

**An Exploratory Study of Teachers' Views  
About the Involvement of Other Teachers in their Work**

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## **Dedication**

To my husband, Rog

To Ella, Hayley, Dulcie and Lawrence

For their support, belief and love

## **Acknowledgements**

Professor Ingrid Lunt, research supervisor  
The 59 teachers who were interviewed  
Many educational psychologist colleagues.

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James White', is centered below the declaration text.

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## **Abstract**

This is an exploration of the views of teachers from a range of different schools in two local authorities about the involvement of other teachers in their work. Many aspects of the education context are based upon the assumption that teachers' involvement in each other's work is a helpful and unproblematic phenomenon, which supports the learning, effectiveness and well being of teachers at all levels in all aspects of their practice. However, there is little empirical work on how teachers understand these terms and the value they place upon them.

The research builds upon David Hargreaves' (1972) work on inter-personal relations and education in which he highlights the difficulties in gaining access to this personal and largely hidden aspect of teachers' work. A social constructionist framework is used in order to achieve a better understanding of what constitutes work with other teachers and of what obstructs and facilitates it. Three studies using in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 59 teachers from secondary, primary and special school and local authority settings. A thematic analysis of the data was used.

The findings are that teachers view their involvement with other teachers as an important, varied, complex and problematic aspect of their work but do not reflect upon or discuss this topic a great deal. In addition, it is not viewed as essential or mandatory and many reasons for not being involved with other teachers were expressed. Further research is required to clarify and raise awareness of the attitudes, resources and conditions for enabling teachers in classroom-based and management roles in choosing and utilising involvement and non-involvement with colleagues to support their best practice. Schools, local authorities and government should utilise such research in policy, guidance and professional development initiatives.

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# **AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF TEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER TEACHERS IN THEIR WORK**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction and Rationale for Research**

In his British secondary school-based research over thirty years ago, Hargreaves attributes much importance to teachers' social relationships and highlights the significant gaps in our knowledge:

*the social relationships of teachers form an important part of being a teacher; it is the teacher's colleagues who in many respects control and influence his induction into the profession. The teacher's conception of himself, his values and attitudes to many aspects of education, may ... be influenced by his relationships with his colleagues and superiors and thus influence the teacher's behaviour in the classroom and his relationships with his pupils. Life in the staffroom and its impact upon the teacher constitutes one of the most significant gaps in our knowledge of the social processes within the school.*

Hargreaves, 1972, p. 402

Hargreaves was writing over 30 years ago and talking in general about social relationships between teachers. Since then, there has been very little research about teachers' social relationships, or the ways in which they interact whilst at work in schools.

It is well known that teachers' work is generally isolated. Teachers teach their own classes, usually in their own classrooms and without other adults present. There have, of course, been exceptions to this situation, such as initiatives in team teaching and more recently the use of teaching assistants and other support staff working in classrooms. Nevertheless, teaching remains a task which is usually undertaken alone.

In my work as an educational psychologist I have had the opportunity to observe thousands of teachers from all phases of the school system. I have also directly observed the benefits of professional peer support initiatives (Cullen & Morris, 1998) in supporting teachers' work

and professional development. These initiatives have included opportunities for teachers to engage in honest reflection within a non-judgemental forum that reduces stress, contributes to professional development and to creative and innovative problem-solving. In my practice I have observed that effective and supportive collaborative practice amongst teachers is a phenomenon that cannot be assumed and often requires active facilitation. However, for some teachers, the requirement to be involved in colleagues' work is not welcomed or may even be resisted.

### **Clarifying the language used within this study**

Many different terms have been used to describe teachers' work together, including 'collegiality', 'collaboration' and 'teamwork'. However, there may be problems in relation to these terms. Firstly, the words appear to imply something inherently positive and thus do not capture the complexity of this language. Secondly, a number of authors have highlighted their ambiguity. For example, Little & McLaughlin (1993) conducted research with North American teachers and maintain that the term 'collegiality' is 'conceptually amorphous'. Thirdly, these words are often used inappropriately and interchangeably. McGregor (2000), who has researched teachers' involvement in each other's work in UK secondary schools, writes:

*The concepts of collegiality and collaboration are widely employed in education literature, but commonly conflated, some writers merely meaning "teachers working together".*

p. 15

Given the breadth, diversity and complexity of the topic and the inductive nature of this enquiry, I therefore decided upon a deliberately neutral and generic term, namely 'teachers' involvement in each other's work'. This language is employed in order to develop a better understanding of what teachers' involvement in each other's work means to the teachers involved.

**The gap in what is already known about teachers' involvement in each other's work**

One limitation of the UK research is its almost exclusive focus on primary schools. The lack of research in secondary schools may be due to problems with designing appropriate methodology, gaining access to sample groups and the limited scope for generalisation because of the situated nature of research findings. In addition, the emotional and sensitive nature of this research topic makes it hard to study and requires courage on the part of the researcher (Hargreaves, 1972).

The gap in empirical research in this area may be contrasted with a succession of policy pronouncements which appear to highlight the importance of teachers' working together. These will be discussed under the three headings of 'Effective Schools', 'Teachers' Well-Being', and 'School Structures'.

### **Effective Schools**

As far back as the Plowden Report (DES, 1967), the importance of school staff's involvement in each other's work has been recognised:

*Schools of outstanding quality, [are] schools which are outstanding in their work, personal relationships and awareness of current thinking on children's educational needs.*

p. 101

Two decades later, the same view is echoed in Smith and Scott's (1990) research on effective schools:

*An accumulating body of research about the characteristics of unusually effective schools indicates that schools in which children learn the most usually have a "collegial" staffing structure and a strong sense of common purpose among teachers and administrators. This is often described in the abstract as "a shared moral order" or a "school ethos" but what it comes down to is that the professional staff functions as a team: it has clear objectives, works together smoothly, shares goals that transcend those of individual members, and shares a sense of responsibility for the mutual enterprise.*

p. 3

The UK government has emphasised the importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work in numerous aspects of education improvement, such as: organisation of the National Curriculum (Croll, 1996); behaviour management (DES, 1989); special educational needs (DfE, 1994); teachers' joint problem-solving and staff induction, development and support (Elton Report DES, 1989), and whole school performance (DfES, 2001). Little (1987) highlights this reliance upon teachers' involvement in each other's work:

*one workplace condition seems to beat the lot: collegiality. Initially, collegiality got the status of a solution for all problems. It was considered a condition sine qua non for teachers' professional development.*

p. 8

Hargreaves (1991) also suggests that:

*Much of the burden of educational reform has been placed on its fragile shoulders.*

p. 46

Despite the scale of claims regarding the benefits of teachers' involvement in each other's work, there is surprisingly little acknowledgement of the possibility of difficulties and the need for facilitation (Alexander, 1991).

### **Teachers' Well-Being**

There are claims that teachers' stress is a common and increasing phenomenon (Kyriacou, 1987). Workplace stress and well-being are frequently linked with quality of interactions with colleagues (Duck, 1998; The Mental Health Foundation, 2000), and research specifically focused on teachers also makes this connection (Griffiths et al., 1999).

A striking paradox about teachers' work is that, despite its highly relational nature with children (Henry, Osborne and Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1983) and the fact that teachers often express the belief that they are part of a team (Nias, 1989), the reality is often one of working lives isolated from other adults and there is a common perception of isolation from professional peers (Pomson, 2005), with some individuals being particularly isolated (Nias, 1989). Kruse, Louis and Bryk (1995) proposed that requiring teachers to work as part of a team could result in them feeling even more isolated. Clement and Vandenberghe (2000)

make the point that teachers should only be encouraged to work together if it is practically helpful for them, rather than as an aspect of school managers' stated ideology.

It seems possible that a lack of involvement in each other's work could increase teachers' stress through reduced opportunities for practical and personal support. It also appears that mandatorily working together could increase stress if some individual teachers work more effectively alone. Insufficient empirical research exists to understand the relationship between teachers' involvement in each other's work and teachers' stress:

*In spite of extensive research into teacher-pupil relations and pupil-pupil relations, there has been almost no systematic research into teacher-teacher relationships.*

Hargreaves, 1972, p. 402

### **School Structures**

Despite the fervour for teachers' involvement in each other's work, there is little practical information regarding the conditions and structures that support such practice and how to achieve them. The White Paper 'Schools Achieving Success' (DfES, 2001) repeatedly refers to teachers working together; however, practical guidance on how to ensure that this happens and how to address potentially arising difficulties is omitted. In addition, policies such as the National Healthy Schools Standards (DfEE, 1999) that clearly require teachers to be actively and constructively involved with each other do not acknowledge the possibility that problems may arise and that active facilitation may be needed.

Teachers' involvement in each other's work is often not straightforward or even evident (Kruse et al., 1995; Fielding, 1999). This may relate to Smith and Scott's (1990) observation that teachers' involvement in each other's work seemed incidental and unplanned for in school structures and systems. Salmon (1995) agrees and claims that the way schools operate and are organised does not provide the time for teachers to 'talk with colleagues openly, freely and at length'.

Alexander (1997), however, asserts that the provision of resources, time and space are not sufficient to ensure effective and constructive involvement between teachers. Issues such as



‘status, leadership and the division of responsibility’ between teachers need to be given consideration. Projects that support teachers’ involvement in each other’s work have also highlighted the need for a fine balance of support and criticism (Henry et al., 1983; Newton, 1995; Cullen et al., 1998) and the development of individual teachers’ confidence in their own inter-personal skills in the workplace (Kruse et al., 1995). This study aims to explore individual teachers’ views on the extent to which school structures influence teachers’ involvement in each other’s work.

### **The Autobiographical Context of This Research**

This study aims to offer both a researcher *and* a practitioner perspective. The research interest arises from my professional experience of almost 30 years in education working as a teacher and as a practising educational psychologist. In my daily contact with teachers as an educational psychologist in many different schools, I have regularly discussed their practices and the subject of other teacher’s involvement in their work has constantly featured. I have been aware of emotional and relational complexities and tensions between colleagues and this has motivated me to try to gain a better understanding of teachers’ views about their involvement in each other’s work, in order to gain a better understanding of the psychological processes and the complex social dynamics involved.

I have speculated that the complexities and tensions could have something to do with a random interplay of factors, which include teacher managers’ unspoken rules and beliefs within the school, compatibility of individual staff members, the inter-personal expertise of the staff, physical conditions and resources, time, space, school systems and structures. My research is designed to capture teachers’ views on these and any other related issues.

I have observed that teachers in management roles spend much of their time thinking of teachers as a collective rather than as individuals, and organising and facilitating teachers working together for the benefit of the whole school system. Teachers based in the classroom, however, spend most of their time teaching children; whether or not they work with other teachers is incidental and not their primary focus. Hargreaves’ phrase: ‘relationships with colleagues and superiors’ (1972) highlights the role-bound positions of teachers within school organisations. Therefore, I wanted to explore teachers’ views on the importance and desirability of involvement in each other’s work and whether or not patterns

exist in terms of their different roles within the school's hierarchy. I also wanted to explore teachers' views on whether or not management structures exert an influence on teachers' opportunities to be involved in each other's work.

As an applied psychologist working mainly in education, my work is underpinned by the assumption that social behaviour does not exist within a vacuum and that the effects of context are paramount. Kurt Lewin's field theory states that 'Behaviour is a function of the field that exists at the time the behaviour occurs' (Lewin, 1951). In my view, the 'social processes' that Hargreaves (1972) examined in secondary schools are likely to be different from that of other, smaller school settings. My research is conducted with teachers from a range of different schools in order to explore how teachers think the type and size of school context affects their involvement in each other's work.

In my practice when I asked explicit questions about the involvement of other teachers in their work, I received many different responses. Some individuals wanted to talk at length and in depth and some, hardly at all. My perception was that open discussion only occurred when I had been working with a member of staff for a period of time and a level of trust and confidence had been established, and where the particular teacher had spent time thinking about this subject. My professional practice with a range of teachers from many different primary, secondary and special schools in several local authorities enabled me to design this study and utilise existing trust-based, professional relationships in order to gain access and to collect authentic material.

### **Constructing an Approach to Researching Teachers' Involvement in Other Teachers' Work**

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is based upon social constructivist theory, more specifically, social constructionism, which emphasises social processes and interaction (Shotter, 1993; Gergen, 1994). This theory is derived from philosophical ideas in which the social and psychological worlds are seen as the product of individual and collective interpretation or construction within specific temporal and physical locations.

The epistemological basis for this study about the workplace interactions and related social processes between teachers places the layered and complex social and psychological world of people as central to a better understanding. This perspective also acknowledges heterogeneity, difference, fragmentation and indeterminacy (Foucault, 1972). I have drawn on a number of theoretical ideas, since adoption of a 'purist' approach to theory is likely to be inadequate within an applied setting.

Three ideas are central to the study: The first is that researcher reflexivity and self-awareness of connections with the research topic are important and illuminating. This has been essential because of the absence of prior research and the need to be adaptive in re-formulating the research over a long period of time. The researcher's personal experience of the dynamic, multi-factored and multi-levelled nature of the research topic has also been key. Maintaining awareness of the researcher's personal connection with the research topic has been important in contributing to the authenticity of this project.

The second idea is that language enables a better understanding of multiple social realities. The importance of individuals' meaning-making and social representation is acknowledged through the use of interviews with many different individuals across and within a deliberately wide range of professional contexts. The contradictory and paradoxical aspects of individuals' narratives and dialogue are consciously identified and recognised as providing interesting data.

The third idea is that an inductive approach over time has been necessary for engaging with the research topic. Staying open and adaptive in my approach to the enquiry has been required in order to be clear about what it is possible to explore and to understand, and also in the selection of methods and the research design. This flexibility has also been needed in order to respect the complexity and sensitivity of the research topic.

I have explored the views of a range of teachers through a series of interviews. I have asked teachers to describe their involvement in each other's work, and to reflect upon the benefits and challenges, the supportive and obstructive factors in this work.

## **Aims**

The aims of the research were formulated on the basis of relatively little existing empirical research conducted with individual teachers and designed to deepen understanding with teachers through broad and open areas of question in order to:

- 1 Gain a better and more situated understanding of what teachers perceive to constitute their involvement in each other's work and how this is enacted.
- 2 Develop a better understanding of teachers' views regarding the advantages and disadvantages of their involvement in each other's work.
- 3 Explore teachers' views about the effects of involvement with colleagues upon their well-being and performance as individuals and the effects of individual teachers' characteristics.
- 4 Identify teachers' perceptions of the facilitating factors and influences which either support or obstruct their involvement in each other's work and any patterns relating to work contexts and school management structures.

## **Conclusions and Structure of Thesis**

The involvement of teachers in each other's work is assumed to be important at an individual level in terms of teachers' well-being and professional development, at a local level in terms of school effectiveness, and at a political level in relation to educational policy. It is also assumed that teachers' involvement in each other's work happens naturally and is unproblematic. However, there is some evidence to contradict the belief that it is always beneficial and straightforward. There is little empirical research on this topic and the commonly used terms to describe teachers' involvement in each other's work are subject to many different interpretations arising from a weak conceptual basis. This research aims to describe teachers' involvement in each other's work from teachers' viewpoints: the advantages and disadvantages, the facilitating and obstructing factors, the impact of the individual and the whole school context. In so doing, this work will contribute to a clearer and more robust conceptual basis regarding teachers' involvement in each other's work.

- Chapter two relates the study to existing research and relevant literature. Although there is a relatively small amount of literature on the topic of teachers' involvement in

each other's work, there is a much larger body of literature on the experience of being a teacher. Within this there are references to teachers' involvement in the work of other teachers across a range of different schools. The chapter concludes with the research questions.

- Chapter three explains the research priority of collecting rich and personally authentic information directly from those who are most involved in the context of the phenomenon under investigation, using a social constructionist framework which enables multiple and divergent viewpoints to be recognised. The research design implies a recursive and inductive system and incorporates a double feedback loop mechanism in which new understandings and phases of the research have been incorporated and used over time to understand data from all stages of the study.
- Chapter four presents the research design, and describes the three semi-structured interview studies and the methods used for sampling, access, data collection and analysis. Some results from Study 1 and 2 are incorporated into this description, as Study 1 informs Study 2 and Study 2 informs Study 3.
- Chapter five presents the research findings from Study 1 with 15 teacher managers and 21 classroom-based teachers.
- Chapter six presents the research findings from Study 2 with 13 deputy head teachers and from Study 3 with 9 experienced educational professionals employed at local authority level.
- Chapter seven presents a discussion of the findings and of the methodology and design.
- Chapter eight concludes with a summary of the entire research, the implications of the work and the possibilities for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review**

Within the vast field of literature on teachers and teaching, there is relatively little material arising from empirical research, specifically about teachers' views on the involvement of other teachers in their work. References to teachers' involvement with other teachers have been searched for using the following key search words: teachers, collaboration, collegiality, teamwork and relationship. The main points are summarised under the following broad and inter-connected headings that represent the key themes which arose repeatedly from the literature: teaching culture, the work of teaching, pupil outcomes, teachers' professional development, teachers' job satisfaction, school structures and systems, and teacher support initiatives.

#### **The Culture of Teaching**

Whether the culture of teaching is predominantly individualistic or collective has been subject to much debate, and this clearly has strong implications for the exploration of teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Information to would-be teachers makes scant reference to the processes relating to the involvement of other teachers in teachers' work. Most references are of an entirely pragmatic nature and describe curriculum, special needs and whole school development initiatives. Studies of new entrants to the profession and their process of learning about and assimilation into the prevailing local and professional culture, and which highlight the complexity of teachers' interactions with colleagues, are few and far between. However, one study does exist which found that the professional culture within which student teachers were socialised, framed their views of themselves and of teaching as being essentially isolated (De Lima, 2003).

Attempts to define and understand the culture of teaching have highlighted the individualistic nature of teaching (Klette, 1997) and that there are as many styles of teaching as there are teachers. Teaching is a complex and unpredictable endeavour, which requires continual and continuous 'in the moment' and in situ problem-solving and judgement. In their complex

work, teachers have to use a combination of ‘in the moment’ intuition and contextually defined practical knowledge. There is no ‘one way’ or prescription for doing the job.

Teachers have to draw upon and exercise their individuality, their styles and strategies. In his seminal American study of teaching, Lortie (1975) employed comparative research methods to identify the central characteristics of teachers and teaching and contrasted these with other professions’. He used historical review, national and local surveys, observational studies and interview methods and concluded that teaching could be conceptualised as individualistic rather than collegial. He likened teachers in their school setting to eggs in an egg-box and described a general teaching culture characterised by conservatism, individualism and presentee-ism.

Lieberman and Miller (1995), explore the affective reality of day-to-day teaching and the implications for school improvement in the American education system. They construe teaching as a singularly lonely profession, in which individual teachers conform unquestioningly to an unspoken cultural norm of ‘self imposed and professionally sanctioned isolation’. They claim that teaching practice is not discussed in any way that acknowledges problems, supports joint problem-solving or learning. Conversation amongst teachers is largely superficial. Lieberman and Miller describe this style of communication as ‘remote, oblique and defensively protective’:

*The rule of privacy governs peer interactions in a school. It is alright to talk about the news, the weather, sports and sex. It is alright to complain in general about the school and the students. However, it is not acceptable to discuss instruction and what happens in classrooms as colleagues.*

p. 11

The contexts in which teachers work are highly structured and hierarchical. Within these contexts, collaboration and collegiality are not necessarily the norm (Lortie, *ibid.*). In studies of teaching as a craft, the apparent lack of shared practical knowledge about the job has been attributed to the way in which teachers work in relative isolation to each other (Pollard et al., 1987). Sarason (1982) writes:

*The teacher is alone with problems and dilemmas, constantly thrown back on personal resources, having little or no interpersonal vehicles available for purposes of stimulation, change or control.*

p. 162



This raises important questions about how teachers' professional knowledge can be shared and fully utilised within unique and complex individual schools, as well as in the complicated mesh of various diverse cultures within these.

Despite these problems associated with an individualistic culture, teacher groups appear to be able to accommodate individualism. In his meta-analysis of research from Britain, America and Europe, Calderhead (1987) explores teachers' practices, drawing upon a wide field of theory, including psychodynamic, cognitive psychology and symbolic interactionist ideas. He found that, regardless of the school's official, stated culture, individual teachers possessed divergent views and practices but nevertheless could receive approbation and support from some colleagues, as long as they followed the official rules of the particular school and were sufficiently politically adept.

Teacher individualism is not necessarily as unhelpful as discourses proclaiming the virtues of collaboration suggest. Hargreaves, in Little and McGlaughlin (1993, p.74), proposes that teachers' '*care, individuality and solitude*' are essential aspects of healthy and effective schools, and that there is a '*foolishness of presuming that all teacher individualism is iniquitous*'. It would seem that the job of teaching requires a capacity to develop strategies for maintaining individual choice and autonomy in practice, as well as selective engagement with some colleagues sometimes.

Storr's (1989) comprehensive analysis of solitude also encourages a more positive view of teachers' individualism. Storr points out that the capacity to be alone is associated with intellectual maturity, often sought by those with an ability to reflect and aid the development of creativity and original thought. There is, therefore, a possibility that teacher groups may benefit from the presence of some individuals who have a natural tendency to work more singly. This suggests that requiring all teachers to conform to the collaborative model of practice may impede some individual teachers in performing to the best of their ability. This in turn may reduce the diversity of contributions arising from a respect for the diversity of individuals within a staff group. In addition, it is likely that problems might arise where such diversity is diminished and a staff group is comprised wholly of those who prefer collaborative practice or those who show a preference for isolated practice.



The experience of teachers in training and newly qualified teachers highlights the tension between individual and organisational aspects and needs. Lortie's (1975) research on American novice teachers described the 'sink or swim' attitude and culture prevalent at that time. Lortie questioned whether novice teachers and their more experienced colleagues were the victims of unfortunate isolation or whether they actually welcomed the autonomy, finding it helpful in doing their job. In general, Lortie is critical of teacher individualism but does recognise that there may be some benefits derived from this way of working. In particular, Lortie highlights how working in relative isolation from their colleagues may enable teachers to invest more in their relationships with pupils. Flinders (1989) also views teacher isolation as functional:

*Isolation is an adaptive strategy because it protects the time and energy required to meet immediate instructional demands.*

p. 25

Flinders adds that because isolated practice is helpful in enabling teachers to meet the various demands involved in the complex job of teaching, efforts to reduce teacher isolation are usually unsuccessful. Examples of such efforts are constructing open plan schools and equipping teachers with the inter-personal skills to facilitate communication with their colleagues.

Despite the benefits of an individualistic culture, collective practice is also important. The socialisation of American beginning teachers was found to be subject to three levels of influence: the individual, the classroom and the institutional. Zeichner (1983) found that colleague teachers were the major source of information about schools' informal cultures, which are affected by many factors, including the number of years teachers had worked together. This therefore meant that beginner teachers needed to understand and work within this hierarchy of professional experience while at the same time realising that their own position of inexperience meant that they had relatively little influence.

Given the generally widely recognised individualistic nature of teaching, it is important to consider what makes teachers involvement in each other's work happen.

Firstly, teachers' personal priorities and values appear to be of more influence than organisational values. Whether or not teachers spontaneously interact and co-operate with each other seems to have more to do with individual person-centred values than

organisational structure, policy or stated ideology and pedagogy. Individual teachers must be predisposed and energetic enough to actively collaborate with colleagues within the existing school structures. The reality of these structures is that they are functional and, within them, interactions between teachers can only be loosely co-ordinated rather than mandated (Huberman, 1993). McGregor's (2000) secondary-based study investigating the challenges of collaborative practice within secondary schools, found that the presence of a humanistic perspective and related fundamental values of particular school contexts were important for supporting teachers' practice and involvement with colleagues:

*to move towards the development of a collegiality that is not a contrived and managerialist strategy expressed in the sterile language of performativity...This will require more emphasis on relationship, including the emotional context of teaching and schools as workplaces.*

McGregor, 2000, p. 21

If teachers are involved in each other's work, it appears to be as a result of it serving a practical purpose as opposed to it being a manifestation of the stated and collective ideological stance and cultural position of the school. School structures exist to support the primary job of the school, i.e. to educate pupils through imparting curriculum through whatever means practicable, and this is not necessarily through teachers' conscious collaboration. Teamwork, joint practice and shared professional development may be espoused ideals but the reality is that teachers have to teach and cover large amounts of curriculum and provide evidence of doing so.

Talk between teachers reveals the underlying school culture but does not necessarily reflect working realities. Nias's (1989) research on primary teachers' relationships highlighted the way in which communications between staff offered a reflection of the overall school culture and its many (explicit and implicit) closely observed rules, which served to demarcate insiders and outsiders to the school community. A pattern of staff interactions in breaks and/or before or after the end of the school day existed, and arose from and were embodied by the values and feelings of individuals within a broad, value-based school culture:

*a set of what may broadly be described as moral beliefs about the value of relationship between individuals and groups.*

Teachers' discourse featured 'professional talk' relating to the job, i.e. pupil behaviour, SENs, curriculum, professional development, responsibilities, organisational issues and 'personal talk'. It also featured many references to 'teamwork'. Nias found that a blend of individual and organisational factors was evident but that teachers generally led working lives which did not involve contact with colleagues. The anomalies between talk and practise in relation to teamwork raises questions about the reasons for this situation. Nias sought to clarify the influence of various factors, including the formality of contact between staff and the effects of the school's structures, systems, resources, attitudes, values and school history upon the existence of teamwork.

