The rapid growth of Modern Studies is perhaps explained in terms of the Goodson and Marsh (1996) four step model for analysing the evolution of school subjects: invention; promotion; legitimisation; and mythologisation. Modern Studies would seem to be past the third stage, as it has developed and maintained legitimating rhetorics (e.g. the curriculum and the discourses emanating from the Modern Studies Association); however the fact that it was still not present in 13% of the sample 10 years after the original publication of the 'requirements' of the *People in Society* strand in 5-14 suggests that there was some way to go before it gained the fourth level - defined by Goodson and Marsh (ibid) as the acceptance by the external public of these rhetorics - and the universality enjoyed by Geography and History.

*Provision: forms of organisation*

The second set of findings that I wish to expand upon deals with the types of provision found in schools in S1 and S2. I shall deal with each year separately because there are some important differences in emphasis in each case. These seem to be related to how the years were conceptualised by teachers; S1 was widely seen as being a transition period from primary to secondary, whereas S2 was widely seen as being a training ground for the 'real' business of secondary education, namely preparing pupils for externally assessed examinations in the quasi-disciplinary school subjects (Beane 1997) that comprise the school curriculum. I have analysed the data across the whole sample as well as in respect of the size of the school and, where possible, by Education Authority (EA). In this latter case, I have only

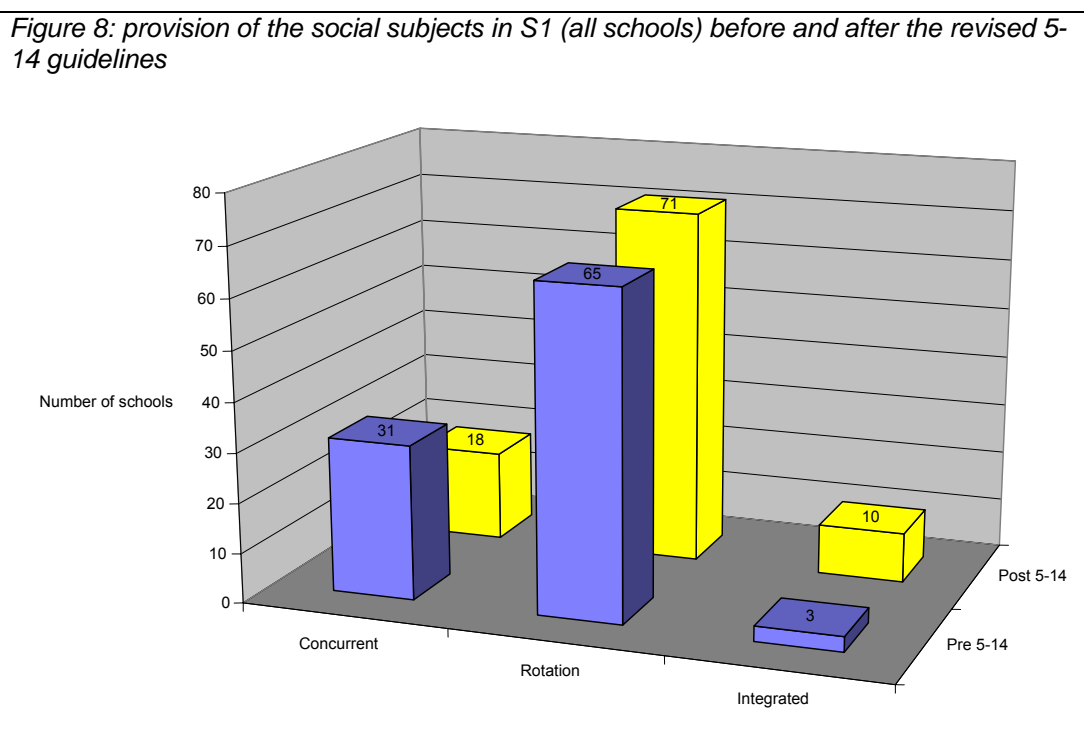
analysed the larger EAs (more than 6 schools) to look for significant general patterns that might be indicative of EA policy; the small numbers of schools in some authorities rendered such analysis a pointless exercise.

### *Provision in S1*

The graph overleaf (figure 8) shows that while only a small number of schools chose to integrate following the publication of the revised guidelines, this number increased between 2000 and my survey in 2002. Conversely, the more substantial minority of schools timetabling the social subjects separately and concurrently fell during this period. However the vast majority of schools opted to teach the subjects separately in rotation throughout the year, a number that grew between 2000 and the completion of the questionnaire. I have included in this latter category the sole example of a school with mixed provision – in this case rotations for Geography/History and separate Modern Studies – as asked for in category 4 in the questionnaire typology.

The data in the graph needs to be contextualised further at this point. As outlined in the first chapter, the 1993 5-14 guidelines (SOED 1993) gave a steer to the notion of integrating the social subjects. Perhaps more significant was the pressure from HMIE (e.g. 1992; 1999; 2000a) to reduce the amount of contact that young people had with different teachers. Indeed several of the schools indicated explicitly on the questionnaire that it was HMIE rather than 5-14 that had prompted changes in provision.





Detailed analysis of the questionnaire data threw up some significant variations by EA. Such variations in S1 provision are summarised in figure 9.

*Figure 9: variation in S1 provision by Education Authority*

| Education Authority | No. schools <sup>4</sup> | Concurrent |           | Rotation |           | Integrated |           |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                     |                          | Pre 5-14   | Post 5-14 | Pre 5-14 | Post 5-14 | Pre 5-14   | Post 5-14 |
| Angus               | 7                        | 100%       | 100%      | 0%       | 0%        | 0%         | 0%        |
| Dundee              | 10                       | 20%        | 10%       | 80%      | 80%       | 0%         | 10%       |
| Falkirk             | 6                        | 33%        | 0%        | 67%      | 83%       | 0%         | 17%       |
| Fife                | 17                       | 18%        | 0%        | 82%      | 100%      | 0%         | 0%        |
| North Lanarkshire   | 24                       | 17%        | 4%        | 83%      | 92%       | 0%         | 4%        |
| Perth and Kinross   | 9                        | 56%        | 33%       | 44%      | 56%       | 0%         | 11%       |
| Stirling            | 6                        | 33%        | 17%       | 67%      | 83%       | 0%         | 0%        |
| West Lothian        | 10                       | 40%        | 30%       | 50%      | 50%       | 10%        | 20%       |

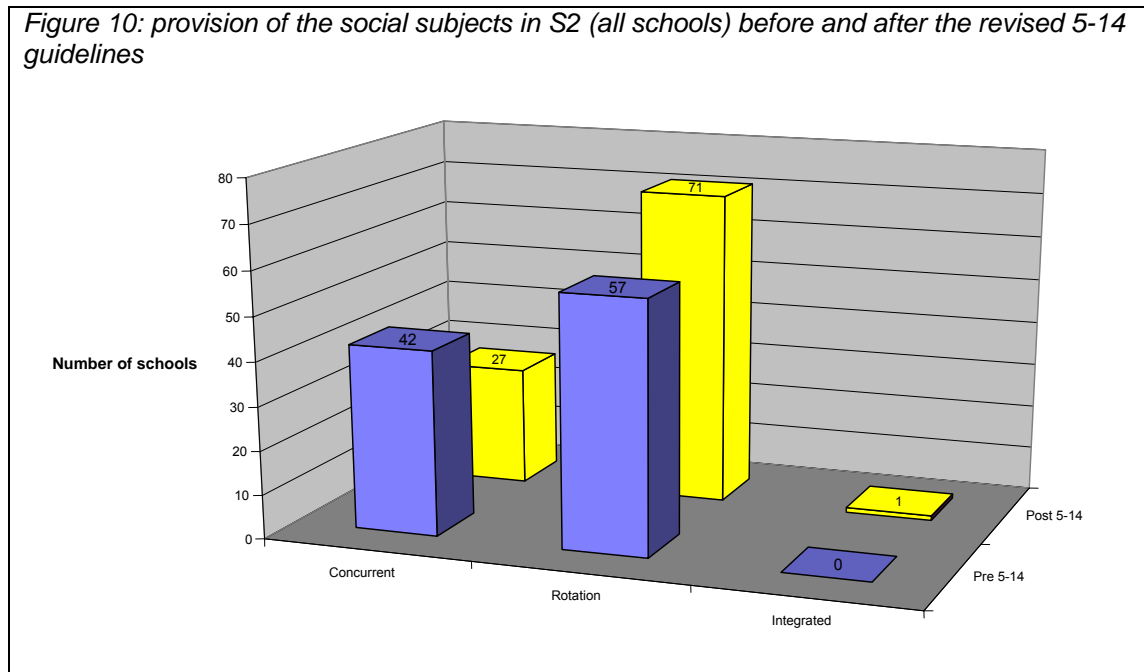
These figures add richness to the national picture depicted in the graph. They show clearly a trend for schools to move away from separate, concurrent provision towards rotation or even integrated forms of provision. It is worth noting specific cases. In Stirling, one school moved from

<sup>4</sup> This figure represents the number of schools for which there is data; this is not necessarily the total number of schools within the Education Authority

concurrent to rotation (as shown in the figures), then changed back. This apparent change inflates the appearance of change in Stirling; in reality the situation remained unchanged from 2000. In Perth and Kinross, a school adopted integration after 2000, but according to the questionnaire return this was prompted by the idiosyncratic preferences of the Headteacher, rather than being in response to EA policy or a specific policy steer. There were some major variations in provision which can probably be best explained in terms of EA policy (or lack of it) in respect of provision. One EA, Angus, stands out in stark contrast to the national trends, maintaining a 100% rate of separate, concurrent provision in its schools. It is not clear whether this suggests a laissez-faire attitude towards provision by the EA (an absence of a catalyst to change), or whether it was the strict application of EA policy (structural and/or cultural constraints on change). Given that, in this case, homogeneity means the maintenance of a status quo, the former seems likely. Interestingly, there appears to be a tendency towards a contrasting form of homogeneity (in terms of rotations) in the larger EAs; in these cases homogeneity resulted from changed provision, and I would posit a strong likelihood of mandated change in this direction. Such a hypothesis cannot be fully investigated within this project, due to lack of applicable case study data, but it could form the basis of future research.

### *Provision in S2*

Provision in S2 is simpler. Figure 10 shows the proportions of schools adopting different forms of provision in S2.



Across the sample the following trends were observed. First, there is only one school that opted for an integrated form of provision. Second, the number of schools offering a separate concurrent provision decreased, both in terms of S1/S2 comparison, and in terms of continuity from 2000-2002. The likely reasons for this have already been posited, and the prevalence of separate subject provision in S2 supports the hypothesis that S2 was seen widely as a preparation for examination courses; hence the separate subject is viewed as being important. However there was increasing pressure (from HMIE, from EAs and indirectly via the national guidelines for 5-14) to reduce fragmentation of provision, therefore rotations were popular.

A marked trend which adds support to this thesis is thrown up by the questionnaire data. This concerns the movement in provision between S1 to

S2 in individual schools. Several types of movement are possible as illustrated in figure 11. The clear trend evident in this analysis is of a move towards rotation, regardless of where the school was on the continuum (concurrent → rotation → integration) in S1, and this tendency increased after 2000. Large numbers of schools retained existing rotated provision, but hardly any schools retained integrated provision. Furthermore the numbers of schools remaining with separate concurrent provision dropped sharply. The message seems to be clear here: the need to provide defined subjects in S2 was considered to be paramount, but increasingly the problems associated with a separate, concurrent provision led schools to opt for rotations.

*Figure 11: change in provision from S1 to S2*

| Type of change            | Number of schools |           |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------|
|                           | Pre 5-14          | Post 5-14 |
| Integration to rotation   | 3                 | 8         |
| Integration to concurrent | 0                 | 1         |
| Continue with integration | 0                 | 1         |
| Continue with rotation    | 54                | 62        |
| Rotation to concurrent    | 11                | 9         |
| Continue with concurrent  | 31                | 17        |
| Concurrent to rotation    | 0                 | 1         |

Again there were some interesting regional variations to the overall trends. Figure 12 illustrates the overall move towards the middle of the continuum described above. This was especially marked in the larger EAs, Fife and North Lanarkshire, again perhaps indicating a degree of central direction. As with the S1 data, such a large degree of homogeneity in rotated provision might suggest strong policy steers from the EAs. Within the latter EA, a majority of schools already rotated, and this trend increased after 2000. In some other areas the trend was less apparent, although it is worth

mentioning two specific local authorities. In Dundee, the figures show no change, although in fact one school changed to rotation, but this was counter-balanced by another school moving against the trends from rotation to concurrent provision. In Falkirk, Perth and Kinross and West Lothian, schools which had integrated provision in S1 without exception moved back to rotations, illustrating the greater preoccupation with subjects in S2. Only one school across the whole sample (in North Lanarkshire) retained integration into S2.

*Figure 12: variation in S2 provision by Education Authority*

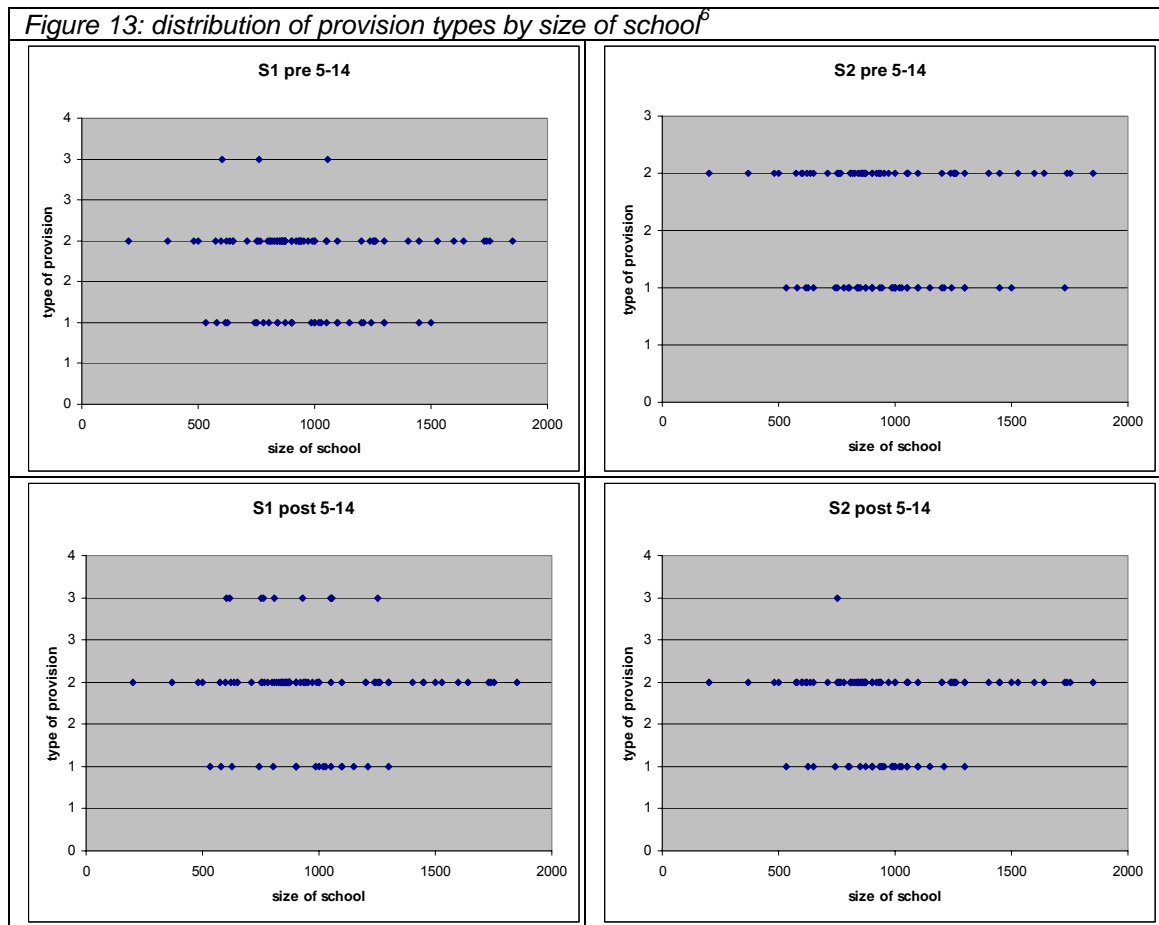
| Education Authority | No. schools <sup>5</sup> | Concurrent |           | Rotation |           | Integrated |           |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                     |                          | Pre 5-14   | Post 5-14 | Pre 5-14 | Post 5-14 | Pre 5-14   | Post 5-14 |
| Angus               | 7                        | 100%       | 86%       | 0%       | 14%       | 0%         | 0%        |
| Dundee              | 10                       | 20%        | 20%       | 80%      | 80%       | 0%         | 0%        |
| Falkirk             | 6                        | 33%        | 0%        | 67%      | 100%      | 0%         | 0%        |
| Fife                | 17                       | 53%        | 24%       | 47%      | 76%       | 0%         | 0%        |
| North Lanarkshire   | 24                       | 21%        | 8%        | 79%      | 88%       | 0%         | 4%        |
| Perth and Kinross   | 9                        | 67%        | 44%       | 33%      | 56%       | 0%         | 0%        |
| Stirling            | 6                        | 50%        | 33%       | 50%      | 67%       | 0%         | 0%        |
| West Lothian        | 10                       | 50%        | 40%       | 50%      | 60%       | 0%         | 0%        |

#### *Provision in different sized schools*

Another fruitful avenue for inquiry involves analysis of the data by size of school. The scattergraphs in figure 13 illustrate the spread of provision according to this variable. One significant trend was identified here concerning provision in S1. Separate, concurrent and integrated forms of provision were found only in schools in the middle of the size range. Very small schools (under 500 pupils) and very large schools (over 1500 pupils), virtually without exception, adopted rotation in S1. The effect is even more marked in S2, with no school larger than 1400 adopting a form of provision

<sup>5</sup> This figure represents the number of schools for which there is data; this is not necessarily the total number of schools within the Education Authority

other than rotation. These findings are consistent both before and after the publication of the revised guidelines.



It is useful to speculate on the reasons why this may be the case. For instance, staffing flexibility to deal with clearly identified problems of fragmentation may be greater in larger schools, where larger numbers of available staff might facilitate the timetabling required for rotation. However, this does not explain the lack of integrated approaches; here it may be that, while flexibility exists in terms of available staff to pursue the less radical option favoured by HMIE, the size of departments creates inertia, which militates against more radical innovation in provision that may challenge the

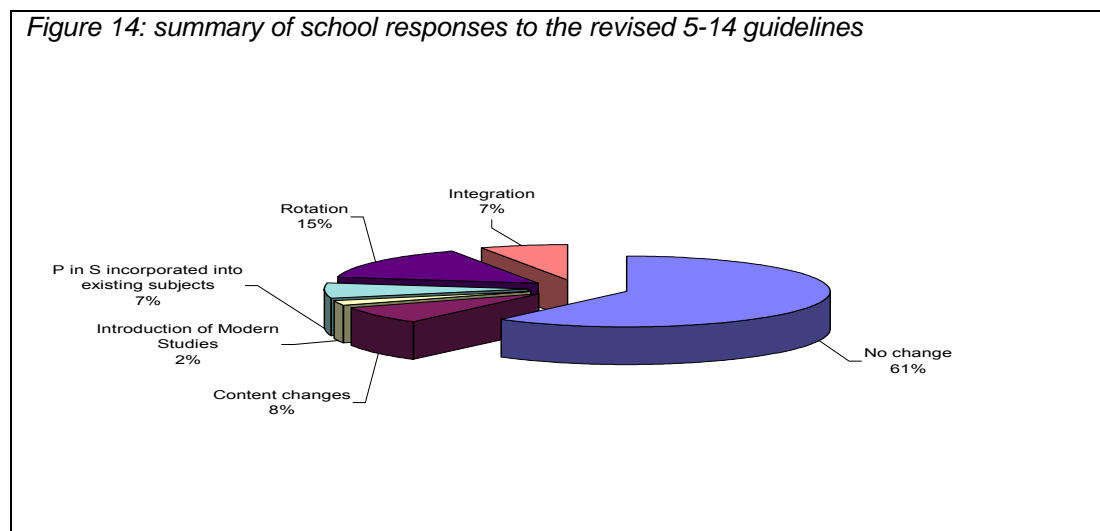
<sup>6</sup> 1 = separate, concurrent provision,; 2 = rotation; 3 = integration

subject-centred status quo. In the case of small schools, the dynamics may be different; the fragmentation experienced by pupils in the face of separate, concurrent provision may be just as evident as in larger schools, leading to innovation, but because of the potential for closer teacher/pupil relations in such settings, issues of continuity and coherence associated with rotation may be less acute than they would be in larger settings. In such a context innovation is possible and indeed desirable, but such schools may tend to be conservative for different reasons to those posited for large schools. Interestingly, 6 of the 10 schools in the sample that identified some form of integrated provision had between 580 and 930 pupils; further to the above hypotheses, these are small to medium schools where the conditions – big enough for the problem of fragmentation to be felt, but small enough to minimise inertia and other reasons for conservatism – may be propitious to the development of integration.

### **Responses to change**

The questionnaire also elicited some interesting data about the nature of schools' responses within S1 and S2 to the revised *Environmental Studies 5-14* guidelines (LTS 2000). One has to be careful in interpreting this data. For a start, it is self-reported data, and in some cases may have been reported inaccurately. Second, perceptions about what might constitute change may vary from school to school; thus what is reported as change in content by one school may have been reported differently elsewhere as changes to provision. Third, one has to be cautious about the provenance of change, bearing in mind that a change attributed to 5-14 will likely be

subject to various factors. Finally, the large percentage of schools reporting no change needs to be treated cautiously. In many cases, change will not have taken place because the likely provision prompted by 5-14 was already in place. For example, in EAs with a high number of schools already practising rotation, we may also see a high response rate of no change, as the change has already happened prior to the revised 5-14 document. With these caveats in mind I have attempted to disentangle the various threads which emerge from the data.