It appears that the complex human processes at play between individual teachers in different school contexts are little understood but are of fundamental importance.

The actual amount of contact teachers have with each other is likely to vary according to both the local school context and also the wider national education system. A study by Hilsum and Caner (1971) conducted a 'minute by minute' survey of the activities of 129 teachers in British junior schools. In this study, the terms collaboration, collegiality and teamwork do not feature at any point. Only one reference to teachers' involvement in each other's work was made in the whole study. This involvement was described as being of an informal and ad hoc nature, but this was not explored to any degree. One interpretation of this aspect of the findings is that policy has a large effect upon the incidence of teachers' involvement in each other's work. This study predates the introduction of the National Curriculum (DfE, 1988) and attendant requirements to plan and co-ordinate curriculum programmes across the school (Croll, 1996). The contrast of this study and that of Nias's (1989) study may therefore offer an indication of teachers' propensity to work together, which is less influenced by the demands of the school as a whole and has more to do with government policy.

A number of possible reasons have been proposed as to why teachers are reluctant to be involved in each other's work unless it is deemed absolutely necessary and mandated from on high. Ironically, McTaggart (1988) suggests that policy that dictates teachers' involvement in each other's work leads to a reluctance amongst teachers to work with peers when left to their own devices. Increasing centralised curriculum, accountability, evaluation and standardised teaching materials all erode teacher autonomy and thus reduce willingness to engage in

collective rather than individual practice where there is a choice. Another possible reason for teachers to show a preference for isolated practice, as proposed by McTaggart (*ibid.*), is that teachers are defending themselves against observation and evaluation and the possibility of being found wanting. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) also make the same point. McTaggart, however, points out that all of these possible reasons are speculative in the absence of sufficient empirical research.

Downie et al.'s (1974) study of teaching concludes that teachers' involvement with each other is complicated by the many aspects of the teacher's role. Downie et al. view the work of teachers as an 'aims-job, skills-job and a role-job' and suggest that competing aspects result in a tension between the social context and the individual. The seemingly limitless scope for different roles held by teachers in relation to their many interactions with different individuals and groups, means that the teacher's identity and self-image is a complex and dynamic one that is not easy to discern or define. The attendant high potential for 'role-strain' may explain teachers' high levels of stress and complicated workplace relationships (Hargreaves, 1972).

Another reason that has been proposed for why teachers' involvement in each other's work is difficult is that of the individual, personal differences between teachers. Denscombe's sociological writings about British teachers (1980) highlight the complicated nature of school settings and teachers' work, and places particular emphasis upon the general ethos of privacy and individualism evident within the profession. Denscombe found that different teaching styles reflected many individual factors, i.e. biographies, backgrounds, hopes and dreams, opportunities and aspirations. However, he also found that relationships with colleagues transcended these differences. These relationships resulted in either a culture of supportive teaching communities collaborating for common goals, or collections of isolated individuals. All of these studies indicate that understanding this complexity is unlikely to be achieved unless the central players, teachers themselves, can contribute their perspectives and meaning-making to what supports and what hinders their involvement with the work of other teachers.

In summary, there has been much debate about whether the culture of teaching has been predominantly individualistic or collective. Research suggests that it is mainly individualistic, as suggested by information provided to would-be teachers and within studies of teachers'

practice. Where interaction between teachers has been found to occur, it seems to be of a largely superficial, social nature rather than related to the job of teaching, and this phenomenon has been linked with the hierarchical nature of school structures. A predominantly individualistic teaching culture poses the problem of how teachers' experience and knowledge can be shared and therefore contribute to ongoing professional and organisational development. However, it would seem that such individualistic cultures are accommodated. This may be because such cultures offer certain benefits. Individualism has been found to aid creativity, reflexivity and original thought. It may suit certain teachers better and support their best practice. Such diversity can also enrich teaching groups. Teachers who invest less in their colleagues may have more to offer their pupils in relational terms and have more time and energy to meet the demands of their work. Achieving a balance between an individualistic and collective culture is clearly important. This has been particularly highlighted in relation to beginning teachers whose involvement with other teachers is crucial to many aspects of their development, especially their identity formation. Teachers' involvement in each other's work would appear to be the result of person-centred values rather than organisational values based on performance and because it serves a practical purpose. Discourse between teachers surrounding the desirability of teachers' involvement in each other's work does not necessarily mean that it is enacted. Policy would appear to have a major influence in the incidence of teachers' involvement in each other's work. However, it may work against teachers if they choose to be involved in each other's work when they are not required to do so. Defending against criticism, teachers' role strain and individual differences between teachers are further possible causes for a limited incidence of teachers' involvement in each other's work. It would appear that individual relationships between teachers can transcend these difficulties.

### **Teachers' Work**

The benefits of collegiality in teachers' work appear to relate to three main areas: establishment and execution of common tasks, enhanced problem-solving of a collective nature and ideological rewards of mutually supportive working contexts (Hawkins et al., 1990; Brooks, 1996; Seifert, 1997; Handal, 1991).

Since the passing of the Education Reform Act of 1988 (DfE, 1988), educational writing on the curriculum delivery aspects of teaching has emphasised the need for common, co-

ordinated and consistent teaching approaches (Yeomans, 1989; Louden 1991; Croll, 1996). Whether greater involvement of teachers in each other's work makes a positive difference to individual teachers is questionable, and the quality of this interaction has only received incidental attention in studies such as the Primary Assessment Curriculum and Experience (PACE) (Croll, 1996). Much of the imperative for increased involvement between teachers revolves around the implications for curriculum and for school management, i.e. primary head teachers. The personal effect upon classroom-based teachers has received relatively little attention.

On a practical level, collaboration between teachers has become more necessary in order to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the pupil population served by schools. A greater incidence of children with English as an additional language, children with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and the trend for inclusion of children with additional needs in mainstream settings, all result in much more heterogeneous class groups. Thus, meeting individual needs can only be achieved through the development of individual teachers' skills and collaboration between classroom, specialist and subject teachers (Little, 1982; Rosenholz, 1989).

Both the quantity and quality of teachers' involvement in each other's work is difficult to ascertain. The amount of involvement with colleagues varies greatly, according to both individual preference and teaching context. Many of the studies that do attempt to shed light on the quality of teachers' involvement in each other's work are publicly funded, school-focused, large-scale research projects, which utilise and emphasise local authority and head teacher perspectives and school structures as opposed to classroom-based practitioners. Paradoxically, the experience and views of classroom teachers are particularly hard to access due to the isolated (from other teachers) nature of their work:

*The norm of non-interference may be understandable in a system where shared problem solving rarely occurs and teachers are expected to work things out on their own.*

Feiman-Nemser et al., 1986, p. 506



As Feiman-Nemser's meta-analysis of American research on teaching found, gaining a better understanding of teachers' work also depends upon classroom contexts being open to other adults. Other findings stressed the importance of accessing teachers' subjective experiences in planning and implementing policy change, and in professional development generally.

Numerous influences on teachers' involvement in each other's work appear to exist. One main area of influence is that of the existence of multiple roles undertaken by teachers and the associated tasks involved. Teachers occupy a range of different roles in any single school organisation and this is likely to influence their interactions. Partnership Teaching (Bourne, 1991), a guidance document commissioned by the Department of Education Science and produced by the National Foundation for Educational Research, is an example of the government's commitment to teachers' involvement in each other's work. This document extols the virtues of pairs and groups of all staff in a variety of roles throughout the school, particularly those working together to support language development for children who speak English as an additional language. This manualised approach omits any reference to possible problems or complexities relating to people working together who have so many different roles. Hing Fung Tsui's (1995) study investigates the new demand for resource teachers and class teachers to work together to meet SENs through work relating to assessment, team-teaching, group-teaching in general and resource classes, curriculum development, consultation and staff development. She conducted a large-scale postal questionnaire study to explore the topic of class teachers' and resource teachers' (SENs support teachers) work together. She approached 869 class and resource teachers in 268 primary schools in Hong Kong and achieved a 30% response rate. She found that the whole sample was positive towards working together in relation to SENs but much less so for shared general classroom teaching. In the case of the latter, problems concerning role autonomy, communication, ambiguity, role conflict and role stagnation resulted in increased levels of stress. Hing Fung Tsui concluded that fundamental changes to the school system were needed, not just changes to resource teacher roles, and that more research was needed on the complex topic of collegiality. Arkoudis (2003) identified a similar resistance to collaborative teaching among secondary subject specialists when EAL specialist staff sought to teach with them rather than focusing entirely on individual student support.

Despite the fact that one of the main reasons for urging teachers to collaborate is that teaching effectively is facilitated, instructional interdependence is relatively rare (Lortie, 1975; Acker,

1991; Louden, 1991). Teachers do not necessarily share common tasks, organised as they are, by complicated systems of curriculum, pastoral structures and management teams. Even when the work of teaching – such as meeting the additional needs of pupils – requires collaboration, it would appear that teachers are reluctant to share tasks or else find it difficult to negotiate the boundaries of their diverse roles. Four particular challenges to teachers teaching together have been identified: being observed by colleagues; a lack of one's own professional space; philosophical differences, and different levels of expertise (Pugach, 1995).

Another very important influence on teachers' involvement in each other's work is that of school managers. Nias et al.'s research on staff relationships in primary schools (1988, 1989) was developed in response to a recognition that the 1988 Education Reform Act (DfE, 1988) had contributed to the existence of puzzling anomalies between curriculum planning and staff relationships, i.e. as previously stated, there was an insistence that teachers work together but a total omission of what supported or hindered this involvement for individual teachers. Specific aims of Nias's study were to explore and identify informal and formal ways in which curriculum decisions were made, whether agreement regarding the curriculum implementations made a difference to pupils' learning experiences, how teachers worked together, and to identify leadership qualities and approaches. Nias found that schools' management systems were key. The most effective schools were characterised by a conscious culture of collaboration. Head teachers valued and worked with the multiple perspectives of individual staff and facilitated teachers in integrating their personal and professional selves. The research also found that head teachers were important in establishing and modelling a climate of mutual security and openness, essential in allowing a quality of communication for which there was a shared and collective responsibility. This informed and agreed mutual interdependence, emotional openness, congruence and articulation was viewed as necessary for individual and organisational change and development. These studies, however, are conducted entirely within mainstream primary school contexts.

Sher's (1996) psychodynamic critique of the professional alliance between primary head teachers and deputies supports Nias's claim that the head teachers' working relationships are crucial to the smooth running of the school:



*A good constructive "pairing" relationship at the top allows teachers and children to feel secure in the educational enterprise as a whole and provides a sense of freedom in which learning can take place.*

P. 56

Alexander (1984) contributes another perspective on the influence of school power structures, highlighting that they can both facilitate and hinder teachers' work with each other. In his critique of policies, values and practices of British primary education, Alexander identified three helpful components: Openness to learning and intellectual scepticism, mutual accountability and positive leadership. He also speculated, however, that two aspects of primary school culture in particular could hinder collegiality, i.e. the role of relationships between teachers and the conditions in which teachers work. Alexander's work endorses previous studies such as Lortie's (1969), Taylor et al. (1974) and Coulson's (1987), where the focus is upon unhelpful attitudes relating to power positions between heads and class teachers.

There has been a succession of empirical studies as part of the Leeds Local Education Authority's 'Primary Needs Programme' by Alexander (1992), and on various aspects of primary education and special educational needs. These aspects include teacher thinking and decision-making, classroom practice and school management, and also identified that school leadership is both a prerequisite for and a possible obstacle to teachers' collegiality. Class teachers' views were not explored regarding what supports and what hinders the development of collegiality and workplace relationships, as well as the particular influence of school managers in this respect.

Hargreaves agrees that school power structures are important, but highlights the fact that teachers holding formal school management roles are not necessarily the only leaders within the organisation. Certain individual teachers may assume powerful positions of social leadership also. In his study of the inter-personal relations of secondary teachers, Hargreaves (1972) draws upon symbolic interactionism and phenomenological theory and emphasises the importance of individuals' experiences and interpretations of others within the shared system of the school. He speculates upon how a framework comprised of a strong and positive relationship can facilitate constructive dialogue, creative problem-solving and a more valuing, optimistic and diverse inter-personal climate. Hargreaves also emphasises the fact that the formal and informal status of individuals may or may not coincide and is not fixed but fluid within the constantly changing staffroom dynamics. Successful existence within

unique, complex human organisations requires a capacity to understand and negotiate the systems of overt and covert values, roles and rules (Handy, 1993). Schools are unquestionably unique, complex human organisations.

A third influence upon the involvement of teachers in each other's work appears to be school context. For example, there is some evidence to suggest that more collaboration takes place between teachers of children with SEN (Handal, 1991). Handal's study also revealed some interesting patterns and differences between groups of teachers in primary and secondary schools. Findings revealed that part-time, university trained and subject specialist secondary staff were less likely to value and cultivate collegiality within workplaces, whereas full-time and primary teachers were more disposed to attempt, if not actually achieve, a greater degree of collegiality in their practice. Other studies (Little, 1982; Acker, 1991) have also found secondary school settings to be less collegial in terms of task collaboration and joint problem-solving. This is reflected in initiatives designed to institutionalise collaborative problem-solving amongst secondary school teachers (Memory et al., 2003).

Another aspect of how the school context affects teachers' involvement with each other is that of practical, time-tabled arrangements. Campbell's (1985) case study utilised a multi-method approach over an 18-month period. He used observation, interview and discussion with teachers regarding their experience of joint curriculum planning in relation to ten school-based curriculum development programmes in eight primary schools in the Midlands. The study described teachers' work in terms of collegiality and provided a commentary on the educational context in relation to this. Features of teachers' contexts such as informal meetings, working parties, full staff meetings, advisors' input, inter-school liaison and in-service training, were identified as important in supporting interaction. However, these arrangements were not necessarily made with teacher collaboration as a stated aim.

Finally, the more nebulous concept of school culture has been found to have some impact upon the extent to which teachers are involved in each other's work. Nias et al.'s (1987) case studies of five primary schools, selected by the Local Education Authority as being particularly collegial and collaborative in culture, included interviews with 5-12 teachers (including head teachers) in each school. The main finding, which endorsed an earlier study, was that school culture, i.e. shared beliefs and values, had an important effect on the degree of collaborative practice amongst teachers.

To sum up, teachers' involvement in each other's work offers numerous benefits to teachers' work, which includes making their work relatively easier and more effective. Ascertaining the degree to which it takes place and the quality of this phenomenon is notoriously difficult. Known influences upon teachers' involvement in each other's work include the diversity of roles and tasks teachers take on, school management and features of the school context.

### **Pupil Outcomes**

The evidence that individual schools do make a difference to pupil achievement has grown in the last twenty years and a number of factors relating to this have been identified. Part of this evidence is Rutter et al.'s (1979) large-scale study of secondary schools, '15,000 hours'. In it, he stresses the importance of the school as a social institution in which the social climate between teachers is an important aspect, and which correlates with pupil outcomes.

Sammons et al. (1995) identified a related aspect of effective schools as being the existence of shared vision and goals derived from and manifest in collegial and collaborative staff practices. Rutter points out that the development of such shared values needs to reflect and meet both teacher and pupil needs:

*For there to be this kind of staff consensus on the values and aims of the school as a whole, it is clear that it must meet the needs of the teachers as well as pupils. This was not something on which it was possible for us to focus in our study. Nevertheless, it follows from our arguments on the value of cohesive social groups that most of the issues which apply to pupils apply similarly to teachers.*

Rutter et al., 1979, p. 193

Whole school principle-based policy and practice such as those relating to equal opportunities require professional reflexivity, considered and ethical professional values and practice (Phoenix, 1997). These qualities are unlikely to develop in the vacuum of solitary, isolated practice. Those practitioners who struggle with the complexities of anti-oppressive practices are also those who are most likely to subject their work and ideas to scrutiny and self-examination and hence, to employ good practices. Diversity issues between professionals provide the starting point for self-examination and ways forward for all members of the

school community. The attitudes and practices that are required in order to ensure encouragement, co-operation, critical thinking and democratic values and practices at all levels in the school context, can only develop over time and if firmly based upon the first order principles of valuing, success for all, continuous learning and inclusion.

Teachers, both individually and through their involvement with other teachers, are important models to pupils. The adults within the school system must and should be the starting point (Steiner, 1996). The interactions between adults should demonstrate the values which teachers wish to encourage in their pupils and which play an important part in learning. In his studies of the processes of learning and teaching, Rogers (1983) found that the interactions between adults in the school context and their discourse and mutual reflection contributed to a humane climate, and one in which the needs of the individual are recognised and respected:

*Facilitators of learning create a humane climate in which, being themselves real persons, they also respect the personhood of the student. In this climate there is understanding, caring, stimulation... students respond with an avid interest in learning, with a growing confidence in self, with independence, with creative energy.*  
p. 307

Teachers' interactions with each other also model desirable inter-personal behaviours to pupils. It would appear to be obvious that improved relationships between pupils would result in fewer behavioural difficulties and therefore facilitate learning and improve pupil outcomes.

Teacher interactions and collaboration reflect the democratic processes of the school and provide a model to pupils. The complex negotiations about control and choice, gaining, using, sharing or relinquishing power and decision-making, are evident at all levels within the school system. Pupils witness these negotiations on a daily basis and their own learning experiences are shaped accordingly. If they observe adults treating each other with respect, there is a greater chance that this will be evident in all relationships in the school community (Rogers, 1983). Where a variety of viewpoints can be expressed and heard, active learning is facilitated. Also, in an environment in which respect between individuals is evident and real communication can be experienced, conflicts and misperceptions are likely to be resolved more easily.

In conclusion, it would appear that the inter-personal climate between teachers is important for the whole school organisation and pupil outcomes. Teachers' involvement in each other's work is crucial to developing and acting upon a shared vision and goals. Teachers' involvement with each other also models recognition and respect of individual needs and effective inter-personal skills such as communication and management of conflict, all of which impact upon learning and therefore pupil outcomes. Understanding the factors that influence and the conditions that support constructive interactions between teachers requires further research (Hargreaves, 1972).

### **Teachers' Professional Development**

When teachers' professional development is facilitated through involvement with colleagues, it offers numerous additional benefits, including school improvement and supporting the development of education in general (Cordingley et al., 2003). In cross-cultural studies of teachers and teaching, different types of collaborative practice amongst teachers from around the world have been generally perceived as beneficial, helpful and dynamic (Schwile, 1993). It has even been suggested that increasing problems of recruitment and retention within the profession may arise from problematic or insufficient contacts with colleagues (Louden, 1991). Nias (1989b) concludes her study of primary teachers' reflections on their work by stating that answers to the problem of the high wastage rate of leaving teachers could well lie in the area of their interactions with colleagues.

In recent years, mentoring arrangements have been organised in schools in which trainee teachers receive support from experienced teacher mentors. According to research, they value and benefit from this (Totterdell, 2008). However, opportunities for mutual learning *with* experienced colleagues outside of the mentoring arrangements are not generally available. When this does occur, it is ad hoc and not consciously planned for. The school and classroom arrangements into which the newest members of the profession are introduced, serve to maintain largely solitary practice rather than rich, socially interactive, mutually professional learning. Teaching is constructed as a largely solitary endeavour within schools. The degree to which they experience a collaborative teaching environment is very much influenced by the particular school context factors during their brief and parochial training (Lortie, 1975). Hargreaves (1999) suggests that a non-collaborative learning culture serves to reinforce and

perpetuate the individualistic and parochial flavour of teaching as a whole, and there are particular implications for new teachers:

*Unless beginning teachers undergo training experiences which offset their individualistic and traditional experiences, the occupation will be staffed by people who have little concern with building a shared technical culture. In the absence of such a culture, the diverse histories of teachers will play a cardinal role in their day-to-day activity.*

Hargreaves, A., 1999, p. 67

Training courses operate on the assumption of unproblematic professional collaboration between practising teachers (De Lima, 2003). Although De Lima's study is set within a Portuguese secondary school, UK training courses are equally presumptuous with regard to teacher collaboration in schools. Teachers begin their careers with little support and input to negotiate the adult social world within the school. David Hargreaves' (1972) words bemoaning the lack of professional development input and the gap in initial teacher training still ring true:

*Teaching is a social process, yet we give so little guidance to teachers during training in the necessary social skills... "It is time that teachers began to recognise their own needs in this respect..."*

Hargreaves, D., 1972, p. 248

Collaboration has a role in the development of teachers' own practice, whatever their level of experience, and it also contributes to the development of innovative practice amongst teachers. It is also important in the development of the teaching profession as a whole. However, Lortie's (1975) egg-box metaphor for individual teachers in schools continues to be pertinent and teachers are not actively encouraged to seek and engage in mutual learning experiences. Miller, A.(1996) also found that teachers did not engage in reciprocal learning activities with colleagues. In his research on teacher culture and management of pupil behaviour, he found high levels of teacher isolation in relation to professional practice:

*It is not that teachers do not necessarily enjoy the company of their colleagues but rather that colleagues do not serve the function of being stimuli and agents for one another's professional development.*



McPherson (1972) observed that where teachers were involved with each other, it seemed to be more concerned with socialising than professional development. McPherson found that staffroom talk was more likely to be about the home, non-work and family backgrounds of pupils rather than about pedagogy and curriculum.

As teachers gain in experience they are in a better position to take more account of the whole school's issues and needs. It is these experienced individuals in particular, who can locate and facilitate opportunities for learning, collaborative practice, collective responsibility, support and problem-solving for and from teacher colleagues (Newberry, 1977; Feiman-Nemser et al., 1986), and yet they do not necessarily share their ideas in interactions with colleagues.

The question of whether a management role is necessary in order for experienced teachers to feel able to use their experience in supporting collaborative practice is raised in Hodgkinson et al.'s (2005) study on teachers' workplace learning and school improvement. Lieberman, Falk and Alexander (1995) describe the facilitating leadership role of teacher-directors, experienced teachers who are appointed by peers to aid and support teacher development in six schools in New York City. This role is described as being 'a leader of and for the teachers who assumes neither a supervisory nor a hierarchical stance'. In these New York schools, teacher-directors support the growth of teachers, acting as an 'observer, supporter and reflector' for teachers and providing them with continual learning opportunities through dialogue. In addition, they strive to uphold the vision and values of the school, not least by trying to empower others:

*Rather than a slogan, it is the subtle means by which directors create the conditions for continuous growth for adults and students alike.*

Lieberman, Falk and Alexander, 1995, p.124

In these schools, leadership is described as being 'legitimated by following practices consistent with ideals embraced by the community...' whereas, in the traditional school, the power of the principal derives from the position. Interestingly, these teacher-directors are

chosen by the community to which they belong, and are accountable to this community in creating 'a democratic learning community'. The difficult question of how non-management based teachers placed in leadership roles can remain detached from the power structures, yet be equipped and supported in facilitating teachers' work together, is not addressed. Hodkinson (ibid.) suggests that an overly directive, managerial approach is unhelpful. Ryan (1999) also suggests that formal leadership roles impede teachers' capacity to support collaborative practice.

All collaborative practice presupposes a mature professionalism amongst teachers (Hargreaves, 1994), in which equality amongst teachers exists. Hierarchical school structures, in which management is seen as the key to effectiveness, however, mitigate against such equality. Hudson's (2005) case study research, undertaken within the secondary school context in which he taught, investigates teachers' perspectives regarding professional development and collaboration with teacher colleagues. He found that the school management structures within the overall education context worked against the teacher agency, learning and professional community.

In order for teachers to be adult learners, and to utilise what they and their colleagues have to offer, collaborative communities of learning (Wenger, 1998) have been advocated. In these communities of active, mutual learning, construction of new meaning (Schrage, 1990) is possible. Strategies for collaborative learning amongst teachers include action research projects, observing colleagues and being observed, consultation, co-teaching and peer evaluation. All of these approaches require teachers to be amenable to scrutiny by colleagues in order to develop.