Where no change was reported, or where change was reported as being limited to content, some schools reported increased cooperation with other social subjects departments as a consequence of the revised 5-14 guidelines. Some schools suggested that the new guidelines had led to a lessening of the time allocated to deliver the social subjects within the whole school curriculum. Other schools reported making minor changes to the length of rotations (depicted in the accompanying graphs as no change). Figure 14 gives an overview of the types of response generated in schools following the publication of the revised guidelines.



I was initially surprised by the high number of schools reporting no change. This led me to pursue a number of lines of inquiry in respect of other aspects of the data (for example looking for possible correlations between a no change response and existing provision). Many schools reported varying degrees of change. For instance, 23% of schools reported changes in provision (i.e. moves towards rotation or integration where this had not been the form of provision beforehand). 8% of schools reported minor content changes in response to the new guidelines. 9% of schools were prompted by the guidelines to introduce Modern Studies, as discussed earlier in this chapter, either as a discrete subject or as integrated content within Geography and History courses (through working 5-14 *People in Society* content into modules that already covered *People and Place* and *People in the Past*).

Again it is significant that, while the guidelines seem to have provided a fillip to promote such changes, the original 5-14 guidelines published seven years previously had not done so in the case of these particular schools (although they had presumably acted as such a catalyst in other cases). Two schools reported making complex series of changes as a result of the guidelines: in the first instance, a school changed to rotations and then back to separate, concurrent provision some time later; a second school reported moving to rotation in response to the guidelines, then a subsequent move towards a more integrated provision. In both cases, I have represented these changes in terms of the initial response to the guidelines, namely a move to rotation.

Figure 15: response by small schools with less than 800 pupils (23 schools)

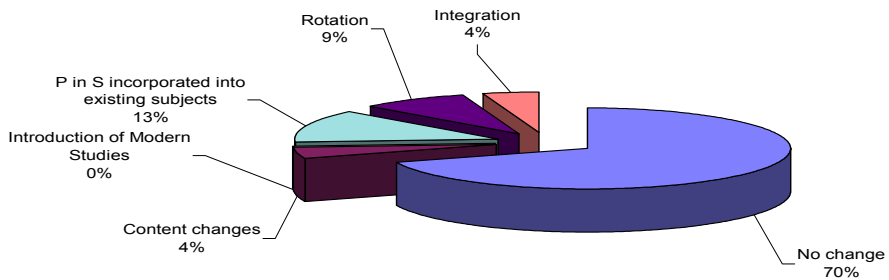


Figure 16: response by small/medium schools with between 800 and 1049 pupils (44 schools)

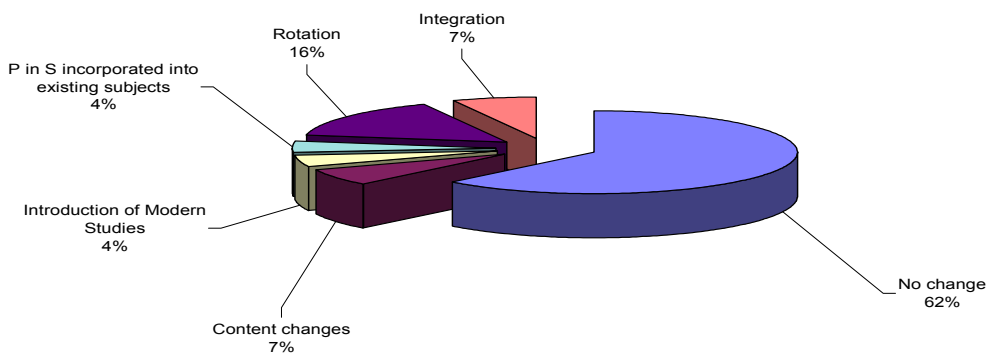


Figure 17: response by medium/large schools with between 1050 and 1299 pupils (18 schools)

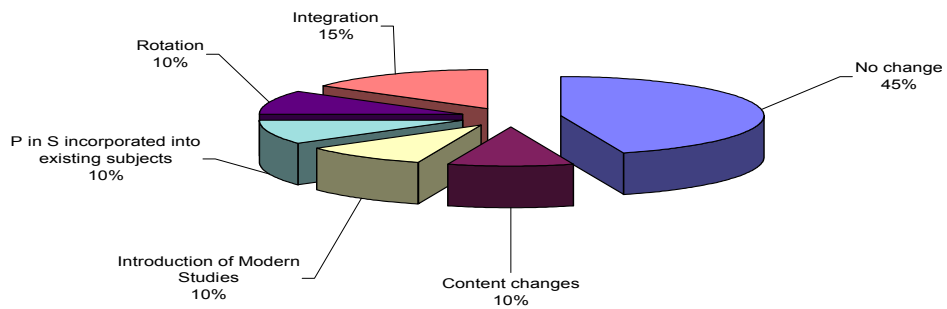
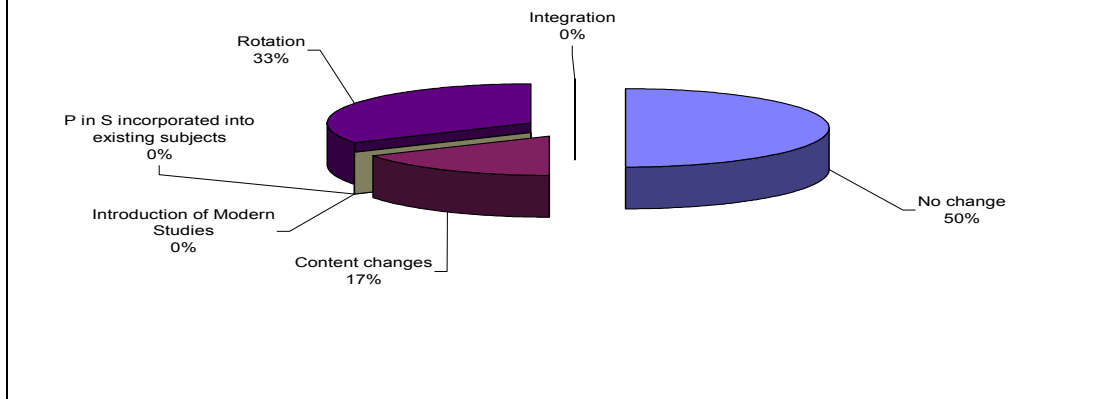


Figure 18: response by large schools with more than 1300 pupils (13 schools)



Analysis of school responses to the revised guidelines in relation to school size produced some interesting findings. For the purpose of this analysis I categorised the schools into four size bands, as shown in figures 15-18 (above). In parallel to the scattergraphs showing provision in S1 and S2, there seems to have been less diversity of response in smaller schools than in medium sized schools, and a lower frequency of change.

As already noted, many small schools already employed rotations as their preferred provision for the social subjects; a serious hypothesis must be that many such schools had already innovated prior to the introduction of the new guidelines (perhaps as a response to the 1993 guidelines and perhaps facilitated by the small size of departments), and consequently it was not deemed to be necessary to innovate further.

Medium sized schools showed higher rates of response to 5-14, and a greater diversity of response. Large schools showed higher rates of response, but more limited diversity. I have already posited the potential for

tension in large schools between flexibility to change on the one hand, and inertia on the other. The scattergraphs relating provision to size add support to this hypothesis. Many large schools had already adopted the less radical change option of rotation prior to 2000, especially in S1. In S2, some schools retained separate, concurrent provision in 2000, but moved to rotation following the publication of the revised 5-14 guidelines: this appears to be the general trend for 33% moving to rotation after 2000.

In general, the frequency of change responses across the sample increases with the size of schools, but (if we leave very small schools out of the equation for the reasons already noted), diversity of response seems to decrease with size, perhaps as a result of difficulties with inertia in large departments.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has described in some detail a number of trends that have emerged from the questionnaire data, and has introduced some hypotheses about the likely reasons for some of these trends. In particular, the chapter has gone a long way towards addressing the first of my research questions. It broadly identifies various types of provision, and also highlights trends such as the move from separate, concurrent teaching to rotation, and the varying patterns of change across local authorities and across schools of different sizes.

Chapters 6 and 7 introduce the two case studies; each chapter will highlight key themes and trends within each of the case studies, to start to dig below

the surface that is evident in some of the types of provision identified, and to begin to address the remaining research questions. This provides the foundation for a more detailed and in-depth explanatory analysis of the data in chapter 8, in the context of both the literature on educational change and the critical realist methodology outlined in chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **HILLVIEW SCHOOL: IS SMALL BEAUTIFUL?**

#### **The school**

Hillview<sup>7</sup> School is a small rural school. The school is composite, with primary and secondary sectors of roughly 200 each. The secondary sector comprises cohorts in years 1-4; pupils choosing to continue with post-compulsory schooling are bussed to another large secondary school in a neighbouring town for S5 and S6. Each cohort in the secondary school contains one class. The school is situated in a small, and fairly isolated, rural town, with a mixed socio-economic profile. According to the questionnaire return, the town is not a poor locale, but contains some relatively disadvantaged families. Attainment in exams is high in comparison with national and EA averages with over 90% of pupils achieving 5 or more passes at SCQF level 4 by the end of S4 (LTS 2007).

At the time of the research, Geography, History and Modern Studies were organised within the school through a Social Subjects administrative unit; one teacher, a Geographer who will be referred to as Sam, had a management overview of all three subjects, but is not qualified to teach the other two subjects. This was a longstanding arrangement, and was somewhat unusual given the tendency before 2002 for subject departments to be run entirely by promoted subject specialists (although increasingly common now in the post-McCrone (SEED 2001) era of faculty organisation).

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<sup>7</sup> Pseudonyms are used to identify all teachers, schools and Education Authorities where they are named within the case studies.

According to the Headteacher, the small size of the school was a major reason for this, as there were simply not enough promoted posts to go around. The subjects were taught in 2 adjacent classrooms, with an adjoining workroom. Despite this combined administrative structure in the social subjects, the teaching of the constituent subjects was kept largely separate; Geography (taught by Sam) and History (taught by a teacher who will be referred to as Frank) were taught by one specialist teacher in each case. These teachers shared the teaching of Modern Studies between them, although Modern Studies enjoyed only 50% of the time allocation given to Geography and History over the course of S1 and S2. The school operated a system of rotating blocks of teaching in both S1 and S2. According to the questionnaire return:

we now work on a rotational system and it has been refined and revised in the light of our pupils' needs and to suit aspects of our course (approx 7 week rotations, with variations to work in exams, fieldwork for example).

I was attracted to this school as a potential case study because of another statement on the questionnaire return. This concerned attitudes within the social subjects.

We would (and have!) actively resist any move to integrate the 3 subjects; this is seen as an organisational convenience rather than having any good educational reasons.

At the time of the questionnaire return and subsequent interviews, the school was facing a time of uncertainty. Reorganisation of local schools by the EA had led it to question of the status of Hillview. Bluntly, was such a small school viable? Added to this uncertainty were the long term effects of the post-McCrone job-sizing exercise. In the case of Hillview School, this had meant a sharp reduction in the number of promoted posts, and only one member of staff with a salary to be conserved at present levels. The Headteacher's salary in particular was drastically downsized. While such moves do not affect individuals, whose salaries are conserved for life, they send a powerful message about how the school is viewed centrally in comparison with other schools, and tend to affect morale. Furthermore the school had recently experienced a follow up (from 2000) HMIE inspection in April 2002. This had placed some pressure on some parts of the school, especially in terms of progress towards meeting the first of the 2000 report recommendations:

the secondary department should maintain its drive to improve attainment by meeting pupils' needs more effectively, and ensuring appropriate pace and challenge in lessons, particularly for able pupils (HMIE 2002: 2).

I interviewed 4 members of staff during 2 site visits: on the first occasion I interviewed the specialist teachers of Geography and History, as well as the Headteacher and Depute Headteacher. On a second visit I interviewed the two specialist teachers again.



## **The culture of the school and department**

Visitors are readily impressed when arriving at Hillview School. The ethos of the school was reported in its inspection to be very good (HMIE 2000b), and this is something that my site visits strongly confirmed. The school is situated in a pleasant rural locale with extensive panoramic views. When the visitor enters the school, s/he is faced by a clean and welcoming environment, and a friendly teaching staff. As an observer in the staffroom, and within lessons, I was impressed by the warmth of relationships amongst staff, and between staff and students. This impression was supported by the espoused views of the teaching staff. According to the Headteacher, Hillview School is:

a small, community school, the ethos of which is people working together in teams (Headteacher).

The community theme was one that was readily, as well as independently, developed by other members of staff.

Well I would say that I mean the ethos of the school obviously it's a, we see ourselves as very much a part of a wider community and a broader community. You find that the people working here are very often involved in things like the Highland Games and all the things like. ... you meet children in the street and they stop and talk to you. "Hello Mr. Jones. How are you doing" and I actually would say that this is a place where young people can be themselves, more than any other place I've worked in... the community, it's also very

involved in what goes on in the school in different ways, you know, for instance you get them coming to help out at activities, to parents it's quite common, they'll come in and help with activities and with, you know, other things that are going on in the school, so it is a community, no question (Sam).

It's very much a community school and although it is only up to fourth year it is, you know, being P1 through to S4 makes it a fairly important focus for the community, you know, and as I say it's considered to be well thought of within the community ... I keep telling myself I wouldn't have worked here as long as I have done if I didn't enjoy it as much as I do (Frank).

Such a community ethos, combined with the small size of the school, facilitated human relationships. This had a number of important spin offs in terms of pupil behaviour and cooperation and teamwork amongst the staff. In particular, the ethos included a strong sense of collegiality.

The good thing about this school is I'm really hard pushed to think of any member of staff who I couldn't turn and ask for some sort of support or assistance at any time, nor can I think of any members of staff who if they needed, wouldn't be able to approach me to ask for similar support ... I know in some schools the treatment of staff, you know, towards their care assistants, classroom assistants is, the work in classes, is not very professional, whereas everybody here recognises the contribution that everybody else has got to make. (Sam).

Such working relationships extended to the day to day dealings between management and staff. Both teachers commented favourably upon the management style of the Headteacher and the Depute Headteacher.

Nobody's scared to go and speak direct to her. Nobody sort of stands to attention whenever she goes by or anything like that. It's a very good working relationship. Jim is, well Jim's always been there, he's the only person that's been here longer than me, and you know you can always approach Jim. If it's either for, if you're needing something or anything like that and the other thing too is, you can do, as long as you, like anything else, as long as, I mean, if there's something you're not happy about you can say "Look I don't think this should be happening. I think you should maybe reconsider doing that." And I know in other schools many members of staff, other than possibly the most senior promoted staff wouldn't even think of approaching the Rector, or Deputy in that way (Frank).

They've been very supportive ... I mean, you know, if you have had occasionally a point to bring up about it, they've been, I think, very helpful and supportive. I don't have a problem with it... I've worked in a broad range of schools and they can be themselves and I think that is reflected in the ethos that you'll find that the Head and the Depute, they're very much people, they're people, you know accented towards the individual, to the people. They're characters (Sam).

Such a relationship with senior management was seen as bringing tangible benefits, both professionally and in personal terms.

I get from management ... good time-tabling, which is an understanding of our needs within the working week, you know, a sort of time-tabling rhythm. It's not always perfect but generally speaking there's a very good positive approach to that ... I mean I've got this problem with my son at the moment, you know, he is ill and they were very concerned and very touched by it and I am too, you know, I feel the warmth (Sam, 2003).

The generally harmonious and constructive relationships claimed by these teachers appeared to extend to collegial working within the social subjects department. Both teachers reported extensive teamwork in the development of courses and resources and in the undertaking of administrative tasks.

Sam and I are aware both in 5-14 and also standard grade that a lot of the skills between the three social subjects are very similar, and so we are able to work together to ensure that not only are these skills covered but there's not any unnecessary duplication or anything of that. Now I know in some schools that the History and Geography departments just don't speak (Frank).

I think that the personalities, we get on very well. We have a really good, I mean I'm certain that he'd be sitting here taking the piss out of things, Oh excuse me, if he heard that, but the fact is that we've got a very good working relationship (Sam).

The Headteacher concurred with this positive view of the departmental dynamics, adding that this was a very effective department.

It is one of the better social subjects departments that I have seen in that at least it's not History in one corner and Geography in another. They work together, they plan together, although they've kept a separate identity of the subjects and that's very strong. They are prepared to plan together to work together, develop courses together (Headteacher).

The strong relationships between these two teachers were both formal and informal.

We have all the organisation of blocks in place, you know the course outlines, the time tables, all of these things so we know what's going in where and when and does it fit in with the over all 5-14. We talk, you know, we have a departmental meeting once a week but frankly we talk a lot about the job.... He has History, I have Geography and we sort of arm wrestle on Modern Studies, well we have this common point of interest on that subject which we both teach to S1, S2. We share it equally (Sam).

Moreover, this department did not exhibit the sense of hierarchy and associated protocols that are so evident to the casual observer in so many Scottish secondary school departments. The benefits of extending professional autonomy to colleagues were clearly articulated by the Head of Department:

I respect what he does. I mean that's the bottom line. I respect his knowledge of the subjects and I respect how he does things... you

know you create the work and atmosphere and let people get on with it. That to me is good management sense (Sam).

### **Teachers, teaching and the curriculum**

The backgrounds of the teachers are worthy of consideration at this point. The Head of Department was, as previously mentioned, a Geographer, who had taught in the school at the time of interview for 7 years, having come to Hillview from a much larger school. Conversations with this teacher revealed that he saw his work very much in terms of teaching Geography, albeit within the wider context of the community and for its practicality, especially to people living in a rural community. Although his remit was to manage the social subjects, he experienced increasing degrees of discomfort as he moved away from the subject in which he was trained. When asked about his management role, he said:

I've got an overview but if I'm honest Frank would take, you know, time with the History and you know we, obviously, it's a delicate sort of arrangement really but, you know, to be honest, when I first arrived I was a bit frightened of it because I thought "Well I'm not a Historian and I don't really have that" (Sam).

He was an enthusiast for his subject, and articulated this clearly, and was particularly passionate about keeping the three social subjects separate. However his statements about why this should be the case were less clear. In response to a question about his views on the integrity of the subject, he stated:

I would like to see Geography and Modern Studies called Geography and Modern Studies and History called History ... incidentally today I was studying with third year students and it was fantastic, the caves systems and experiences and we looked at the historical development towards the present day village, and it goes through from probably 3000 years ago, I mean lets face it, ... there were people living there and there are carvings to show it and they can say, well they can say what next, a picture of a Viking long ship (Sam).

When asked by the interviewer whether such an approach integrated History and Geography, he replied:

Yes, that is exactly my point, it is Geography because it is shaped the town, now it is an element of History which is relevant to teaching. I mean I love History, History is more an interest to me than Geography is, personally, but I think, I think what I am trying to say, the point is that we have to learn to use these things and come back to the starting point and the way you do that is have people who have the degree in Geography teaching the subject and able to contextualise any other information (Sam).

These semi-articulated views reveal deeply held views about the subject and the role of the subject specialist. However in the case of this particular teacher, the issue seemed to revolve around confidence to teach subject matter, perhaps exemplifying the view of Bryce and Humes (1999) that Scottish secondary teachers first and foremost teach their subjects. In other

words the issue was mainly one of content. For example he stated his belief that subject knowledge is a key component in teaching a subject.

The difficulty comes where if you get the Geography teacher who doesn't know why the Henge was built at a certain place or what the, you know, where it stands in the European or British context or, you know, the History teacher who doesn't understand how the internal workings of a volcano, understand how it works ... I think that you spend your life building up that sort of background, don't you, and that kind of approach to things... I am pretty sure as a teacher I could probably develop skills in teaching History and so on but, I am a trained person in a subject, and I still feel quite strongly about it (Sam).

In Sam's view, the differences between the subjects take on essentialist qualities, and while he conceded that the boundaries between subjects are blurred at times, he believed that there are fundamental differences in emphasis between the subjects that justify their continued separation.

There are assumptions made about the social subjects which are erroneous... I mean, the Geography, we are demanding you know, we are demanding spatial awareness There are many of the common points like, social concern and everything, but I would say that Modern Studies at one level takes a more organisational kind of view ... for instance, they would look at NATO. There are significant key differences, for instance, the demands of the enquiry skills in



Geography are quite different from the demands in Modern Studies (Sam).

This underlying belief in the subject and his identity as a Geographer translated into some anxiety in the teaching of his second subject, Modern Studies. In this case, he was not qualified to teach the subject, but had done so for several years. Despite this experience, he believed that his teaching was hampered by the lack of a formal training in the subject, leading to an over-reliance on textbooks at times.

Superficially, such views go counter to the emerging consensus in policymaking circles that an over-emphasis on subjects can be negative in its effects (e.g. SEED 2006; Alcorn 2006): fragmentation of learning, a failure to make connections, and transmission modes of teaching are easy to associate with Sam's statements about the importance of the subject, and the subject grounding of the teacher. However, a more careful look at this teacher reveals that this subject-centric view is far from the full picture. For a start, observation of teaching, and subsequent discussions with this teacher revealed a thoughtful and skilled teacher, who placed great store on the development of skills, autonomy in learning and engagement with pupils. When asked for his philosophy of education, he gave this response:

Well I mean I suppose people have laughed at me before when I've said that I've a philosophy in teaching. I suppose I've got to have a couple of drams before I say these things. My philosophy goes something like this. That all of these individuals bring something different and I'm interested in everyone of them and what they bring

that's different and if it's good we reinforce it and if it's bad we nip it out if we can, but the bottom line is that the student who is aware of their own role in their education is a success and it doesn't matter whether they achieve that a C in the Geography class in second year or an F. If they're aware of their own input in it they can produce that input they will always get support and encouragement from me, always and that's the way I see it. Now, obviously there are all sorts of ways, you know, of thought and ideas and things that we could go on and talk about below that, but the fact is that if you can get the pupils to that stage you will get them to the very best (Sam).

Despite describing himself as a traditional teacher, there is considerable evidence of the sort of engagement, independent thinking and classroom dialogue that one would normally associate with more progressive teaching. For example,

I don't think you can get the best out of people unless you engage with them, you know, there has to be some kind of interaction and even for the least confident child, you know there is something there that they can give you back and then you can hopefully give them too. I am a great believer in that and I think that you will find the same with my colleague (Sam).