However, there is a need to respect individual autonomous practice as well as to create opportunities for collaborative practice. School context conditions which allow teachers to create a balance of collegiality *and* autonomy are difficult to specify, and the tension between teachers' needs for autonomy and the issue of collegiality is not easily addressed (Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000). In Clement et al.'s interview, questionnaire and case study research on teachers' experiences of collegiality and autonomy in (Flemish) primary education, they explore how this may affect teachers' professional development. Their findings support Hargreaves' (1994) work, finding that the individuality and autonomy of



teachers needed to be respected and allowed for but that this should, ideally, be within a school context where:

*learning opportunities and learning space are created in a professional way*

and where

*teachers can become professionals who not only are technically apt, but who are conscious of the moral and political implications of the work they are committed to.*

p. 98

The benefits of teachers' involvement in each other's work in terms of teachers' professional development is well known. This has implications for teacher retention, school development and the progress of education in general. However, teacher practice tends to be isolated and this is evident from the earliest stages of teachers' careers. Teachers in training are involved with other teachers through mentoring arrangements, in which the focus is upon learning from rather than with more experienced teachers. Teacher training generally neglects consideration of the potential problems or the conditions needed to support teachers' involvement with other teachers. Studies that describe teaching practice allude to a generally isolated culture in which interactions between teachers tend to be social rather than of a professional development nature. Experienced teachers who are perhaps better placed to support professional development through teachers' involvement with each other, rarely do so. A formal management role may impede this further. Possible reasons for the lack of teachers' involvement with each other for the purpose of professional development include the school's hierarchical structure, teachers' reluctance to undergo the scrutiny of professional peers and the teachers' wish for autonomy within their work. The difficult task of facilitating a school context which achieves the right balance between supporting teachers' autonomy and their professional development through interaction with colleagues is one that clearly requires further research.

### **Teachers' Job Satisfaction**

Teachers' job satisfaction in general has been found to be problematic (Smith et al., 1992). Little is known about the relationship between teachers' involvement in each other's work and job satisfaction. Specific research on whether or not involvement with other teachers is

an aspect of teachers' job satisfaction, has not been investigated. There is some evidence to suggest that involvement in each other's work is more important to female teachers' job satisfaction (Acker, 1991; Elbaz, 1991; Sikes, 1997). One might assume that friendship and/or effective involvement in each other's work would contribute to teachers' job satisfaction. However, no research-based evidence exists to back this up. The relationship between friendship and teachers' involvement in each other's work within a school is unknown. The following questions therefore arise: Is friendship an essential prerequisite to belonging to the teacher group within the workplace or a desired by-product? Does effective professionalism require detached objectivity or friendship? (Yeomans, 1985). The qualities of effective colleague relationships and whether or not these include friendship have not been systematically explored. There is evidence to suggest that teachers' involvement in each other's work in school and outside of school is unrelated. Silver (1973), writing about black teachers in urban schools, found that a lack of professional collegiality within schools was not necessarily matched by a lack of positive social relations in general and that, in many cases, these were enacted out of school. Friendship between teachers appears to be a positive but non-essential product of teachers' involvement with each other's work.

Various investigations into the general sources of satisfaction for teachers have been undertaken. A number of studies suggest that the main reward of teaching arises from the relationships with and benefits to pupils (Hargreaves, A. 1999; Downie et al., 1974 and Lortie, 1975). However, the question of whether this source of satisfaction is equivalent for primary and secondary teachers has been raised (Handal, 1991; Hargreaves, 1999). For primary teachers, the positives of the job appear to relate to pupils' achievements and learning, teachers' own intellectual stimulation and the opportunity to work fairly autonomously once inside the classroom (Nias, 1987). Other studies of secondary teachers found that teachers' involvement with other teachers featured much more highly in terms of its relationship to overall job satisfaction; for example, Mann's study of teachers' work with low achieving pupils depicts this (1976).

Relatively few studies on teaching have drawn upon psychological theory in understanding what gives teachers satisfaction in their work. One exception is the work of Nias (1987), which critiques the application of Maslow's (1970) theory of 'hierarchy of needs'. She postulates that the individual teacher's needs are viewed in a strictly linear fashion, placing lower level physical needs first; next, social needs for belonging, love and self-esteem, and

finally, intellectual, aesthetic, self-actualisation and self-fulfilment needs. Nias, whilst accepting much of this model, is critical of the idea that it can be applied 'undiluted' to teachers (Nias, 1989b). The fact that teachers themselves list self-actualisation and fulfilment needs very highly in relation to job satisfaction and as being more important than social needs, suggests that if involvement with other teachers threatens rather than supports these goals, involvement with other teachers will be less welcomed.

It cannot be assumed that the relationship, whether with pupils or other adults in their work, is a principal source of teachers' job satisfaction. The usual arrangement of teacher and class, i.e. large numbers of pupils, entails the teacher being role-bound and engaging in limited personal involvement with individual pupils. Alexander's (1992) evaluative research of 'teachers teaching together' in primary schools, found that teachers did not necessarily welcome the more intense and personally involved teaching context of small groups. Exploring what teachers construe as being a relationship and whether or not they desire relationships in their work has not been explored through empirical research.

Little empirical research about everyday, naturally occurring interactions between teachers in the school context exists, although it is alluded to in studies such as those of Yeomans (1985), whose research upon English primary teachers found that staffrooms were places where teachers talk, reflect and conceptualise. He also concluded that they were a critical area in the school, in which teachers exchanged confidences, released tension through humour and disclosure, and where the school culture was developed. Furthermore, they could be places where a degree of cohesion in teachers' views of school life emerged, and discussion played an important role in that teachers' reflections could be organised into patterns of coherent meaning. Schools' staffrooms were also the places where group support processes were developed. In this way, teachers' shared understandings of the collective and subjective responses to the situations in which they found themselves as teachers could be shared:

*The staff room and colleague group offer the best chance to allow personal needs to achieve legitimate status.*

Yeomans, 1985, p. 7

Colleague teachers appear to act as a reference group through which teachers are able to evaluate their work and seek affirmation for it (Ball and Goodson, 1985). Acker's (1991)

study of the oral culture of the school found certain interactional patterns: The staffroom talk reflected themes relating to control and autonomy, workload expectations in relation to infinite possibility and finite reality, health and stress, personal fulfilment, perceived competence and enjoyment. Permeating most talk between teachers were references to threats to self-esteem and job satisfaction, such as: parents, head teachers, difficult pupils, cultural expectations and social pressures of society at large, all of which were found to contribute to individual teachers' self-images. Acker (ibid.) suggested that three important question areas about the levels of collegiality/individualism actually present in schools warranted further in-depth ethnographic research: gender effects, effects of centralisation and the effects of control over teachers.

The types of conversation and interaction teachers have in staffrooms are frequently of a personal or deliberately non-teaching-related nature (Elbaz, 1991). It is possible that the formal constraints and requirements of the National Curriculum, appointment of curriculum co-ordinators and the proliferation of curriculum working parties are likely to have accentuated this almost anti-intellectual/anti-professional stance which teachers frequently adopt when a little time out from the classroom is possible (McPherson, 1972). Teachers may welcome the unstructured and more personally engaging dialogue with colleagues in the staffroom, when it is not prescribed by management and policy.

However, another view of staffroom contexts is that they are 'uncomfortable, interpersonally intense and difficult places' (Huberman, 1993). Teacher isolation or *absence* of work with other teachers may well be a strategy for surviving and managing (Pomson, 2005). Pomson's research in 16 Canadian Jewish day schools over four years, involved three studies, two of which used data from teachers' journal accounts and the other used semi-structured interviews. He encouraged teachers to generate accounts of their daily practice in reflective diaries and to focus upon the phenomena of teacher isolation and community in these. He found that the motivations for and actual daily professional practices of teachers were not as positive, straightforward and unproblematic as school reform literature assumes. Major implications for school management, professional development and staff well-being were highlighted.

Interestingly, quite a lot is known about the unsatisfying aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work. Various particularly unsatisfying aspects of teachers' involvement with

each other have been identified. Nias (1989b) describes teachers' workplace relationships as being complex and problematic. In her study of primary school staff relationships, she highlighted the potential for jealousy, rivalry and suspicion amongst teachers:

*Sometimes they make friends, share interests, enjoy companionship and find mutual affection. At others, their staff rooms are poisoned by rivalry, jealousy and suspicion, making it difficult to secure any remission from the pressures of classroom work.*

Nias, 1989b, p. 152

Another study by Welchman (1982) with American teachers, also highlighted problematic aspects and found that teachers lacked in trust, experienced difficulties in communication with colleagues and with their workplace inter-personal climate in general. According to Elbaz (1991), a particularly unsatisfying aspect of teachers' involvement is the tendency to collude and to agree rather than risk disagreement. The possibilities of conflict, i.e. the opportunity to use conflict as a catalyst for change and growth, are therefore lost and a contrived collegiality results. In addition, a stigma exists about admission of difficulties and needing help. Newberry (1977) writes of his findings that teacher norms mitigate against asking for help as this is construed as an admission of failure and that the only permissible exchange of practical help between teachers is that of information relating to alternative teaching and pupil management methods.

There are many challenging issues in relation to teaching which are likely to affect the satisfaction teachers derive from their involvement with colleagues, such as: a lack of consensus regarding expectations of teachers, i.e. traditional and progressive, that make up the teacher role and contribute to 'role strain' (Bowers, T., 1987); over-involvement and identification with pupils and their difficulties (Henry et al., 1983); stress and fatigue (Kyriacou, 1987; Nias, 1987; Smith, 1992); conflict with pupils and colleagues, excessive workload and low levels of reward (Smith 1992), and isolation and levels of support and recognition (McPherson, 1972; Lortie, 1975).

The implications of teachers' involvement with other teachers being problematic and unsatisfying are serious and far-reaching, as Woods (1977) found in his studies of British teachers:

*what is at risk is not only [the teacher's] physical, mental and nervous safety and well-being, but also his continuance in professional life, his future prospects, his professional identity, his way of life, his status and self-esteem.*

p. 152

A few clues exist as to how teachers' involvement with each other might be made more satisfying. Nias found that the balance of autonomy and chosen support, which teachers appeared to value, seems to be best achieved in a social environment characterised by mutual dependence. It was necessary for the staff team to be characterised by an openness to admitting and sharing difficulties. The requirement upon staff to be individual persons as well as role occupants was central to the development and maintenance of a relationship (Nias, 1989b). Little's (1982) American study of teachers also emphasised individual teacher characteristics. He looked at the question of what constitutes an ideal colleague, therefore presupposing a positive underpinning workplace relationship. He found that, generally, most teachers valued a colleague who 'is helpful but not pushy', influential in an informal rather than formal manner and is reciprocally involved. However, what constituted an ideal colleague varied between individual teachers. Pollard's (1985) British study of primary teachers emphasised structural rather than individual aspects of how teachers worked together. He found that although there were wide variations in teacher identity formation, in sociological terms, the nature of similarities in perspectives was more significant because teachers share similar structural positions in terms of the school system and education as a whole. Therefore, Pollard proposed that structural changes were important in improving teachers' satisfaction with their involvement with colleagues.

In summary, little is known about the relationship between teachers' involvement in each other's work and job satisfaction. Known sources of job satisfaction are mainly related to pupils and also to self actualisation and fulfilment. There is insufficient evidence to assume that teachers find relationships a particularly satisfying part of their work. Naturally occurring involvement with other teachers mainly serves the purpose of providing a reference point for teacher identity. It is usually personal and deliberately non-teaching-related. It is also a potential source of difficulties and problems. Interestingly, as opposed to the satisfying aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work, quite a lot is known about the unsatisfying aspects. The stresses and strains involved in the job of teaching provide some clues as to why teachers' involvement in each other's work might be difficult and



unsatisfying. It has been suggested that both teachers' individual qualities and whole school structural arrangements could make teachers' involvement with each other more satisfying.

### **The Influence of School Managers**

Studies which focus upon the school as an organisation, suggest that the head teacher holds a special place in the school's systems, structures and inter-personal network. She or he represents and experiences many different issues in relation to teachers' involvement with each other (Burgess, 1983; Schon, 1983; Handy et al., 1986; Booth et al., 2000). The conflicts and stresses which head teachers frequently describe, are many and diverse and many of these relate to their involvement with teachers.

Somehow, head teachers have to lead a co-ordinated and cohesive team of individual teachers, who have expectations of being authorities in their own right and who require and demand autonomy and independence as much as possible (Hartley, 1985). The words of Burgess (1983), about teachers, relate no less to head teachers:

*Education is more than the facts or skills or opinions. It is at best a delicate system of personal relationships.*

p. 140

In many cases, the principal aims and objectives of head teachers are removed from this 'delicate system of personal relationships'. Feiman-Nemser's (1986) research indicated that head teachers frequently place a higher value upon administrative, bureaucratic and impersonal aspects of their jobs and that this leads to difficulties with their teacher colleagues with whom they have a supervisory and managerial relationship.

In addition, the possibility of teacher colleague sycophancy towards head teachers (Hargreaves, 1972) can contribute to the alienation of head teachers from their professional workplace group and can pose difficulties within the dynamics of the adult staff group. Head teachers, frequently as absent staffroom members, are also particularly vulnerable to the possibility of teachers projecting their own unresolved emotional material with respect to authority and power (Richardson, 1967; Spooner, 1982).

Head teachers are required to have very specialist skills in relation to managing complex staff group dynamics and individuals. Head teachers have to maintain a balanced approach, combining involvement with detachment (Woods, 1977). A headship style featuring a person-centred approach (Rogers, 1983) and which includes an understanding of group processes and also a counselling element which can benefit all involved via congruent, accepting and empathic communication, is advocated by Welchman (1982). Head teachers are usually outside of the informal social organisation of the teaching group (Burgess, 1983) because of their managerial and decision-making role, which makes them relatively isolated. It is therefore likely that head teachers themselves would benefit from supervision of a supportive and therapeutic nature (Hawkins et al., 1990).

Acker (1991) makes links between head teachers' challenging work and social isolation and their control agendas, evident in ritualised interactions and discourse, i.e. formal meetings. The culture of meetings so evident in schools today may well arise as much from the social and emotional needs of the meeting callers as the actual officially stated business to be conducted.

The pinnacle position of the head teacher within the hierarchical school structure presents particular challenges. Head teachers have a difficult task in implementing effective, democratic leadership. Their own relationship needs have few opportunities for expression, as interaction with colleague head teachers is relatively infrequent in the hectic business of running a school. Nevertheless, they are key figures in influencing and shaping the inter-personal climate of the school and their own inter-personal style may hinder or facilitate this feature of a school. The implications for teachers and pupils alike are great. The DfES (2001) consultation paper, 'Schools: Building on Success', contains a chapter titled 'Teaching – a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Profession', which makes a number of proposals for supporting and developing teachers' practice. It makes a special reference to the situation of head teachers and recommends the initiative 'Talking Heads', an interactive online community linked to the National College of School Leadership. Reasons for this recommendation include: opportunities for collective problem-solving, accessing information, professional development, reducing isolation and increasing support.

School managers serve as models (Barth, 1990) and are crucial figures in terms of modelling to teachers the various qualities and behaviours necessary for collaborative practice. Where



head teachers actively embody openness to learning and can be viewed as the head learner in a school, this provides an implicit and explicit communication to staff and the whole school community about the priorities of the school and education in general. Eraut (1998) also highlights the informal influence of managers and the micro-culture of the workplace in terms of learning and development for staff. Eraut found that, whereas formal education and training exerted a variable influence, a consistently more important influence was that of informal interactions with others in the workplace and the work task itself. In other words, teachers were interested, motivated and generally more likely to learn when professional development actively linked to and drew upon the work of teaching and the professional peer group within the school.

Yeomans (1985) also writes of the importance of the head teacher as a key member of teachers' professional reference groups. Those individuals who can model a human, reasonable and balanced attitude and actively resist the 'workhorse ethic', i.e. excessively personal and stressed approach to their work, appear to be the leaders whose staff are also avoidant of such unhelpful and unhealthy personal and professional stances. It is not uncommon for the head teacher's inter-personal style and behaviour to be a vehicle for the acting out of their own personal stress (Dunham, 1977). The stress that head teachers experience may be linked to involvement with other teachers, and how the head teacher manages his work and related stress is likely to be key to whether or not the school is a good place to work (Hoyle, 1969). The head teachers' ability to manage their own stress is related to a capacity to communicate, the confidence and assurance to share power and a willingness to delegate and adopt a consultative style (Steiner, 1996).

The key role of and need for head teachers to have a proactive stance and commitment towards the concept of collaboration is evident in writings about whole school collaboration projects within LEAs (Goodchild, 1989; Lunt et al., 1994; Croll, 1996). It follows, therefore, that head teachers would benefit from understanding and considering what collaboration might mean. According to Holly (1986), collaboration can be one or a combination of three types: instrumental, factional or collegial. Instrumental collaboration is mandated according to another's agenda, e.g. the school's management, the LEA or the government's policy. Factional collaboration arises out of and facilitates competition, usually for finite resources or acclaim, between factions requiring loyalty and commitment of individuals involved in inter-group rivalry, e.g. different departments in a school or different schools within an LEA.

Collegial collaboration is based within and across a whole staff group and requires the involvement and support of all individuals, along with conducive systems and structures. Despite government rhetoric promoting the importance of collegiality (DFE, 1994; DfEE, 1997a & b & 1998; Glatter, 2003,), this is the least common and hardest aspect of professional practice to be achieved (Handal, 1991; Cullen, 1995).

Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) distinguish between implementing collaborative structures and creating collaborative cultures. The former relates to such initiatives as teacher mentoring, peer coaching, problem-solving teams and team teaching. These structures can be helpful if they are introduced sensitively over time, tailored to individual schools and include a variety of approaches. Putting such structures in place are relatively easy management actions in comparison to the complex work of developing a collaborative culture. The former may result in a contrived congeniality (Elbaz, 1991) but does not establish mutual trust or common goals. Creating a collaborative culture, however, is a hard, time consuming and skilful task requiring openness, trust and support. It is an evolutionary and incremental process. Collaboration cannot be imposed by school management; rather, it is a progressively inclusive effort to which individual teachers can commit as and when they are ready to do so and management can facilitate this.

Head teachers have a role in ensuring that the structures to support collaboration are in place. Little (1982) writes of the need for effective leadership, which prioritises staff development, ongoing and continual school improvement and frequent practice-related interactions amongst teachers. Some studies have located evidence of genuinely collaborative schools (Little, *ibid.*; Nias, 1989), and these seem to feature head teachers who work to institute structures, systems and rituals and constantly work on supporting these. Nias also makes the point, however, that schools with collaborative cultures are generally more personal than pedagogic and that teachers have a greater awareness of the importance that the quality of interactions with colleagues has upon their work.

Styles of headship, which appear to coincide with or facilitate collaborative school cultures, are characterised by power-sharing, toleration of different views and respect for difference (Steiner, 1996). They also enable the possibility of healthy and constructive conflict and disagreement, which is largely either encouraged or discouraged by head teachers' examples (Dunham, 1977; Burgess, 1983).

The facilitation of workplace support amongst teacher colleagues, the presence of a strong and assured professional reference group, opportunities to share daily frustrations and successes, to express feelings and to reduce isolation, are all important aims and achievements for head teachers in the pursuit of collaboration (Miller.J., 1996). Unfortunately, it would appear that few head teachers are particularly successful in establishing 'stable, organised and effective means of support and supervision for their staff' (Newton, 1995). Where this does occur, however, it usually links directly with head teachers' ideologies. Head teachers can potentially offer referential, even corrective scripts for staff groups. This is especially the case for newly appointed head teachers (Hartley, 1985).

Research has also provided evidence that head teachers can actively obstruct teachers' involvement in each other's work. Head teachers with paternalistic and dominating leadership styles impose and endorse particular attitudes, beliefs, aims and teaching methods (Coulson, 1976). This also serves to screen out different views. This may take place with the acquiescence of classroom-based teachers:

*The attitudes support the conventional power positions and give them life and meaning.*

Coulson, 1976, p. 154

Coulson proposes three reasons for this acquiescence which may block the development of collegiality. These consist of teachers' personal and individual investment in and satisfaction with *their* pupils' progress, the routine nature of everyday school life, and the impetus to reduce and control tensions and conflict in a densely populated and complex organisation:

*activities involving collective discussion and decision-making reduce predictability and require tolerance of ambiguity and conflict in relationships, and this is not a very comfortable experience, especially in relatively small organisations, where daily and frequent face-to-face contacts require that friction is avoided as far as possible.*

Coulson, 1976, p. 155

Alexander (1984) concurs with Coulson's conclusions, making the additional point that classroom-based teachers are focused upon their relatively small and parochial class horizons

rather than the 'big' whole school picture. He also suggests that the acquiescence to head teacher control may relate to the gender imbalance, which is apparent within the teaching profession in terms of proportions of males and females working as classroom-based teachers and teacher managers.

Teachers' attitudes to authority and the pivotal role of the head teacher with respect to control are realised within workplace attitudes and behaviour. The absence of acknowledgement and support for teachers working together in schools' systems and structures, therefore serves a purpose in terms of maintaining current arrangements, i.e. teacher manager status, role and function.

*in the primary school world from the pupil's point of view, fraternity is the dominant value. For the pursuit of collegiality, a more daunting scenario would be difficult to imagine.*

Lawson, 1979, p. 156

To sum up, research shows that head teachers have a special role in supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work. Through their own workplace interactions with teachers, head teachers face various challenges: of leading and co-ordinating a group of professionals in an environment where 'collective individualism' flourishes (Goodchild, 1989); being an authority figure; dealing with their position of relative isolation from colleagues and professional peers, and achieving the delicate balance between involvement and detachment with the rest of the staff group. In addition to these challenges, they are expected to support their teaching staff's involvement in each other's work. They need to model the qualities likely to support collaboration, set up helpful structures and facilitate the processes involved. Finally, research also suggests that head teachers may benefit from not supporting teachers' involvement with each other, and that they may do this with teachers' implicit support.

### **School Development Initiatives Designed to Develop and Utilise Teachers Working Together**

From existing research on related topics, it would appear that schools which enjoy high levels of collegiality are relatively rare (Little 1982, 1990) and in such cases, collegiality probably occurs informally and as part of the normal course of working in a school (Newberry, 1977).

However, a number of formally arranged initiatives, which actively and overtly utilise the relationships between teachers, have been described. These initiatives are largely untheorised and have not been subject to empirical research.

Psychoanalytical ideas and theory can be located in some accounts (Henry et al., 1983). Henry et al. maintain that the quality of the relationship between colleagues can act as a therapeutic containment for the inevitable experiencing of stress involved in 'people work' (Hawkins, 1990). Through relationships, professionals can be enabled in staying in emotional contact with the reality of themselves and their agendas. Healing, growth and learning can thus be facilitated. Henry et al.'s (1983) account of work done with a group of teachers attending a course at the Portman Trust and Tavistock Clinic, demonstrates how the use of psychoanalytic understandings can help teachers deal with stress and in their search for job satisfaction. The group sessions took the ordinary, inter-personal and intra-personal factors at play as their starting point. Henry et al. (1983) found that the processes and experiences of teacher participants described in the account appeared to be similar to those which pupils seem to undergo. Participants' anxieties about feeling lost and confused, their hopes and fears in relation to themselves, the facilitator, and in relation to other members of the group are described. The facilitator's skill and participants' internal resources, i.e. individual intra- and inter-personal qualities and skills, however, require careful consideration in order to ensure that participants cope with the experience.

A teacher support group account by two educational psychologists, Antrobus & Cullen (1997), describes how eighteen teachers from nine different primary schools met together for support and development purposes. In the group, teachers expressed their feelings and beliefs about the importance of sharing good practice, of mutual workplace support and of the fundamental need for accepting, congruent and empathic relationships between school staff. They saw relationships with colleagues as an antidote to feelings of isolation in the face of the difficult task of teaching and realised that there was an absence of such affected self-perceptions of confidence and competence. The safe, supportive and enabling group experience helped participants to feel cared for, supported and celebrated.

Teachers' professional development service providers have written about the importance of utilising workplace support in helping teachers to draw upon their personal knowledge, beliefs and ability to engage in continuous problem-solving and professional development

(Creese et al., 1997, Clark et al., 1986; Woods, 1990 & 1993; Newton, 1995; Hanks, 1996; Antrobus & Cullen, 1997; Hall et al., 1997; Carnell, 1999; Cordingley et al., 2003). It would appear that such support initiatives are particularly important in a seemingly hostile and alienating educational context (Salmon, 1995), in which teachers' self-esteem is frequently threatened. Direct links from this work have been made in understanding areas such as teachers' construction of personal meaning in their work contexts, the integration of personal and professional selves, and capacity for and openness to development (Salmon, 1995). Development of these qualities is likely to increase teachers' capacities to be involved in each other's work on an everyday basis, thereby creating a benign cycle.

The special education project support initiative offered by Lacey (1996) differed from group support initiatives in that it aimed to train teachers and equip them with skills in order to work effectively with each other. Also, it was based upon research which involved using a model derived from team building in industry. She used an ethnographic approach, collecting material through observations and interviews. Her work highlights the importance of working with the detail of individual teachers' perceptions and attributions in their situated contexts.

It appears that deliberate and systematic planned support is necessary for collaboration between professionals to increase. Johnson and Johnson (1994) have created a theory of social inter-dependence, in which three common interaction styles feature: individualistic, competitive and collaborative. In order to best meet the special educational needs of children in schools, a framework of strategies which supports collaboration is offered. This includes elements such as clarification and shared understanding of purpose and various types of support, i.e. resource, moral and technical. They also recommend that individual schools make adjustments to their timetables, managerial and meeting structures, that skilled teamwork facilitation is provided and that particular task and relationship skills of all personnel are developed. Obviously, a whole school initiative of this scope is based on the premise that collaborative practice does not just happen and needs careful planning, implementation, monitoring and maintenance.