Even on the topic of inter-disciplinarity, Sam was prepared to concede that, while he opposed it in Hillview School, it may work elsewhere. His view, ultimately, was that government should enable local professional judgement through a flexible approach to curriculum planning.

Yes, well it may well be that some schools see things, the way in an integrated format and it may be it suits their skills, and who am I to pronounce on what it is like in inner city Glasgow or Stirling or wherever it might be. I think the whole thing calls for a bit of flexibility but always the model should lead to the best possible educated student at the end of the day, and if you are not doing that then you are doing something wrong. We are doing that, we get great quality students here, and they come out very competent in second year, most of them, and it is because we help them to write, we help them to understand the identity, you know to have an identity in the subject, if you like that they are studying, so I just think that flexibility is the thing and that works for us, it might not work for other schools, but it works for us. And if somebody in Peter Peacock's<sup>8</sup> position was to sit down and pronounce that say, well, Oh I don't think you know, we could, I don't want you teaching Geography, History or Modern Studies, I want you to put them all together, I think it would be totally inappropriate (Sam).

Despite his strong views on inter-disciplinary provision, in practice there appeared to be some blurring of the subject delineation. What Sam advocated is integrated teaching with appropriate connections built in by the subject specialist; in other words subject teaching that is routinely shared, providing a strong measure of pedagogic integration (Fogarty 1991). Moreover he saw Geography as an evolving and flexible subject with

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<sup>8</sup> Minister for Education and Young People

permeable boundaries which are capable of absorbing parts of Modern Studies and even History.

The other teacher in the department had a quite different biography, but demonstrated similar views when interviewed. Frank had taught in the school for 24 years at the time of the interview, and his role had changed during this period.

I came here as a teacher of Modern Studies and for a start there were three in the department. There was a History teacher, a Geography teacher and a Modern Studies teacher. Then about in 1992 the History teacher was declared excess. She got shoved sideways into the English department so she stayed in the school and all of a sudden I had to start teaching History having not touched it since College, which was a bit of shock, and I'm now teaching more History than I do Modern Studies but I thoroughly enjoy it (Frank).

Again, and perhaps surprisingly given Frank's professional biography, there was a strongly espoused opposition to integrating the teaching of the social subjects; in this case he was a teacher trained in one social subject, but primarily engaged in the teaching of a second, for which he had less formal training, and at the time of reorganisation, less experience. One might expect such a teacher, by dint of the subsequent experience, to be more open to the idea of teaching beyond the boundaries of the familiar subject than would a colleague with a strong background in only one subject. Significantly, Frank grounded his arguments in the integrity of the subject specialism taught by specialist teachers. In practical terms he saw some

problems with teaching outside of his specialist areas. These largely related to the future status and credibility of the subject. However, in principle he believed the whole notion of teacher professionalism in Scotland to be based upon a foundation of subject specialism.

Call me old fashioned, but, no, no, I am not for integrated for S1/S2. Basically what I know about Geography I could write on the back of a postage stamp, I prided myself at school on how little Geography I knew. And for me to stand in front of a class of people, who are possibly, about to start a standard grade credit Geography course, and I would be responsible in preparing them for that, that is a nonsense ... It is not professional confidence and knowledge, I mean I can stand up in front of a class and deliver any old nonsense, probably blag my way through it, but it is professionalism ... I mean where do you draw the line if you have people who are not Geography teachers, teaching Geography, where else does that stop. I mean, to me, the whole point about the professionalism, within Scotland ... is the quality of and the qualification of the people delivering it, and I see it quite simply as the thin edge of the wedge ... I think basically, that I don't think it would do the credibility of any subject any good, because the kids would smell a rat. Once you start to flounder they will pounce on it, you know "hee hee, he doesn't know", and once that happens it is not so much your personal status within the school, it is the status of the subject, which would then become threatened (Frank).

As with his colleague, and despite his statement that it was not a matter of professional confidence, at least some of these views seem to be grounded in a confidence in and familiarity with the subject matter to be taught, and a deeply internalised view that teaching the subject is ultimately rooted in the transmission or mastery of content. When asked his views on the feasibility of integrating the two subjects with which he was familiar (History and Modern Studies), he was more ambivalent.

To be perfectly honest, if such a subject area were to present itself, I would obviously have to have a look at the course and see about that. To be perfectly honest ... I will frequently skip forward or back, either in Modern Studies look at the historical background at something or in History jumping forward again and look at something we were doing in History and giving a modern day example. You know, American Foreign policy, I mean, I do that as a matter of course anyway, its, whether it confuses or helps the pupils I don't know, you tend to do that anyway (Frank).

As with his colleague, the overt statements of opposition to integrated teaching and expressions of traditionalism were in some tension with the apparent reality of his classroom philosophy and practice. Here was another teacher who prepared lessons thoughtfully, made connections between topics and with other curricular areas, and employed a wide range of teaching methodologies to engage pupils. Like his colleague, he was traditional in the value that he placed on the teacher as a resource in the

classroom, but in many other ways his teaching was in tune with more progressive methods.

As I said that (the textbook) has its place and I use that from time to time but not to the exclusion of all others. I try to use as wide a range of styles as I can but I still, I'm an old fashioned old fart here, but I still think the most important resource in any classroom is the teacher ... I think the teacher should be the motivator in a classroom (Frank).

In summary, my visits to this department left me with the impression of two caring and thoughtful teachers who took their duties seriously. Teaching was varied and focused on learning and on the needs of pupils. It was rooted in the demands of the subject up to a point, but interviews revealed a situation that was more complex than it seemed at first glance; objections to integrated provision stemmed from both practical and philosophical roots, being articulated as matters of professional confidence and through essentialist interpretations of the school subject. However at the level of classroom practice, such boundaries were considerably more fluid than initially seemed to be the case. There was little evidence of the fragmented approach often associated with separate provision; this was limited by the contiguous nature of teaching accommodation, regular formal and informal contacts between the subject teachers, and especially, in the words of Sam, by the excellent relationship between the teachers:

I mean it works in an excellent way because we happen to be friends, we never fall out (Sam).

## **Influences on the construction of curriculum**

Having looked in some detail at the attitudes, values and teaching practices of these teachers, it is next interesting to examine how these impacted on the construction of the curriculum, and indeed whether other issues and factors exerted any influence on this process. In doing so, I will address some of the issues, where possible, that arose in the analysis of the questionnaire data, specifically the question of whether innovation and diversity are limited within small schools, where rotation seems to be fairly ubiquitous as the response to the problem of fragmentation.

It is worth reiterating that this was a department where strong views were expressed against integrating the subjects; and yet there was substantial evidence of collegial working, links being made between subjects through common planning of courses, and a strong sense of departmental cohesion. It is clear, that despite the opposition expressed to integrated provision, a measure of integration was nonetheless achieved in the teaching of the social subjects. It was present in only a limited sense at an organisational level (through a management structure that identifies a head of department for the social subjects). However at the level of pedagogy, the strong interpersonal cohesion evident in this department created an environment where integrated approaches to teaching may take place. In Fogarty's (1991) terms the teaching of these subjects was formally shared rather than fragmented, as might be expected in a department with separate, concurrent provision; furthermore at times, for example in the teaching of enquiry skills, teaching could be described as threaded, and teachers



readily made more *ad hoc* links between their subjects and the wider context of the social subjects.

Yet it is clear from the above discussion that the integrity of the subject is an important factor in the planning of provision in this particular school. While both teachers readily made cross-curricular links, they had strong and principled objections to this sort of approach being enshrined in the official provision of the school. This was true even in the case of a teacher who was trained in two of the subjects; in this case, he saw no need to integrate teaching of two subjects where he admitted the overlaps and similarities, and where he had technical expertise in both. Such a situation can also not be blamed on a lack of knowledge of alternatives. Integrated provision was very much on the political agenda, as these teachers were well aware. That they appreciated the benefits of a shared approach was clear from the data. Both teachers had regular contact with colleagues from other schools (via EA curriculum panels), and had come into contact with alternative approaches, including integration, of which they were critical. Thus in the particular case of Hillview School, the lack of innovation, in formal terms, in the direction of integrated provision can be attributed in part to the reluctance of the teachers to consider such alternatives.

A further reason for the lack of innovation in this direction may be found in the relative autonomy enjoyed by these teachers, and the high regard in which they were clearly held by the school management. According to the Headteacher, the existing provision produced excellent results, contributing to an 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' mentality.

Given the quality of the product that they give me at present I do not see the need to change for the sake of change. If ... there was a lead coming from our Authority or nationally that we have to reduce further the number of teachers in S1 and 2 that we are perhaps coming back down to a core of teachers then the situation would be different. I would, we would be forced to take that step. As things stand at the moment I have got quality staff delivering a quality product, children attaining high attainment from the top of the school and I don't think there is any good reason to change that (Headteacher).

Moreover, the external pressures on this school to conform to any standardised model for the provision of the social subjects seemed to be limited. The Headteacher commented on HMIE's influence on school-based decision-making.

It's stressful for the folk involved. It means any development plans, every year, are going to be addressing points only that HMI come up with, that you're not going to be taking forward the agenda that you think is appropriate, the authority thinks is appropriate and new initiatives coming from the government (Headteacher).

Nevertheless, inspection reports seemed to be limited to demands to improve attainment and pace and challenge, and are not specific to this subject area. There were no requirements for an overhaul of provision in the social subjects, and more general guidance (e.g. HMIE 2000a) is open to wide interpretation.

Likewise there was little evidence of a strong steer on provision from the EA. According to interviewees, this was emerging at the time of the interviews from a sustained period of disorganisation. Indeed this particular EA was one of the more heterogeneous authorities in terms of provision (according to my questionnaire data), suggesting further that such a policy was lacking. According to the Headteacher, this situation had improved with the appointment of a new Director; at the time of the interviews there had been little discernible change in actual policy, but encouraging signs of a more effective approach to enacting policies were evident.

Thus a lack of a strong policy direction from the centre was evident in this case, combined with substantial professional trust in effective practitioners. These could have been a contributory factor in the lack of major innovation. Another likely factor was innovation fatigue. This was articulated by Sam:

I think most teachers would like a bit of stability, you know, I'm certainly not against change, not at all and we're actually looking at certain things that we might do, you know, for instance teaching higher still programme instead of standard grade (Sam).

Several of the interviewees, responding to specific questions about 5-14 and general questions about change exhibited a degree of cynicism about educational change. 5-14 is a case in point; a non-mandatory document in principle, it was also seen in some quarters as being a poor document that has little relevance to secondary schools.

I think I can speak on behalf of Sam and I (sic), it doesn't drive our S1/S2 course. I pay lip service to it because basically the original 5-14 document was a poor document, and they had the chance to rearrange it and they made as big a pig's ear of it second time round as they did first time. Basically I feel that if I can do it, if I can deliver the sort of unit that I want, and in the process, tick all the necessary boxes, then I am happy, they are happy and the most important point for me, is not the 5-14 ticky boxes, it is the point of delivery in the classroom (Frank).

Sam expressed similar reservations about centrally mandated change.

I don't even raise my eyebrows now at every new bombshell that comes from on high. I don't even take a flicker of interest in it. I just wait until it impacts upon me and I have to act and then I do it... I've come to the stage where I just wait until they impact upon me directly. Meanwhile I'll do what I'm best at and I know Frank will, and that is teaching kids and make sure that they're equipped to go out there (Sam).

Surprisingly, this view on centrally mandated change was echoed by the Depute Headteacher.

Sometimes, I shouldn't be saying this, but sometimes we pay lip service to the change... but we try not to rock the boat too much. We try to take on some of it and know we have to be accounted for some of the stuff. It can be a bit iffy at times (Depute Headteacher).

Nevertheless there was some evidence that 5-14 had impacted on provision. The document has created a framework for shared planning, obviously facilitated as discussed within the environment of this particular school, and it has further encouraged this through the designation of common skills. Frank placed some of the school planning within the context of 5-14.

Following the rationale is that the 5-14 document, whereby the People in Society is considered to be less prominent ... I feel that that balance is just about right, because many of the concepts which the pupils require in Modern Studies are a wee bitty difficult for them in first and second year and I know some schools where they do equal third, equal third, equal third, and the substance for that amount of time in Modern Studies I feel it is just isn't there, but I know speaking to some friends' children, when they were going through school they found Modern Studies less interesting ... whereas we do it in more slightly shorter time and more intensive and hopefully more meaningful (Frank).

However, even here, I got a feeling that the document was being used *post hoc* to justify and rationalise existing provision.

All of this raises further questions. Why then had this school adopted rotation, rather than retaining separate, concurrent provision? Is the small size of the school conducive to this course of action? Had the relative autonomy of the social subjects teachers impacted on the form of provision adopted? And what external factors might have had a particular influence on

this school? The Headteacher suggested that rotation was an innovation due to HMIE pressure. However there is no evidence from recent HMI reports of pressure on provision, therefore this innovation could be seen in terms of a school response, set in the national context of HMIE general pressure, a local, albeit, fragmented policy environment, and the activities of teachers with a free rein to innovate.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **RIVERSIDE HIGH SCHOOL: THE TOP-DOWN MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE**

#### **The school**

Riverside High School is a medium sized denominational school, serving a large suburban and rural catchment area. At the time of the survey, the school roll was 1050, a significant growth since an HMIE report in the late 1990s put the roll at 900. According to the questionnaire return, the school catchment area is mixed in terms of socio-economic status. This is supported by the words of one teacher, who stated that despite the school's denominational status,

it's a fairly, typical comprehensive, yes we've got some very, able kids, not an awful lot of really able kids, but there's a fair top end and we've also got a lot of children that have got difficulties, and I think that is perhaps best seen in your first and second year classes when you have got a whole range of ability and you can have an enormous range from virtually illiterate to children who are really quite able, but I would imagine that's the same at a lot of secondaries in Wenshire (Martin).

Attainment was roughly in line with EA and national averages at the time of the research, but this was noticeably variable from cohort to cohort. For example, attainment of five or more passes at SCQF level 4 by the end of S4 varied from over 85% (over the national average) to under 70% (well

below the average) between 2002 and 2005. This variability is also evident in staying on rates as well as attainment in S5 and S6 (LTS 2007).

At the time of the questionnaire return, there were three teachers of Geography, two teachers of History and three teachers of Modern Studies. Three of these teachers were newly appointed probationers. By the time the first interviews were conducted in September 2003, the staffing profile of the faculty had been further changed due to the retirement of the Principal Teacher of History, and his replacement by a new Faculty Manager, Jim, a History specialist appointed externally. Prior to the issue of revised 5-14 guidelines for the social subjects (LTS 2000), social subjects provision had been mainly organised across S1 and S2 via the mechanism of separate subjects running in rotation. The exception to this general situation is the first year European Union unit. This was set up as a pupil induction for the three social subjects, utilising an inter-disciplinary approach, based around the organising theme of Europe. According to the questionnaire return, this is an 'S1 Introductory Social Subjects unit with an emphasis on developing S.S skills'. This management-led innovation predated the revised 5-14 curriculum, and had its roots in the strong and proactive links that the school had formed with its large number of associate primary schools, providing a phased transition from primary to secondary within this curricular area.

Geography, History and Modern Studies had traditionally been associated with one another through being situated geographically in the same area of the school, with a common staff base; the first year integrated unit further cemented these links, however the departments retained strong individual



identities prior to 2000. Following the revised guidelines, and the McCrone Agreement, the departments had been brought together more formally through the institution of a humanities faculty structure. This structure also included a formerly unassociated department, Religious and Moral Education, although in this latter case the links were purely administrative. In the case of the social subjects, the links extended to teaching. In S1, the school has developed a form of provision that is termed integrated by the teachers. This consisted of the existing inter-disciplinary Europe unit, followed by a modular, multi-disciplinary approach (one teacher, three subjects) for the remainder of the first year. In S2, the social subjects were taught separately in rotation by specialist staff.

I chose to focus on Riverside High School as a case study because it had developed a form of integrated provision of the social subjects. The questionnaire and subsequent conversations with a Depute Headteacher suggested that this was an initiative driven by senior management, held in place by management structures. This top-down style of change management contrasted with the apparently more autonomous approach to provision at Hillview School, and I was interested to see how these case studies compared upon closer analysis.

At the time of the interviews, the faculty was emerging from a turbulent period. The previous HMIE report had identified poor attainment in the social subjects (HMIE 1998); attainment in History in particular had been criticised as showing a declining trend. There was a history of conflict between the Principal Teacher of History and the senior management, primarily over

attainment and approaches to teaching. Shortly before the first interviews in 2003, the situation had come to a head with the early retirement of this teacher, and his replacement by the new Faculty Manager.

As with Hillview School, this case study was researched via two sets of site visits. On the first sets of visits, I spent several days in the school, interviewing senior managers and social subjects teachers. During the second set of visits, I interviewed only social subjects teachers. In total, nine teachers were interviewed, five of them on two occasions. I observed five lessons, and spent several days as a participant observer in the staff base.

### **The culture of the school and department**

In marked contrast to the Hillview case study, the interview data from Riverside High School presented a very mixed picture of the school and department. Much was positive, but there were significant elements of dissatisfaction. This complex picture, therefore, merits extended discussion of the context within which the teachers work, as it has a major bearing on the form that socio-cultural interaction in the department took, and consequently on the enactment of the curriculum.

#### *Ethos*

Early indications were of a harmonious and well run school. Riverside High School has an open and pleasant campus. The administrative block is well-presented. The visitor is quickly struck by the calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school; students move quietly around the school, transitions between lessons are orderly, and one regularly sees a respectful

relationship between teachers and students, who greet one another in the corridors. This is borne out by the latest inspection, five years earlier. According to this report,

strong loyalty to the school among staff and pupils contributed to its very positive ethos. A calm and orderly atmosphere prevailed throughout the school and pupils were polite and courteous. Relationships among staff were very good (HMIE 1998: 3).

This ethos was said by some teachers to be reinforced through the application of high standards in respect of uniform. According to one fairly new member of staff,

The first impressions of the school were excellent in terms of things like the pupils have all got uniform on and it is nice to walk into a classroom and see everybody with a shirt and tie (Angela).

Another, more experienced teacher commented similarly:

I think the kind of uniform side of things and the feeling of belonging maybe is a bit stronger than in some other schools (Martin).

A related area was discipline. Most teachers commented upon the positive nature of student behaviour. For example, Jim gave his impressions as a new member of staff.

First impressions were very good. I thought when I came to my pre-visit it seemed very orderly. Every classroom I went into the kids, seemed to be on task (Jim).

It is clear that the school management took a low tolerance approach towards indiscipline and infractions of uniform policy. Sometimes this approach to discipline was less than positive. On at least two occasions I witnessed confrontational, and even aggressive, approaches taken by senior managers towards students. According to one member of staff, this was the norm.

I think it's because of the style of the school, the traditional style the senior management want to attain. The tough disciplinarian is seen as being the way to go and the two new assistant Headteachers and Deputy who were appointed ... were at that style (Jock).

First impressions of the school thus tend to convey a sense of high standards in terms of the aesthetics of the school environment, uniform and student behaviour. One of the Depute Headteachers stated confidently that the school had a good ethos, based around a strong sense of community.

Well certainly we would claim that we have a very positive ethos in school, very focused on people ... I think you will find that we do operate as a school community, staff operate as a team. Where we do identify situations where we feel that staff might not be co-operating positively all of the time we will address that issue, we will address it again in a constructive, supportive fashion, so the community spirit is extremely important and one method of doing that really is involving the staff in the way that the school operates. Clearly our own focuses, you know management team, is not to instruct staff in what they should be doing. It's more a case of involving them in the

decisions, getting them to feel some kind of ownership of what is going on in the school, and empowering them, giving them an opportunity to develop professionally (Steve).

I shall take this unequivocal statement as a starting point for analysis of several features of school ethos that go beyond the surface features represented by uniform and school environment, dealing in turn with relations between management and teachers and relationships amongst staff in the social subjects.

#### *Management/staff relations*

The Headteacher stated her belief that Riverside High is a happy school.

I think it's very positive unless they're all very good actors. Everywhere I go the people are friendly and seem happy. I mean it's a difficult job; people have good days and bad days, but I would say generally morale is good (Headteacher).

This rosy view of staff morale was supported by some staff, but was less evident in conversations with other teachers. In general, it is a view expressed by members of the senior management team, and to a lesser extent by new members of staff, particularly the younger teachers. For example, one recently appointed teacher stated that the atmosphere in the school was,

very friendly, I've received really good support from other teachers and senior management team. We had a really good probationer support (Angela).

Another young teacher commented on his experience of contacts with the senior managers.

I've worked with, you know, Steve obviously at lot, and Barbara who's an Assistant Headteacher and you know I think that they're really friendly and open. Mrs. Davies is you know obviously really sort of polite and encouraging but I don't see her very often (Dean).

This view of a supportive management and a happy staff was supported by Barbara, one of the Depute Headteachers.

I think it's to do with leadership. We have an excellent Headteacher. She's very enthusiastic, she's very creative she's a good original thinker. She's got a very much "I can do" philosophy. She wins staff over on that ... She wants the school to look good. She wants the school to be well resourced and she's very good at managing finances ... I wouldn't be happy for us to go down this road of school managers standing at the back of classes criticising teachers (Barbara).

School managers suggested that classroom teachers and middle managers fully participated in setting future directions for the school's development. For instance, Steve explained how a group was brought together to work out strategies for raising achievement in the school.

Staff were approached to ask if they would be interested and my role there was to ensure that they felt that they were actually taking ownership, taking charge, taking responsibility ... (it) wasn't the case that I would be managing that and telling them what to do, they came up with the ideas, they were in the team, they felt part of the team, they helped deliver the programme, they helped to evaluate the program, so that would be just one example of the kind of approaches that we have, a number of initiatives, getting people who we feel would be interested to become involved with the clear notion that not only would that help the pupils to perform better but also to help themselves on their own personal professional development (Steve).

The views of some of the younger and newer staff added credence to this. Dean explained his involvement in a working party to forge links with local primary schools.