There is also a case to be made for deliberate facilitation of a culture of informal collaboration between teachers, in which regular and frequent interaction is not only possible but is required (Yeomans, 1985). For example, staffrooms should be inviting places in which models of positive social behaviours feature and are openly acknowledged as activities of



high-level status (Yeomans, 1989). Although not specifically focused upon the head teacher, Yeoman's study of teachers suggested a clear role for head teachers in taking positive steps towards achieving this situation through leading by example, such as by arranging frequent, predictable opportunities for the staff to gather as a group, and by creating pleasant physical circumstances and environments in which colleagues could meet and interact.

Regardless of the arrangements put in place to support teachers' involvement with each other, certain individual qualities are particularly helpful and particular roles will be adopted by teachers. Pugach (1995) lists five helpful qualities of teachers who work effectively with other teachers. These include: recognition of the complexity of teaching goals and the related need for a joint effort; a valuing of the creativity generated by working together (Schrage, 1990) and a shared sense of accomplishment; enjoyment of the social nature of joint problem-solving; a valuing of personal growth and intellectual stimulation, and an ability to reflect on practice and a wish for continuous improvement. An individual embodying these qualities is critical and selective in relation to innovation, and is open-minded, whole-hearted and intellectually responsible (Dewey, 1980). Johnson and Pugach (1995) describe four roles that teachers adopt in their involvement with each other. The supportive role is one in which flexibility of approach, according to need, is evident; for example, the teacher will be particularly supportive of a colleague experiencing problems, offering praise to a teacher who is attempting something new, supporting a project that one is not necessarily involved in and encouraging newly qualified teachers. The informative role involves networking, providing direction and advice but being able to accept that this may not necessarily be utilised. The facilitative role is adopted when helping peers to solve problems through such methods as scaffolding, demonstration, direct instruction and peer coaching. Finally, the prescriptive role entails a didactic approach to prescribing a path of action to a colleague. Teachers generally adopt the roles flexibly and in combination with each other.

Initiatives to increase teachers' involvement in each other's work offer individual teachers the chance to examine their own needs for help with and awareness of relationship difficulties, change, support and respite. Furthermore, the systemic idea (Dowling et al., 1994) that individual classroom/teacher difficulties and themes frequently mirror whole school issues, provides key ideas and opportunities for organisational development.



Carnell (1999) also points out that the personal and organisational aspects of teacher development and professional collaboration are inter-linked. She interviewed pupils and teachers about their effective classroom experiences and highlighted the need for a systemic and multi-levelled perspective. She found that individual practitioners' engagement in professional collaboration and the integration of their personal and professional selves were not sufficient in themselves for ensuring development of professional experience. She identified the need for better understanding and active input to organisational factors also.

In his accounts of organised teacher support group work, Newton (1995) highlights the ambitious nature of teacher support initiatives, given the scope and scale of the work. He points out the many interfaces and overlaps between the personal and professional, teaching and learning, and the affective and cognitive aspects of professional work as a teacher. It is therefore inevitable that there are likely to be a number of challenges but these are rarely acknowledged within the literature, the emphasis rather being upon the perceived benefits. One challenge is the perception that admission of difficulties, even when conquered, is perceived as detrimental to the teacher's image and credibility amongst workmates (Cohen, 1981). Such openness and sharing of problems is essential to genuine work with colleagues. Also, it has been found that successes are rarely shared with and discussed with teacher colleagues in the same school setting (Miller.A.,1996). Miller observed this in relation to interventions and approaches developed for children with SEN. Another problem identified within research into the teacher-centred movement, is that groups intended to develop the sharing of professional support between teachers are often used as opportunities for accessing physical resources rather than for discussion, problem-solving and support purposes (McPherson, 1972; Feiman-Nemser, 1986).

One particular example of teacher support work which exemplifies the tendency to omit acknowledgement of the problematic, is the work of Bernstein, Colton and Sparks-Langer (1993). Bernstein et al. are teacher educators who write about the conceptual framework they developed to describe and work with 'teachers' mental processes'. They used a model of the teacher as a reflective decision-maker plus took into account longer-term social and theoretical dimensions. Underpinning the whole framework is the stated but under-analysed importance of the collegial environment. This collegiality is assumed to feature reflective dialogue, trust and safety and to be one in which risks can be taken. Their work comprises an interesting, practice-orientated collection of ideas and resources to support teachers' professionalism, but it raises questions in relation to the individual differences which school

staff groups inevitably feature and about the assumptions regarding what constitutes trust, optimal communication, learning styles and personal agendas.

A relatively small number of initiatives designed to raise awareness of and to develop collaborative practice have taken place in British school contexts. Approaches are generally untheorised and are facilitated by external agencies. They offer a range of supportive, practical and educative functions. The case has also been made for supporting collaboration in a less formal way. Something is known about the particular qualities of teacher group members and the roles within the groups which may be undertaken. Numerous benefits of such initiatives have been described. However, the problematic aspects receive less attention, which is surprising given the complex and ambitious nature of such initiatives. It has been suggested that these initiatives should take organisational aspects into account. The question of whether or not teachers find formal arrangements aimed at enhancing teachers' involvement with each other helpful and/or desirable needs to be explored.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Many studies have explored the culture of teaching and sought to describe teachers' involvement in each other's work. The difficulty in ascertaining the incidence and quality of this phenomenon has been highlighted. A common finding has been the largely individualistic nature of teaching. This has been shown to be evident at all stages of teachers' careers, from the training years onwards, right up to the most experienced of teachers. Where incidental involvement with other teachers occurs, it tends to be of a superficial and social nature rather than related to the job of teaching or to teachers' professional development. It also seems to serve the important function of providing a reference point for teacher identity. Sometimes personal relationships develop. There is some evidence to suggest that teachers' involvement in each other's work can be a source of difficulties and problems. However, there is little cognisance of this within teachers' training or workplaces and, in practice, little consideration is given to providing the necessary conditions which support teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Numerous problems have been associated with the largely individualistic nature of teaching. Teachers' involvement in each other's work has been found to be particularly important to beginning teachers and it offers many benefits to all teachers' work, making the work relatively easier and more effective. Teachers' involvement in each other's work also serves as an important model to pupils in terms of effective inter-personal skills such as communication, respect and management of conflict, all of which impact upon learning and pupil outcomes. Little involvement in each other's work limits how much teachers' experience and how much knowledge can be shared. This has implications for professional development and teacher retention. In terms of the whole school, teachers' involvement in each other's work appears to be crucial to developing and acting upon the shared vision and common goals necessary for school development and the progress of education in general.

Many reasons have been proposed to explain the largely individualistic nature of teaching and the scarcity of teachers' involvement in each other's work and professional development. Research has indicated that teachers' involvement in each other's work arises as a result of person-centred rather than organisational values and that its occurrence relates to individual personal qualities. However, relationships between teachers have been found to transcend these differences. There are numerous explanations for why individual teachers may be opposed to becoming involved in other teachers' work. These include teachers' general wish for autonomy and the fact that teachers' job satisfaction has been found to relate primarily to pupils, self-actualisation and fulfilment. A reluctance to be exposed to the criticism and scrutiny of peers and the difficulties involved in teachers' work, including high levels of stress and the diversity of roles and tasks involved, also contribute. Individualistic cultures may also exist because they are accommodated due to the fact that they afford certain benefits to both individuals and to the school as a whole. Little involvement in other teachers' work may suit individual teachers and support their practice. Teachers' involvement in each other's work occurs only when teachers perceive it as supporting a practical purpose rather than because it sounds like a good idea in theory. Less investment in their colleagues may allow them to offer more to their pupils in relational terms and release more time and energy to meet the demands of their work. Furthermore, solitary practice may aid creativity and reflexivity and therefore, a combination of individualistic and collective teaching styles is likely to enrich the teaching group as a whole.

Organisational factors have also been found to play a significant role in determining the incidence and quality of teachers' involvement in each other's work. Research indicates that the hierarchical school structure mitigates against the professional equality required for the genuine exchange of ideas and views. There is some evidence to suggest that the type of school, i.e. phase, size and pupil population, is influential. School managers play a crucial role in supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work, but which is complicated by their authority status and their own lack of involvement with professional peers. Some studies have suggested that a 'divide and rule' style of school management will, by definition, obstruct teachers' involvement in each other's work and that this may happen with teachers' implicit support. Further evidence that teacher management titles can be unhelpful comes from findings that allocating formal leadership titles to experienced teachers does not support them in the facilitation of teachers' involvement in each other's work. It has also been suggested that whilst policy is instrumental in the incidence of teachers' involvement in each other's work, it may also impede it from occurring naturally. Organised teacher support initiatives designed to increase the incidence of teachers' involvement in each other's work have shown some promise but are untheorised and are not informed by an understanding of whether such formal arrangements are perceived as helpful or desirable for teachers.

The research yields a number of possible ideas in relation to improving teachers' involvement in each other's work. It suggests that school cultures should strive to achieve a balance between individualistic and collective practice. Head teachers can play a key role in modelling the egalitarian qualities that support teachers' involvement in each other's work, setting up helpful structures and facilitating the processes involved. Organised initiatives aimed at supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work should be more informed, take organisational aspects into account and offer teachers an experience in which they have choice, feel safe and relaxed, and there is a practical focus on making their work easier. Finally, there is evidence to suggest that reducing the policy demands for teachers' involvement in each other's work would facilitate its natural occurrence.

### **Research Questions**

The following main research question, which results from my reading of the literature and ongoing immersion in the research context, is:

What are individual teachers' experiences and expectations of teaching and the involvement of other teachers in their work?

Seven further sub-questions are also produced:

- 1 From a teacher's perspective, what differences does involvement with colleagues make to the whole school?
- 2 From a teacher's perspective, what differences does involvement with colleagues make to the well-being of themselves and the pupils?
- 3 Do teachers want and value support for their work with colleagues and, if so, what sort of support?
- 4 Do school managers make a particular contribution to teachers' involvement with each other?
- 5 Do teachers attribute positive and negative effects upon their job satisfaction from involvement with colleagues in their work?
- 6 What obstacles do teachers see in relation to their work with other teachers?
- 7 Are teachers' views on involvement with colleagues related to their roles, school contexts or length of experience?

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Research Methodology**

The aim of my research is to explore teachers' involvement in each other's work, through research which is characterised by an emphasis upon trustworthiness, depth and authenticity. Intrinsic to this is the aim of constructing knowledge which is more informed and sophisticated than any predecessor constructions and includes my own constructions as a researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). I have attempted to use an interactive, dialectical discourse between researcher and participant to generate data. Methodological issues such as consideration of my role and status as researcher, the meaning of reciprocity within the research activity, and the actual relationship between me and participants are considered. A pluralist research approach, reflective of and in keeping with a methodology founded upon diverse paradigms, is core to my research. A variety of different ideas and theories inform the epistemological and ontological basis of this research so as to attempt to develop an original research methodology that is appropriate to the specific field of research.

This is an inductive research project which uses hermeneutical approaches, i.e. the research discoveries at every stage of the research are fundamental to the evolution of the whole study. The process of striving to become more aware and articulate about the rationale and background for my research is recursive, complex, dynamic and multi-levelled. The degree of coherence, presence or absence of patterns, overt researcher participation, developments and tensions within the interview process and material are continually utilised as a means of giving rise to new explanations and understandings (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 and Weedon, 1987).

#### **Researcher Positioning**

Researcher awareness is pivotal to this research undertaking. My background is that of an applied psychologist whose early training was informed largely by the 'traditional' or 'received' view of science's (Woolgar, 1996) method and measurement, in which complex human behaviours and relationships are frequently reduced to independent and dependent variables, i.e. the positivist paradigm. However, my professional practice as an applied psychologist and engagement in postgraduate research within the complex real world



(Robson, 2002) has resulted in a different perspective, and I now view positivist, experimental psychology as reductive and limiting:

*an important and unfortunate consequence of this impoverished, empiricist epistemology and privileging of method (indeed one particular form of method) has been the neglect of a range of alternative conceptual foundations for psychological inquiry together with a prescribing of the types of questions psychology can address and the form in which it is legitimate to ask them.*

Smith et al., 1995b, p. 2

I reject key positivist principles such as the notion of context stripping, the issue of totalising theory, the nomothetic/idiographic divide, and the exclusion of the discovery dimension in research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Entirely politicised accounts of the human world, sociologically expressed and reasoned as 'cultural discourses', risk the omission of the personal and unique. I have frequently experienced feelings of alienation from the context of my research when I have attempted to adopt a masculinised, emotionally aseptic and hyper-rationalised stance in relation to objectivity, order and classification. Such a stance is neither personally congruent nor does it fulfil what I consider to be important ethical and moral obligations within the research endeavour. The quality of the research product may also be compromised, since the complex human state, processes and contexts are unlikely to be conceptualised without an acknowledgement of emotional and relational aspects within the research process:

*Knowledge then becomes a way of carrying us into more fruitful and caring relationships with others, rather than distancing us in the name of objectivity.*

Dewey, 1980, in Jackson, 1995, p.163

This research is an empirical study but not empiricist, which implies a totally rational, objective researcher, untainted by emotional or relational complexities. This position is intrinsic to conducting inductive research in which meaning and findings are created as the investigation proceeds (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), and to eliciting reflexivity from the participants (Somekh, 2003).

The construction of this research is based upon an acknowledgment of my own need to understand and take account of me as researcher, and to utilise the material derived from this



process in a way which Laing (1980) bemoaned an absence of, and a need for, in the study of personal relations:

*The science of personal relations is not assisted by the fact that only a few psychologists are concerned to discover valid personal ways in which person, and relations between persons, can be studied by persons. Many psychologists feel that if psychology is not a branch of natural science it is not a science at all...It is impossible to derive the basic logic of a science of persons from the logic of non-personal sciences. No branch of natural science requires the researcher to make the peculiar type of inferences that are required in a science of persons.*

Laing, 1980, pp. 27-28

The focus of my research encompasses and explores the possibility of personal relationships between teachers. I know from my own experiences that this exists but I want to build upon this awareness through a systematic and logical research approach.

The 'peculiar type of inferences' which Laing (1980) refers to, signify the paramount requirement for recognising and using the researcher's own motivations and processes of learning:

*Researchers cannot help being socially located persons. We inevitably bring our biographies and our subjectivities to every stage of the research process, and this influences the questions we ask and the ways in which we try to find answers...the subjectivity of the observer should not be seen as a regrettable disturbance but as one element in the human interactions that comprise our object of study.*

Cameron et al., 1992, p. 5

Barone (1995) also writes of the need to know about the researcher as well as the researched in order to make sense of the whole research process and its location in time and space:

*Part of the postmodern intellectual attitude is a repudiation of the modernist notion of textual authorship. An author may no longer claim to provide universal truth as a morally or politically neutral translation of reality. The act of authoring is now exposed as arising from within a particular perspective bound to issues of personal meaning, history and power.*

Barone, 1995, p. 65

My stance as a psychologist researching teachers' involvement in each other's work is based upon the notion that the meaning of what teachers express can only be discerned within an interactive and collaborative research framework. Implicit to this ontology is the requirement for me, as researcher, to strive to be aware of and communicative about my own subjectivity. Teaching is a personal endeavour (Sarason, 1982) and my own teaching experience highlights the personal nature of teachers' involvement in each other's work. In terms of my own researcher role and stance, the need for reflexivity and personal congruence is paramount and is overtly drawn upon in the interviews due to the fact that I use my own professional contacts with teachers to gain access.

My personal motivations for carrying out this research consist of what Thomas (2004) describes as an accumulation of ideas formed over time, which have emerged 'out of confluences of circumstantial evidence' from me as a professional 'steeped' within the educational context in which a discourse of assumed and under analysed professional collaboration exists. My experience, reading and intuition, i.e. my professionalism (Thomas, *ibid.*) suggest that relationships between all involved in teaching and learning situations are key, and that these can be risky, often uncomfortable and difficult, but that current discourses within education do not generally reflect this. He describes this phenomenon as 'intelligent noticing of evidence' which has 'emerged outside the intellectual infrastructure from which evidence is expected to materialise'. The intellectual infrastructure, in the case of this research, is the small body of existing empirically-based research.

In my role as educational psychologist, I have substantial experience of adopting the 'rational observer' position and of striking the appropriate balance between objective detachment and subjective involvement in the context. This is necessary for supporting complex school organisations and formulating constructive ways of addressing the issues which are presented, and means that I must aim to avoid enmeshment or over-identification with particular schools and must strive to maintain an applied scientist perspective and position. However, this does not have to compromise the validity of the data, as my immersion in multiple, complex practice contexts ensures that a high degree of authentic, situated and complex data is collected, usually over time and through systematic and multiple data collection methods and sources.

The critical relationship between researcher and researched has, historically, been unacknowledged within research, but it is important to consider as it may give rise to questions about the validity of the research. It could be argued in this research that teachers might produce rehearsed and 'sanitised' versions of their experiences and viewpoints for my benefit, as I was a visitor to their schools and had LEA officer status. However, prior to the start of data collection, I tried to address this possibility by engaging in a great deal of preparatory discussion with participants, explaining and describing the research idea, the uncommissioned and independent nature of the research, my personal motivations for doing it and also by providing written details of the project. Furthermore, the participants gave their time voluntarily and every single interviewee expressed an interest in the subject being researched. I also sent transcripts of raw data to participants very soon after their interviews, and ensured that they could add, amend or even withdraw material.

My researcher position challenges the positivist model of detached and 'objective' researcher, I see it as necessary to own and use my own partiality, vested interest in and personal connection with the research topic. Within this relationship, the emotional realm and my own gender are key and my view of the world and of the research enterprise reflects this. For me, gender is a central and organising social construct and therefore influences my research (Gergen, 1994 & Burr, 1995) and in so doing contributes to the development of theoretical knowledge and the possibility of generalisation.

### **Foucauldian and Feminist Theory Influences on the Research**

The French philosophical traditions of structuralism and post-structuralism (Foucault, 1972) highlight the connections between power and knowledge as expressed within everyday discourse. Research on complex social phenomena, such as identity, personal and social change (Weedon, 1987; Holloway, 1989 and 2006; Walkerdine, 1990; Parker, 1992 and Burr, 1995) utilise these ideas and are highly relevant to my research.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the position held by psychology in contemporary society is actually a mechanism for social control but, at the same time, represents itself as illuminatory and liberatory (Burr, 1995). Psychology's preoccupation with and reliance upon standardised assessment techniques and instruments is a case in point:

*The history of psychology is littered with such products: intelligence tests, personality inventories, tests of masculinity, femininity and androgyny, child development tests, measurements of attitudes and beliefs and so on. All this information about ourselves constitutes, from a Foucauldian perspective, the production of knowledges which can be used to control people while making it appear as though it is in their own interests, and with the stamp of 'science' to give such knowledges authority.*

Burr, 1995, p. 68

Further development of ideas about power and its relation to discourse suggests that power is more diffuse and permeable (Davies, 1992; Walkerdine, 1990). Nevertheless, the relationship between discourse content and process, legitimacy and power are key and therefore it is essential that a clarity and understanding of the elements, factors and processes involved are all subject to scrutiny.

Questions such as: 'Who knows what?', 'Who knows about whom?', 'How did the question arise'? (Hey, 2000) and 'How is knowledge legitimised?' are key to work undertaken from a researcher position which draws upon feminist research theory. According to this perspective, the knowledge in common currency at this time in the Western world is very much a knowledge structured according to male norms, values and existing systems. Dorothy Smith's (1988) critique of sociology as an essentially male science of society does not just infer a study of men in society but is an exposure of men's power to create and express the world from a masculinist point of view. Smith goes further to claim that all 'scientific' knowledge is gendered and partial. She relates the present day rationality and positivist epistemological basis of science to having developed from Enlightenment thinking and views of science in which men engaged in the quest for universal truths and laws, intellectual self-realisation and the belief in a direct link between reason, objectivity and the generation of reliable and universal knowledge. Developing this idea yet further, Smith claims that the basis for such thought and 'logic' is rooted in a series of dualisms which lead inevitably to the male/female divide, in which each is seen as inherently separate, unconnected and is intrinsically devaluing of the feminine, of context-specific knowledge and of practice as opposed to abstract knowledge and theory. The emotional experience and reality of individuals is an inevitable casualty within such thinking and as one of the earliest feminist writers, Simone de Beauvoir (1949), wrote, is fundamental to the epistemological roots of contemporary discourses about the relationship between gender and emotion.

Foucault's work and post-structuralist stance has highlighted the need to relinquish the attempt to produce a meta-analysis of the world in which masculinist, western, middle-class discourses dominate all other dialogue. My research represents an attempt to engage in alternative knowledge production (Ussher, 1989) arising from inviting some different discourses about teachers' involvement in each other's work.

My researcher position has been conceptualised as one which supports the opportunity for participants to discuss emotion and relationship, should they wish to do so. As such, I have rejected a hyper-rationalised and mechanical approach to the research, as being an inadequate and impoverished position to take as a researcher. Such a position is akin to that which Bochner writes of in relation to sociology generally:

*it narrows the scope of sociology, refusing any moral or ethical role for sociology, that could weaken or interfere with its methodological purity.*

Bochner, 2001, p. 139

I consider that Bochner's criticisms might just as easily be made of defenders of epistemologically objective psychology, whose rationalisation includes no acknowledgement of the researcher's own humanity, i.e. emotional and relational aspects of the self. I also agree with his view that this '*opposition to emotionality*' is a disguised gender conflict and not simply a methodological dispute:

*a war waged ceaselessly by academic intellectuals against feeling, against women, against what is personal. To ridicule the emotional is akin to looking down on women, with whom feelings are associated, and on the activities with which women are associated.*

Tompkins, 1987, p. 178

The problematic nature of intimacy and the invisibility of relational and emotional aspects of human interaction may well be a manifestation of a largely masculine ideology of autonomy, rationality and domination (Hartsock, 1983) reflected at institutional and societal levels.

However, Smith, D. (1999), in her analysis of scores of articles in leading newspapers over the last four years, highlights the increasingly overt acknowledgement of emotion, of the

individual's emotion, or emotional reactions of professionals within contemporary public discourse:

*The change in language and the reprofiling of emotion in the public domain.*

Smith, D.1999, p. 114

Arlie Hothschild (1983) suggests that this increased coverage and acknowledgement of professionals' feelings does not necessarily reflect an increased valuing of emotion. Hothschild takes an overtly political and ideological stance in her writing about the work of nurses and suggests that exploitation, commercialisation and politicisation of individuals' inner states may serve to maintain the masculinist status quo (Lloyd-Smith, 1999). Teachers are increasingly required to educate the whole child and, as such, may be similarly viewed as nurses are perceived to be members of the caring professions. This would be manifest in greater emphasis being placed upon emotion and relationships in education and, indeed, this does seem to be the case, for example, with the DfES' Primary National Strategy Guidance: 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (2004).

Through an examination of teachers' views on their involvement in each other's work, I aim to provide an opportunity for teachers to share their emotional and relational realities, should they choose to do so. By going beyond the rhetoric of collaboration, co-operation and collegiality in schools and by talking to individual teachers, I aim to explore the possibility of the 'masculinised hijacking of relationship in the workplace' that Hothschild (1983) describes.

Through exploration of the discourses in which teachers' work together as a topic, I am open to the possibility that emotion and relationships may be themes, and I attempt to understand which and whose voices, questions and agendas are prominent and which are absent. To examine relationships and emotion within the research is in itself a feminist issue as there does appear to be some support from researchers from both positivist and social constructionist positions that relationship per se is a female concern as opposed to a competitive individualistic enterprise (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky et al., 1986; Lawthom and Burman, 1999; Unger and Crawford, 1996).



In my research of teachers' views on their involvement with each other within the school as a social institution, I aim to understand through talking with individual teachers, whether or not a gendered aspect of views on the involvement of teachers in each other's work is evident and whether or not this is problematic for teachers. I anticipate that comparison between the relatively 'female populated' primary school (Miller, J., 1996) context and the secondary school context, may provide a better understanding of this area. However, I am also aware that the frequently male management and female workforce aspect of primary schools is another dynamic to take into account.

Although there is an absence of one single feminist perspective or theoretical model, certain (not necessarily discreet) aspects of the research approach require consideration (Maynard et al., 1995), i.e. the requirement to use lived experience, personal narrative, the importance of a reflexive researcher stance and a sensitivity to gender as a major and organising social construct within the social world. I deliberately integrate a range of teachers' experiences, both male and female, at every level of the research. I use personal and narrative approaches in an attempt to avoid an emphasis upon methodological purity at the expense of engagement with and understanding of participants' meaning-making (Broyard, 1992) and, in the research process, I attempt to share power and ownership with participants through using their articulation of their experiences and through inviting their comments on the interview data.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The ongoing discourse within the research community about the importance of validity and reliability or their relative importance in the quantitative versus qualitative debate, have commanded considerable print-space and academic energy e.g. (Reinharz, 1983). This is a piece of qualitative research, in which I emphasise validity in order to ensure authenticity, depth of understanding and richness of data. This differs from the traditional positivist model of research in the field of human sciences, in which the researcher is a rational observer of social reality. In addition, the idea that the knowledge produced is generalisable and is purely technical and not connected to policy, politics and values (Giddens, 1974) is rejected. The framework underpinning this study therefore is primarily social constructionist. The question of whether or not it is possible to retain and incorporate a rigorous, theoretically grounded and 'scientific' stance from a social constructionist position can be addressed through being open to the idea that:



*We need to be aware of the limits and possibilities both of quantification and of interpretation, combining the strengths of diverse paradigms to maximise constructive interchange and collaborative creativity.*

Lunt, 1999, p. 494

In addition to social constructionism ideas from phenomenology, psychodynamic, personal construct and grounded theory are also used.

### **Social Constructionism**

The main theoretical position adopted within this study is social constructionism. My stance as a researcher emphasises the notion that how I ‘construct’ the world and the knowledge base on which I draw are intrinsically inter-linked and inform and shape the research process and resulting outcomes. My study, being very much about the social realities experienced by and between teachers, seeks to illuminate and communicate some of the complexity and richness of these human interactions. In engaging openly and transparently with teachers via interview ‘conversations’, I demonstrate my ontological basis for research, i.e. that the world or reality is available through dialectical processes. In keeping with social constructionist theory, I acknowledge that the study’s findings will reflect my particular researcher stance and self as well as the professional relationship between me and the interviewee. In my intentional stance as an overtly reflexive and reflective researcher, I position me as an active agent of reality construction, whose use of symbolic form is neither a passive nor incidental act (Harré, 1998).

A key idea which underpins and informs the research methodology I adopt is that of the concept of language as relational (Gergen, 1994). My research is grounded in a social constructionist framework, in which my reflective researcher position is central and facilitative of empiricism *and* moral deliberation. I also view it as instrumental in my application of a dynamic psychology, in which the view of a selfhood capable of reflecting and giving meaning to its own positioning in time and space and process of development is key. I maintain that an ongoing dialogue between readers and me, as the author of this research, is more achievable than if I were to adopt the positivist conception of a researcher that is ‘objective’, fixed and removed from my field of research (Blumenthal, 1999).

In this study, language is viewed as key to a better understanding of the social realities perceived by the participants in my study. I subscribe to the idea that within the social world, there is no single, essential 'truth'; rather, there are multiple, shifting and complex notions of 'truth', which are frequently contradictory and paradoxical and located within individuals' narratives and dialogue. The research methodology incorporates symbolic interactionist ideas (Mead, 1934) which emphasise social representation between and amongst individuals. The interpretation of my own and participants' meaning-making and communication of ideas forms the framework underpinning this research.

Within social constructionist theory, conceptions of truth and morality are constantly changing and are subject to continual re-construction through dialogue. This theoretical stance does not operate as a totalising force, closing down dialogue, but rather recognises all propositional reality as local, political and provisional. In this way, further interaction around what is held to be important is ensured and it allows regularities of research outcomes, non-reified knowledge production and culturally and historically specific and fuller research.

The relational view of language originally arises from Wittgenstein's (1953) suggestion that language acquires its meaning not from a referential basis of the world as it is, fixed and absolute, but by its use in social practices, i.e. the relationships in which we participate. This links with the notion of Foucault (1972), namely that scientific language limited to measurement, reliability and value-free neutral knowledge has been reflective of existing power structures and knowledge bases. The circularity of the positivist or traditionally 'scientific' argument, which claims to represent reality and truth, uses the same language that gives rise to its justifications. By deliberately and self-consciously preceding a more personal language and research emphasis, i.e. acknowledging emotional and relational aspects, I try to expand the ongoing question, interaction and development of the scientific enquiry process.

The social constructionist framework adopted in this study, whilst acknowledging the importance of language, also emphasises the need to be aware of that which is not said within the social and political context. This study aims to reveal the *'reality outside of the text'* (Parker, 1992) in what is written about what teachers should or do think about involvement with colleagues. Extending ontological status to all aspects of the physical and social

environment in which humans act has major implications for what and how change can be affected and necessitates the inclusion of moral and political dimensions:

*In a capitalist economy, for example, industrial workers are physically located for much of the time together with others, and certain types of collective action make sense. In patriarchal societies in the West, women are physically located in homes for much of the time and certain types of collective action do not make sense. In a world organised by structures of imperialism, victims outside and inside the industrial centres can only act, accept or resist, in particular ways.*

Parker, 1992, p. 36

Classroom-based teachers, like women and industrial workers in the example above, are positioned and organised by the structures in which they work. The contemporary discourses of fraternity, collegiality and co-operation have arisen within an education system in which schools are hierarchically structured and competitive places. Individuals at the highest points, with the most professional statuses, also have the most voice and power (Cortis, 1977). The autocratic system of school leadership and management is based upon clear power differentials (Hargreaves, 1972). These produce and organise dialogue and ideology. It is possible that alternative discourses, i.e. those promoting the benefits of independent and solitary practice may, because they are different from the dominant discourses arising from the autocratic structures of schools, be absent or only present in some hard to discern, heavily camouflaged and coded way. Classroom-based teachers are dependent upon the head teacher or school management for many things, e.g. resources, promotion, references and favours (Hargreaves, 1972). For this reason, it is improbable that they will risk displeasing or challenging them. Raising involvement with colleagues as anything other than a necessary and straightforward 'good' is therefore unlikely. My research enquiry offers an opportunity for a range of teachers, i.e. classroom-based, management and outside of schools, to voice alternative discourses and to problematise this area and thus support developing a deeper understanding.

My researcher stance, in which individual narrative, heterogeneity, context specific knowledge and embodied experience are privileged, poses problems in terms of locating themes and patterns which might apply and generalise to other, similarly positioned individuals in a wider and broader context (Kitzinger, 1992). The extreme relativist position

of no reality outside of multiple discourses, is not one to which I subscribe. My reading and lived experience in relation to the research topic suggest that some broad generalisations are possible from which to understand and support individual, situated experiences. By talking to a number of different teachers from different contexts over time, I aim to identify broad themes and from this to clarify what teachers themselves experience and want.

### **Psychodynamic Ideas**

Ideas from psychodynamic theory and practice, relating to the emotional aspects of individuals, groups and organisations and their development, have influenced my approach to the research. I have found it useful to draw upon the idea that individuals create and inhabit unique, private and usually secret places formed from their thoughts, fantasies and rationalisations. This model is *dynamic* in that individuals' lives are subject to and shaped by their earliest experiences and all subsequent experience, on an ongoing, constantly evolving basis. The person's external and observable behaviours and interactions with others provide some clues about the nature of their private self and possibilities for change, but can only be accessed via their own self-description and narrative guided by the therapeutic process (Freud, 1973; Lacan, 1977).

Within psychodynamic theory, the emotional interaction of the psychotherapeutic relationship is the very material from which the therapist and client learn and develop (Kvale, 1996; Holloway, 1989). This type of professional practice is one with which I am familiar due to my work as an educational psychologist, and there are parallels with the interaction between me as researcher and the research participants. Such use of the researcher's personal material is reminiscent of the work of family therapists such as Bowen, Keller and Protinsky (Barker, 1992).

*The 'educational encounter' is a two-way process with a relational character, the researcher/teacher, being affected as well as the researched [or learner].*

Ohlsson, 2002, p. 105

The core idea within psychodynamic theory, of individuals having essential selves (apparent as the unconscious) which exist in their own right, poses problems to research framed as social constructionist. According to social constructionist theory, these individual selves are

shaped by and influenced by the interactional forces and elements of larger, structural societal and contextual factors, and a relativist positioning regarding identity and personhood is emphasised:

*we are fundamentally multiplicitous; we are populated and saturated by the views and opinions of others.*

Gergen, 1994, in Abma, 2000, p. 147

The conceptualisation of emotion is another challenge to reconciling social constructionist and psychodynamic perspectives. Core to psychodynamic theory is the notion that emotion is essentially knowable and discernible and reflective of the essential self. Social constructionism, on the other hand, views the language and dialectical elements of communication about emotions as being of primary importance because of the way in which it illuminates the larger social context. In social constructionist theory, the Cartesian dichotomy of mental versus physical and reason versus emotion is seen as an organising and limiting idea:

*The very fact of the existence of the mental-physical dichotomy in our language and concepts spawns a particular kind of understanding of human beings, their experience and potentialities.*

Burr, 1995, p. 35

Feminist researchers such as Chodorow (1978) and Holloway (1989, 2006), however, do achieve some reconciliation between the essentialism of psychodynamic theory and the relativism of social constructionism, through an emphasis upon the importance and centrality of the researcher's positioning and the researcher's self in bridging theory and experience. The use of ideas from feminist theory in the construction of my researcher positioning enables the integration of psychodynamic and social constructionist theoretical perspectives in this study.

## **Personal Construct Theory**

Another important part of the theoretical framework informing my research approach is personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1991; See End-Note 1). This theory and research approach arises from psychodynamic ideas and also draws upon symbolic interactionism and social constructionism. In this model, there is a recognition of individuality, agency and developmental processes, but it is positioned within a larger framework in which contextual structures and forces are acknowledged. Salmon's (1995) research on teachers' meaning-making and identity is an example of research utilising personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1991). She makes many links with teachers' involvement with each other, finding that sociality and commonality are core to teachers' meaning-making and identity.

My professional practice and research approach, informed by psychodynamic theory and feminist theory, emphasises the relational and emotional aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work. Personal construct theory offers a number of techniques that support exploration of these aspects, some of which are used in this study. Repertory grid instruments (Bannister, 1999), commonly used in Personal Construct Psychology, are not used because this rather rigid and quantitative approach and methodology could obstruct my efforts to stay true to the Kellyian principle of being open and flexible in relation to interviewees' processes. In other words, I aim for the questions to be formulated spontaneously during interviews rather than organised to fit a specific and fixed framework.

## **Grounded Theory**

I employ grounded theory in order to precedent the role of experience and to address some of the problematic aspects of using an inductive approach to explore teachers' rich, social complexities. In this way, I aim to ensure that the research is theoretically grounded, adds more than description alone and incorporates a systematic analysis of experience and understanding. I have started with a particular area of interest and then built a theoretical analysis of what I have found to be relevant to the particular individuals who have shared their workplace experiences throughout the study (Charmaz, 1995).

## **Ideas from Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is the term used to describe a particular method of enquiry developed by Husserl (1970), which offers an alternative philosophy of science to the positivist, hypothetico- deductive position. Phenomenology thematises consciousness and all that we become aware of by means of consciousness. In addition, it is a method for accessing all that consciousness pertains to. A phenomenological approach to research demands that the researcher commence by understanding and making overt her/his own conscious and intellectual processes. Research framed within a social constructionist paradigm embraces phenomenological ideas in that the researcher's own subjectivity and reflexivity are topics for close study. The researcher's meaning-making in relation to the research endeavour and to themselves as researcher must be unveiled and justified.

As a psychologist-researcher, I have an interest in learning about and understanding better how people themselves make sense of their lived experience. Extending this idea requires me to adopt a meta-position to the research process. In a sense, I have to step outside of my role of researcher, view both content and processes involved and how I make sense of my own sense-making. The philosophical basis of phenomenological theory is therefore congruent with the research topic, theory and approach.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are an important aspect of the research because:

*The age of value-free inquiry for the human disciplines is over, and researchers now struggle to develop situational and trans-situational ethics that apply to any research act.*

Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 24.



My own process within the research and my adoption of a conscious reflexivity and openness in relation to this are important manifestations of the ethical stance I adopt (Punch, 1989; Clarke, 1975). I concur with the idea that:

*At the situational and interactional level, then, it may be unavoidable that there is a degree of impression management, manipulation, concealment, economy with the truth, and even deception.*

But that:

*we have to accept much of this as being in good faith.*

Punch in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 180

My priority is to maintain an openness and a conscious awareness of what I am doing within the context of the research as a whole, which is unquestionably ethical in intent, i.e. to further knowledge and understanding. This is an ethical intent to engage in knowledge production and better understanding, as well as being an argument for a thoroughly grounded and argued epistemological and ontological basis for research.

My ethical stance as a researcher incorporates my own emotional and relational response and experience and addresses gender issues. The researcher stance I have adopted draws heavily upon feminist research ideas (Roberts, 1981) and is one, therefore, which privileges reflexivity, honesty and transparency. The entire research process and methodology for this study is intended to continually enact this conscious ethical integrity (Gubrium, et al., 1989).

As a practising chartered educational psychologist, I am bound by the ethical principles and guidelines contained within the 'Code of Conduct' produced by The British Psychological Society and the 'Professional Practice Guidelines' (Division of Child and Educational Psychology, British Psychological Society, 2002). These relate to consent, confidentiality and personal conduct in general, but are supplemented by sections on deception, debriefing, risk and implementation regarding research pursuits specifically. I must value integrity and impartiality, work in a way which is respectful of persons and of evidence, is in the best interests of the recipients of my services and give of the highest quality possible. My personal conduct as a professional must reflect this and should be exercised in a way which

maintains and protects the rights and dignity of my clients. I also need to be very clear about the limits and boundaries of my role as a psychologist.

### **Ethical Issues Particular to this Research**

The main areas of ethical concern within this study include issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality of data. These key ethical issues are held in mind whilst attempting to explore teachers' work with other teachers, in a way that ensures the production of data that is authentic, rich and relevant. It is a difficult balance to achieve, as I know that much of the material is necessarily of a personal and, ordinarily, private nature, and some of which, if identifiable, could have negative and even harmful consequences for participants. The anonymity and confidentiality measures I have adopted go some way to countering this but, at the same time, I have to trust participants' own judgment about what they choose to tell me. My overall aim is to manifest a researcher stance which is transparent and open, and I strive to ensure that participants' judgments should be of an informed nature.

Another issue for consideration is that of my involvement with participants, both as a researcher and school's educational psychologist. In this study I have deliberately utilised my own professional relationships as an entry point and access mechanism and, in this way, I recognise what Punch (*ibid.*) says about the researcher's personal involvement with 'subjects' in the field, which continuously poses moral and ethical dilemmas. To a large extent I am reliant upon the work I have engaged in for a number of years prior to starting the study as an educational psychologist, in which I continually attempt to be clear about the limits of my professional role and also the principles that guide my professional practice, e.g. protecting the well-being of clients and professional colleagues. I am hopeful that such a basis, developed over time, in the professional relationships which I utilise for the study, is a good, trustworthy and honest one.

The power-base differences between me and participants presents another ethical consideration. The educational psychologist role does, in reality, continually raise questions and issues about inequality of power and status. I am aware that, due to my potentially evaluative function in relation to teachers' professional competency as a psychologist who also has an LEA officer role, the quality and integrity of professional relationships between me (as educational psychologist) and teachers may be affected. However, this cannot be

avoided. The questions raised about the effects of different roles upon relationships between professionals are in fact important, and are central to my research.

In my professional practice I aim to work with respect, openness and transparency as much as possible and consider that this goes a long way towards resolving differential power issues. As a researcher whose 'world view' is through a social constructionist lens, I am most comfortable with and aim to adopt a 'negotiation' approach to evaluation', in which all feedback is seen as supportive of ongoing development processes over time and where:

*Findings are not reduced to a set of conclusions and recommendations but rather are presented in the form of an agenda for "negotiation" in which various stakeholders are approached as partners rather than information givers.*

Abma, 2000, p. 135

The teacher participants are voluntarily involved in this study and are informed as far as possible about the nature of the research scope. I view the participants as partners in the enterprise and therefore must exercise maximum honesty and openness, or risk a serious loss of authenticity and relevance to the research enterprise as a whole:

*Deception is worse than useless to a non-conventional evaluator; it is destructive of the effort's ultimate intent.*

Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 122

At the same time, however, it is worth noting what Punch (1989) has to say about informed consent when he makes the point that the professional code of conduct which requires the principle of informed consent is important to bear in mind at the beginning of a study, but that some aspects of the research, as it develops, cannot be made explicit as this could serve to sensitise participants from whom data then becomes less authentic, defended or even withheld.

One more ethical consideration is the use of camouflaged questions. In my research, I have encountered a certain reluctance on the part of teachers to talk in any great depth about their involvement with other teachers, which they perceive to be negative or inherently conflictual. I have therefore quite deliberately 'camouflaged' some of my questioning in this area within other questions, for example:

*Describe your relationships with: a) Pupils, b) Other teachers.*

*7a) How would you describe the 'ideal' colleague relationship?*

*7b) How would you describe the 'nightmare' colleague relationship?*

Although I can see this aspect of the study as being central in organising its future development, I know, at a commonsense level, that to highlight this might threaten and reduce future research opportunities, particularly with individuals in powerful and gate-keeping positions, e.g. head teachers and LEA officers.

This could be construed as deceptive but, taken within the context of the research as a whole – which I believe is guided by the ethically principled stance of wishing to illuminate and improve teachers' work with other teachers, and the social world in which teachers operate – it is not unethical. In fact, it would be unethical, I consider, to not research this area, having embarked upon the inquiry.

## **Conclusion**

In my research I attempt to achieve a high degree of transparency. I place great value on reciprocity within the research process between me, the researcher, and the researched. The idea of participants as 'objects' for study who are 'blind' or 'naive' to the research focus and agenda has no ethical or useful place in the research enterprise.

I consider that it is vital for me to overtly state the benefits of the research process for the participants. In specific terms, this has meant talking about my own experiences of working with colleagues and also my observations and experiences of many teachers within my psychologist role. By modelling an openness and aspiring to be accepting, congruent and empathic, I believe there is a greater likelihood of producing high quality, authentic data.

An interactive researcher and participant relationship is employed within the interviews, and data is elicited from text generated by this discourse. I consider methodological issues such as the role and status of me as researcher, the meaning of reciprocity within the research activity, and the actual relationship between me and participants. I also view the role of the interviewer's feelings, reactions and responses within the interview as acting as a reflection

of important emotional material and constituting vital data in itself. The ambience, contradiction, gaps, paradoxes and human elements are essential aspects of the process of making sense out of the multiple narratives offered by talking to many, differently positioned individual teachers. Being aware of and using my researcher self as a research tool and incorporating my evolving reflexivity into the research process is not entirely unproblematic. In overtly acting upon my own experience as a catalyst for the research which shapes the research agenda, the questions and the method of enquiry and analysis, there is a necessity to articulate the liminality of the researcher position. My use of free association and spontaneous imagery at certain points within the data analysis stages (which draws upon psychodynamic ideas), illustrates this liminality most acutely. However, the gains, in terms of moving the research on, in exercising creativity and utilising emotionally authentic material, are embraced within an overall research framework which is mindful of validity and theoretically grounded method.

Reconciliation of micro- and macro-level factors, elements and processes is an important aspect of the research I am engaged in, and has shaped the form and direction that my inductive study has taken. Starting from an attempt to engage with, listen to and gain a better understanding of individual teachers, where my use of some aspects of psychodynamic ideas is key, I see some possibilities for understanding and articulating the supportive and obstructive features of the structures and systems in which teachers work together.

In my research I seek to understand, in the first instance, by listening to and trying to make sense of individuals' oral accounts of their experiences. The purpose, agenda and format of my research is overt and transparent and I consciously invite interviewees to engage with me in thinking about the question areas. My use of the partly structured, generally open interview is an approach which is phenomenological in that it draws upon subjective and personal experience and is recognisant of thinking, reflective and dynamic individuals. In the interview interaction, I seek to understand better, a range and variety of people, their situations and their processes of reflection and engagement with the research, which is vital.

I concur with the notion of one identity, one self and one story as being fundamentally flawed. I substitute the alternative model of what it means to be a person as a reflection of discourse at any one particular time in which personal and political agendas are acted out, justified and given expression. Of fundamental importance is the idea that language is a

vehicle for expression, creation and maintenance of self and its enactment in social contexts and that the perception of others is necessary to identity creation.

This social phenomenological view of personhood or self as multiple and dynamic, rather than unitary and static, is complex and often contradictory rather than coherent and consistent (Blumenthal, 1999, Bochner, 2001, Husserl, 1970). It is rooted in an individual's ongoing interaction and sense-making with others and is most apparent in the arena of conflict.

Selfhood is viewed as a metaphysical link with other human beings which is inherently conflictual and ambiguous. In my study I question the common and currently prevalent discourses of collegiality, collaboration and co-operation in relation to teachers' involvement in each other's work. Another aspect of this view of self is the notion of a continual process of construction and deconstruction and, in this process, three elements in particular are key: relationship, communication and time. This research project has enacted these elements in its quest (over a number of years) to reveal the complexity of individual teachers' views and experiences and the search for themes or patterns.

## CHAPTER 4

### Research Methods

This chapter includes a description of the research approach, justification of the choice of methods and an overview of the development of the entire research project, which comprises three studies. Clarification of the aims and sample groups of each study and an account of the access issues are provided. The research method and the approach taken to data analysis (Cohen et al., 2000) are described.

#### Approach to the Research

The study sought to portray the multiple realities of a wide range of participants located in their *particular* situations. It was my intention to elicit participants' views and perceptions and, at the same time, identify issues as they unfolded in the course of the research. I acknowledged, sought and welcomed the inherent subjectivity, honesty, authenticity and complexity of the entire research process and components. I expected the design and analysis of the research to be of a formative and emergent nature, which would change over the course of the entire project.

A guiding principle was to work in as collaborative a manner as possible with participants. I invited participants to collaborate with me by first contributing data from their own experience in a fairly loose and open interview and then contributing further after seeing the raw transcript data. I wanted to invite teachers to be more aware and reflective in describing their work with other teachers. I thought that it was unlikely that they would contribute openly, fully and authentically unless I adopted and made explicit my position in relation to how I viewed their input, i.e. as active participants rather than as passive subjects. It was my aim to model an ideology based upon respect, value and equal worth between me, the researcher, and the researched.

#### Choosing a Research Method

I considered a range of methods which had been used in other, related studies about teachers. These included oral and written life history accounts (Miller J, 1996 and Sikes, 1997), semi-



structured and open interviews (Banister et al., 1994; Flick, 1998; Nias, 1995), questionnaires (Hing Fung Tsui, 1995; Johnson, 1990) observation (Croll, 1986), work-shadowing, group discussion and case studies (Nias, 1987) and diary accounts (Pollard, 1985).

I rejected a questionnaire approach because I considered the questions would be too closed to elicit the rich individual perspectives-based data I was seeking. Observation, diary accounts, and life history accounts were discarded as being too costly in terms of time and too dependent upon the extensive goodwill and availability of participants. Group interviews posed too many access and practical obstacles.

For practical, ethical and epistemological reasons, I decided to choose individual interviews. The necessarily volitional and exploratory nature of the enquiry meant that asking questions was central to the methods used in this study of individual viewpoints on a topic about which relatively little research had previously been done.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews**

#### **Advantages**

Use of interviews offered four main advantages (Banister et al., 1994). Firstly, the interview situation allowed me to acknowledge and utilise the essentially subjective nature of participants' beliefs and attributions. I was also able to answer participants' specific questions about the research and to stress the importance of their authentic experience and viewpoint. I could refer to my social constructionist framework in which the existence of multiple individual social realities was central to the research.

Secondly, the complex issues, apparent in all of the interviews, could be explored flexibly and in more depth than a closed question format such as that often used in a questionnaire approach. In this way, material that could not be anticipated was more likely to be elicited:

*To ask a question is to invite a reply*

and

*to ask a question is to invite the unexpected.*

Kelly, 1955), p. 21 & p. 8

Frequently, participants held contradictory and inconsistent views, which were as much a reflection of the complex 'real world' (Smith, 1995a) context of the research as that personally seen by the individual interviewee. The research process itself involved learning from the participants' sense-making and the patterns and themes inherent in this contributed a great deal.

Thirdly, the interview approach allowed me to model and utilise the material derived from a reflexive approach. This was made possible through encouraging and allowing time for reflection and processing of the material voiced during interviews, through a conversational interviewing approach and through participant verification of transcripts.

Fourthly, the use of interviewing highlighted issues of power, 'voice' and control, which existed between me as the researcher and the interviewees. Aspects of class, race, gender and age, amongst other factors, present in our interactions all constituted rich and valuable information which was included in the research account and required me to be continually aware and self-reflexive (Oakley, 1980).

### **Disadvantages**

Cohen and Manion (2000) write of the difficulties which the semi-structured interview approach can present in terms of maximising validity, as the interviewer has to relinquish some control of the elements involved. However, they also cite Kitwood (1977) in arguing that the costs to inter-personal interaction and the general comfort levels between participant and interviewer is too high to justify a detached, closed and structured interview format.