Steve is my Principal Teacher so he's really encouraged me to get involved in all these things and I think compared to other people at my stage I've been involved in a lot more, you know, I'm ... involved in things like with feeder ... primary schools and working parties (Dean).

Similarly, Angela and her more experienced new colleague Jim had been invited to become involved in whole school initiatives.

However, this picture of a positive ethos and staff involvement was not the whole story. As Steve indicated, membership of working committees appeared to be by invitation, justified by the rationale that people are chosen according to their skills and interests. There was substantial evidence in the interview data of ill-feeling amongst some members of staff, who perceived themselves as being marginalised. Older, established members of staff tended to be less positive about the school ethos than their newer colleagues. One member of staff articulated his views on participation clearly.

I don't think the majority have a say in what happens. I think there's certainly a lot of effort to involve them. I mean I think they've got quite a good scheme for the probationary teachers and they're keen to involve a lot of the young teachers in the life of the school. Sometimes I don't get asked to do things. ... you talked about cross school committees and things. I'm not really asked to go on them. There was one or two that I sort of volunteered my name for they don't really meet all that often. It looks good on paper but I don't think it comes through really (Martin).

Criticisms were also made about communication, management style and relations between staff and management; such views were in considerable tension with the philosophies and putative practices espoused by members of the senior management team and the newer young teachers. In many cases these criticisms were guarded, but some were expressed openly and frankly, and they pointed to the existence of a great deal of resentment in



some quarters. One repeated comment concerned what is perceived in some quarters to be autocratic management.

I'm not happy about management culture in a number of respects ... in the time I've been in this school there's been about half a dozen Principal Teachers' meetings and I've been here thirteen years and I felt when I became a Principal Teacher that I would be involved in some kind of management role and I feel that my views and opinions were not really listened to on a number of occasions and I feel that it's very autocratic in this school (Martin).

Another experienced teacher talked of what he saw as his progressive disengagement and marginalisation from the centre of power in the school.

I think the attitude towards senior management and myself changed significantly because perhaps of my attitude, my background, the way I teach and I'm quite outspoken these days if I'm asked my opinion; if I'm not I tend not to give it anymore because I don't think it's really welcome. It's a very autocratic management ... I will work with democratic decisions ... I do know that even in the authority that there are better, more open, less hard management styles that (are) more effective (Jock).

Both members of staff raised concerns about what they saw as confrontational and unprofessional styles of management, which were humiliating personally. Both referred to alleged instances when senior managers had reprimanded teachers in front of classes.

They would prefer more regular, heads down kind of thing. They want new methodologies and all the rest of it, yet they walk into a class and there's a lot of noise and hubbub going on and they think there's something wrong in the class where in actual fact they might be quite productive what's going on (Martin).

Jock was more explicit in his criticism of this sort of practice, citing also instances where middle management colleagues were placed under a great deal of pressure by senior managers, resulting in one case in an extended period of stress related absence.

I've also seen ... Heads of Department who I feel have actually been forced out of the school for very, very, unprofessional reasons, to the point where I have actually confronted and spoken to senior members of staff about the treatment given to colleagues ... It's unprofessional to stand at the door and say, "there's too much noise in here, Mr. Jones." That's bad to me because I would stop the lesson and say "Excuse me, may I speak to you outside." I really don't accept that sort of remark (Jock).

Both of these experienced teachers point to the imperative of attainment in exams as the driver behind such actions and attitudes.

This school is setting ... traditional targets for examination passes, and that is seen as being the main objective. OK if traditional styles - what that's supposed to mean - of sitting in rows, being absolutely quiet, copying notes, etc. is the way to do that, well yes I could accept

it totally. For me, as a teacher of twenty six years in different schools, I don't think that's the only way to go. (Jock).

The interview transcripts suggest that there is general agreement on this latter point; senior managers and teaching staff alike agreed that attainment was a major priority in this school, and this was manifested in pressure upon departments to perform, and by the existence of working groups to raise attainment. The proactive stance by senior management was part of this overall picture, and was an explicitly stated position:

It's maybe not that some schools do it and some schools don't. A lot of my Headteacher colleagues would say to me "Oh they won't wear that, they won't do that." So they don't disturb them ... I've never been sort of like that. ... It's not the comfort zone for the staff (Headteacher).

Senior managers were consistent in articulating this clear managerial policy. Indeed they were surprisingly open about the degree of manipulation of staffing that takes place. The Headteacher stated that she chose appropriate staff, and that she preferred to appoint and develop young staff, including probationers, for management roles. This, she implied, was a strategy to overcome resistance to her agenda.

So there are one or two pockets of resistance, but I've brought in to counteract that sort of middle barrier of people who, I sort of say fifty upwards, and it's really not an age thing, but in this school there is a correlation between age and attitude ... I head hunt everybody and

get the best people in ... So it's been a matter of training them up to be able to do the job that people in here couldn't do, so we kind of got a new management team to sort of squeeze in the middle if you like ... pockets of resistance (Headteacher).

One of the Depute Headteachers was yet more explicit about this strategy. When asked how the school overcame staff resistance to the school's overt change agenda, she responded;

Well, employing young enthusiastic staff ... the senior management team is relatively (young) ... the average age is about 43, 44 ... there's still a freshness about the team, but if you look then at the middle management, our Principal Teachers, most of them have been here for twenty years .... so what does a creative person do. They bring people in at the bottom line and bring them on. We now have curriculum leaders which is McCrone initiative. We've got lots of young, enthusiastic staff and as a Headteacher and as a senior management team we're encouraged to manage those young people by creating staff development opportunities for them (Barbara).

This nurturing of newer staff extended to a conscious effort to shield them from what was seen as the cynicism of more experienced teachers.

I think that is our job, as a management team. I know all of my new staff pretty well, I would know what their needs are ... I will advise them on what to listen to, I will advise them when not to listen too

much if they feel they are being exposed to that kind of negative attitude (Steve).

I have dwelt at length on this aspect of the ethos of the school because it is significant in the analysis of socio-cultural interaction within the faculty and the ultimate success or otherwise of the curricular initiatives in the school. My analysis of the data reveals a complex picture of the management structures within the school. On the one hand, we see a senior management team with a clear vision for the school, underpinned by a rhetoric of participation and a proactive stance in driving forward change. On the other hand we see a potentially divisive managerial style, perhaps manipulative in bringing pliant staff on board, and at times heavy handed in its dealings with teachers who are less favoured. Of course one has to be sceptical about the reflections of teachers who may have a personal axe to grind, but their testimony seemed to be supported by the statements of the senior managers themselves. In the words of the Headteacher,

You're not sort of kidding people on this is a democracy (Headteacher).

### *Relationships within the Social Subjects faculty*

The faculty was a relatively new entity, having been formed from four previously discrete departments. This top-down reorganisation had formalised some existing relationships. Some of these were based in the geographical context of the department (the shared staff base, and co-location of teaching rooms). Others related to provision, specifically the S1

European Union integrated unit. The reorganisation had also created new relationships, particularly in the area of provision, as social subjects teachers were now expected to teach across the social subjects, but also through the assimilation of the RME department.

According to Martin, such links had provided a spin off in terms of collaborative working.

We have always shared a staff base ... I think we have always been aware of what the other subjects are doing and you know sharing resources ... Well I think all the time I've been in this school the three social subjects departments have got on well together ... I feel that because we are largely in this corridor we always have worked quite well together. We kind of supported each other, you know, things like removing kids from a class and putting them somewhere else and stuff like that so there's a lot of cooperation as far as that's concerned. Sharing of resources, as well things like TVs, overheads and all this kind of stuff. (Martin).

This positive view was not shared by all of his colleagues. Several teachers alluded to the difficulties that were experienced with History in the years preceding the departmental reorganisation. Difficulties extended to relationships with senior management and within the department, support for new colleagues and attainment.

The department, I think, has obviously changed a lot in the last sort of two years since I came ... I think as well with the introduction of Jim

it's certainly grown stronger, hopefully anyway. It's certainly a more pleasant atmosphere to work in over the last year and a half. Well maybe it's just because I was new in and I was obviously a lot younger, you know, I was the only sort of young person who came in so in was harder on me coming in. It's just been such a difference for me in terms of, you know, support and, you know, obviously you don't want to work for a social life but you have to have people that you can get on with and talk to and enjoy your sort of working days so it has made it a lot easier for me. They've got sort of the same ideas as me and just been through the same system (Angela).

This view of harmonious working and social relations within the department was largely shared by the established, discontented teachers in the faculty; their enmity seems to be directed entirely towards senior managers and their management practices. The exception to this picture of a group of people working in relative harmony was the case of the recently assimilated RME teachers. Difficulties appeared to be both interpersonal and consequential to ill-feeling caused by the forced reorganisation. This had most overtly manifested itself in the fact that the RME department had removed itself *en masse* from the social subjects base to the main staffroom during lunchtimes. Several teachers commented negatively on this, including Dean:

I think the merging of the two departments probably hasn't worked so well. Clearly you can see the divide. It's visible in terms of where people sit. Personally, I get on well with (them), but I know that

everybody wouldn't say the same things ... it hasn't made any difference to my life but I think that it has to certain people and therefore it causes a bit of fuss (Dean).

Interestingly, the view from the senior management was somewhat different, downplaying the differences, and talking up the benefits of the reorganisation. Perhaps this was a difference in perspective, or maybe a case of impression management.

I think very successful ... We, as a management team need to think of how people interact, we did have a situation in Social Subjects up until June where there was a negative influence and we did not want our young, inexperienced and very able staff being subjected to that negative influence for too much of the time and one of the strategies that we were thinking of was to bring R.E. staff in who tend not to have that negative influence, sort of really counteract what would have been happening in Social Subjects base. So we did give it some thought as to how it might work now. In fact the impression that we have today is that people are very happy with it, they feel that they are mixing with other staff, the problem is, as we know with all departmental bases, is that people can get set in ways and it was an attempt to break that down (Steve).

#### *The faculty in its wider context: inter-faculty interaction*

A major theme emerging from the transcripts was an apparent balkanisation (Hargreaves 1994) of the school in departmental terms. This was evident in



many of the statements made by teachers and managers, and can be ascribed to a variety of factors. Some of these are concerned specifically with provision, and will be further developed in the next section of the chapter. While this situation was not necessarily totally applicable to the internal logics of the social subjects faculty, it is worth a mention, as it had a bearing on school ethos and management practices, and upon the positioning of teachers within the social subjects faculty.

According to the department's teachers, formal opportunities for staff to communicate with other departments were infrequent. All teaching staff mentioned this; comments included:

I do feel that departments are isolated both physically in terms of staff bases, forums and opportunities for whole school gatherings (Jock).

That's one thing that is weird about this place is the Departments stay in their departments and on In-Service Days and Christmas and the end of the Summer holidays we all go and have a coffee in the staff room, but otherwise, and they tried to change that, but it just doesn't seem to work (Sue).

Use of the main staffroom was a common theme in the interviews. This room was used primarily by the Support for Learning Assistants as a workbase, and (since the faculty reorganisation) by staff from the former RME department. Some of the teachers stated a belief that the staffroom was underused, and that this was a problem for the school. For example, Angela saw this as being an essential way to bring the staff closer together.

I think to get more people using the main staff room. It's one of the only schools that I've been in where people don't. I mean even down at (my last school) they didn't use it very much but every Friday everybody went down at interval whereas here, you know, it's very, very rarely, like if there's a coffee morning or something and I think that would help with communication. (Angela).

Senior managers, while accepting the desirability of strong inter-departmental links, were less concerned about the under use of the staffroom.

Yes, there is a main staff room which is used primarily for social occasions. It's ... probably under used as a facility ... Staff do tend to remain in their subject areas, in their bases if you like, one of the reasons for that is that we have spent time thinking about furnishing these bases, you know, members of staff will have their own work area, they will have access to the computer, to telephone and so on, they can have coffee there, they can have their lunch there, they can meet with their colleagues informally there. I talked with a Headteacher recently who in fact did away with the notion of departmental bases and in fact went so far as doing away with departmental areas. I didn't quite see the rationale for that, I think if he is looking to promote a wider social network there are different ways of doing it, I would argue that in this school there is a strong departmental networking (Steve).

It is not entirely clear from the research what constituted this strong departmental networking, other than formal structures for developing probationary teachers and the cross curricular working teams described already. Comments from the teachers refuted the notion of strong departmental networking; they pointed to an organisational fragmentation within the school, a lack of familiarity with the workings of other departments, and a general sense of isolation. While membership of cross curricular groups undoubtedly helped to break down such barriers, it did not seem to provide the opportunities to build strong social relationships, or to enable the staff to bond together as a cohesive whole.

### **Teachers, teaching and the curriculum**

The situation in respect of provision of the social subjects mirrors the wider issues of ethos. The school had structures to further integrate the teaching of the social subjects, building upon a previous management driven initiative, the thematic first year unit. The Headteacher outlined the proactive role that the senior management team had in driving these reforms, describing how she initiated moves to:

look at how the children learn, how teachers teach and one of the things we thought to do was to look at the Social Subjects curricula. Now there were two motivations to that, one about the teaching and trying to get across to children that skills they use in one area are generic, but also to combat poor leadership within the Social Subjects area and I use Steve to do that because he's Social Subjects and a

good curricular person ... it was with great opposition that we did this (Headteacher).

As previously described, a part of this change strategy involved the recruitment of new members of staff. In this light it is worthwhile to briefly examine the staffing in the department, and the backgrounds of the teachers. The faculty was led by Jim, a new, but experienced teacher of History. The rest of the department comprised three experienced teachers - one History and two Geography - and three new, younger teachers, one for each of the three social subjects. The experienced teachers were Sue, Martin and Jock. Martin combined his teaching role with the administration of Geography, being formerly the Principal Teacher of this subject, prior to the reorganisation. Jock was a very experienced teacher, with a background teaching integrated Humanities, and some experience as an Assistant Headteacher. His role at the time of the research included guidance, with duties that took him frequently away from the social subjects faculty.

These teachers articulated a variety of views on the new provision in the faculty. Jock favoured the proposed approach, notwithstanding his general antipathy towards the school management; this is perhaps unsurprising given his background in integrated humanities. However he sounded a note of caution, warning that simply putting structures into place would not achieve successful change:

(it) will make life easier and make us more effective in terms of curriculum provision, quality ... but we do have a very difficult job because of the nature of the fragmentation of the curriculum and the

way the school is organised on a departmental basis. This notion of bringing the faculty basis into Riverside, I think will need some careful thinking out because it means an adaptation of the staffing structure, of course, salaries and costs and so on (Jock).

Given the management strategy of appointing and managing staff who were amenable to change, one might have expected the newer members of staff to favour the multi/inter-disciplinary approaches in S1. However the situation proved to be more complex than this, although superficially the overall picture was support for the aspirations of the senior management. Several such members of staff expressed a general willingness to engage with school policy, although when pressed to expand upon their views about the place of their subjects and their roles in relation to teaching across the social subjects, they fell back into espousing subject specialism.

Angela, a young Geography teacher, was perhaps typical of this phenomenon. Initially, when asked about her identity as a teacher, she said:

Well just really a teacher in general, you know. I'm obviously doing SCS as well. Within the first year section you're teaching History and Modern Studies. More a sort of teacher than actually a teacher of Geography (Angela).

In the second interview, she described how she enjoyed the challenge of teaching History, a subject she admitted to loathing at school.

I personally wouldn't have any problems with it, I think it would maybe be a bit more interesting especially, I quite enjoy teaching the Modern

Studies aspect of it and the History is getting better and I think the Geography section of it can be quite boring in comparison. (It) might make the Geography a lot, a bit more interesting if you make it in promotion of a theme (Angela).

However despite avowals that she saw herself as a teacher of children rather than of subjects, and her enthusiasm for implementing the school policy, there were also clear signs of a strong subject identity. As with other teachers, whom I interviewed, such identity often exhibits a strong negative underpinning; it is driven to a large extent by a fear of the unknown, particularly in terms of content and skills. This reinforces a view that subject specialism is in many respects a matter of confidence to teach, in a job where weaknesses are often very publicly exposed. On the subject of the multi-disciplinary provision adopted at Riverside, she was unequivocal in her view that specialists should teach specialist subjects, and that they should not teach outside their specialism.

I think if it is taught by a specialist you are going to get a different view point on the subject ... I think as a Geographer I would have to go against it, there are too many skills which non-Geographers do not know, even quite simple things like your four figure grid references ... So I would have to say, I can see the whole principle of it, and I can see on paper it all sounds very good and looks good, but I think in practice you need a specialist teaching it ... I think enthusiasm of the teacher is one thing, which obviously does influence the children as to what they are going to choose as well, obviously skills and

technique towards the subject and I have to say, when I look at some of the results from my History classes, I think the results are a lot lower than they are for Geography and Modern Studies and I have got to wonder whether that is because my teaching, because I am not up to scratch on it, although I know all the basics ... I sort of brush over some things, where a (History specialist) would go into a lot more depth in it, so I think the children benefit from having a specialist (Angela).

More significantly, such attitudes were also expressed by Jim, an experienced teacher brought in from outside, and one of a series of appointments specifically made, in the words of one of the Depute Headteachers to encourage 'very whole school' thinking (Steve). Jim showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for teaching outside the boundaries of his own subject.

Well personally, and I think a few teachers obviously would rather teach their own subject and be associated with their own subject but it's the way of the world now. I mean we're school teachers now as opposed to subject teachers (Jim).

As with Angela, when asked to expand on his thinking about provision, he reverted quickly to his preferred model, the teaching of separate subjects by specialists.

Deep down ... if I'm going to have to, in first year, have to teach Geography I find it hard to believe that I'm going to draw the same

enthusiasm, well I'll try but I think it naturally comes out within your teaching, you know attitude towards the subject, but whether the kids will perceive a difference I don't know, but certainly within myself... It's not confidence at all it's just the interest, lack of interest, got absolutely no interest ... I just have a mental barrier against it, personally. I don't want to teach Geography. That is the bottom line. I have no interest (Jim).

As was the case with Angela, for Jim, the issue went beyond the negative rationale of lack of interest and enthusiasm, to encompass what is seen as essential differences between the three subjects. He believed fervently that subject specialists should teach their subjects, and that moreover integrated teaching may affect pupils' ability to make informed option choices further up the school.

But the skills are completely different within the three social subjects so you are teaching different skills; it's not just the content. Well they're trying that way, I suppose, with the Europe investigation elements of it. I think it would be quite difficult because then how do you differentiate when it comes to option time ... I would have problems with, as kids are choosing their subjects, they could get hit with someone who has not just got the same enthusiasm that could get transferred over to the kids (Jim).

Such views revealed a deep seated philosophical adherence to the subject-centred paradigm of teaching; subject specialism is a major part of this teacher's identity as a teacher. Even where Jim could identify no particular



problems for the learners, he was still fundamentally opposed to an approach that challenged his role as a subject specialist.

I understand why it has been replaced but I cannot get my head round the fact that I am a subject specialist. I am dual qualified anyway ... if it mixes into Geography I will be professional but I don't think I'll have the same enthusiasm. The kids don't seem to mind they don't notice it because you are taught social subjects at primary school, so it is a natural progression and they understand logic (Jim).

Interviews with other experienced teachers revealed a similar picture. If we exclude Jock, who offered qualified support for integrated approaches, these teachers were sceptical about the educational value of integration, and were suspicious of the motives of the senior management in introducing it. This scepticism tended to be underpinned by a philosophy of education rooted in the primacy of the subject, and of transmission pedagogies.

Now with this in first year, with individual social subjects teachers having to teach History, Geography and Modern Studies, we're maybe beginning to see a little bit more about how these other subjects operate, but I still regard myself as a Geographer and I think my department do as well and I think you'd find that about History and Modern Studies as well that you know we are subject specialists and you know we regard our subjects as being important (Martin).

Such primacy was justified by one teacher, Sue, in terms of a perceived need to maintain academic standards. There was an implicit assumption

here that inter-disciplinary approaches somehow lack the academic rigour of separate subjects taught by specialists. Sue indicated that she felt that such an approach was adequate for first year pupils, presumably because this stage does not involve advanced study. However her view was that such an approach was not satisfactory for more advanced study

I do not think that anybody wants to see a bland social subjects, I think it would be the lowest common denominator (Sue).

When asked to expand on whether she supported the current policy of integration in S1, she replied:

I do not think that there should be a subject called social subjects, once you get past first year in the sense of them not being able to identify it. So I suppose if you went into second year, it would become less and less integrated because the bottom line is that unless universities and things are going to change their outlook on life, then they need to know what History and Geography is (sic) (Sue).

In general, the transcripts revealed an assumption that the specialist teacher will be an expert in one (or perhaps two) of the component social subjects, rather than being an expert across the three disciplines. Such expertise was widely seen as being contained within the boundaries of the school subject in question; within such boundaries teachers could be legitimately asked to teach any required content, but being required to cross the subject boundaries was considered to be much less acceptable. Thus, Sue was

quite happy about the prospect of teaching unfamiliar History syllabi at an advanced level, because she sees herself as a Historian, but was considerably more reticent about tackling equally unfamiliar, but less advanced Geography content.

Again, as with other teachers whom I interviewed, there were strong negative aspects to this reluctance to teach beyond the subject boundaries. Much of Sue's reluctance stemmed from a lack of confidence, and a lack of interest in subject matter.

I think it is just interest, and lack of knowledge I mean, total lack of knowledge. As a teacher you have a good general knowledge, but that doesn't stop me from not knowing things to do with weather and, I have to rush next door to find out if I am saying the right thing, and it doesn't, I haven't got enough interest in it, I make sure I know what I am talking about to the kids, but I haven't enough interest to pursue it any further. So that narrows your knowledge... It doesn't, methodology is the same, skills are the same, it is really the factual knowledge, even at this basic level, it is just like, you know as a teacher, the way you make lessons more entertaining or better is by being able to expand on things and have anecdotes, and I haven't got any geographical anecdotes (Sue).