The disadvantages of using interviews largely relate to the fact that they rely heavily upon the inter-personal and communication abilities and skills of the interviewer. However, as an applied psychologist, with a knowledge of theory and professional practice relating to these

areas, plus extensive experience of interviewing and consultation, I did not find this to be a particular issue.

A further problem associated with the use of interviews is that the interview schedule cannot be replicated exactly in every interview. Researcher/researched interaction effects and subjectivity and bias in general are aspects which have to be acknowledged and accounted for. However, in my phenomenological study (Husserl, 1970), my reflections on this phenomenon were utilised and this material was framed as a strength and an additional data source.

Power and control problems are another potential difficulty that can arise in conducting research interviews (Cannell and Kahn, 1968) because, in the very formulation of questions and interview schedules, the researcher imposes their construction of the world and the nature of the issues to be explored and illuminated. However, I attempted to address this issue by adopting a humanistically principled (Rogers, 1983) and a consciously reflexive stance (Schon, 1983), and aimed to make my own researcher background and positioning overt to participants at all times. I tried to ensure an 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas, 1979, 1984), in which understanding, honesty, genuineness and legitimacy were key. In my attempts to ensure an equitable dialogue rather than one where I was positioned as the 'knower' (Billington, 1995) or 'repository of things to be known', I was trying to override the likelihood that participants would simply recite received and well-practised official scripts and sense-making dialogues. What I hoped for was that participants would be able to offer me a chance to reveal and understand better the influences, including the possibly 'repressive forces' which 'systematically distort' communication (Habermas, 1979, 1984). I explained to participants that I was personally motivated to conduct this research as a way of understanding some of the issues which I had experienced as a teacher before becoming an EP and also because of direct work with teachers in my present professional role. I made it clear that I was not commissioned by the local authority or any other body and that anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. I also stressed the fact that all participants would have the final say on which data was included in the research report.

### **Overview of Research Process**

The research consisted of three studies. This research design developed over time in a cumulative manner as a result of each study's findings. The first study, Study 1, was a

scoping exercise in which I interviewed an opportunity, snowball sample of teacher managers and classroom-based teachers. Findings from this study led into a further study, Study 2, using a random sample of deputy head teachers. Study 3 developed from the second study and used an opportunity sample of local authority officers. The diagram titled ‘research design’ in Appendix XVIII illustrates the development and incremental nature of the research and the timescale for this work.

Access issues also determined the development of the research design. As explained in more detail further on, access was only possible through using the opportunities arising in my usual EP work and, therefore, I had to adapt my original plans several times in order to collect sufficient data. The sample groups for each study are summarised in **Table 1**.

<b>Study</b>	<b>Sample size (N)</b>	<b>Sample characteristics</b>
Study 1	36	15 teacher managers 21 classroom-based teachers
Study 2	13	13 deputy head teachers
Study 3	9	9 local authority staff

**Table 1. Sample details for the three studies**

Interviewees for all three studies were accessed through my professional work. The ‘real world’ (Robson, 2002) context of my educational psychologist practice spans many educational settings and was ideal for gaining access to participants. The initial exploration of individual teachers’ ideas, thoughts and experiences in relation to the research topic, provided a contextualised understanding of a range of teachers’ perceptions about their work with colleague teachers within their real world school contexts (Acker, 1991; Handal, 1991).

In approaching potential interviewees, it was necessary to be economical with respect to their time, not personally intrusive and to integrate these approaches into my work as an educational psychologist. In each study potential interviewees were talked with face-to-face and provided with a very clear explanation and description of what would be required. I justified the use of participants’ time in the research through emphasising the ‘interventionist’

aspects of the project, i.e. that by raising awareness and seeking a better understanding of the complex area under investigation, the research could offer ways of supporting teachers and schools.

The samples for each study consisted of groups of highly diverse individuals. For this reason, the interview questions were broad and exploratory in order to capture the complexity of the material provided by respondents. Whilst such diversity within the samples makes it difficult to draw generalisations from the research findings, it enables an in-depth exploration and is likely to yield an authentic variety and range of viewpoints.

### **Aims, Sample and Access Issues for the Three Studies**

#### **Study 1**

This initial study was designed to explore teachers' viewpoints through some wide ranging and open questions. I used a diverse sample group, which included different teachers from a variety of school contexts, holding different roles in their particular schools and with varying amounts of experience. I constructed a semi-structured interview schedule from the literature search and also my own professional experiences. I hoped to clarify the main issues relating to teachers' views on their involvement in each other's work in order to inform the next stage of the research. I also wanted to ascertain whether or not school contexts, length of teaching experience or teacher position had a particular influence upon these views.

Study 1 was constructed essentially as a scoping exercise. The first part of Study 1, hereafter referred to as Study 1A, is comprised entirely of teachers in management roles, i.e. the 15 teacher managers referred to in Table 1. Study 1A, used a 'convenience' sample in that all respondents were relatively easy to 'access', i.e. people with whom I had established working relationships and who, as part of their roles within schools were required to have frequent contact with other teachers, all of whom I worked with at that time as a main grade LEA educational psychologist. My work involved regular weekly visits and/or communication with key staff in a number of special, secondary and primary schools in the authority. Much of the work involved consultations with staff about the additional needs of individual students but issues relating to the school as a whole, especially management of student behaviour, links with parents and carers, special educational needs, classroom practice and staff development and support were also regularly discussed. Discussion about my proposed research took place as part of these professional conversations.

Only one potential interviewee did not agree to become involved in Study 1A. This primary head teacher was only recently appointed at the time of the request for interview and was someone with whom I did not have an established working relationship. My initial request in person and follow-up letter were not refused, but were simply not responded to and I assumed a lack of willingness to participate. On reflection I realised that she was different from the rest of the sample in that she was newly appointed to the LEA and my own interaction was different in that I did not pursue my request for her involvement. However, about a year after the initial request, I did have a conversation, fully informed by that head teacher's knowledge of my research interest, which supported the basic premise that teachers' work together was important and problematic and required more consideration within school systems. The head teacher also told me that she had not felt able to discuss my research topic with me before we had developed a working relationship which felt safe and trustworthy. This revelation supported the view that teachers' work together was a sensitive and potentially difficult topic to research (Hargreaves, 1972).

I conducted fifteen interviews with teachers whose work included management responsibilities. I had direct knowledge of the participants' professional practice and knew that they had frequent involvement with other teachers in their schools as part of their roles. All of the interviews took place between the spring of 1999 and the autumn of 1999.

Because the first study was designed as a scoping exercise and I considered it important to include teachers from a range of different positions, I developed Study 1 and extended the sample to include classroom-based teachers. The second half of Study 1, which I hereafter refer to as Study 1B, was a snowball sample that consisted of twenty-one classroom-based teachers (See Table 1) from the same four school settings as Study 1A. I utilised contacts with participants from Study 1A and asked these individuals to suggest possible classroom-based participants from their four different schools to agree to be interviewed by me.

Access to participants for 1B was far from straightforward and I had to be persistent and flexible in my approaches to possible participants (See Appendices III and IV). I provided an explanatory letter, which outlined the topic of the study and a description of the proposed interview to all potential participants. I made direct contact in person to eighteen of the twenty-one participants. I telephoned eleven of the twenty-one individuals. I asked



participants from Study 1A, i.e. teacher managers, to make a repeated request to ten of the teachers. I also arranged to speak in the staff briefing and to write an entry in the weekly staff bulletin in the targeted secondary school about my research and the need for participants (See Appendix X). My persistence over time, almost a whole academic year between October 1999 and July 2000, was productive in that all twenty-one of the potential participants eventually gave me an interview. It should be noted that the two schools where I had the most difficulties in recruiting interviewees also happened to be the primary school and the secondary school which had failed OFSTED inspection and were in 'Special Measures'. A summary of types of approach to the classroom-based teacher participants of Study 1B is included in the appendices (See Appendix IV). The persistence, time and variety of approaches supported the notion that my enquiry into the topic of teachers' involvement with each other was indeed like trying to explore a 'secret garden' (Hargreaves, 1972). The participants for Study 1A came from four different school settings, i.e. two primary schools, one secondary and one all-age special school. Appendix II summarises biographical details of Study 1A participants. The sample for Study 1B came from the same schools as Study 1A and consisted of four classroom-based teachers from an all-age special school, ten classroom-based teachers from two mainstream primary schools and seven classroom-based teachers from a mainstream secondary school. Appendix V summarises biographical details of Study 1B participants.

## **Study 2**

The aims of Study 2 were to gain a deeper understanding of a number of propositions arising from the findings of Study 1. The first study indicated that a range of teachers from different settings viewed teachers' involvement in their work as an important and problematic topic which required better understanding, as it related to teachers' efficacy and student achievement, teacher morale and possible links with recruitment and retention, staff and school development and school ethos and student behaviour. Findings also suggested that individual teachers' qualities and characteristics were influential on their involvement in each other's work. Teachers' views on their involvement in each other's work also appeared to be influenced by school structures and systems, i.e. their positions within school systems as teacher managers or as classroom-based practitioners, and were school specific, i.e. specifically related to their own school situation. An additional aim of Study 2 was to



explore views about the possible influence of Local Authority, DfES and other wider national structures.

The sample for Study 2 consisted of a random sample of a range of deputy head teachers from various school settings. My rationale for this was that particularly rich data was gained from interviews with deputy heads in the first study; also, staff in these positions are likely to have a particular interest in the topic of teachers' work together and occupy a good vantage point within their schools from which to form views. Deputy heads have a distinctive and special role within school structures, as they are informal leaders and culture bearers. Their roles encompass a special responsibility and function to do with staff working together, being custodians of the past, repositories of humour, stage managers of presentations within and outside the school and actualisers of values (Nias, 1989). I was also aware that many deputy head teachers engaged in classroom practice as well as being part of school management teams, and were able to reflect from both positions (Wise & Bush, 1999).

Study 2 took place in a different education authority from the one in which Study 1 was conducted. My position as a senior educational psychologist with management responsibility for work relating to emotional and social behavioural difficulties at the time of Study 2 meant that I worked across the authority with a large number of schools for relatively short and time-limited projects. I was therefore known to many schools, which was very helpful in terms of facilitating access to schools during my own working day. The question of whether or not my own workplace connections with participants affected their expressed views was raised in Study 1. In the second Study I approached teachers with whom I did not have connections and thus reduced some of the researcher effects which may have been present in the first study. It was also helpful in that it reduced the likelihood of participants being primed about the research by knowing more about it from previous interviewees, and ensured that participants shared a common baseline of information about the research, i.e. that which I made available in my letters to schools (See Appendix IX).

In making an explicit request for teachers to take part in the study, it was likely that they would be a self-selecting group, i.e. they were only likely to volunteer if they considered the research topic to be valid and important. This posed issues regarding representivity.

However, my overall use of a social constructionist paradigm (Gergen, 1994; Burr, 1995) which prioritised depth, understanding, authenticity and complex social realities, was an acknowledgement that research findings would not take the form of absolute answers upon which generalisations could be based. Rather, multiple and rich perspectives would be produced, from which greater insights could be gained about being a teacher at this time within the UK state schooling context.

The initial plan for Study 2 was to conduct six focus group interviews with randomly selected deputies from one local authority. After discussing my proposal to write to all head teachers in the authority requesting volunteers from their teaching staff groups to take place in some group interviews, I was given permission to do so (Appendix XIII: Memo to Assistant Education Director regarding focus group proposal). This involved 10 secondary head teachers, 45 primary head teachers and 4 special school head teachers. The letters were sent at the end of the summer term of 2003. Of a potential sample group of approximately 90 deputy head teachers, only two replies were received. Both of these were from secondary school deputy head teachers.

Due to these problems with access and practical arrangements, I adapted my plans and carried out a further interview study with individual deputy head teachers randomly selected from the local authority and representative of secondary, primary and special school settings. At the start of the autumn term of 2003, a list of all secondary, primary and special schools was produced and then used to construct a randomly selected sample. Twenty-two head teachers were sent letters inviting them to ask their deputies to take part in an individual interview (Appendix IX). Four were from special schools, nine from secondary schools and nine from primary schools. From these, I was offered seventeen interviews: eight primary, six secondary and three special. However, four of these, i.e. three secondary and one primary, were cancelled on the day of the planned interview because of participants' work pressures.

The sample for Study 2 ended up consisting of 13 deputy head teachers, i.e. seven primary, three secondary and three special. Teaching experience ranged from 5 years to 32 years and the time spent in their current posts ranged from 1 year to 30+ years. Details about

participants' teaching experience and their current post at the time of the interviews are summarised in Appendix XI.

### **Study 3**

Study 3 was designed to extend and deepen understanding from Studies 1 and 2 as part of the recursive and inductive process of the whole research project. In this study I aimed to elicit and explore the views of non-school-based staff and also to find out whether the themes from Study 2 were discernible. The questions employed in Study 3 were designed to explore these areas in more depth. In this way, I aimed to clarify the influence of internal, school specific aspects of the findings such as the alliances and divisions which characterise most established teaching groups (Hargreaves, 1994), and identify the more general aspects of the findings.

The rationale for using an opportunity sample of local authority officers was that the participants would be experienced educational professionals who had worked in and with a number and range of schools, who worked with teachers on a regular and ongoing basis and were very familiar with and knowledgeable about school organisations, teaching and the local context. It was also anticipated that local authority officers would provide a more distant and separate perspective relative to teachers, and a non-partisan viewpoint, i.e. not arising from and specific to just one school.

Study 3 took place in the same local authority context as Study 2. My role as a senior educational psychologist with a special responsibility for EBSD work, brought me into direct and regular contact with a number of local authority officers. It was relatively easy and convenient, therefore, to access the opportunity sample that was used in Study 3 and to utilise professional links in order to carry out the interviews. My working connections as an educational psychologist working across the borough within which the participants also worked, also provided me with the 'inside knowledge' to help ensure that participants were interested in and supportive of the research topic in general.

I asked nine local authority officers and colleagues to participate in this study, which I described to them as being a small-scale investigation designed to extend and deepen the understanding derived from two previous studies, which I had also described to all

participants. Communication and other practical arrangements for the interviews were relatively straightforward and this study presented the fewest access difficulties.

All of the participants I approached were experienced education professionals whose jobs involved frequent contact and active involvement with teachers from primary, secondary and special schools across the borough. All nine participants agreed to be interviewed. Appendix XIV presents brief details of participants' educational careers and posts at the time of the interviews.

There were difficulties with access throughout the study. This was most difficult with classroom-based participants and least problematic with the local authority staff participants in Study 3. Four aspects of the study appear to have contributed to the difficulties: Firstly, the voluntary nature of the study, i.e. there was no particular incentive or directive to take part; secondly, the links which I was able to utilise, i.e. whether or not I was known to and familiar with participants; thirdly, the ease of communication with individual teachers, i.e. whether this was direct or via other staff such as school managers, and fourthly, the practical obstacles such as timing, time and availability of an accessible physical space in which to carry out the interview.

### **Interview Methods and Procedure**

Informed consent was obtained for every interview. Prior to interview, individuals were approached in person, via telephone, email or letter and the nature of my study was described. I outlined the areas of questions to be covered, stressed absolute anonymity and confidentiality and explained that verbatim interview transcripts would be sent to them soon after the interview in order for them to add, amend and/or comment upon, either in writing/telephone exchange or follow-up meeting. The participants of the three interview studies had received information that included a brief description of the nature of the research, the interview procedure (Appendix VI) and areas of questions to be covered.

Participants were also invited to contact me for more information if they wished. In fact, very few of the interviewees acted upon this invitation. They agreed to be interviewed upon the basis of the information already provided. In the second study I received telephone calls

from three deputy heads who wanted to know more about the background to and rationale for the research. These three individuals agreed to be interviewed but two subsequently withdrew on the day of the planned interviews and both said that pressures of work demands were the reason for doing so. In the third study I had the opportunity to talk directly to all interviewees and to answer specific questions, mainly, again, relating to the background to and rationale for the research.

I asked all interviewees to maintain confidentiality about their interviews but it is not impossible that confidentiality was broken, either indirectly through casual, related conversations or through conscious attempts to disclose material from the research. I rationalised that my semi-structured interview schedule was sufficiently open for replication of answers to be unlikely, based on discussions with previously interviewed teachers, and the unique and varied data elicited from every interview bears this out.

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis as face-to-face conversations. I employed semi-structured interview schedules in single session interviews and used audio tape recording. I invited interviewees to supplement and amend their interview transcripts, which were mailed in complete form to interviewees soon after the interview. My definition of the research interview incorporated the following perspective:

*a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focussed by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation.*

Cannell and Kahn, 1994, p. 271

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour and a half. In Study 1, all interviews, with the exception of one classroom-based teacher (who was based three days a week in a primary school and worked for the rest of the time for a peripatetic service) and two of the teacher managers, took place in the individual participants' schools. Most of them happened after the end of the school day in teachers' own time. Only four teachers were interviewed during the school day during their free periods. Three individuals were not interviewed in their school settings, and came to my office one day after school. They appeared to be relaxed and comfortable and I did not discern any particular differences in the quality of their responses to those of participants interviewed in schools.

Study 2 interviews with deputy head teachers all took place in participants' school settings. The interviews for Study 3 happened in a variety of locations including the Education offices, coffee bars and canteens. This was dictated by the variety of locations that these interviewees worked in, and all venues were ones which interviewees suggested and were familiar and comfortable with. Audio-taping of interviews was not possible for Study 3 as it had been for the first two studies, because of the level of background noise. Instead, I made notes, which I verified at the end of interviews, transcribed soon after the interviews and then sent to participants for verification, amendment and/or additional comments.

Through employing a consistent interview protocol and schedule, I aimed to ensure that all participants had an equivalent opportunity to give voice to their experiences, beliefs and attributions and that the interview constituted an inclusive experience.

The complexity of my research topic meant that the emphasis in this study was upon description and explanation. I attempted to blend this systematic approach with creative methods developed from Personal Construct Psychology and based on the philosophical theory of alternative constructionism (Kelly, 1991; See End-Note 1) developed by Ravenette (1997). These were appealing and familiar, as I used them regularly in my work as an educational psychologist. This approach incorporated a set of systematic yet flexible guidelines for investigation and a method of research enquiry which offered a creative and contextualised approach to understanding human behaviour. I used personal construct theory in thinking about and in informing my question formulation.

Semi-structured interview schedules were used to guide the interviews (See Appendix VII), Study 2 (See Appendix XII) and Study 3 (See Appendix XV). I attempted to counteract the possibility of reduced levels of validity by formulating clear areas of questioning which were derived from my literature search and from the emerging findings that were built upon throughout the research. Each interview schedule ended with an open question asking participants if there was anything else they wanted to add or thought that they should have been asked. They were also invited to comment on their experience of the interview process. In this way, each subsequent interview was formulated more thoroughly and based upon a cumulative and increasingly authentic and situated corpus of information. For example, in

the first study I asked wide 'scoping' questions, designed to explore the following broad areas:

Why do people choose to become teachers and do relationships with colleagues form a part of this choice?

How do teachers see themselves and does collaboration with colleagues form a part of this self-image?

What do teachers enjoy/find satisfying about teaching and do teacher colleagues contribute to this?

What do teachers not enjoy about teaching and do teacher colleagues contribute to this?

How do teachers describe the ideal teacher colleague?

How do teachers describe the 'nightmare' colleague, i.e. not ideal/least desirable?

Does work with other teachers support and/or hinder teaching?

Each of the interview questions was designed to correspond with and elicit data, which would illuminate the areas of questioning listed above. For example, the area of questioning: 'How do teachers see themselves and does collaboration with colleagues form a part of this self-image?' corresponds to the actual question:

1.i.) 'I would like to know who you are. If I were to ask you to say three things to describe you, what would you say? Who are you?'

followed by:

1.ii) 'If someone were not ..... [the interviewee's responses to Q. 1.i.] what would they be?'



The topics or questions to be explored did not necessarily correspond in a one-to-one way with the interview schedule questions. It was necessary as a way of ensuring the highest level of validity possible, to approach topics through a number of questions and to explore both positive and ideal scenarios as well as the less ideal. This in itself is an apt reflection of the complexity, the absence of absolute facts and the interwoven nature of the area of enquiry. An example of this is in Question 9, where I asked interviewees about ideal and 'nightmare' colleague characteristics. Although the interview schedule provided a 'script' upon which I based my questioning, I did alter the wording or expand upon it where interviewees needed further clarification or different wording in order to understand. I had made it clear at the start of the interview that questions were allowed and that I framed our interview experience as a two-way interaction so that I would not stick rigidly to the schedule 'script' but use it as a basis for questioning. In the case of the Question 1 (i & ii) above, I invariably had to add the words 'a person who is a teacher' so that the questions were:

1.i.) 'I would like to know who you are. If I were to ask you to say three things to describe you, a person who is a teacher, what would you say? Who are you?'

(followed by:

1.ii) 'If someone, a person who is a teacher, were not ..... [the interviewee's responses to Q. 1.i.] what would they be?'

With each interview I was clearer and more confident about my question areas as themes started to emerge, and I therefore used the interview schedule as before and continued to bridge, extend and develop teachers' responses in accordance with my growing understanding and sense of certain themes.

All interview notes and recordings were transcribed, including both the participants' responses and my own questions and comments, within a week of the actual interviews. Directly after transcription, a copy of the transcript was mailed to the participants and they were invited to supplement, amend or comment upon the transcripts, either in writing, by telephone or in a follow-up meeting. The large majority of interviewees told me in person during subsequent school visits, that they considered the transcripts to be accurate and also of great interest. A small minority (five for Study 1, three for Study 2 and six for Study 3) sent

transcripts back with a few typographical corrections and only two from Study 3 had anything to add in terms of substantive content. It was interesting to hear again and again, surprise and amusement at their styles of speaking and slight embarrassment about their lack of lucidity and eloquence. This suggested to me that, in terms of recording their own spoken words, this interview had been a new experience and somewhat discomfiting in that their words did not translate consistently as grammatically correct cursive prose. It also suggested, in combination with interview content, that consideration and articulation of the topic was a new or infrequent experience.

## **Data Analysis**

Ideas from discourse analysis methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Habermas, 1984; Potter & Wetherell, 1987, Edwards et. al., 1993; Billington, 1995; Miller, A. 1996; Bozic et al., 1998; Lunt, 1999; Harré, 1998; Flick, 1998) were used in this research. I decided to use this methodology because of the complexity and hard to measure aspects of my research, which required a systematic and structured methodology grounded in a social constructivist paradigm. I was aware of the principle that discourse analysis is neither theory nor methods driven and should be thought of as an approach to research which arises from key epistemological and ontological perspectives (Potter and Wetherell in Smith et al., 1995b; Harré, 1998).

The approach to data analysis was informed by the idea that speech acts reflect the substance of the social world and that through making overt the meaning contained within discourse and text, a better understanding can be achieved. However, acknowledgement from the researcher is also required at the transcript analysis stage; this is always an incomplete process and one which is theory laden at every level through selection, enactment and analysis of data (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). Also, it is important to recognise and accommodate the partiality of the researched, as much as the researcher within the transcription process, as for any other aspect of the research enterprise (Kvale, 1996).

Using ideas from the broad and adaptive framework of discourse analysis, I have worked through and created a number of different stages as the overall research has progressed. This has consisted of:

1. The refinement of data into a collection of textual extracts, which related very specifically to the research topic
2. Engagement with the whole text
3. Repeated re-analysis of and saturation in the texts starting with one particularly interesting and paradoxical transcript
4. Coding against the whole set of data and linking with themes identified in the literature review
5. Some spontaneous free association  
(Used in analysis of first transcript, Study 1A only)
6. Identification of major research premise.

I began by analysing the first transcripts from Study 1A and it became clear that it was not appropriate to take a content analysis approach to the data, as I wished to retain a reflexive and embedded researcher stance and remain as open as possible to new patterns and connections. At the same time as becoming saturated by the data (Ball, 1991), I needed to become more in tune with my own part in the interview dialogue and of the process of the interview itself. I looked at the language of the transcripts at single word level. I was satisfied that much of it appeared to be highly relevant to my enquiry but it seemed to be mainly confirmatory and did not lead to new understandings.

After repeated reading and re-reading of the transcripts from Study 1A, I selected one especially interesting transcript to engage in finely detailed analysis. The rationale for and process of selection of this one transcript is described in Chapter 5, in which I give an account of the specific details of how the data analysis developed through the first study with head teachers and classroom-based practitioners. I embarked upon further data analysis, this time focusing upon the whole interview transcript (not just the interviewee's words) with the intention to develop a more free-flowing and spontaneous analysis and interpretation of the text. I extracted all parts of the transcript which appeared to be directly relevant to the specific enquiry. This consisted of the entire second half of the transcript, ten pages in all, and I looked at this line by line, summarising (Flick, 1998) and engaging in an 'open coding' exercise (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). These ten pages contained a large amount of data, not all of which related specifically to the research topic. I reduced and selected the data (Miles and Huberman, 1984) through extraction of the relevant sections and then distilled these. I

repeated this process with all transcripts. This meant producing a summary of participants' responses which related directly to the questions asked in the interviews.

I then systematically went through the transcript distillations and organised the data into the key code areas. I summarised the points being made and the particular transcript source. I also kept a running total of numbers of participants making the point. This was useful, in the first instance, for identifying similarities and patterns of consensus but not for informing claims of generalisability (Weber, 1990). This was in keeping with my use of the constant comparative approach (Henwood & Pigeon, 1998).

I then refined the data further, amalgamating all material which overlapped and repeated in significant ways; for example, where a participant had talked about teachers' work together as being important to 'the smooth running of the whole school' and another as 'core to the structure of the whole school', this became one sub-set within the key code area 'the perceived links between whole school function and teachers' work together'. In this way, I attempted to account for and streamline important aspects of the text.

Some of the data could not be categorised into any of the key coding areas, so I created another key code area, initially headed 'miscellaneous material'. I continued to refine and cross-reference the material, seeking similarities and diversities and tentatively developing and labelling the emerging concepts (Henwood and Pigeon, *ibid.*), thus transforming the findings from being purely descriptive to being conceptually relevant. Some particularly strong themes cross-referenced to a large number of other areas.

I used a thematic data analysis and expected this study to take the form of a recursive 'process composed of double-feedback steps' (Glaser, 1978, p. 16), in which every new understanding would require re-visitation of previous understandings. This offered the best practical possibility of ensuring completeness of data, integrity and verification. The involvement of participants in this process, i.e. asking them to read and provide feedback on interviews, was another measure which was utilised in this process (Kvale, 1996). I held in mind Potter and Wetherell's (1987) view of data analysis using discourse analysis methods, not as a linear but a cyclical process in which it was necessary to revisit data and to rework analysis, as clear themes could only be detected over time and in conjunction with better understanding through the process of coding, re-coding and analysing transcripts. I worked

towards provisional theoretical explanations that were linked with the available literature and dependent upon verifications through the data. The recursive process of data collection involved repeated re-reading of the interview transcripts.

Great care was taken to maintain scepticism in my interactions with the data in order to ensure theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978). I stepped back periodically to look at the reality of the data and sought peer verification from colleague educational psychologists. This took the form of many informal discussions with individual colleagues, plus discussion following presentations of my research in progress at a number of conferences and training events for educational psychologists. I also organised a lunch-time discussion group, which 5 colleagues attended, in the spring of 2004, after completing and analysing Study 1 and prior to commencing Study 2. At this discussion group, I presented a summary of the work in progress and my proposed interview questions for Study 2 (Appendix VIII: EP focus group discussion materials: Summary of findings from Study 1 and proposed questions for Study 2). My EP colleagues all had teaching experience and were involved in ongoing work with many teaching staff in a wide range of schools, and I asked them to, firstly, comment on the questions and findings available at the time and, secondly, comment upon the interview arrangements and procedure. Their feedback did not consist of suggestions for changing, removing or adding questions. They found the emerging themes plausible and verified them from their own professional experience. No themes or responses were offered which differed from those already available within interviewees' responses. Feedback upon the interview arrangements and procedure was supportive.

## CHAPTER 5

### Results from Study 1

In this chapter I start by describing the development of the Study 1A with teacher managers, which leads into an account of Study 1B with classroom-based practitioners. I conclude with a summary of the main findings from Study 1, which informed the subsequent studies 2 and 3.

#### Study 1A with Teacher Managers

The 15 interview transcripts produced from the Study 1A yielded a substantial quantity of data on the participants' practice, some of which was not specific to the subject of teachers' involvement with each other. My starting point was to 'refine' the data into a collection of textual extracts which were particularly relevant to my enquiry. The following section from the interview with Sylvie, a deputy head teacher in a secondary school (Appendix II) illustrates this process and the large amount of material which is not directly relevant to the enquiry. The bold font text is from me, the interviewer, and the normal text is from the interviewee. I have underlined the parts of the transcript which I considered to be relevant and which I extracted for further analysis.

**KC (Interviewer): So, teaching itself. What do you enjoy about it? What's good about it?**

*I think the fact that it does change. I mean it's not a job where you come in and tomorrow's going to be the same. You just don't know what's going to happen. It's that sort of unknown that makes it attractive, and I do enjoy the rapport with the kids. I mean the kids think I'm a really strict person, but at the end of the day you know, they can come and knock on my door. If they have a problem they can come and talk to me about anything. Literally anything. Although we have got to have this front it is comforting to know that they will come to you if they need to.*

**KC: So, the opposite of that. The contrast. When it's not going well, when you're not satisfied, when you feel it's actually not working, what's happening there?**

*It's either I'm stressed, I've maybe arrived late to the lesson. Somebody, staff has said 'can you do this, can you do this, can you do this?' or I'm on the way to my classroom with all my stuff and somebody says can you come here, we need to do this. I say 'no, I can't. I'm going to teach'. They are still talking to me as I am walking down the corridor wanting me to come*



in so I say again 'no I cant. I'm going to teach', and that makes me feel, then you get to the classroom sometimes and you think, you then sometimes take your frustration out on the class and you think 'right, everyone's going to sit in silence and blah, blah, blah.

This extract from Sylvie's transcript demonstrates the social and conversational nature of the interview, which I considered to be vital for maintaining rapport. I was aware in Study 1 of my involvement with and knowledge of interviewees' working situations and, whilst this supported access, it did mean that I had to ensure participants focused on the main research focal point.

I then selected one transcript at random, with the intention of closely scrutinising the text in terms of meaning, structure and function (Banister et al., 1994), I started by identifying the many diverse and surprising types of discourse contained therein. The extracts below come from Anthony's transcript. Anthony is a primary head teacher. I have organised Anthony's comments (italicised) into themes:

#### Scientific/academic/theoretical

*policies do stand, um, solidly and I think they will remain the same. I mean, they stand for what the school believes in obviously, pluralism, inclusion, equal opportunities, celebrating multi-culturalism and all the rest that will remain the same.*

#### Self-descriptive/analytical/reflexive/introspective

*you have to be very conscious of how you dress, how you behave, um, how you speak to other members of staff in the corridor.*

#### Emotional/affective

*he has been very good as a friend as well as a colleague (new head teacher mentor). So that has been really lucky with me, because if I had been paired with someone who was really busy or didn't have the time or had basically decided 'well, he can get on and learn it himself' then I would have been in big trouble, desperate, unhappy. I think, because I've had so much to learn this year.*

#### Discursive/social/relational

*I think it does work very well; the fact that people do stop and help each other and give each other ideas. At the staff meetings it is important for everyone to contribute and put forward their point of view. No-one is brushed aside because they are new. Everyone's ideas are sort of put in the hat and thrown around with everyone else's.*



### Historical

*but I think the school has changed in some respects. You've got, obviously, me a new head, a new deputy, um, things are starting to change so I think we're revising those now to try and um, cope with the different sort of aspects that six years of change can bring really.*

### Instructional/administrative/pragmatic

*obviously the hard work goes with the territory; there's a lot to do, a lot of paper-work, on top of it all teachers have an administration side of the classroom, um, I think with the organisational side obviously you have got to have it with the amount of paper-work or you'll have had it.*

### Ideological/political

*I use the word professional in a broad sense that you approach your job from a professional point of view. Um, you try and realise what teaching is all about; responsibilities you have towards the children as well as to other people in the school, society and you try and sort of conduct yourself as best you can.*

### Biological/physiological/developmental

*I think people (staff) come out of their shells more, and the more people know you, the more they will....maybe they'll put forward ideas, they grow.*

I also listed individual words used by participants in Study 1A within their interviews. In doing so, I was not surprised but somewhat overwhelmed by the richness and complexity of the material. I have grouped these words into three categories: those which are about individual participants' own qualities and feelings, i.e. intra-personal; those which are about interactions and responses from and to others, i.e. inter-personal, and those that are work-related. Some of these words could be placed equally appropriately in two or three categories but I have placed them into the category which seemed to apply most within the context of their whole transcript.

#### **INTRA-PERSONAL:**

ANXIETY APATHY CONFIDENCE CONFORMITY CONGRUENCE  
CONTENTMENT CREDIBILITY DIFFERENCE EMOTION FEAR FRUSTRATION  
GENEROSITY HONESTY HUMAN INDIVIDUALITY INHUMAN INTUITION  
SELF-ESTEEM SIMILARITY SPONTANEITY

**INTER-PERSONAL:**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BALANCE BOUNDARIED CO-OPERATION  
COMPETITION COLLECTIVISM CRITICISM DEPENDENCE DETACHMENT  
EXCLUSION HUMOUR [& LACK OF] INCLUSION INVOLVEMENT PRIVACY  
REGARD SUPPORT TRUST UNDERSTANDING VALUE (& LACK OF)

**WORK-RELATED:**

AUTONOMY CHALLENGE CHOICE COMMITMENT COMMUNICATION  
COMPETENCE COMPLACENCY CONFUSION CONSULTATION CONTROL  
CREATIVITY DIRECTION ENCOURAGEMENT ENJOYMENT ENTHUSIASM  
EXPERIENCE FAMILIARITY [& LACK OF] IDEALISM INCOMPETENCE  
INDEPENDENCE INEXPERIENCE KNOWING LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT (&  
LACK OF] OBSESSION OWNERSHIP PRAGMATISM PRESSURE  
PROFESSIONAL REALISM RESPECT RESPONSIBILITY RISK ROLE-  
PLAYING SATISFACTION STATUS STRESS UNBOUNDARIED  
UNPROFESSIONAL

In Chapter 4 I describe my rationale for focusing upon the meaning rather than the linguistic aspects of interview transcripts. I decided to proceed by examining the content of one transcript, Vicky's, in detail, and to use the findings from this exercise as a way of informing my subsequent transcript analysis.

**Close Analysis of and Findings from one Interview Transcript**

I selected Vicky's interview for practical reasons, i.e. at the time of analysis it was one of the most recent interviews to have been carried out and, also, I was particularly curious to find out what an in-depth analysis might reveal. I had a vague, generalised sense that there were many gaps and contradictions in Vicky's words and I thought that a clear picture of these could illuminate further enquiry. In all of the interviews, I had been aware of 'the interview game' self-consciousness in me and also in the interviewee but, in Vicky's interview, that experience was particularly acute. By this I mean the style of communication, verbal and

non-verbal, the language, what was said and what was not said and also the contradictions and 'oddnesses' that were expressed. I thought that close analysis of the text would be revelatory and informative.

### **Background and Context to the Interview**

I will describe the background to this interview as it provides some context to and justification of my findings. The interview itself had not been straightforward to set up. My initial letter requesting some of Vicky's time was made in June of the summer term, which coincided with a two-term period in which she was 'acting up' as head teacher. The previous head had been appointed head to a newly built school in the borough, and at very short notice, Vicky took over. Vicky did not immediately respond to my request and I judged it best to delay asking again. As it turned out, I did not need to approach her again because she came to me during one of my regular school visits at the start of the autumn term and offered a time for us to meet the following month.

The interview was carried out at the appointed time and went very smoothly, i.e. the questions were covered, time was adhered to and there were no interruptions. However, throughout the interview and afterwards I did not feel that it had been satisfactory. At an emotional level, I sensed that a lot of what I had listened to had been a heavily defended and 'polite' version of Vicky's reality, created for the 'research interview'.

There was a lot of good humour, laughter and talk of the ideal nature of staff relationships at the school, but my experience of working with the school over a period of 3 years plus did not match this rosy and cosy version at all. The key person with whom I had linked (the SENCo, not Vicky) had made many disclosures about difficulties between staff and, in fact, the previous head had been portrayed as being immensely unpopular and somebody who blocked and discouraged any communication between staff which had not been mediated by herself. I was also aware that two teachers had been through disciplinary proceedings and that their professional practice was under the intense scrutiny of local authority officers and their professional peers.

Vicky was a deputy head in her late 40s, working in a large (3 form entry) primary school in North London. The school serves an area, which in many respects resembles the inner city in terms of ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity, degree of population mobility and the socio-economic profile. It is also similarly situated to all of the schools involved in my study. Vicky had been at the school for 12 years and before this had worked as an advisory teacher supporting newly qualified teachers in the borough. Prior to this, she taught in the Inner London Education Authority, having left school and gone straight to teachers' training college.

### **General Findings**

Vicky always wanted to teach and continued to be pleased that she made the choice as it had *'turned out to be so much more'* than she had anticipated. Vicky's constructs in relation to teaching included flexibility and focus. She was pragmatic and very much saw teaching as a job to be done but, within the task-focused view, there was an awareness and acknowledgement of people, pupils and staff as individuals who were idiosyncratic and required an adaptive and flexible approach on her part.

Her views on teachers' working together were much influenced by her principle that it was a management responsibility, stated as school policy, that staff should work collaboratively and co-operatively in order to get the job done, but at the same time be able to work in their own way and/or style.

She saw teachers' relationships at her school as being largely very strong and positive and that this reflected the requirement for teachers to be capable of working in this manner in order to work there. Themes arising in her view of teachers' involvement in each other's work: The importance of adequate resources, gender influences, the importance of positive and constructive attitudes, hard work and personal and professional respect, the importance of modelling and enabling by management staff, the reality of some tensions/conflicts and inevitability of a small minority of teachers who were not collaborative and co-operative but who actually had to be worked with or at the very least, directed.

The single quotation from Vicky's interview transcript, which seemed to be most pertinent and illuminating of the interviewee and her views regarding the area of research, was as follows:

'It's a personal thing and you do have to, in all things stand out as the individual you are.'

### **Development of the Data Analysis**

The general findings were unsatisfying in that most of the general understanding derived from the findings was quite 'surface level' and self-evident. I considered that it was unlikely that further data collection would yield anything new as this initial interview already featured quite a bit of repetition. I therefore decided to focus upon further analysis so, following this summary case study exercise, I then extracted all parts of the transcript which were directly relevant to my enquiry and from this formulated 432 codes. From being so totally saturated in the text, I noticed that as I worked through, I was becoming much more 'free-floating', spontaneous and less literal in my code formulation. Also apparent was the fact that more and more connections between different areas of the transcript were becoming clearer, as were the gaps and contradictions.

### **Emerging Themes**

I started again, trying to organise the data into neat headings, i.e. 'teaching', 'self as a teacher', 'teachers' relationships', 'the school system' etc. but realised that these were constraining and rested heavily upon the preconceived interview question headings and did not contribute much in terms of new avenues of enquiry. Also, they took no account of the fact that the transcript contained information relating to the stated area of research and *equally to the process of the interview itself*. Bearing this in mind, I formulated a set of six new areas (thematic domains) for understanding and organising the data: **Complexity, Reality, Feelings, Control, Task, Judgement**. These thematic domains were informed by the literature review. My growing familiarity with the interview data (i.e. via the repeated processing and attempts to organise the transcript material), during which certain words and themes appeared again and again, was also key.

'Complexity' was a thematic domain relating to the nature of the work of teaching, to the multiple roles, tasks and relationships intrinsic to these. The thematic domain of 'reality' largely referred to the idea, expressed many times, of the need for a distinction between actual lived experience and commonly prevailing fantasies and stereotypes about teaching and teachers working together. The thematic domain of 'feelings' encompassed the emotional experience of being and working as a teacher with other teachers. 'Control' came up as a thematic domain within the work of teaching and in terms of work with other teachers, mainly as an aspect of school management structures and arrangements. The thematic domain of 'task' referred to getting the job done and the implications of and for working with other teachers or in isolation. Finally, the 'judgement' thematic domain was specifically about the 'in the moment' continuous problem-solving nature of teaching and the way in which this impinged on work with other teachers.

I sifted through the original 432 coded data extracts and categorised this under the six thematic domains. There was a great deal of overlap and it was not always clear-cut which of the six thematic domains a particular code was most relevant to, but in order to be pragmatic, I did so by questioning and re-questioning until a primary theme became clear. I then listed it under the most relevant thematic domain:

### **Complexity**

The complicated nature of the school as a system

Teachers as people *and* professionals

The complex and hard to describe nature of this area of enquiry

### **Reality**

Subjectivity and personal opinion

School replicating real life

### **Feelings**

Interviewee feelings

Management of the emotional life of the school

Negative emotion

### **Control**

Official line

Interview/interviewee collusion

Managing the managers

Control within the interview process

### **Task**

The teaching task

Management role/function regarding the task of teaching

Interview task

### **Judgement**

Judgments regarding teachers and teaching

Judgement and management

Judgement within the interview process

On examining the remaining fourteen transcripts of Study 1A, these thematic domains did indeed account for much of what the interviewees had been saying. I allowed me to detach from close content analysis and to free associate, very much in the manner described by Parker in Banister et al. (1994) when he refers to the contribution of psychoanalytic ideas to discourse analysis and also aligned with Holloway's description (1989 and 2006). I was also aware of the need to be creative and open in the analysis rather than to use a step-by-step, prescriptive 'recipe' approach (Ball, 1991). The research focus was becoming clearer. In researching teachers' views on the involvement of other teachers in their work, I was making overt the phenomenon of teaching/education as a highly structured and formalised professional activity involving diverse, dynamic and complex situations, people and emotions. The process of teaching could be construed as a striving for structure, containment and order out of elements and factors which were intrinsically *not* easily contained, ordered or structured. It therefore followed that, however planned and ordered my research approach was, the scale and complexity of the research topic would be challenging to order, make sense of and to communicate. Three further summative themes then became apparent: Education (**E**), Management (**M**) and the Research process (**R**), and I was able to categorise the data further using these codes (**E**), (**M**) and (**R**):

### **Complexity**



The complicated nature of the school as a system (E, M)

Teachers as people *and* professionals (E, M, R)

The complex and hard to describe nature of this area of enquiry (R)

### **Reality**

Subjectivity and personal opinion (R)

School replicating real life (E)

### **Feelings**

Interviewee feelings (R)

Management of the emotional life of the school (M)

Negative emotion (M, R, E)

### **Control**

Official line (E, M, R)

Interview/interviewee collusion (R)

Managing the managers (M)

Control within the interview process (R)

### **Task**

The teaching task (E)

Management role/function regarding the task of teaching (M, E)

Interview task (R)

### **Judgement**

Judgments regarding teachers and teaching (E)

Judgement and management (M)

Judgement within the interview process (R)

Data relating to the six thematic domains of complexity, reality, feelings, control, task and judgment have been organised under the further summative themes: Education (E), Management (M), Research process (R), and this is presented below:

**Education (E)**

The complicated nature of the school as a system  
Teachers as people *and* professionals  
School replicating real life  
Negative emotion  
Official line  
The teaching task  
Management role/function regarding the task of teaching  
Judgments regarding teachers and teaching

### **Management (M)**

The complicated nature of the school as a system  
Teachers as people *and* professionals  
Management of the emotional life of the school  
Negative emotion  
Official line  
Managing the managers  
Management role/function regarding the task of teaching  
Judgement and management

### **Research process (R)**

Teachers as people *and* professionals  
The complex and hard to describe nature of this area of enquiry  
Subjectivity and personal opinion  
Interviewee feelings  
Negative emotion  
Official line  
Interview/interviewee collusion  
Control within the interview process  
Interview task  
Judgement within the interview process

Three aspects of the data featured consistently under each of the three summative themes.  
These appeared to be particularly rich and relevant and were: 'Teachers as people and

professionals', 'official line' and 'negative emotion'. I had gained a sense in Vicky's interview that she was particularly aware of the complex and difficult task that teachers faced of integrating their personal and professional selves in aiming to be effective teachers and, in her position as a manager of teachers, had a high stake in ensuring that they actually were effective. She therefore saw herself as not only as a task manager but as a manager of feelings and the affective life of the school. Her way of containing this was to constantly reiterate the official line that conflict and negative emotion, although present, were inherently unproblematic and of minor import. Her words and descriptions and her actual interaction within the interview process, however, belied the official line and was a source of tension and unease. It also made for unsatisfactory communication and blocked a real and human connection between us. In my attempt to be reflexive about the effect of such a communication and interaction style, I experienced frustration. I sensed that it would be extremely difficult and uncomfortable to disagree and to do anything other than collude with this idealised story of positivity and tension-free human relationships. My overt question about ideal and non-ideal colleague relationships, the 'non-ideal colleague', yielded a fairly full and convincing response:

*Vicky: Yes, I suppose the ideal colleague relationship (sighs)...it's so difficult. It's somebody who doesn't go: 'ohhhh' every time you sort of approach them in the staffroom and they might have very legitimate criticisms; they might raise really valid, professional points against or obstacles which you then sit down and work through and that's really healthy because then you think 'oh, yes, I don't think of everything' you know, that is so true and I think there's an immediate, a feeling that 'yes, okay, how can we make this work' rather than 'oh no, can't do that. We haven't got this and we haven't got that and I don't like it anyway and I'm not prepared to do that. Somebody who's prepared to meet me at least half way or to go along with, entirely can be equally boring if they're to say yes, yes, to everything but I suppose it's a bit like myself. I like people to meet me half-way and actually do it, actually see it through and I suppose those are the people I value working with the most. But I've got to have professional respect for people so that's what an ideal colleague is about.*

*Interviewer KC: So the opposite ....*

*Vicky: Yes it's like that again. It's the people...oh, I don't like ..... Well from time to time you come across the colleagues who are...folded arms (sharp intake of breath) and shoulders back and you know, it doesn't matter what or how.... You actually have to spend a lot of time.. You actually want to shake them but you can't do that. You have to spend a lot of time saying; 'right, this is necessary for this to be done. This is necessary for the school's policy, for the children's learning and it's a pain knowing that you have to get them on board when the bottom line is, you're probably saying; 'I'm sorry, it's school policy, please have such and such by a certain time.... You know, I hate that because that's not the way I like to work.*

*Um, somebody who, you know, things that you really care about and not necessarily as an individual but it's crucial to the ethos of the school that lots of people bid into who, you know 'ha, ha, ha, ha', you know, poo poo it ...*

**KC: Destructive**

*Vicky: Yes, it is and so negative. I can't stand negativity. I mean, I have my moments, don't we all, but I can't stand negativity. It's somebody who comes up with the fifty-four reasons why something can't be done or; ohh, we did that twenty years ago. You don't want to hear it, actually, you don't, because you've got a job of work to do. You wouldn't be asking if it wasn't actually valuable, useful and reasonable. Perhaps that's another reason why I get a lot of respect...because I don't actually waste people's time. I only ask for something I consider it's worth spending time on...They don't always agree with me, of course (laughs).*

The response, at a surface level, was a considered and reasonable one and conveyed a picture of teacher practice as being pragmatic, task-focused and collegial in essence. However, my next question, which sought to establish the frequency of problematic involvement with other teachers, was answered in such a way as to imply that difficulties with colleagues were out of the ordinary, relatively rare and attributable to single, problematic individuals.

Further on in the interview, Vicky had expressed the view that dissent on a very minor scale within the staff group was not only inevitable but probably necessary for the system of the school as a whole.

In this data analysis exercise of one interview transcript, the themes of control, judgement, task, feelings, complexity and reality appeared to centre around issues to do with management of the school.

### **Analysis of the Remaining Teacher Manager Interview Transcripts**

My sample, essentially an opportunity sample, consisted almost entirely of individuals with management responsibilities, i.e. three head teachers, five deputy head teachers (one of whom was also a SENCo), three secondary year co-ordinators and four SENCos, all except one of whom were on schools' management teams. I decided to explore the other fourteen interview transcripts, bearing in mind the central research finding phenomenon which had arisen in my analysis of Vicky's transcript, that researching teachers' views on the involvement of other

teachers in their work has highlighted the observable fact that the role and function of management is intrinsically linked with task achievement *and* management of people and the affective and relational side of school life. For the teacher manager this means:

- 1) An awareness of the complex and difficult task that teachers face of integrating their personal and professional selves.
- 2) An attempt to contain and control unpredictable and spontaneous occurrences arising from the complex interactions between individuals and related negative emotions, and an understanding that problematic individuals serve their purpose within the organisation.
- 3) Adoption of a constantly reiterated official line that conflict, negative emotion and tensions between teachers, although present, are relatively rare, inherently unproblematic and of minor import.
- 4) An awareness of the need to be a reflexive and reflective professional individual and, at the same time, maintain objectivity in order to ensure efficiency and optimal outcomes for the school system as a whole.