### **Influences on the construction of curriculum**

The approach to provision of the social subjects thus appeared to be fairly dichotomous. On the one hand, there was senior management enthusiasm

for a more integrated approach, in response to a perceived external (mainly HMIE) agenda to reduce the number of teacher contacts for junior pupils. This had led to the imposition of first an inter-disciplinary first year module, and more recently the introduction of a modular, multi-disciplinary model for the whole of the first year course. On the other hand, the teachers were less keen, with the exception of one member of staff; as the Headteacher indicated, the innovations were introduced in the face of considerable opposition from existing staff, and the research suggests that newer staff also lacked enthusiasm for the approach. This raises questions about the efficacy of an approach that is top-down, and which does not elicit the proactive support of the teachers who are expected to enact it.

One teacher, Jock, articulated clear opinions about the integrated approach. In his view, it had been less than successful, and he identified several reasons why. These included the tradition of subject in the Scottish curriculum, but also contextual factors within the school: teachers' backgrounds and experience, planning, resourcing and whole school structural development.

Well I suppose really it would start at base level in terms of the historical perspective in the school, how the school is put together. How it's run, financed and developed, historically in Scotland. It does tend to be fragmented into subject disciplines. There's a degree of resistance to say humanities approaches and as I've discovered here, we're now in probably the fifth year of a cycle of integrated humanities ... and perhaps we've not really taken on board and

implemented things like planning, provision, finance, staffing, staff experience and how it fits into the whole school curriculum (Jock).

Specifically, Jock was critical of the development model for this particular innovation.

Partly what happened was that there was a small working party of interested people and PTs<sup>9</sup> who were designated to be involved with that as part of their ... development. I gave my views when I was asked as regards how it should be put together after the initial meeting, though it was designated to a particular group of people who took it forward, perhaps a fall out from that was that because all the staff who would be eventually delivering it were not involved at the planning and developing stage, they didn't really keep tabs on how it was developed so therefore they are not in full agreement with how it has actually been solved, and what particular has been assessed (Jock).

This suggests, perhaps, that this innovation involved senior management direction and involvement at the inception of the project, but that this had not been followed through and that, given the lack of enthusiasm of the departmental staff for this innovation, the result had been ossification.

The Europe one, great in principle, I think, but very out-dated, we have spoken this year about changing it, obviously just the simple things like currency changes (Angela).

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<sup>9</sup> Principal Teachers

In the case of the more recent multi-disciplinary model for the remainder of the first year, the issues are different. Here, development of modules is not problematic, as the work required would occur anyway within a separate subjects model. This is not to imply that there were no workload issues; subject specialists have to produce teacher-proof materials that may be used by non-specialist teachers, however this is not a major problem. According to Martin, this fits in with the time-honoured approach of assimilating new procedures into existing practice; what Osborn *et al* (1997) have termed incorporation.

I think and you'll find it with most Scottish Geography departments that what we've done is adapted units of work we've been doing for years, you know. I mean these things are tried and tested and I don't have any qualms about doing that (Martin).

Potentially more serious was the lack of enthusiasm by teachers to engage with development and teaching outside of their subject specialism. This had the potential to derail the current multi-disciplinary initiative, and to discourage further experimentation with integration. It is clear from the transcripts that the majority of teachers did not really believe in the approach adopted, even where they were prepared to go along with the innovation. Planning and course development were thus given low priority within the busy lives of the teachers in the faculty. Even the new Faculty Manager admitted that he had not engaged with the initiative, particularly with Geography, which constituted one third of his remit.

The impact of such a situation could have a serious effect on the development of provision, in the likely absence of significant Geography experience elsewhere in the faculty (once the only experienced teacher retires). The problem appears to be twofold. First, a weak Geography voice could negatively impact on the place of geographical knowledge within the inter-disciplinary first year unit as it is redeveloped, and in any future inter-disciplinary initiative. Second, it appeared that while curriculum development remained the preserve of the senior subject specialist, there was a risk that the first year provision would remain, in Fogarty's (1991) terms, relatively fragmented, rather than embracing shared or threaded approaches that might be seen as valid aims of the multi-disciplinary model. Indeed in this faculty, there was little evidence of an active approach to foster such integration; despite the clearly cordial social relations between the majority of the staff, programme planning did not readily make such links, and connectedness seemed to largely depend upon the member of staff teaching any particular class.

Another interesting feature of this faculty concerns the role of the senior management in filtering external initiatives. Unlike the situation at Hillview School, where the social subjects teachers were granted a large degree of autonomy, new initiatives at Riverside seemed largely to be launched following decisions made at a senior management level. There was little evidence in the transcripts that the teachers in the faculty were directly affected by external pressures (e.g. EA policy), but were instead influenced by the internal imperatives following management mediation of these pressures. One exception to this general rule was Martin, an active member

of the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers (SAGT). Such organisations are active, in line with the Goodson and Marsh (1996) model of subject evolution, in maintaining the integrity and legitimacy of school subjects. Many of Martin's views on Geography were consonant with the stance of SAGT, and his membership was perhaps linked to his opposition to the integrated provision in the school. Nevertheless this is an exception; most other teachers expressed indifference when asked about their membership of subject associations.

In conclusion, one can tentatively posit that the top-down approach to management adopted in this school was problematic. There was no shortage of initiatives, with strong political support and with strong organisational structures to hold them in place. As indicated in the original questionnaire, the school had developed an integrated model of provision. However, Bloomer's (1997) distinction between described and enacted practice is instructive. In this case the social practices which underpin long term change seem to be weak or missing. Engagement of the teachers who ultimately mediate and enact initiatives was limited. The result was a form of integration which seemed more illusory than real; practice tended to be fragmented despite the structures, and integrated practices were not greatly in evidence.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CHANGE AS SOCIAL PRACTICE: ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDY**

#### **DATA**

The previous three chapters have provided a largely descriptive account of my research data. This chapter is concerned with explanatory analysis. In this chapter, themes and issues drawn from the data are interrogated using the generic questions that were posited in the methodology chapter, and which form the basis for the research questions set out in the research design chapter.

- Questions relating to social interaction focus on the complex interplay between culture, structure and agency. Such questions explore the relative contributions of memes, social structures and human agency to the production and reproduction of social practices in schools, and in turn to the production and reproduction of new cultural and structural forms.
- Questions about culture focus on prevailing and new memes in respect of the curriculum. Prevailing memes include notions of the subject organisation of the curriculum; the new meme in question is the integration meme.
- Questions about structure focus on the relationships between people and groups within each school, and external relationships. These seek to identify the emergent properties of such relationships and explore how they impact on the penetration into the schools of new memes.

- Questions relating to individual agency seek to identify how and why individual teachers can act to impact upon the organisation and philosophies of particular departments, and how agency can be enhanced.

The latter three sets of questions will be addressed in three separate sections of this chapter. The first set (social interaction) relate to the interplay of the three elements of the triad (culture, structure and agency) in social settings; as such they inevitably permeate the discussion of culture, structure and agency, and they will be addressed throughout the chapter, for example, how people (agency) respond to the integration meme (culture), and how the nature of relationships (structure) impacts on such interactions. These are listed in figure 19 below.

*Figure 19: generic questions relating to social interaction*

- How do teachers and managers react to the new ideas?
- Do the new ideas stimulate dialogue?
- What new systems and structures develop as a result of the new ideas?
- How is new knowledge constructed as a result of the engagement with the ideas?
- How do individual motives translate through interaction into group goals?
- What new artefacts develop as a result of such engagement?
- What constraints do school and external systems place upon social interaction?
- How do relationships between the various actors impact on enactment?

While the generic questions have underpinned analysis of the data, it is also necessary to consider how the study has addressed the research questions outlined in chapter four.

1. What forms of social subjects provision exist in Scottish secondary schools?
2. How is externally driven curriculum change constructed at a school level:
  - a. by individual teachers?
  - b. collectively within departments?
  - c. by senior managers?
3. What memes influence the construction of curriculum?
4. What social structures influence the construction of curriculum?
5. How do teachers' professional knowledge and skills, beliefs and values influence the construction of curriculum?

The first of these has largely been addressed in chapter five, which provided a picture of the varying forms of provision that have been adopted in schools across Scotland's central belt, the questionnaire data suggesting that, while integrated provision was not common at the time of the survey, many of the ideas that constitute the integration meme were clearly factors in schools provision (for example the problem of fragmentation that drove systems of subject rotation). The case study data do not add much to this general picture, presenting merely two examples of differing forms of provision (separate subjects and multi-disciplinary). However they are valuable in that they provide deeper insights into the processes by which managers and teachers have engaged in two settings with the integration meme, showing in both cases how this meme is bowdlerised and modified to fit with existing notions of practice. The ensuing sections of this chapter will cast further light on this process. Research questions 2-5 are more overtly addressed in the

chapter, as the discussion analyses the case study data in respect of teacher and management mediation of change, prevailing memes and practice, and the social structures which influence such practice. The concluding sections of the chapter will summarise the cultural and structural elaboration that occurred in the schools as a result of this interplay of culture, structure and agency, reflecting upon the extent to which the study has addressed the research questions.

### **Culture: new memes for old?**

This section examines the nature of culture, both in terms of existing culture in the case study schools and new memes, as well as consistencies and conflicts between the old and the new. As such it addresses the second, third and fifth research questions, providing insights into the processes that occur when new ideas come into contact with established social practices and the memes that underpin them.

*Figure 20 generic questions relating to culture*

- What existing notions of practice exist in this area?
- Do these constitute a collective tradition?
- What new ideas does the change initiative introduce?
- To what extent do new and old memes:
  - have internal consistency?
  - concur and conflict with other current memes?

#### *Existing notions of practice; the individual and the collective*

Within any school, new memes encounter existing notions of practice. Such existing memes (i.e. knowledge, attitudes, values and skills) are significant in affecting the will and capacity (Spillane 1999) to accept or assimilate new

memes, and comprise the cultural software (Balkin 1998) possessed by individual teachers. Collectively, they form departmental subcultures, school culture, tradition and ethos, and wider views of schooling in society at large (e.g. the Tyack and Cuban (1993) notion of the grammar of schooling). The following paragraphs will briefly highlight some features of this in the two case study schools.

The data powerfully suggest that the subject was seen as being the *raison d'être* of teaching by the majority of teachers in both schools, the exception being Jock at Riverside High School, who had a quite different background, and a different set of beliefs about teaching and learning. This aspect of teacher beliefs seemed to be the most overtly powerful in affecting the form that practice took, and the responses that teachers made to externally initiated reform. Subjects were often seen in essentialist and content-driven terms; indeed, I saw little evidence of awareness amongst teachers that school subjects can be viewed as socially constructed entities (Beane 1997), rather than as absolute categories. Olson *et al*, writing about innovations in Science, Mathematics and Technology, have noted these tendencies elsewhere, suggesting that,

moving away from the safety of familiar subjects is not easy...  
teacher practices - themselves a reflection of teacher culture - are  
what bring curriculum ideas into operation (Olson *et al* 1999: 71).

Teacher tradition, as Olson (2002) reminds us, can be a powerful and shared experience. Teachers in both case study schools talked passionately about their grounding in a subject, and the shared understanding that this

enabled. Such disciplinary pigeon-holing is well documented. For instance, in higher education, Balkin (1998) suggests that economists may find communication easier with economists in other universities, than with anthropologists in adjacent corridors within their own institutions. Specialist language and disciplinary norms help reinforce such boundaries. Schools are similar; school subjects can be seen as quasi-disciplines (Beane 1997), with shared ways of thinking and practice. Thus Siskin (1994; 1995) found in her study of American schools that teachers often had more professional dialogue with same-subject colleagues in other schools, than with colleagues in other subjects within their own schools. My data provided some evidence of the importance of such within-discipline dialogue; for example, at Hillview both teachers were active in regional curriculum groupings.

A major aspect of this subject-centredness appears to stem from the training that teachers receive, both at college through degree study and initial teacher education, and subsequently via CPD. Hansen and Olson (1996) suggest that teachers are socialised both by their discipline training and by their subsequent experience of practice within the discipline. The formative role of academic and professional training was mentioned by several of the teachers at both schools. The reinforcing effect of professional dialogue is also significant. At Riverside, as has been noted, such dialogue tended to occur between subject specialists, rather than occurring more widely within the faculty. Thus the subject both provides a frame for professional dialogue (and indeed for the establishment of structure to maintain this) and a collective tradition within which teachers define themselves.

This is not simply a cognitive affair. Balkin (1998) suggests that affective processes play a major role in the acceptance of new ideas. In the case of schools, these include issues of emotional attachment to the subject (e.g. Siskin 1994: 1995; Hansen & Olson 1996) and fear of failure (linked to professional confidence) in moving beyond the familiar (e.g. Lang *et al* 1999a). This was certainly apparent in my research, where issues of confidence and motivation have been highlighted in both case studies, suggesting a powerful affective dimension. Wubbells and Poppleton (1999) found that enthusiasm for change is likely to contribute to the success of an initiative, and that this is more likely when teachers identify strongly with the change, perhaps having played a role in its inception. This is especially the case for Jock at Riverside High School; his positive prior experience of integrated humanities has led to his support for the management initiative even where he strongly disapproved of the ways in which it is enacted.

### *The integration meme*

I have characterised ideas about integration in the social subjects as a meme because they are a relatively enduring set of core ideas, albeit with fluid and permeable boundaries. But what are these ideas? The research suggests several dimensions to this meme. First, there are notions based on content. This includes the substantive ideas that comprise the meme, such as common skills and terminology, in this case including the core enquiry skills of 5-14 and the unifying language of the curriculum statements (e.g. *People and Place, People in Society* etc.). At Riverside this is manifested as the core idea is that of the single teacher for the three subjects; at Hillview,

the integration meme is seen similarly, although in this case it is rejected. Related to this, there are notions based on value, for example: that integrated provision will allow greater contact time facilitating better relationships between teachers and classes; that it will reduce fragmentation; and that it will allow more meaningful inter-disciplinary links and the promotion of cross-cutting skills. This was a major driving force behind the promotion of the integration meme by the senior management at Riverside. At Hillview, the situation was different, and such aspects of the meme had less force because of the cohesive nature of the department, and the simple fact that the problem of fragmentation was less acute than in the larger school. Third, there are notions based on teacher skills/practice: these could include alternative approaches to teaching, for instance child-centred methodologies, and are tied up with teachers' experience and attitudes and beliefs in respect of their practice. This situation was certainly evident at Hillview in the partial acceptance of the integration meme (through joint planning and delivery of skills and some content); it was less evident at Riverside, where the emphasis was more on organisational issues, and less on pedagogical concerns.

These components are memes in their own rights, constituting nested subsets of a broader integration meme, although it needs to be borne in mind that some elements of the meme were less clearly articulated than others, and that the meme varied from place to place. An important component of the integration meme seems to be the problem of fragmentation, as acknowledgement of this issue has stimulated socio-cultural interaction, thus challenging existing notions of practice. I will



henceforth refer to the integration meme as a single entity, although it must be borne in mind that it contains a constantly shifting set of ideas, values, norms and skills that underpin various social practices. In short, the integration meme is an amalgamation of smaller memes, with a clearly recognisable and relatively unchanging centre, but constantly shifting around the periphery as it comes into contact with prevailing notions of practice. The new meme, if it is to replicate (or at least translate) successfully (Balkin 1998; Dennett 2007), needs to be accepted by large numbers of people through this process of socio-cultural interaction. As Archer (1998) suggests, there are several likely consequences of such a process: rejection, modification, assimilation and adoption.

*A conflict of old and new?*

A major difficulty concerns shared understanding of the concepts that comprise the meme. The term integration is one that is subject to multiple meanings, as discussed previously, and teachers' often incomplete and/or misconstrued notions of integration inevitably affected their responses to the new meme. The research suggests two aspects to this.

The first factor has already been highlighted. This is the tendency to see integration as an organisational problematic; thus curricular fragmentation is dealt with via the establishment of organisational frameworks, rather than as a pedagogical issue to be addressed through social and classroom practice. For example, at Riverside, the senior management team seemed to genuinely believe that putting into place an overarching inter/multi-disciplinary structure would ensure that integration occurred; my data

suggest otherwise. At Hillview, the teachers expressed open hostility to any form of inter-disciplinary organisation, even though close examination of teaching suggested that, despite this, pedagogic integration was an important strand of practice across the faculty, through shared approaches (Fogarty 1991). In both cases, the term integration was explicitly associated with putting one teacher in charge of three subjects, rather than the sort of pedagogic link making that was implied within 5-14. This sort of thinking is not new:

The cardinal error was to see most curriculum reform in terms of subjects and to organise curriculum development among teachers committed to the same subject. To do so kept the assumption that these are the right subjects which must continue to be taught as distinct subjects completely unchallenged. Even where two traditionally distinct subjects were 'integrated' there was a constant danger that the integration existed on paper only, the 'Geography' and 'History' components (to take one example) being clearly visible beneath the new surface of 'social studies' and in practice being taught by a teacher whom the pupils knew to be 'really' a Geography and a History teacher' (Hargreaves 1982: 81).

This process provides a good example of a meme being mutated as it comes into contact with prevailing memes in schools. For instance, at Riverside High School, the new meme was mediated via social interaction at two levels. First, the notion of integrated teaching was watered down at the level of senior management. Hence the potentially controversial inter-

disciplinary variety became the less contentious multi-disciplinary version, more in tune with prevailing notions of subject-centredness (with the exception of the year one European Union unit, which was viewed in terms of transition from primary school, and was thus more readily accepted). The second level was its operationalisation at faculty level. Such an approach focused on epiphenomena, establishing externally visible frameworks rather than addressing the underlying practices that support and maintain those frameworks. Consequently, there was little evidence amongst teachers of serious engagement with the new meme, which did not seriously contradict the existing memes. Thus potentially contradictory memes were able to co-exist happily; the new, mutated meme of an integrated structure for teaching was superimposed on more deep-seated teaching practices which were based clearly on the teaching of separate subjects and the integrity of those subjects, and while this apparent dichotomy caused a degree of cognitive discomfort for some teachers, this was not pronounced enough to make the arrangement unworkable, or to seriously challenge existing practice.

A second issue is an apparent and widespread identification of integration with low ability – a long-running mythology that Gleeson and Whitty (1976: 8) term 'slops for the less able' - and/or younger pupils (King 1986), and a belief that subjects equate with academic rigour. This came through especially clearly in the case of some of the teachers at Riverside High, who openly stated that it was fine to teach in such a way in the early stages of secondary education, but that it was not acceptable with older students.

### *Meme filters*

Such beliefs can be seen as meme filters (Balkin 1998); for example, the holding of particular beliefs automatically precludes or diminishes acceptance by actors of new beliefs, which can be seen as threatening to the subject, to personal identity and to the education of pupils. Hansen and Olson (1996) found that even where teachers nominally support integration, they will still put their subject first in turf battles. Other meme filters include beliefs about the purpose of education (in many cases seen as preparing pupils for exams), perceptions of how external quality control agents such as HMIE may react to innovation, or simply the lack of mastery of a specialist language required to assimilate extra-disciplinary ideas. Such filters are actualised through judgements about cost/benefit and congruence with teachers' own values (Doyle & Ponder 1977).

A meme filter apparent in both case studies was suspicion of change initiatives in general. At Hillview High, this took the form of a fairly benign cynicism, which seemed to be shared by senior managers. For instance, several interviewees commented wryly on the way in which 5-14 was mediated to fit with existing practice, an example of strategic compliance; in this case, incorporating the new curriculum to cause minimum disruption to existing patterns of practice. At Riverside, teachers were less explicit about this process, with only one teacher referring to fitting 5-14 to existing practice. In the case of the management-led integration initiative, there was more evidence of such strategic compliance at Riverside, although here, as noted, this took the form of a co-existence of different memes rather than

open subversion of the initiative. Teachers expressed strong reservations about integrated provision, but happily went along with the required job. As one teacher said, 'we are all school teachers now, not subject teachers' (Jim); this accompanied some strong views about the place of integrated teaching. Such double think indicates a lack of serious engagement by many of the teachers with the integration meme, apparently minimising the cognitive dissonance to which teachers were exposed in this school. This mirrors the Swann and Brown (1997) finding that teachers were able to implement 5-14 effectively in terms of paperwork and systems while persisting with established patterns of teaching, suggesting that superficial and strategic engagement may be a commonplace response to external reform initiatives.

Pedagogic traditions appear to be important in this respect, and moreover these differ to some extent in the case study schools. At Hillview School, both social subjects teachers heavily emphasised the importance of teaching for skills development, despite their grounding in the subject. This was not a paradigmatic difference, but certainly represented an important difference in emphasis between the schools, and seems to have facilitated the development of pedagogic forms of integration at Hillview. Here, dialogue within the classroom was considered to be important, and this extended to the teachers' professional engagement with their subjects and with each other. Their practice consequently allowed a degree of integration, achieved through joint planning, even though they articulated strong opposition to formally integrated provision. The integration meme, although rejected in organisational terms, enjoyed some degree of penetration into

practice. At Riverside High School, the majority of teachers appeared to articulate their practice in terms of transmission of content and maximising attainment, framed within the boundaries of the subject. This was also congruent with the views of senior managers. Despite the social engagement that undoubtedly occurred within the faculty, this view of knowledge, teaching and learning meant that professional concerns were less likely to be discussed outside these boundaries, and this perhaps contributed to the failure of the integration meme to penetrate, other than at an epiphenomenal level. The one exception to this rule was Jock, who espoused a pupil-centred approach based around social-constructivist theories of learning, grounded in his experiences of working in other schools. Interestingly, he seemed to experience higher degrees of discomfort with the actualisation of school policy on integration (with which he broadly agreed in principle) than did his colleagues, and also appeared to have a clearer understanding of the issues in respect of integration.

When considering the memes that stimulate change, it is also interesting to look at how the managers of the schools positioned themselves, the staff and the initiative in question. Such questions inevitably connect with issues of social structure (roles, power etc.), but they also concern attitudes, dispositions and ethos, and thus are part of the culture of the schools. At Hillview, there was a notion that teachers were trusted to get on with the job, and this was accompanied by deep-seated views about professional autonomy. This seemed to enable an environment of reflection about teaching, and engagement with the business of learning, although one could also argue that a lack of management and external direction, combined with

the physical isolation of the school, also reduced the cultural alternatives available to staff, limiting the scope that innovation took. At Riverside, the management team was far more directive, both filtering external memes, and launching school-based initiatives. An apparent strand of managerial thought at Riverside combined two mythologies, which are also evident more widely in some of the curriculum change literature. One is the myth of an essentially happy and well-run school, underpinned by a 'rhetoric of excellence' (Fore 1998: 560). All of the senior managers interviewed emphasised this strand, although as has been seen, some staff did not share these views. The second is the 'the construction of (some) teachers as people who are unwilling to change their practice' (Carlgren 1999: 44). All of the senior managers highlighted what they saw as the problem of the older, obstructive teacher.

As with all mythologies, there may be an element of truth in these notions. Older teachers in both schools tended to be more resistant to changes that challenged the predominance of subjects, mirroring Ball's (1987) conclusions that younger teachers tend to be more interested in children and learning, and older teachers in subjects. If Ball's conclusions and my later findings are widely applicable to the teaching workforce, this leads one to ask why the younger teachers of 1987 (presumably the older teachers of 2003) have become more conservative and more wedded to their subjects. Perhaps the answer lies in Cooper's (1984) conclusion that older teachers may be expected to be more resistant to change, as they have achieved their positions under the established definitions of teaching. Certainly my data from both schools support this view; with the exception of Jock, whose

career had developed within an environment of integrated humanities, all of the older teachers who were not senior managers expressed strong subject identity, having reached this particular point in their careers through successful negotiation of an environment predicated on subjects. At Riverside, younger teachers tended to be slightly more ambivalent about teaching inter/multi-disciplinary courses, although even here subject identity tended to be strong.

In summary, both schools exhibited a shared notion of practice largely based around the teaching of separate subjects. Integration was explicitly viewed in largely organisational rather than pedagogic terms. At Riverside High School, the proactive development stance of the senior management provided cultural alternatives (Archer 1988) to the standard separate subjects model of provision, but a lack of engagement by staff with the new meme rendered this problematic leading to little change in practice. At Hillview, greater staff autonomy, combined with the small size of the school enabled a higher degree of dialogue and engagement with forms of integration, although this was not explicitly recognised as such. It is possible that this is as a result of the comparative lack of cultural alternatives. In both schools, the new meme was 'lethally mutated' (Spillane 2002: 378) as it was filtered through existing beliefs and values, either at the level of senior management, or in its enactment by classroom practitioners. I would conclude that a key issue is teacher identity rooted in the subject. Integration creates uncertainty and tension amongst teachers, foregrounding 'notions of otherness', and heralding an 'invasion of others'



territories'. Conversely, the discipline 'fences ownership' (Hansen & Olson 1996: 676), providing ontological security (Giddens 1990).

### **Structure: relationships, practice and change**

In this section, I seek to address the fourth research question, disentangling the threads in the data relating to social structure and illustrating how the trajectory of new memes is enabled and/or constrained by the effect of structures, and how the influence of social structure is played out through social interaction. This section, therefore, also further illuminates the nature of construction of curriculum, addressing the second research question.

It is important to start by distinguishing clearly between social structure and social interaction. As discussed in chapter three, structure is defined as the emergent properties of relationships between different people, between people and groups, and between groups and groups. This is not the operationalisation of relationships as social interaction; it is not the social processes through which relationships are constituted, reproduced and transformed. Rather, it is aspects such as power (whether exercised or not) that accrue from the relative positioning of people to one another, for example through defined social roles. Many such properties have relatively enduring existence, for example the emergent properties of the relationship between Headteacher and staff will exhibit various continuities that are to do with the roles rather than the people who occupy them. In some cases, the properties of such relationships are fairly obvious (e.g. the power that attaches to particular roles); in others it is less easy, and perhaps impossible, to identify relevant properties. Nevertheless, analytical

separation of culture, structure and agency enables one to dig below the surface features of social interaction to inquire into social structure and its relationship to social transformation and reproduction.

*Figure 21: generic questions relating to structure*

- What relationships exist within the change context (roles, internal and external connections)?
- What existing systems may influence enactment of the new ideas (including external systems such as exams)?
- How might classroom and school geography affect enactment?

*Horizontal relationships*

There are various structural factors that are significant in influencing the development of integrated practice at the two schools. In some cases these represent significant differences between the schools. For example, the small size of Hillview school has exerted an effect on the organisational structures of the department. There is no economy of scale in a school of this size, therefore teachers tend to take on multiple roles. Thus, the school was unusual in establishing a social subjects faculty pre-McCrone, with a single Principal Teacher or Faculty Head in charge of all three subjects. Such an arrangement has the potential to bring the subjects together, although as we saw in the case of Riverside High School, organisational systems do not automatically ensure professional cohesion. The small size of the department also meant that two teachers taught three subjects between them; both had a specialist main subject, and then shared the teaching of Modern Studies between them. This had the effect of bringing the two teachers together professionally for at least the third subject. The

geography of the school was also significant in this respect. The situation of the department (two adjoining classrooms with a connecting workroom) had the effect of bringing the teachers together, at least in social terms, and potentially facilitated closer working in terms of provision and pedagogy; as Cuban (1984) reminds us, the form that these take is often a practical response to the spatial characteristics of the school.

Perhaps as a result of the close organisational links between the social subjects, professional and personal relationships between the teachers in the faculty were warm and personal. This relational positioning seemed to transcend the narrow allocation of roles, and provided the basis for positive social interaction. The interview data reveal that there was a good deal of social banter between the teachers, and that they were good friends as well as colleagues. There was no evidence of tensions between them, and a consequence was fruitful and proactive professional dialogue on a range of topics from pedagogy to planning the content of courses. As Siskin (1995) suggests, there tends to be a blurring of social and professional talk in such contexts. Moreover professional dialogue was not confined to the subject that they shared - Modern Studies - but also extended to the planning of the other two subjects, leading to some degree of integrated practice (Fogarty 1991).

According to Siskin and Little (1995: 16), the subject department is both 'an enduring structure and a local context' for action, contributing to the development of shared practices and a source of professional identity.

Subject departments constitute the primary point of reference , or professional home, for most teachers ... the department is the singular entity that most predictably unites teachers with one another, and most deeply divides faculty groups from one another (ibid: 7).

In the case of Hillview, the boundaries between the social subjects departments have been eroded, both through the redeployment of staff in the early 1990s that had led Frank (originally a Modern Studies teacher) to become the sole teacher of History, and by the appointment of a single Faculty Head to coordinate all three subjects. Such trends were further reinforced by close working, joint planning and the requirement for both men to teach a third subject, Modern Studies. It is clear that, while the subject disciplines of History and Geography continued to form a major part of the identity of the two teachers, this identity was perhaps not as clearly rooted here in terms of the subject as it might be elsewhere; comments by both teachers indicated some ambivalence on this subject, and dialogue necessarily took on a degree of inter-disciplinarity. As Ball (1987: 41) notes, 'the department gives teeth to the intellectual ethnocentrism of disciplines'. At Hillview School, the locus of identity shifted to some extent in this case to the multi-disciplinary faculty (where social interaction occurred) rather than remaining in the single teacher departments. This coming together of the teachers from different subjects contrasts with Siskin's (1994) case study of the large Rancho School in the USA, where attempts to break down subject identity through faculty reorganisation failed as teachers tended to coalesce into sub-groups based on subjects. The small size of Hillview's social subjects faculty did not provide these social alternatives, therefore the

faculty became the major social and professional focus for these teachers, where 'social norms are developed, critical resources acquired and distributed, (and) abstract epistemologies woven into subject-specific understandings of practice' (ibid: 24).

The situation was considerably different at Riverside, partly as a result of scale, and the organisational and relational complexity that this engendered. Differences included: a lower incidence of professional dialogue between colleagues from different subjects (despite the new need for people to discuss teaching beyond the boundaries of their own subjects); the changed dynamics caused by the influx of new (especially younger) staff; the guidance role of one experienced member of staff, which took him away from the department; the balkanisation of departments within the school and apparent lack of opportunities for whole staff dialogue, except when mediated by the senior management through formal structures (e.g. committees).

Professional dialogue across the faculty seemed to be less in evidence at Riverside than at Hillview. Substantive professional dialogue about teaching (pedagogy and provision) tended to focus on the subject, taking place within the subject subsets. In this large faculty, the situation mirrored Siskin's (1994) findings from Rancho School, with the existence of strong professional subcultures based on the teaching of subjects. For example, in Geography, professional dialogue about teaching tended to coalesce around Martin, the former (and still unofficial) Principal Teacher. This was enhanced by the lack of interest of the new Faculty Head in the subject.

Where cross-faculty professional dialogue existed, it tended to revolve around themes such as pupil behaviour, rather than substantive issues of pedagogy and provision, or to be concerned with practical issues of day to day teaching (e.g. support with materials). These findings are consonant with those of Hansen and Olson (1996) in their research in Science, where they found that integration was hindered by a lack of role models. In the case of Riverside, the structures associated with subjects provide clear boundaries that the faculty lacks. Similarly, subjects provided role models for younger staff – Martin in the case of Geography, and Jim, in History and Modern Studies – despite the senior management’s attempts to promote integrated structures, and despite Jim’s official role as the leader of Geography. The structures that emerge from these roles and relationships, along with subject identity, constituted the departmental immune system that acted to maintain existing practice and resist the influx of new memes.

A final comment about the internal workings of the faculty concerns Huberman's departmental typology (Siskin 1994). The social subjects faculty at Hillview School exhibited many of the characteristics of a bonded department. It is socially cohesive, with strong norms of commitment and inclusion. According to Talbert (1995), strong departments help mediate effects of institutional conditions and changes in teachers' working lives. The data suggest that, at Hillview, the strength of relationships within the faculty enabled the teachers to cope with centrally inspired innovation, through a mixture of pragmatism and an ability to articulate clear objectives for their professional lives. Both teachers had a clear vision about what they are teaching and why, and this led to an active approach to the creative

mediation of change (Osborn *et al* 1997), with a clear focus on learning. It is more difficult to classify the faculty at Riverside. In many respects it is a bundled department - according to Huberman's typology (Siskin 1994) – exhibiting high inclusion, but low common purpose. There were undoubtedly good relationships, and a clear sense of collegiality within the faculty, but strong adherence to the stated school policy on provision in the social subjects was not greatly evident, even in the words and actions of the Faculty Head. Collegiality remained largely at a social level, and professional allegiance remained at the level of the subject sub-groupings that had been formerly the separate departments. In some cases, these groupings exhibited a bonded (*ibid*) approach, especially in Geography, where there was an impressive degree of collaboration between the teachers, and where group loyalty was strong. Overall, the Faculty was fragmented in some respects, particularly in terms of the formulation of overall goals for pedagogy and provision, and in the case of the assimilation of the Religious Studies teachers.

#### *Vertical relationships*

Moving beyond the faculty, one can see that the formal organisation of the two schools at the time of the research was fairly similar. Both had a hierarchical organisational structure, with faculty organisation nominally bringing subject departments together as a greater whole. However, the superficial similarities in terms of organisational structure do not obscure the very different fashion in which this structure was operationalised in the two schools. At Hillview, relationships between staff at various tiers of this

organisational structure were informal and largely cordial. There was a good deal of vertical interaction in the school, and a mutual view of good relations between staff and senior management. This was combined with a 'hands off' approach to management in respect of the social subjects. It is clear that these teachers were trusted to get on with the job, and they are extended a great deal of autonomy. According to Boreham and Morgan (2004), such professional autonomy is an essential ingredient in establishing effective practice, and in the management of innovation.

However, this is only half of the story. The exercise of power (or a lack of it) can enable or constrain social practice. In the case of Hillview, there was some evidence that a lack of central impetus limited the potential for engagement with new ideas. School managers have a role in providing such impetus (Higham *et al* 1999; Priestley and Sime 2005). In the case of the teachers in the Hillview social subjects faculty, one can see the positive effects of autonomy (creative mediation of innovation, for instance), combined with more negative effects (a lack of serious engagement with cultural alternatives). My data suggest that the rejection of many of the more formal aspects of the integrated meme was at least partially rooted in such a lack of engagement with, and understanding of, the concept of inter-disciplinarity. The hands-off approach of the senior management in the case of these particular teachers, especially its apparent lack of a major role as a mediator of curriculum policy at a departmental level, may be a reason for this phenomenon.



At Riverside, social practice was more overtly influenced by senior management direction, sometimes in a negative or muscular fashion (Smyth & Shacklock 1998). The move to a faculty organisational model ostensibly simplified the hierarchy within the school. However, the situation was more complex in the case of the social subjects, due to the continued role of the former Principal Teacher of Geography and the lack of interest of the new Faculty Head in this role. It is probably more accurate to describe the reorganisation as shifting the locus of control. It had the effect of narrowing the gap between middle and senior management, and distancing the role from classroom practice and the subject; Jim's contact time was reduced heavily compared to the former Principal Teacher role, and management responsibility increased to cover several subjects.

The relationship between senior management and staff was a key issue in influencing the development of practice in the faculty. There seemed to be a dichotomy between the methods espoused by senior management, supported to some extent by comments from newer teachers and the perceived experiences of more established teachers within the faculty. It is possible to view this in various ways. One could see the scenario as representing a rhetoric/reality dichotomy; a cynical view might posit the pronouncements of senior management as being about promoting the school, and obscuring the actual management methods which are used on a day to day basis. The candour with which the senior managers espoused their methods seems to make this scenario unlikely. Alternatively, this dichotomy may be viewed in terms of Bloomer's (1997) distinction between described and enacted practice, or between aspirational values and the

hard realities of day to day practice; in such a view, a sincere idealism articulated by senior managers may simply become subsumed by the demands of day to day decision making, but is nevertheless no less sincere for that.

A third, and more plausible, option is rooted in the micropolitics of a complex organisation. According to Ball (1987), schools are arenas of conflict. School policy is open to interpretation and contradiction, and 'in no other organisation are notions of hierarchy and equality, democracy and coercion forced to co-exist in the same close proximity' (ibid 15). Where agreement about goals diverges, conflict is thus inevitable. At Riverside, the senior management had an agenda that is driven by a set of discourses articulated in effective schooling documents such as *How Good is Our School?* (HMIE 2001). This agenda encompassed clearly articulated managerial imperatives about the goals of the school, and appropriate methods for attaining these goals. It was in effect a set of cultural resources, linked inextricably to emergent properties of school and EA systems (for example power differentials). This is a good example of the enmeshing of power and ideology, of structure and culture (Archer 1995; Balkin 1998). Teachers who dissented from the agenda were potentially marginalised, whereas those who assented were genuinely involved more fully in decision-making processes in line with a rhetoric of inclusive management. Talk of enthusiastic new teachers and obstructive older staff was a part of this process. According to Sparkes (cited in Blase 1998: 549), this is 'contractive rhetoric', pejorative language to dismiss ideas at variance from the norm. Of course there may have been an element of all three scenarios within the

socio-cultural interaction that occurred in the school, and indeed the third scenario does not exclude the first two.

There is considerable evidence in the interview data to support this latter hypothesis, suggesting that different groups within the school are treated differently depending on the degree to which they support the management agenda and whether their 'faces fit'. Arguably, such a management style acts as an impediment to fundamental change; as discussed previously it encourages teacher compliance and risk avoidance strategies, rather than genuine engagement with innovation. Blase has noted that,

Generally the failure of principals to let go of power and to facilitate the development of political power in others has been reported as a serious impeding factor in school restructuring efforts (Blase 1998: 551).

Drawing on a number of studies, he identifies several dimensions of this including control of decision making, intimidation, misinformation or withholding knowledge, favouritism, exclusion, dismissing agendas and cancelling meetings. There was evidence of several of these dimensions in my case study data from Riverside High School.

#### *The wider school*

Another area of significance concerns the relationships amongst staff across the wider school. The interview and observation data reveal the multi-dimensional nature of staff relationships at Hillview, where staff across the school had regular opportunities to come together, both socially and

professionally. The structural characteristics of the school provide an environment where cross-school interaction is facilitated. The situation at Riverside was very different, typical of that described by Bernstein (1975) for schools organised around a collection code conception of curricular provision. In line with Bernstein's observations, managers at Riverside tended to have both horizontal and vertical relationships. On the other hand, more junior teachers were more likely to have vertical relationships confined to the school hierarchy, horizontal relationships being confined to their subject or faculty groupings. According to Bernstein, horizontal relationships at a wider school level tend to be limited in such schools to non-task focused contacts. This was partly the case at Riverside, where there were only limited horizontal relationships. Within the faculty, there was less blurring of the difference between social and professional talk than at Hillview, in line with Bernstein's model; professional talk tended to occur within subject groupings. However although there was some evidence of cross-school professional dialogue, where inter-faculty professional dialogue was evident, membership of groups was allocated by senior managers, and agendas seemed to be fairly closely circumscribed. Bernstein (*ibid*) states that this type of organisation can encourage gossip, conspiracy theories and distrust, issues that were certainly in evidence at Riverside High School.

To summarise the networks of relationships within the case study schools, the professional focus at Riverside rested firmly in the subject department despite the creation of new systems to encourage cross-faculty working, and despite their apparent similarity to the organisational hierarchy at Hillview. The relative size of social and professional groupings seemed to be

a key factor in this. Another key difference seemed to lie in the style of management at the two schools. At Hillview, an extension of professional trust and autonomy was apparent, arguably facilitating professional engagement with forms of practice, but limited by the apparent lack of cultural alternatives. Conversely, at Riverside, senior managers clearly occupied an overt gatekeeping role within the school, acting as a layer of mediating filters to national and EA policy. There was the promotion of a limited form of cultural alternative by a proactive management team; however, in this latter case the degree of engagement by teachers was limited by several factors, including the large size of the faculty, entrenched interests, poor relationships in some cases between management and staff, and an apparent lack of trust and autonomy. Interestingly, in both cases the process is similar (a partial engagement with aspects of the integration meme), although there were quite different outcomes in terms of how this impacted on provision and pedagogy at the level of the faculty.

### *External relationships*

Schools are open systems, embedded in their wider contexts, and moreover are socially constructed contexts which provide the conditions within which teacher agency is constrained and enabled (Siskin 1994). A number of social structures emerge from relationships that are external to the school, and these can serve to reinforce the 'common technical culture' of the subject tradition (Siskin 1994: 92). Relationships and their properties include:

- Links to more distant colleagues within the same subject, via for example the EA curriculum groupings.
- Academic learning, teacher training and the practice of teaching the subject (Ball & Lacey 1995).
- The ultimate need to prepare pupils for exams in particular subjects; as Goodson and Ball (1983) suggest, these are the chains that bind comprehensive education.
- The subject-centredness of quality control mechanisms, for example the Geography specialist HM Inspector of Education.

It is clear from the questionnaire returns that the relations of HMIE with schools constitute a key structural component of the schooling system. Thus, several schools indicated that changes had been made in response to HMIE suggestions following inspection, rather than in response to 5-14. Added to this, is the plethora of HMIE publications relating to the school curriculum (e.g. 1992; 1999; 2000a), which add substance to the often vague statements of policy in the quasi-mandatory 5-14 curriculum statements. The nature of the relationship between HMIE and teachers thus acts as a potential catalyst to change, via the medium of official endorsement of classroom practice. Again in this case, there is a close identification of ideology and power (Archer 1988; Balkin 1998); the meme of a more integrated form of provision, stimulated by cognitive dissonance created by the problem of fragmentation, and mediated by filtering memes, such as the essentialist place of subjects, becomes an ideology of change, reinforced by the power that HMIE has by dint of its asymmetric relationship with teachers.

HMIE can of course be seen in more negative terms, as a structural inhibitor to change rather than as a catalyst (Hayward *et al* 2004). For example, Hayward *et al* (*ibid*) have documented the ways in which perception of the likely reaction of HMIE to innovation has stifled school-based curriculum development in respect of formative assessment. In this case, the nature of relations between teachers and HMIE leads to emergent issues of power (both actual and perceived), which can have the effect of limiting teacher agency in respect of classroom practice. These are especially perceived by teachers in terms of a cost/benefit analysis (Doyle and Ponder 1977) and risk avoidance (Olson 2002; Cuban 1984). These conclusions are supported to some extent by the comments of the Hillview Headteacher, who bemoaned the limiting effect of HMIE on school-based curriculum development.

The questionnaire returns offer some more limited evidence of similar properties of relations between teachers and other external bodies. For example, as already highlighted in chapter five, the varying patterns of provision across different EAs, suggest that some authorities are more prescriptive than others in this respect, especially the larger authorities such as Fife and North Lanarkshire. Similarly, one can imply from careful analysis of patterns of provision in S1 and S2 that the influence of examinations, and by implication SQA, enables some forms of action as pupils move beyond their first year (e.g. single subject teaching), and constrains others (e.g. integrated teaching). However, the case studies offer little support for the thesis that SQA and EAs significantly affect provision in S1/2, and further research would be needed to support such an assertion. Indeed, the only

strong reference to the role of the EA in this respect was negative, in this case the lack of constructive central direction perceived by the Hillview Headteacher.

### **Agency: human activity in its social contexts**

The next section of this chapter examines agency, the third dimension of the triad. This section draws together many of the themes explored in the previous two sections, and as such further addresses research questions 2-5.

I have previously defined agency in terms of the capacity of individuals to act reflexively through a process of inner dialogue (Archer 2000), within the possibilities bounded by their social and material environments, to effect changes to their conditions or to reproduce them. In such a view, agency is past oriented (Emirbayer & Mische 1998), in terms of the cultural software (Balkin 1998) that individuals acquire from past experience, but projected to the future and rooted in the possibilities of the present. Agency is subject to the possibilities and limitations of the architecture of the human brain, including psychology, memory and sensory apparatus (Balkin 1998). These are of course beyond the scope of this study, and I will focus instead in this section on how agency was enhanced and/or constrained by its social context of memes and structures, showing how these impact on individuals to form cultural software, a mosaic of personal efficacy and self-confidence (Lang *et al* 1999), 'expertise and practical knowledge' (Wallace & Kang 2004: 936), teacher beliefs (*ibid*) and will or motivation (Spillane 1999). This past orientation, in tandem with the material and structural possibilities of



the present and the reflexive ability of humans to plan for the future, provides the opportunity or space for manoeuvre that makes agency possible.

*Figure 22: generic questions relating to agency*

- Which individuals interact within the change context?
- What views do teachers and managers hold about teaching and learning?
- What biographical details of individuals might influence the reception of the new ideas?
- What motives and goals do individuals have?
- How much knowledge do individuals possess about the issues involved?
- What capacities do individuals have for self-reflection and reflexivity?

One of the difficulties of this analysis is disentangling agency from society; it is easy to indulge in a bleak downwards conflation (Archer 1988), constructing actors as being socially determined. Conversely, it is tempting to construe human activity as being driven by powerful individuals, downplaying the constraints that society places on human action. It is necessary to counter such tendencies with a reminder that agency is the exercise of a finite range of human choices within the conditions of social reality. Agency can be negative, something that can destroy, distort or pervert a worthwhile enterprise. Osborn *et al* (1997) identify negative aspects of teacher mediation; however, agency can also be a desirable attribute, leading to protective or creative mediation of innovation (*ibid*), local adaptation of change (Cuban 1998; Priestley 2005) and social benefit. Menter (2007) describes agency as inquiry, activism and transformation. This is a useful definition that captures the value-laden nature of human activity; however it does not acknowledge that positive agency can also be about opposing change, including when such change can be construed as

ill-conceived and/or harmful. Agency is thus also about reflexive and purposeful human activity that leads to the reproduction of social structures or memes.

The case study data provide many examples of the exercise of agency. These included examples where individuals acted largely in accordance with their structural and cultural conditioning. It also included examples of agency where individuals acted in more complex ways that seemed to be contrary to the structural and cultural pressures of their environments, and against their personal interests. I wish to illustrate these dimensions of agency by highlighting two complex examples from the case studies that may be broadly characterised as agency as opposition. In the first case, this is agency exercised in opposition to the integration meme, but largely in accordance with the cultural conditions of the school; in the second, it is agency exercised, in the face of considerable professional risk, in opposition to the implementation of school policy. In both cases, I will show how agency is enhanced and/or restricted by social and cultural conditions, and by the actors' cultural software.

#### *Opposition to the integration meme*

The actions of Sam and Frank at Hillview School provide the first example of agency. In some ways these teachers behaved as one might expect if a socially determinist view of agency is posited. For example, the adherence to traditional subjects, in the face of a threatening new meme, could be construed as these teachers being a product of their socialisation as teachers. However as we have seen in this case study, agency was

enhanced by a number of key factors. Some of these are cultural; these were both experienced teachers with years of experience in dealing with change. This is a double edged sword; there is a strong possibility that experienced teachers will uncritically follow their material career interests (Bates 1989), or be hidebound by the ideologies that surround their subjects (Goodson & Marsh 1996). Conversely, they had considerable cultural resources upon which to draw. These included the powerful values that both teachers articulated during the interviews. Both emphasised an ethic of care towards the pupils they taught, and highlighted the importance of skills development and learning in general. Both teachers went well beyond the archetypal view of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge. I would posit that this was likely to increase agency, as both teachers were in a position to be personally reflexive about their teaching.

The quality of relationships in the school, both horizontal and vertical, was likely to further enhance the agency of these teachers. There are several dimensions to this. The first is dialogue. Quality professional dialogue between these teachers allowed them to modify, develop and articulate their ideas about teaching. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, dialogue is a key theme in much of the change literature (e.g. Helsby 1999; Olson *et al* 1999; Priestley & Sime 2005). A second dimension is support (Higham *et al* 2000; Spillane 2002). Constructive relationships provided support networks for the actions taken by the teachers and helped them to overcome pressure from external sources and act in the face of risk. In the case of Hillview School, strong collegial relationships, and the active support of the Headteacher were key factors in enhancing the agency of these

teachers. The latter was especially significant; the professional trust accorded to Sam and Frank opened up a significant space for manoeuvre. This allowed the exercise of a considerable degree of agency in their mediation of the curriculum, as they went beyond the simple definition of the subjects as bounded entities, constructing as they did meaningful interdisciplinary links based upon their perceptions of learning as a process of engagement.

Nevertheless, I have argued that the cultural and structural conditions of this school may have had the effect of reducing agency, by limiting horizons. In some senses, the geographical isolation of the school, and the hands off approach of the senior management may have reduced the cultural alternatives available to these teachers, and it is interesting to speculate as to how provision might have been different if two such reflexive individuals had given more serious thought to the available alternatives; we have, after all, seen how they were able to innovate within the existing system, through collaborative approaches to planning. However, there was a considerable amount of agency in the actions of these teachers. To paraphrase Menter (2007) there was inquiry (largely collaborative), there was activism (to develop effective forms of teaching based upon the interests of the pupils) and there was transformation (and indeed active or dynamic reproduction).

### *Opposition to school policy*

A second example of agency in opposition is provided by the case of Jock at Riverside High School. In this case, his exercise of agency had detrimental effects on his career, leading to him being overlooked for a promotion and

becoming relatively marginalised in the school decision-making processes. Jock was a reflective teacher, and a reflexive individual. He was able to stand back from his job, and to acknowledge his own strong views on provision, while seeing the value of alternative approaches. He was also able to critique the school's approach to a policy which he broadly supported. Jock's cultural software was influenced by his background in another education system, and by his varied experience of teaching and management. He espoused strong values in respect of education, and was a proponent of a pupil-centred approach to learning, in contrast with many of his colleagues. Jock's cultural software potentially enhanced his agency; he was able to see cultural alternatives, which he weighed up through a developed process of internal dialogue. However, Jock's agency was diminished by the structural constraints that impinged upon his working life. Truncated professional relationships within the school limited his potential to interact with other, perhaps like-minded teachers. He was marginalised by senior managers, and at times put under pressure to conform to an agenda (and a set of methods) that he did not like. Despite this, and despite knowing that his actions may have further limited his agency in the school, Jock was able to exercise a considerable personal agency. He acted against his material interests, in conditions where instrumentality was difficult, and a rational analysis of cost/benefit would have suggested that such action was best avoided (Doyle & Ponder 1977). Jock acted in line with his deeply held values, when he challenged senior managers. This is an example of culture and structure being in contradiction. In such a scenario, agency resolves this contradiction; this is not just a case of someone blindly

operating in response to societal pressures, but genuine agency as a reflexive response to contradictions within the individual's immediate social world. In this case, space for manoeuvre was limited but this teacher was still able to exercise agency as an internal critic of school policy and practice, and through his own teaching approaches (despite pressure from the school's management).

The two examples illustrate how agency is tailored by societal pressures, but can act in opposition to those pressures. As Archer's (1995) social model would predict, agency is affected, but not determined by the pressures exerted by memes and social structures. Human reflexivity comes into play to exercise choices from a repertoire of possible decisions. Indeed, such agency is necessary, given the contradictions that are faced in daily life. Thus Jock was forced to decide between following his socially evolved conscience, and acceding to social pressure at work. Such choices are played out through socio-cultural interaction, and in turn lead to the transformation and/or reproduction of the memes and social structures that together constitute social reality.

### **From social interaction to structural and cultural elaboration**

The discussion in this chapter has shown how the interplay of culture, structure and agency through social interaction has led to social reproduction and transformation or, in Archer's (1995) terms, cultural and structural elaboration. This analysis of the interplay of culture (research question 3), social structure (research question 4) and agency (research question 5) casts considerable light on the processes of curriculum

construction at the various strata of the management hierarchies in the two schools (research question 2). The analysis of the data suggests that while there are significant contextual differences between the two schools, there are also substantial overlaps and similarities. These tend to lie at a generic level, suggesting that while a definitive blueprint for the management of externally initiated change is not a possibility (given the complexity of contextual factors), there is a possibility of developing a generic model for guiding those who seek to enact such change locally. The final chapter will further explore this possibility, however, first I shall briefly summarise the processes by which the 5-14 social subjects curriculum was mediated in the two case study schools.

At Hillview, the integration meme did not change any of the structural conditions within which teaching is organised. Formal systems, such as the faculty organisation, and the various roles within the school had been established as a result of the contingencies of managing a small school, rather than in response to changed policy imperatives, and/or a new meme about provision. Structural reproduction occurred, and there is no evidence that the integration meme impacted on this process. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that the integration meme has had a greater influence in terms of cultural elaboration. The integration meme has been considered by the teachers, and while one can argue that this engagement is based upon a simplified, incomplete or erroneous understanding of the meme, it is clear that the new ideas have been largely rejected. However, regular social interaction between the teachers in the faculty has led to a limited form of integration, which can be termed shared (Fogarty 1991). Here we see some

cultural elaboration as a result of the active engagement with a set of ideas, by interested and reflexive practitioners. The role of social structures was important here. The lack of economy of scale in a small school meant that standard departmental organisation had been supplanted by a faculty system that brought together teachers from different subjects to discuss pedagogy and provision on a regular basis. The existence of this system, combined with the emergent properties of the relationship between the two teachers led to high quality social interaction with a focus on work issues. This in turn contributed to changed practice, and changed notions about what constitutes effective learning; in this case the teachers saw the benefits of making connections between subjects, and while the subjects remained as separate entities, the boundaries between them have been broken down to some extent.

At Riverside the situation was quite different. The integration meme was considered and mediated by senior managers. The result of this social interaction was the emergence of new relationships and roles (for example the new role of Faculty Head), and social structures have been transformed as a result. Principal Teachers of separate subjects have disappeared, or had their influence eroded, and new cross-departmental relationships have been created. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the creation of new structures is not a sufficient catalyst to stimulate new practices. At Riverside it has been possible for teachers to fit into the new structures without significant engagement with the underlying ideas, and without significant changes to the practices of teaching. At Riverside we see a degree of structural elaboration as a result of engagement with the integration meme;



however, meaningful social interaction and engagement seem to have been largely confined to the senior management team. The lack of engagement by the rest of the staff with the meme, and with the structural reorganisation, means that structural change has not been accompanied by any sort of significant cultural change. One is also reminded of Fullan's (1993) dictum that restructuring must be accompanied by reculturing if change is to be meaningful.

In summary, at Hillview there was a large amount of meaningful social interaction leading to significant engagement with a set of new ideas, stimulated by professional autonomy; but these were limited in scope due to the lack of central impetus for change. At Riverside, the converse was the case: plenty of central impetus, but limited social interaction at the level of operationalisation, limited support mechanisms and restricted teacher autonomy. The result, in this latter case, was limited engagement and a lack of meaningful change in practice. The next chapter will consider how these conclusions may be more widely applicable to the problem of educational change.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

*Understanding is never complete, can never be absolutely final. We are limited by the innate ability of the human species to act freely, beyond the determination of causes and beyond all probability. There is an irreducible element of mystery in human conduct - which is what makes it human (Todorov 2003: 126).*

Previous chapters have explored, through use of examples from the case studies, how culture, structure and agency may be analytically separated for any given social situation. This chapter has four aims:

- To provide comment on the data generation phase of the study.
- To evaluate the utility of analytical separation for the analysis of educational change.
- To extrapolate from the findings some broad conclusions that may be of use to professionals seeking to promote and sustain change in schools.
- To provide reflexive commentary on the process of the research.

#### **Data generation**

I stated in my introductory chapter that I would probably conduct the research differently if I was to embark on such a project again. My initial focus was conceived quite narrowly; I originally chose to focus on the integration of the teaching of the social subjects, with an interest in why

teachers chose to adopt or oppose such an approach. By the end of the project, my focus had shifted considerably to an emphasis on the processes of change, the ways in which professionals take, adapt and enact new ideas. Such evolution in thinking is an inevitable consequence of embarking on the life changing experience that is the Ed.D., and is a necessary process for any doctoral student. Nevertheless, the way in which I conducted the research created some difficulties.

The project started in many respects as a 'naïve and personal attempt' (Nias 1995: 149) to further my understanding of an agenda which concerned me closely. I saw the research as potentially providing an empirical basis for promoting this agenda. The data were gathered at a relatively early stage of the study. While I had engaged relatively widely with the literature at this stage, I had not systematically undertaken any sort of review of this, and my thinking remained embryonic and somewhat naïve. This was reflected in the incomplete typology that was used to gather the questionnaire data. To a lesser extent it was reflected in my approach to interviewing teachers; at this stage I had in mind certain objectives that were to change as my understanding of the topic evolved, and perhaps neglected certain aspects of teacher thinking that would provide insights into how and why new ideas are mediated in schools. These include the ways in which the teachers in the study construed and constructed their relationships with their students, and the effect that this had on their subsequent practice, including the evidently strong adherence to the teaching of their subjects

A linked issue concerns theory. At the time the research was undertaken, I had started to develop an interest in critical realism as a means of explaining the social world, but had not undertaken the depth of reading required to develop from this a fully consistent methodological approach for the gathering and interpretation of data. The data generation phase was, therefore, undertaken before I had formed any firm notions about how it was to be analysed and interpreted. Notwithstanding, the research questions were firmly enough grounded in the critical realist perspective to largely fit with the subsequently developed analytical methodology, comprising as they did notions of culture, structure and agency. Indeed, I would not have significantly changed these questions in the light of my deepening understanding of critical realism, although as stated above, I may well have focused more than I did at the data generation phase on the nature of teacher beliefs, and their relationship with new memes and with social structures.

Despite these issues, I believe that the process has been a valuable one, and that I have learned more effectively from reflection on a flawed process than perhaps I would have done from a textbook research project. Indeed, this is probably a journey that is common to many other doctoral students. As Nias, talking of her own flawed early research, reminds us,

the value of this enquiry has been the generation of insights which will be validated not by looking back at the research process, but by looking forward, to the use that other educationalists make of them (Nias 1995: 164).

Moreover, the data generated during the early phases of the project has proven to be comprehensive and useful. The high rate of response for the questionnaire enabled me to identify patterns, and to choose interesting case studies. The subsequent school-based research was sufficiently broad and fruitful to allow for the evolution of my thinking (and indeed contributed to this).

### **Analytical separation as a methodology for exploring change**

Another area for evaluation is the use of the methodology, derived from critical realism, for the analysis of data. Analytical separation proved to be a difficult and highly complex task. There were a number of issues that rendered it such. The first concerned the close intertwining of the three dimensions of the triad; in practice it is not possible to fully separate them for analysis because each is dependent upon and linked with the others. For instance, I have already commented on the close enmeshing of culture and structure, or of ideology and power. A good example of this occurs at Riverside High School in the establishment of centrally driven ways of organising provision, and the use of management roles to hold these in place. Thus power is used to uphold and perpetuate ideology, and ideology is the justification for the establishment of new social structures, in this case a new tier of school management.

A second, related aspect is the difficulty in identifying where agency can operate within its societal context. I have sought to steer a route between the twin perils of upwards and downwards conflation. On the one hand there is the Scylla of over-privileged agency; the temptation to divorce agency

from its societal context and attribute individuals with an exaggerated capacity to act counter to their socialisation. On the other hand there is the Charybdis of an over-powerful society, a gaping maw that sucks the individual into its orbit and denies agency. In many ways, this latter determinism is the greater danger for the unwary researcher. It is easy to see teachers as being bound by the system within which they work, by their roles, and by the discourses that surround these roles. It is tempting to construct individuals as the products of their socialisation; teachers as over-socialised, Pavlovian drones, reacting to changes in their circumstances, in a stimulus-response manner determined, or at least heavily influenced by their socialisation as subject teachers. It is easy to relate agential decisions back to their social contexts in a way that denies free will and agency.

However, in practice I found that careful disentangling of the three elements of the triad reinforced my view that social action involves a combination of culture, structure and agency, and moreover that was it often possible to make a judgement concerning the relative weight of each element within many of the morphogenetic/morphostatic cycles that were evident in the case study schools. I was able to analyse the various structural and cultural strands that were brought to bear on each situation, and to interrogate the various agential possibilities available to the actors. Bearing in mind that all such social knowledge is fallible, incomplete, provisional and open to multiple interpretations, I was able to infer the existence of social structures from the systems and relationships within the schools, and the nature of the memes that were prevalent in each context. I was able to make judgements about whether cultural or structural factors were more influential in the

decisions made by actors, and show how these interact. I was able to illustrate how the interactions of individuals played out in the course of such decision-making, and indeed how relational properties and access to cultural resources affected these interactions. Finally, I was able to show where social forces were stymied and modified by individual agency. As stated in Todorov's rejoinder, quoted at the head of this chapter, human behaviour can never be wholly predictable; as Archer (2001) reminds us, the human capacity for reflexivity allows for the consideration of alternative courses of action, even those that go counter to social conditioning and the social and material interests of actors.

A third difficulty is the danger of reductionism in any such analysis. In a sense any attempt to categorise, and thereby explain, the world in which we live is a reductionist activity (Dennett 2007). The reductionist danger is oversimplification, and this remains a serious issue when analysing highly complex systems, especially when aspects of those systems are unknowable. It is not possible to know the full facts in any social situation, and social inquiry is necessarily hamstrung by the incomplete nature of the available information. Thus it is necessary to acknowledge the complexity of social reality, and to clearly recognise that answers might not be discoverable. It is necessary to work with reduced ambitions. A scientist working with chemicals may be able to state causation with a degree of certainty; given the relative constancy of the laws of nature, it is a fair bet that an experiment conducted today will be replicable tomorrow. The social scientist is working with huge levels of complexity, moreover within dynamic,

multi-layered open systems where the conditions may change rapidly; quite simply, a causal relationship that holds today may be untenable tomorrow.

The social scientist therefore often has to be content with provisional conclusions about the interplay between culture, structure and agency that may be indicative of causal relationships. However, any such attempts at causal explanation are problematic, and should be acknowledged as such. Applicable relationships have to be acknowledged as being specific to a particular social context and, as previously indicated, explanations always have to be viewed as being fallible and subject to reinterpretation in the light of further evidence. The best we can do in such circumstances is to advance our knowledge through a careful gathering of the available information, rigorous analysis, and a degree of intuition. Generalisation is thus problematic, and is best seen as being a process of extrapolation of findings in a provisional way from one context to another, noting commonalities and contradictions, and carefully analysing how the structural and cultural conditions in the latter context may have a different effect than in the former.

Thus, in the case of my study, one might claim that the Riverside case study shows the folly of over-prescriptive managerial approaches to enacting change. However, such a claim would be of questionable validity if one were to seek to transfer such a conclusion to any other setting than Riverside. As such it is a form of reductionism. A more helpful approach, and one that is enabled by the analytical separation of culture, structure and agency, is to make the claim, as I do, that at Riverside, aspects of the management



approach to promoting integrated social subjects seemed to act as an inhibitor to change, discouraging engagement with the integration meme. Conversely at Hillview, I make the claim that autonomy extended to key staff acts as a catalyst to professional engagement with the integration meme. In both cases, the findings are specific to the context of the case study in question. Nonetheless, despite this context-specific nature of my findings, there are grounds for a non-reductionist transferability of findings, and I develop this thesis later in this chapter.

Despite the difficulties outlined above, I believe that the artificial separation of the three dimensions of the triad is a helpful means of unpicking the key factors that come together in any given social situation. I believe that the theoretical framework, around which this thesis has been constructed and which has informed the analysis of my data, has proved to be a robust and successful base for a practical methodology for researching change in schools. The generic questions provided a comprehensive set of tools to interrogate the themes that emerged from the case study data. The process allowed me to draw tentative conclusions about causal relationships and enabled me to start to identify how each dimension contributed to social transformation and/or reproduction in each of the case study schools. It allowed me to identify some of the key ingredients that contributed to mediation and enactment of a particular policy and its associated ideas in the schools. This in turn has allowed me to undertake some extrapolation of the key ideas to develop a set of generic principles for use by those managing change in schools, including teachers and managers. This is not a hard and fast blueprint for change to be applied unproblematically to the

problem of change, but more a case of identifying key features of a reform initiative and a context that may contribute to its success. These include relevant cultural and structural catalysts and inhibitors that may impact on the future course of the initiative. The principles thus constitute a set of tools to aid the process of mapping change in diverse educational change contexts. The next section of this chapter will, therefore, explore the insights that have emerged empirically from this study, and develop the case for a generic framework or recipe to inform policy, and facilitate sustainable development for future educational change.

### **A recipe for change?**

The case studies provide insights into two differing views of the management of change. At Hillview, a small school, teaching staff in the social subjects faculty were extended a great deal of trust and autonomy in their decision-making about provision and the practice of teaching. This was accompanied by a reflective approach to planning, teaching and evaluation by the two experienced members of the faculty. The downside of this position of faculty autonomy seemed to be a weak management position in terms of proactive engagement with new ideas from the outside; the senior managers in the school did not claim nor fulfil any sort of overt role in the mediation of change. Thus it is possible that the faculty teachers did not have access to the full range of cultural alternatives possible for the provision of their subjects, thereby limiting their capacity to engage with the changes opened up by 5-14.

The situation was quite different at Riverside High School. Here, the larger scale of the faculty made change management more complex. Instead of comprising just two experienced members of staff, the faculty at Riverside was made up of a large number of staff, with a variety of levels of experience in different settings. A key difference is the approach adopted by the senior management team to change. At Riverside, managers were proactive in instigating and carrying through change initiatives, often in the face of opposition from the faculty staff. This was top-down management, carried out deliberately, with a range of managerial tactics to ensure compliance. I was left with a feeling that teachers were seen as technicians charged with carrying out someone else's vision, only involved in some of the decision making process if they explicitly subscribed to the management agenda for change. Above all there seemed to be a culture of distrust (Codd 1999) within the school.

While it is problematic to generalise from the two case studies, I believe that there are a number of features of the change processes in the two schools that may be extrapolated to inform future change management. The two schools, while providing largely opposite pictures, provide findings that are in fact also complementary, and moreover many of these findings are in tune with previous literature on the subject.

But how may contradictory findings be used to complement each other? The table overleaf (figure 23) briefly summarises these findings.

*Figure 23: main findings for each school*

| <b>Hillview</b>   | <b>Riverside</b>   |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Management style</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands-off management</li> <li>• Teacher autonomy</li> <li>• Professional trust</li> <li>• Participation high</li> <li>• Participation open</li> <li>• Experienced staff as change agents</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Change outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change agenda implicit</li> <li>• Pace of change slow</li> <li>• Change focused on pedagogy</li> <li>• Change deeply internalised by teachers</li> <li>• Change as practice</li> <li>• Cultural alternatives low</li> <li>• Structural barriers to change low</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Management style</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directive management</li> <li>• Teachers' work circumscribed</li> <li>• Culture of distrust</li> <li>• Participation low</li> <li>• Participation controlled</li> <li>• New staff as change agents</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Change outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change agenda explicit</li> <li>• Pace of change fast</li> <li>• Change focused on systems</li> <li>• Change superficial in terms of teachers' practice</li> <li>• Change as compliance</li> <li>• Cultural alternatives available</li> <li>• Structural barriers to change high</li> </ul> |

It is useful to cross-reference the change outcomes with the management styles utilised in the two schools. Does for example, the existence of professional trust and teacher autonomy help change to become deeply internalised? Does the lack of these factors encourage a compliance mentality? What about leadership? Does strong management help to promote and sustain change, or does it create a culture of distrust? Does the lack of strong management limit possibilities by reducing impetus for change, and decreasing the availability of cultural alternatives to current systems and practices? My view is that the data from the case studies provide some patterns which may be applied to other contexts, and I draw the following conclusions from them.

- Strong leadership is a vital ingredient in the promotion and sustaining of change. It is a source of both impetus and support. At Riverside,

managers provided impetus, but support was more sporadic. At Hillview, support was evident, but impetus less so. This contributed, in my view, to regular proactive but unsustainable change at Riverside (with a focus on systems), and slow reactive but sustainable change at Hillview (with a focus on practice).

- This combines with the existence of participation, professional trust and autonomy. At Hillview, where all these features were clearly evident, teachers engaged clearly with changes, which were in effect their changes; conceived, internalised and practised by the teachers. At Riverside, where there were low levels of all three factors, change tended to be accompanied by strategic compliance, and was so weakly internalised by some teachers that they were able to practise largely incompatible practices with little apparent cognitive dissonance.

A valid conclusion would seem to be that an over-reliance on top-down management and on hierarchical solutions encourages superficial change at the level of bureaucratic systems. Such management practice seems to be less effective in isolation at encouraging teachers to internalise change; it does not readily facilitate engagement with deeper underlying practices. This is not to suggest that management (or leadership) is not necessary; indeed it would seem to be very necessary as a source of impetus, new ideas and support. I do, however, suggest that the right sort of management is required to instigate, and more importantly, to sustain change. A combination of the styles evident at the two schools is perhaps the best

option: the proactive nature of Riverside's management, combined with the facilitative, supportive and trusting nature of the Hillview senior managers.

This brings us back to the discussion of agency. I have become convinced that the key to successful change lies in enhancing the agency of the change agents, namely senior managers and teachers in school, and local policy makers in Education Authorities. In the case of managers, such agency is about knowing when not to act, as well as being decisive in action. It is a question of exercising agency at this level that does not deny or repress the agency of classroom teachers, as their agency has a major part to play in the success of innovation, especially in terms of its enactment in practice. It is a case of accepting that the exercise of teacher agency may result in change outcomes that depart from the original plan, and that this is acceptable as long as any such decisions have been well informed and thoughtfully taken.

### **Enhancing agency, sustaining change**

Agency is enhanced by increasing the will and capacity of teachers and managers to deal with change. This may be achieved by addressing the cultural and structural conditions within which such agency is exercised. The remainder of this chapter sets out a framework for such a process, a generic model (or set of principles) to inform those embarking on the difficult process of educational change. There are two aspects to this: augmenting (or updating) the cultural software (Balkin 1998) of those who are to be involved with enacting change; and addressing the structural conditions that may influence the form that change will take.

### *Cultural software*

Balkin (ibid) describes cultural software as a toolmaking tool, as the set of values, skills, knowledge sets and dispositions that allow us to construct responses to life's difficult problems. The more extensive our cultural software, the more varied and effective are our range of responses to problems. In the case of educational change, an individual with highly developed cultural software will be more readily able to respond to change initiatives in a meaningful way that takes account of the widest possible range of possibilities. Clearly then, change will be more likely to be successful if relevant individuals possess the applicable cultural software: the right skills and knowledge; and a favourable disposition to the change in question. However this is not about indoctrination, or the imposition of an agenda for change. It is about enabling people to explore and understand a wide range of cultural alternatives, and recognising that they may utilise this enhanced cultural software to develop their practice in possibly unforeseen directions that are best suited to the local context in question. It is about accepting that learners 'combine and adjust the memes they receive with those they already possess' (ibid: 52), rejecting or adapting information that is in tension with what they already believe, and acting creatively on the basis of their knowledge, skills and dispositions. Ready access to information is therefore essential, to provide cultural alternatives to inform decision making.

### *Dialogue and networking*

The above discussion may be taken to imply that learning takes place in isolation. This is not my intention; I would instead posit a Vygotskian view that individual learning is enhanced by opportunities for the co-construction of knowledge. In order to encourage such updating of cultural software (and subsequent cultural elaboration), it is necessary to pay attention to structural factors, and foremost amongst these is the facilitation of relationships between individuals to promote the discussion of alternatives. The establishment of networks is therefore an essential ingredient in any plan for change. Such networks should include colleagues within the same school, colleagues at other schools and within the Education Authority, as well as professionals from different sectors of education. These should not be asymmetrical relationships. Cultural software is not enhanced by teachers deferring to external experts, any more than it is enhanced by directive management. Such networks provide the spaces for dialogue, within which social interaction takes place, and ideas discussed and modified. Such spaces, if properly constructed to bring in outside perspectives, should also prevent the establishment of groupthink and the development of narrow, unchallengeable orthodoxies. They increase opportunities for participation, and make teacher ownership of change more likely.

According to De Lima (2004), the success of teacher networks is dependent upon three factors: density (which increases the number of theoretically possible relations); centralisation (for example the involvement of teachers to act as champions for a change initiative); and fragmentation (not



necessarily a negative term, but also indicating diversity of ideas and the avoidance of groupthink). My case studies offer little positive support for the concept of networking, other than the example of the successful partnership between the teachers at Hillview; they do however provide some salutary warnings about the dangers of teacher isolation, especially at Riverside, where fragmentation along departmental lines was a barrier to engagement with the integration meme at the level of practice. Despite the shortage of empirical evidence in my study, I remain convinced that the establishment of strong social networks is a crucial catalyst for sustaining innovation. Moreover, much of the educational change literature (e.g. Cowley & Williamson 1998; Smyth *et al* 1998; Olson *et al* 1999, Helsby 1999; Spillane 1999; De Lima 2004) suggests that they act as a source of ideas, and therefore impetus to change, and provide ongoing support when teachers feel under pressure to revert to established ways of working.

### *Policy in conflict*

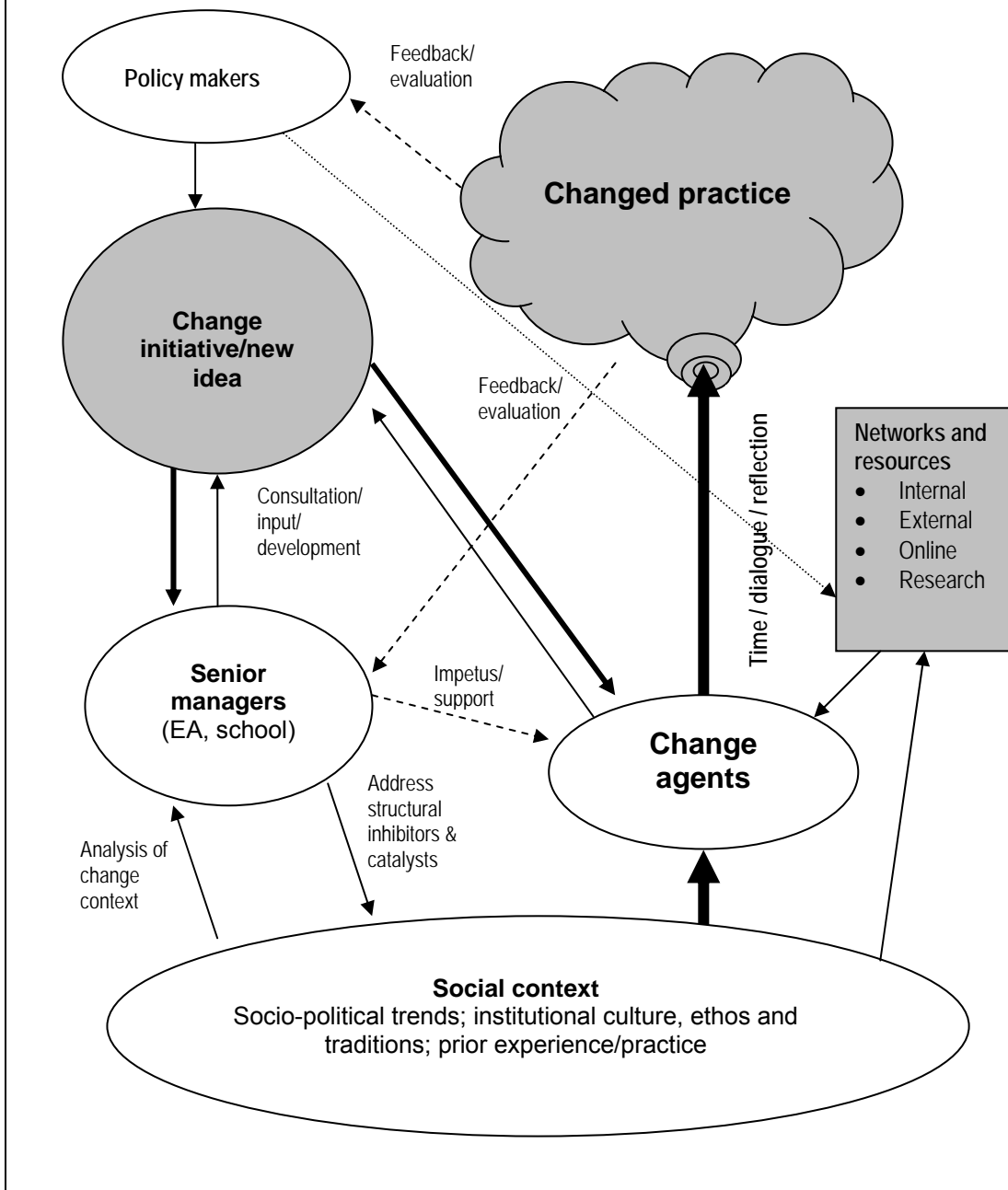
A final set of conclusions concerns the tensions that exist in schools between rival policies. For example, Reeves (2007) has pointed to the tensions between notions of teacher professional autonomy inherent in initiatives such as the chartered teacher programme, and more restrictive and directive approaches that are endemic to school quality assurance mechanisms. Similar tensions exist between approaches to teaching that are participative (e.g. Assessment for Learning) and external exam-based assessment. Such tensions create cognitive dissonance, and make change inherently risky; the result is likely to be strategic compliance, a low risk

strategy that ticks the applicable boxes, while not seriously challenging the status quo. Many recent change initiatives in Scotland (notably *Curriculum for Excellence*) are predicated on a stated need to challenge existing practice; however experience of prior initiatives such as 5-14 suggests that this will not be achieved under the present conditions of schooling. The challenge to policy makers is to re-examine the plethora of initiatives that impact on schools, to look for potential contradiction, and to deal with tensions where they exist. The challenge to Education Authority managers and school management teams is to look carefully at the application of existing policies, to draw problematic areas to the attention of national policy makers, and to apply policy in a flexible way that is sensitive to the potential for contradiction. The challenge to teachers is to foreground such issues of contradiction where they arise, and to bring them to the attention of their managers.

#### *A model for change*

I wish to conclude this study by bringing together the above points into a generic model for curriculum change, illustrated in the schematic diagram in figure 24 (overleaf). This model is designed to provide insights to those with the job of enacting change in a variety of contexts, and is intended to be adapted according to the demands of the specific change context.

Figure 24: generic model for educational change



The following features merit further explanation. First, there is an assumption underpinning the model that change agents (in the case of my empirical research I refer mainly to the teachers who actively enact the new policy) will play an active role in shaping the initiative.

Second, there is an active role for senior managers. There are three main dimensions to this.

1. As the major impetus for change. It should be the role of senior managers to keep abreast of policy developments and to instigate their enactment in school.
2. As a source of support for teachers undertaking the risky business of enacting reform.
3. As the analysts of the social context within which reform is to be enacted. This role involves identifying the structural and cultural inhibitors and catalysts to change and taking appropriate action to address them. This could include the direction of appropriate CPD for teachers, or the modification of an existing policy where it stands in the way of change. Of course, teachers will also play a role in this respect.

Appropriate mechanisms need to be established for establishing networks, access to resources and time and space for dialogue. Again, while senior managers may well play an active role in this, research highlighted in chapter two indicates that such a role can be easily and fruitfully delegated to some of the teachers enacting the changes at a departmental and classroom level. Finally, there should be also mechanisms for ensuring a continuous cycle of reflection, evaluation and feedback, to be fed back to both the senior managers in the school and to policy makers, and to inform the continued evolution of the initiative.

The model provides a map for those charged with enacting change. It is not, as I stated, a blueprint to be followed slavishly, but rather a general guide to highlight the key factors that should be considered by those undertaking change. Thus, managers may wish to consider how they might provide the time and resources to establish networks, and may wish to engage with an analysis of the change context to identify and deal with possible inhibitors to change (e.g. conflicting policies, lack of staff expertise). Similarly teachers may utilise the model to plan for the various dimensions of change (e.g. identification of areas of difficulty and resources required to enact change).

### **Concluding remarks**

This study has been a challenging, at times frustrating, but on the whole enjoyable experience. This study is not perfect, but it does, I think, provide new insights into a much debated issue, the problem of educational change. I also believe that this comes at a critical time, as Scotland embarks upon a major set of curriculum reforms, setting sail into largely uncharted, although not unexplored, waters (to continue with the Odyssey allegory that has surfaced periodically during this study). I hope that the insights that I have gained from undertaking the study will provide a new set of cognitive resources to the architects of *Curriculum for Excellence*, and the professionals who are set to enact it, as they journey through the perilous seas of curriculum change.

The study has enabled me to grow professionally. I embarked upon the data generation phase of the study with a set of fairly uncritical beliefs about the benefits of integrated social studies, and a desire to see this approach adopted across Scotland. My own experiences of teaching Social Studies in

New Zealand had left me with an entirely positive view of interdisciplinary approaches to teaching of the social subjects. In my view, benefits included quality contact time, the potential to develop participative pedagogy, better relationships, fewer classes (and the corollary of fewer reports to write) and easier pedagogic link-making. My view was that the adoption of such an approach in Scotland would lead in the long term to an enriched classroom experience for teachers and learners alike. I still hold these views, but they are now tempered by a number of caveats. In particular, I have come to realise that heavy-handed attempts to impose such a model on an unwilling workforce is tantamount to a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. The research has made me aware that the strong adherence to the separate subject model makes many Scottish secondary schools an unforgiving environment for the integration meme, and that if it is to achieve a wider currency, then much groundwork will need to be done.

My understanding of the issues involved with integration has also grown. In the early days of my research I tended to see integration as a technical problem, as did the managers at Riverside High School. Such a technical problem could, I thought, be tackled through technicist systems, including the development of Faculty management in schools. I now realise that such an approach (and such understandings) leads often to simple and superficial changes in practice, and does not necessarily enable the changes in attitude and culture that must accompany change in practice, if it is to be deep-seated and sustainable. I have also come to realise that integration is more about practice (and indeed social practices) than systems, and that it is possible to practice integration without the benefit of

formal structures. Indeed, such insights were present in the literature, but my epiphany was more a result of my observations in the case study schools, and via conversations with teachers. In this sense alone, the research has enhanced my understanding of a topical educational issue.

Finally I have grown as a researcher. The study has pushed me to engage with research theory, and to develop my methodology from this. Early research efforts were naïve, and involved going into school to 'find out the facts'. I gave little consideration to the relationship between ontology and epistemology, nor to the effects that my methodology (and indeed my presence as a researcher) might have on the transitive objects of my research. The study has enabled me to develop more sophisticated understandings in this field, and will facilitate my future growth in the field of education research.

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## APPENDIX ONE – PROVISION QUESTIONNAIRE

### Provision of the social subjects in S1 and S2

Please refer to the accompanying letter for the details and purposes of the research.

#### Section One

Please provide the following general information about the school:

1. How many students are currently on roll in the school? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Approximately how many students are there per cohort in S1/S2

Less than 50      51-100      101-150      More than 150

3. The school can best be described as:

Urban

Suburban

Rural

Other (please comment)

#### Comments

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4. Which of the following terms best describes the socio-economic status of the majority of the school's students?

High

Medium

Low

Mixed

Other (please comment)

#### Comments

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5. List the number of teachers of S1/S2 who can best be described as:

a. Specialist teachers of Geography

b. Specialist teachers of History

c. Specialist teachers of Modern Studies

d. General teachers of the Social Subjects

e. Specialist teachers of other subjects who teach the social subjects in S1/S2

**Please do not list the same teacher in more than one category**

## Section two

Please provide the following information about the provision of the social subjects in S1 and S2

1. **Prior to the introduction of the revised 5-14 Environmental Studies guidelines in September 2001**, which of the social subjects were taught at Riverside High School?

- a. Geography
- b. History
- c. Modern Studies

2. Please indicate how the provision of the social subjects could be best described **prior to the new guidelines**

- a. As separately taught subjects running at the same time
- b. As separately taught subjects running in rotation (e.g. a term's block of Geography followed by a block of History, etc.)
- c. As an integrated subject (e.g. social studies)

### Comments

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3. What changes to this provision, if any, have taken place since and/or as a result of the new 5-14 Environmental Studies guidelines?

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4. Would Riverside High School be interested in participating in the interview phase of this research project?

- Yes  No

***Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.***

## APPENDIX TWO – CHECKLIST, FIRST INTERVIEW<sup>13</sup>

### Interview schedule

#### In your view, what sort of school/department is this?

Goals/purposes? Educational/moral-spiritual/general?

School departmental ethos?

#### Teacher philosophies

Professional identity

Attitudes to change

Paradigmatic/pedagogic philosophies

Influence of subject communities.

Perceived subject status within the school

Perceived purpose of the subject

Perceived purpose of education/schooling

#### Historical/political/cultural context of depts.

Paradigmatic trends

Pedagogic trends

Teaching subjects of decision-makers.

Provenance of teachers.

Ethos

#### Social relations in the school

What sub-groups within and across depts.?

Relations external to dept.

Collegiality, support and dialogue

Distinction between teaching and social talk

Teachers working across depts.

Relationships with SMT

#### Resource/space issues

Location of depts.

Amount/type of space relative to other depts.

Communal space

Resource allocation

#### External pressures/relations

Perceived nature of influence of - LEA

“ - SEED

“ - HMI

Effect of policy trends on school ethos/teacher philosophy, etc.

Impact of wider educational community – working parties

“ - curriculum groups

“ - other schools

School \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>13</sup> Schedule included space for notes

**APPENDIX THREE – CHECKLIST, SECOND INTERVIEW<sup>14</sup>**

**Current provision**

**Describe your current teaching of the Social Subjects at S1/S2.**

- Current provision 

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- Teaching methods 

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- Resourcing/competition with other departments 

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- Nature and examples of collaboration with other teachers 

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- Nature and examples of collaboration with other departments – implications of collaboration 

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**Departmental organisation**

**LA/School responses to McCrone have led to new faculty structures. What are your views on this?**

- Line management 

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- Dept. management 

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- Nature and examples of collaboration with colleagues in formerly different departments 

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**Curriculum provision**

**In some schools, management changes are being accompanied by more integrated provision. The forthcoming SEED curriculum review is likely to reinforce such trends. What your views a on a more integrated approach to teaching the social subjects at S1/S2?**

- Understanding of integration 

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- Subject/teacher identity – threats to identity 

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- Impact of teaching method on integration 

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- One teacher/3 subjects 

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- Fully integrated theme–based approach 

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- Implications (e.g. time with class, report writing, use of specialist/non-specialist teachers) 

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- Your ideal provision at this level – final question: **if you were advising the minister about the way forward at S1/S2 social subjects, what would be your advice?**

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<sup>14</sup> Schedule included space for notes

## APPENDIX FOUR – ETHICS STATEMENT

### Ethics Statement

This research study will be conducted in accordance with the *Ethical Guidelines* of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). These are available at <http://www.bera.ac.uk/guidelines.html>.

In addition to the general points laid out in the guidelines, I wish to make the following statements with reference to the research.

- **Aims.** This research is primarily concerned with my Ed.D. Additionally I would aim to publish any findings in the wider academic and educational communities (e.g. through journals, TES). A long-term aim is to inform the development of a fully integrated Social Studies course for use by schools at 5-14.
- **Recording.** The research will be conducted in the form of interviews with a number of participants. Interviews will be open ended and dialogical in nature, and will not involve a predetermined set of specific questions. Consequently it will be necessary to record details of the conversations in some way. With the permission of respondents, I intend to record the interviews on tape, and may take some notes. Tape recordings will be transcribed. Observations will not be recorded, but notes may be taken.
- **Anonymity.** All efforts will be made to preserve the anonymity of participants and their institutions. In addition to the transcription process described above, measures taken will include the use of pseudonyms when referring to schools, and random reassignment of gender in any subsequent reporting and publication of findings. Respondents should refer to points 7-13 in the BERA *Ethical Guidelines*.
- **Reporting and Publication.** Any findings and data from the research may be published, either as part of assessed work for my Doctorate, or within relevant education journals. Details of any publications will be communicated to the schools; where possible schools will be provided with copies (e.g. offprints of journal articles).
- **Withdrawal.** Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Any communication regarding this study can be directed to:

Mark Priestley, Institute of Education, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA.  
Tel: 01786 466272, Fax: 01786 467633, Email: [m.r.priestley@stir.ac.uk](mailto:m.r.priestley@stir.ac.uk)