I reflected that much of what had been drawn out so far was not new, not surprising and was well supported by what I had read in my review of the literature. However, in this close analysis of one transcript, a different point had been revealed, which can be encapsulated as:

*The adoption by the teacher manager of a constantly reiterated official line that conflict, negative emotion, tensions between teachers, although present, are relatively rare, inherently unproblematic and of minor import.*

By highlighting the phenomenon of teachers engaging in an 'official line' regarding possible difficulties relating to their involvement with colleagues, I thought that possibilities for gaining a greater understanding and insight might contribute to change and development in this area. Thinking of Vicky's interview in particular and trying to make sense of what had emerged, I was sure that the emotional aspects of this area were key. I was aware from my professional practice of the key part that teachers' emotional experience of teaching contributed to their effectiveness and levels of job satisfaction. Social constructionist theory views people as actively and dynamically engaged in making sense of themselves in relation to others throughout their lives, and the work of theorists such as Kelly (1991) sees each individual as being a kind of scientist constantly researching their own behaviour and that of

others in this endeavour. Indeed, behaviour, in Kellyian terms, can be likened to a continual experimentation and personal research exercise. In my reading I came across a powerful and illuminating idea written by a psychotherapist, Laura Donnington (Jones, 1994):

*It is through relationship that we learn who we are.*

p. 61

This idea informed my choice of the order in which to analyse the remaining fourteen teacher manager transcripts of Study 1A. Understanding the essence of each interviewee's thoughts and ideas on teachers' involvement in each other's work seemed most likely to happen with the transcripts of teachers whom I knew relatively very well. Therefore I started with the four SENCOs as I was now in my fourth year of working with them, and this entailed at least fortnightly face-to-face contact all through the academic year plus numerous telephone and written contacts. Following this, I moved on to the deputy head teacher and then the head teacher transcripts. I continued to develop the data analysis methods I had employed for the first transcript and, having found the original interview schedule format (See Appendix VII) satisfactory, continued to use this.

## **Results for Study 1A**

Interviewees' responses to my question about positive, negative and neutral workplace relationships, expressed as a proportion of all possible teacher peer relationships in their schools, is summarised in Table 2. On the whole, interviewees considered their teachers' workplace relationships to be very positive. None of the respondents actually challenged my use of the word 'ideal'. Also, interviewees were able to be fairly specific about the proportion of positive and negative involvement with other teachers' work, but found specifying the amount of neutral relationships more problematic.

The lowest percentages of positive teachers' relationships with other teachers came from Pippa (primary SENCO), Curt (DHT, special), and all of the secondary teacher managers except for Sylvie. The same individuals offered the highest percentage of neutral relationships with other teachers.



The theme of teacher managers being task managers *and* ‘affect’ managers, i.e. responsible for the emotional climate of the workplace, emerged in all of the transcripts. So too did the theme of teacher reflexivity and its absence in head teachers, as perceived by SENCOs in particular. This was not so evident in deputy head teachers’ accounts and totally absent, not surprisingly, in head teachers’ own accounts.

**Table 2: Interviewees’ perceptions of the quality of their workplace relationships with other teachers (Teachers’ Workplace Relationships, TWRs)**

Interviewee Role and school	% Very good TWRs	% Very difficult TWRs	% Fairly neutral TWRs
Pippa SENCO, primary	50%	5%	45%
Lyndsay SENCO, secondary	70%	10%	20% but ambivalent
Curt DHT, special	60-70%	10%	20-30% but ambivalent
Amy DHT, special	95%	5%	0% but ambivalent
Sylvie DHT, secondary	85-90%	2%	10-15% but ambivalent
Vicky DHT, primary	80%	5%	15%
Anthony HT, primary	80%	5%	15%
Agatha HT, special	80%	10%	10%
Meg DHT, secondary	10%	Less than 5%	Nearly all
Isaac Yr co-ord, secondary	40%	40%	20% but ambivalent
Evelyn Yr co-ord, secondary	20%	5%	75%
Eamon	30%	5%	65%



Yr co-ord, secondary			
James HT, secondary	15%	0%	85%

(Two of the interviewees, both SENCos, i.e. Sue and Dyllis, do not appear in Table 2 as they did not feel able to answer this question, viewing it as too confidential.)

It was interesting to note the strong and common views on the unhelpfulness of OFSTED and teacher trainers who were external to the school/organisation, and of the perception that they were ignorant of local knowledge and overly punitive/judgmental and responsible for problematic teacher involvement with colleagues. The idea of the school as a closed system and the effects and perceptions of external forces seemed to be behind many interviewees' words.

The subject of conflict and difficulties in relation to teachers' involvement with each other was not a comfortable one during the interview, and I gained a sense of interviewees not wanting to personalise or expand on this topic overtly, confining their comments to either abstract situations or to situations in the past or between other people. One interviewee, who I experienced as particularly congruent and open, within the interview and in general, actually estimated his level of 'difficult' teacher relationships as being at around 40%. His level of thinking about conflict also seemed quite exceptional and different from the other teachers', who viewed problems as being mainly attributable to 'deficit' individuals, with larger, contextual factors confined to elements and factors outside of the school system. To quote directly from Isaac's transcript:

*I do believe that there is a problem with lack of respect and I also think that there is sometimes what I would call almost like intellectual/teacher snobbery. That we are better and because someone is middle class or working class it doesn't mean you're better.....I mean school is only a reflection of society, you know, that we aren't tolerant. We don't accept people as they are. We're too conscious of disabilities and differences.*

The issue of power came through in all interviews, as did the need to merge the personal and professional in one integrated and effective teacher persona.

The study highlighted the need to talk with teachers who were entirely classroom-based, and with no particular management responsibilities. The paradox of conducting research into teachers' work together but not being able to access classroom-based teachers was probably quite significant in that it highlighted teachers' limited opportunities to interact with any other professionals, including their own colleagues. I decided that I should explore the views of classroom-based teachers. Issues relating to conflict, difficult teacher workplace relationships and schools' management were of particular interest at this point in the study.

### **Results from Study 1B with Classroom-Based Teachers**

This part of Study 1 involved individual interviews with 21 classroom-based teachers to find out about their experience and perceptions of working with other teachers. In order to ensure continuity, the same interview schedule employed in Study 1A (Appendix VII) was used for Study 1B.

#### **Teachers' Reasons for Entering Teaching**

*Question 2} When you were considering teaching as a career, and during the process of applying to do teacher training, what were your main reasons for doing so?*

My question, designed to elicit teachers' memories of why they had chosen teaching, did not explicitly mention work with teacher colleagues but it was asked within a study with a communicated and overt focus upon this subject.

Interviewees mentioned reasons such as convenience, pragmatism, altruism, enjoyment of children and young people, learning and schools being institutions, and also of family career traditions. Only two of the interviewees, one in a primary school and the other in a secondary school setting, and also the least experienced teachers in the sample, made a direct reference to the subject of involvement with teacher colleagues. One talked of enjoying people in school and said that there were many positive things about how the teachers were together. The other spoke of wanting to be a part of a profession. It was clear from my direct question about motivations for considering teaching as a career that working with other teachers was not thought about as a motivation for entering the profession.

## **Teachers' Perceptions of Themselves and References to Work with Other Teachers**

*Question 1.i} I would like to know who you are. If I were to ask you to say three things to describe you, what would you say? Who are you?*

*What is important about being .....*

*Question 1.ii} If someone were not .....what would they be?*

This question was used as an attempt to gain direct access to the teacher participant's self-image as 'a person who is a teacher'. I was attempting to find out if work with other teachers might be identifiable as a theme. In my question I deliberately, and in some cases repeatedly, framed the personal and professional as two intertwined aspects of one individual person. The fact that many interviewees had to ask questions such as: *Do you mean me as a person?* or *Me, personally?* raised very important questions about possible core group constructs around the apparent dichotomy of personal and professional for the teacher. My subsequent analysis of responses and attempts to merge them into a composite group construct explores this further.

Three main constructs emerged from the interviews: intra-personal, inter-personal and the approach to teaching. The overlap between the three areas of intra-, inter-personal and the approach to teaching was apparent. Based upon the assumption that teachers would describe themselves in positive terms (Woods, 1995), a composite picture emerged of participants' beliefs, fantasies and ideals for the positive teacher and the contrast, a teacher who was not positive. ('Teachers' Composite Constructs', Table 4, page 135). The words 'positive' and 'not positive' are my own. By them I mean: desirable/not desirable, most acceptable/least acceptable.

Kelly (1991) viewed constructs as having either high permeability or impermeability, i.e. being more easily accommodated or integrated by a number of individuals or less adaptable/less easily utilised. Table 4 (page 135) presents evidence of some highly permeable constructs. This is unsurprising because all of the respondents are similarly positioned in terms of occupational context, training and education. What *is* different about them, however, are the very characteristics that their constructs relate to: intra-personal and inter-personal qualities and the approach to teaching. These in turn can almost entirely be described as relating to individual attitudes and to personal/professional relationships.

Within the composite constructs (Table 4) there are some common themes and repetitions, which can be constructed as some common, group constructs. For example, thinking about the intra-personal in relation to being a teacher, the two possible extremes are fairly recognisable caricatures; on the one hand, an individual with strong and positive personal qualities, i.e. character, energy, integrity, balance, humour, and fortitude and, on the other, someone who lacks energy, enthusiasm, organisational ability and is dull, unpleasant and negative. Shades of these are present in any group of teachers. The same can be said of the inter-personal and the approach to teaching. It is important to bear in mind that these constructs represent extreme possibilities for individuals and for how they are viewed by others, and also that one's position on a construct varies and can change constantly, both daily and within a day.

By asking teachers to tell me about how they saw themselves, I wanted to see if they would refer directly to work with colleagues. In fact, only three of the interviewees did so and their comments are in the composite constructs for inter-personal. One, whose constructs included 'accessible' vs 'private' is a primary teacher with 3 years of experience. The other two are both secondary school teachers, one with 3 years of experience and the other with over 20 years. The former's constructs include 'sharing' vs 'private' and the latter, 'a friend' and 'not personally engaged with peers or students'. Given that all interviewees were completely informed and aware of the nature of my research interest, it is curious that so few talked about the importance of 'team playing' or collegiality and a picture emerges of individualistic professional practice, reminiscent of Lortie's 'egg-box' analogy (1975).

The data suggested that teachers saw personal qualities, 'emotional intelligence' and the ability to get the job of teaching done successfully and productively as important. However, nearly all of these qualities were expressed as aspects of interactions between pupils and teachers and not between teachers themselves. One individual's constructs included 'fun/sad' and 'sharing/isolated'. This is a good illustration of how interconnected and how very personal the constructs are, whoever is expressing them. Expressed very simplistically, this person saw a teacher who was open-handed and enjoyably engaged in interactions with other teachers as being highly positive. But she viewed a teacher who was isolated and unhappy as one who manifested negative qualities. For her, the very act of being reciprocal and involved

with colleagues was key to being a functional and effective teacher. For this individual, who has been teaching a relatively short time of three years, and who is perceived as a talented and successful teacher, it would appear that she attributes her efficacy partly to her relationships with colleagues. Few of the other interviewees, most of whom have been teaching considerably longer, articulated similar views.

### **Satisfying and unsatisfying aspects of teaching**

*Question 3} What is it about teaching that you enjoy?*

*Question 3a} What is it about teaching that you do not enjoy?*

*Question 4} Describe some time/s when you consider yourself to be teaching successfully. What are you doing/thinking/being at such times?*

*Question 4a} Describe some time/s when you consider yourself not to be teaching successfully. What are you doing/thinking/being at such times?*

All of the interviewees located pupil learning and development as the main source of satisfaction and fulfilment for themselves as teachers. This is in line with the ethnographic work of Woods (1995). When class teachers described satisfying teaching experiences, the sense of relationships characterised by full and emotional engagement with pupils is very strong.

The craft of teaching appears to be a central element in their constructions of themselves as people who are teachers who enjoy and do their work well. Words like efficient, organised and consistent figure repeatedly. One special school teacher, Fran, spoke at length of her ideal classroom scenario, where everyone worked together. However, she did not refer to other teachers, but classroom assistants. She describes how her role as class teacher actually includes that of being a manager of other adults. She is aware of the need for systems which enable individuals to use all of what they as unique individuals bring, and how to operate as team members and to be managed with strength and wisdom in all of this. Members of schools' management teams spoke similarly in Study 1. Clear roles, expectations, clarity of

purpose and method were key and in Fran's interview, her ideas regarding ways of developing and improving teachers' workplace relationships was expressed as follows:

**Fran:** *I think it comes down to job descriptions and a clear defined job description and people knowing those areas of responsibility because I think that's where difficulties can arise.*

**KC:** *So the ambiguity and the overlap that's possible if they're not clear is avoided so it does not help communication.....*

**Fran:** *Yes, and you know who ....what you're asking other people for help in certain situations and you know that you're going to the right person ....*

Of the 21 interviewees, twelve made direct references to work with other teachers in relation to satisfying and unsatisfying aspects of teaching. Of these, four were secondary teachers, three were special school teachers and five were primary staff. Of the sample as a whole, 11 did not make any connections between positive aspects of teaching and relationships with teacher colleagues, and 14 made no connection between negative aspects of teaching and teacher colleagues.

**Table 3: Responses to Questions 3 and 4 relating to teachers' attributions re positive and negative aspects of teaching**

School type	No. of respondents from sample as a whole who refer to teacher colleagues in response to Questions 3 & 4	No. of respondents giving responses to Question 3 (positive aspects of teaching & teacher colleagues)	No. of respondents giving responses to Question 4 (negative aspects of teaching & teacher colleagues)
Special	3 (out of 4)	3 respondents (out of 4)	3 respondents (out of 4)
Primary	5 (out of 10)	4 respondents (2 only +ve)	3 respondents (out of 10)
Secondary	4 (out of 7)	3 respondents (out of 7)	1 respondent (out of 7)
The whole sample - all school types	12 (out of 21)	10 (out of 21)	7 (out of 21)



The responses relating to teachers working together can be grouped according to five main themes of perceived benefit: A feeling of belonging, getting the actual job of teaching done as effectively as possible, accessing support, accessing helpful problem-solving, and sharing responsibility. Five of the responses fit into the category of deriving a feeling of belonging and they come from teachers in special, primary and secondary settings, with experience ranging from just one to over thirty years of teaching. The following quotes exemplify this theme:

Relating to reasons for working in one's school:

*I noticed that there tended to be more of a sense of belonging in the staffroom ....the staff tended to be more supportive. It doesn't matter how the children are .....like what are their behaviour problems, whatever, I think it's more important as long as you've got that support from the other staff ...that's what's going to make your job a lot easier, or like, enjoyable.....The support is very important ...a sense of belonging.*

(Mike, primary school teacher, 1+ years experience)

*I enjoyed working with the people I was working with. I enjoyed the school environment of both the schools I worked in .....and also here at X ....in some ways it still is. There are a lot of things that are positive about the way staff are together.*

(Secondary school teacher, 20+ years experience)

There were also the themes of accessing support and also better problem-solving:

About work with another teacher:

*.....we both felt because we were working together...we provided a support network for each other and we supported each other ...we did ....we went out on a limb in that project .....we tried really adventurous things that we wouldn't have done if we'd been on our own because we knew the other one was there for back-up ....even just a friendly smile when you think 'oh my goodness', I wish I hadn't tried this.*

*A bit of humour..(interviewer)*



*Yeah, definitely...we were so honest with each other and felt comfortable with each other and I could turn around to her and say 'oh, goodness, I think I was dreadful today ....I can't believe I said that' and she said 'well it wasn't that bad but perhaps you could have tried this?'*

(Laverne, primary school teacher, 4+ years experience)

The notion of sharing of responsibility is key to the view expressed above. Other transcripts also referred to this but in all of the above examples, teachers were referring to the work with classroom and learning assistants. This raises the question of why sharing of responsibility is relatively absent from teachers' (teacher managers *and* classroom-based teachers) reflections on their work with each other, and could relate to a limited amount of time in which they do work together.

It was surprising that less than half of the entire sample referred to other teachers in relation to satisfying and unsatisfying aspects of teaching in an interview in which the research subject was teachers' working with other teachers. It is possible that when asking them about teaching, they did not see work with colleagues as an integral part of this. In addition, within the constructs of interviewees about themselves as people who were teachers, colleague relationships featured relatively little also. However, they were alluded to more than in the study with teachers in management positions.

### **Negative aspects of teaching**

Only seven of the 21 interviewees talked about the negative and less satisfying aspects of teaching and involvement with colleagues. Some of the responses are particularly context specific, for example, the teacher who had most to say on this subject was a teacher who had previously been employed by the borough's Section 11 (English as an Additional Language) EAL team and had only recently, with the devolution of this team, been based on a long-term basis in a primary school. Most of her comments related to the difficulties she faced as someone who was perceived as outside of the school system and with a personal agenda for supporting and prioritising the needs of EAL pupils, which was at odds with the general school priorities of raising academic achievement and leaving special measures. She said:

*Well actually, not too long ago I was setting up some classroom work and then going along to the classroom teacher who I was going to work with and tried to present it to this person who just didn't want to know. Who didn't want to work in partnership and just kept putting up a block. I went home and I think I did cry. I really thought this was going to work, but the frustration of being blocked all the time. It was just 'no, I don't believe in it' and not actually giving me a chance to have a say.....I think it's worse than anything I've actually experienced working with children.*

(Engin, primary school teacher, 24+ years experience)

Another particularly context-specific response came from a primary teacher who was, at the time of the interview, filling the post of SENCo for one term. She struggled with the role and missed her classroom situation:

*Well, the job at the moment, things I don't enjoy is having to deal with areas of the school, you know, things that have gone on within the school, that aren't of your making, or your errors or mistakes, or aren't because of the way you've dealt with it, but you deal with the negative end of it .....with angry children, with angry staff, with angry parents .....you're sort of mopping up.*

(Primary teacher, 10+ years experience)

This highlights the different connection that classroom-based teachers have to the school as a whole and with their own particular class where they possess particular control and power.

Another theme to emerge was that of the links between teachers' work together and rates of staff turnover in a school. Two of the primary school respondents mentioned this. One stated:

*I think there's such a change in staff population that there isn't support .....support networks haven't had a chance to build and haven't had a chance to thrive .....we haven't really got a large senior management team and there's no middle management structure either so basically the support network isn't there like before it was in stepping stones and you knew who you could go to .....alongside your friends you knew who there was and .....I know there's lots of staff who don't feel supported because there's just too many people who need to be supported.....*

And, referring to management:

*you know there's so many demands on their time that it isn't necessarily the first thing on their mind.*

(Diane, primary school teacher, 6+ years experience)

The place of management in supporting staff seems to be prominent in all of the respondents' thinking. There is an expectation of and a disappointment with school managers in how they do their jobs, and direct comments are highly critical:

*I think it's much more bonhomie than structured teamwork.*

He goes on to say:

*I must be a nightmare to manage.*

(Martin, special school teacher, 20+ years experience)

He also talks at length about experience in a previous school where the management actively supported and organised teachers' professional development by ensuring that staff had the opportunity to observe and to be observed by teacher colleagues. In his present school context this did not happen, and he considered this to be symptomatic of a school culture which was complacent, not actively engaged in learning and ongoing development and open to innovation and creativity. Given that the school's recent OFSTED inspection report pronounced the quality of teaching as extremely high and exceptional in some cases, this is a surprising view. This particular individual also had some interesting things to say about the place of friendship and social relationships in the workplace:

*I'm very aware of the political, social nature of groupings within the school and friendships outside the school .....as I said, I belong to all of them or none of them .....I don't think it's tackled head on or in a very secure manner and it ought to be.*

In a sense, this teacher was voicing some of the central issues of the research that I was undertaking, i.e. he articulated an awareness of and a need to address the 'taboo' aspects of the adults' inter-personal world at school (Hargreaves, 1972).

Finally, one last theme to emerge in this section on the negative aspects/experiences of teaching and relationships with teacher colleagues, was that of individual clashes between staff, i.e. the issue of so-called ‘personality’ clashes. A special school teacher says:

*I think staff-wise there are conflicts between staff, personality conflicts and you always feel there could be this tension, sometimes it's not there but you always feel there's the potential, just the way they rub each other up, like the kids.*

(Joyce, special school teacher, 19+ years experience)

However, she then goes on to say that she personally does not have any problems. This resonated with my findings from the study with teacher managers, i.e. that conflicts between teachers were invariably positioned as being exhibited by other ‘rare’ individuals or in the past or as a hypothetical future situation. These classroom-based teacher interview discourses contrasted with those of teacher manager interviews and those which I heard from teachers, classroom-based and management, during my routine work as an EP, in which problems and conflicts between teachers were frequently evident.

### **Teachers’ Views on what Supports and what Hinders Teaching Successfully**

***Question 5} When you consider successful and unsuccessful teaching experiences can you identify any aspects of the school’s organisation or general ethos which contributed to the experience?***

Teachers’ answers to this question fell into seven broad areas: whole school planning, development and ideology, management, ethos, communication, learning culture, teaching group and resources (human and material). Different interviewees located and emphasised different aspects, but some fairly general themes are evident in that teachers talk a great deal about openness, good quality communication, trust, fairness, respect and tolerance. They also see the need for continuing learning for all, adults and children alike, and the framing of problems or mistakes as opportunities and material for development. These attitudes are less possible in an organisation characterised by isolationist and solitary professional practice. The core necessity for socially interactive learning and professional practice is implicit to all of these ideals. Also, there are a number of references to the need for being aware of and

sensitive to people's feelings. Emotion and relationships, those unpredictable, hard to control or measure aspects of the human world, are clearly discernible.

The idea that a teacher could operate in an individualistic and isolated way, in other words in a non-collaborative way, is interesting and alluded to by several interviewees but is also contradicted within the data. The interviews with teachers working with other teachers is referred to as a way of facilitating, planning, thinking, and problem-solving in the work and craft of teaching, getting the job done and achieving results, as a means of accessing emotional and social support, and also as intrinsic to professional development.

The question of how much this needs to be and *is* organised for in the school's formal systems and structures by teacher managers does seem to be an important one. All of the teachers I spoke with acknowledged the importance of managed cycles of teacher meetings. The link between these planned teacher interactions and whole school development initiatives is one that is perceived as being the responsibility of teacher managers but, at the same time, the belief in the importance of teachers' work together appears to be held by individual teachers to greatly varying degrees, if at all.

My question about teachers' perceptions of what helped and/or hindered teaching successfully in the school organisation as a whole, framed as it was and within a research interview, did not appear to reach teachers' hidden assumptions or to yield major surprises. What it did though was to elicit the predictable 'official speak' of how important communication, first principles, ethos etc. are, plus the business model characteristics of systems, structures, evaluation and the like. What was less predictable was the greater emphasis upon the more nebulous and 'process-like' aspects, and emotional and social support, rather than the measurable and end-focused aspects such as planning and evaluation practices and systems. Asking teachers to think about their schools as a whole in relation to their professional practice provoked some surprise and also a small amount of resistance in that several individuals thought the question was too complex to be able to answer usefully.

A number of respondents (four) emphasised the role and function of teacher managers, thus de-emphasising their own individual contribution to or sense of the school as a whole. For example:

*one thing that I can say that I've noticed from working over here, in a lot of schools compared to Australia, ...in a lot of schools the leadership is more overpowering here. The headteachers seem to be a lot more up here and the teachers down here. Whereas the schools that I've worked in Australia, they tend to be more on a level.*

**KC:** *That's interesting.*

*It's just the way that things were conducted, like meetings and that sort of thing.*

**KC:** *So you're wondering why this emphasis on the leadership?*

*Yeah, because I'm not honestly sure if it works?*

**KC:** *The hierarchy?*

*Yeah...and that's why I am emphasizing more of the team working together, you know, that doesn't just apply to us teachers, it applies to heads, deputy heads. I feel that sometimes even the way that assemblies are conducted, it shouldn't be that, you know, different people for the teachers sort of thing. It should be more on an equal basis.*

(Pam, primary school teacher, 10 years experience)

All four interviewees made negatively critical comments like the extract above, which suggested that, in their view, teacher managers were failing in terms of pulling the whole school together and establishing a collective enterprise.

### **Teachers' Views on Relationships in their Current School Settings**

**Question 6}** *How would you describe relationships in general between all members of your school community?*

Participants' responses to this question tended to be of a positive nature and did not feature specific details. I received the impression that the subject had not been given great consideration. However, where participants spoke of negative relationships, a number of repeated themes emerged:

1. The phenomenon of 'cliques' and the emphasis on length of tenure as a member of a school's staff group.

2. The problem of power and authority obstructing relationships, evident not only between teacher managers and teachers, but at every level, i.e. between teachers and parents and pupils and teachers.
3. A lack of respect, collaboration and co-operation, compounded by school systems and structures (particularly management), which places little emphasis upon or practical support for these phenomena.
4. A perception of a blaming and punishing culture in which failure and negative criticism are common.
5. Unskilful, destructive or limited communication at all levels.

All of these themes are explored further in my discussion.

***Question 7} Describe your relationships with: i) Pupils, ii) Other teachers***

***Question 7i} Relationships with Pupils***

Every one of the respondents described their relationships with students as being predominantly good, and amplified these with descriptive words such as respectful, positive, fair, listening, firm and consistent in terms of themselves as teachers. The perception that the teacher was an authority figure whose role had to be clearly defined was expressed repeatedly. Only two respondents, both of whom were female and worked as learning support teachers in the secondary school, described any difficulties and they both thought that where students were rude or disrespectful it was linked to the fact that they, the teachers, did not know the students very well.

***Question 7ii} Relationships with Teachers***

All respondents gave a cautiously positive response to this question. They described their relationships with other teachers as being supportive, professional, helpful and very much linked to the job of work to be done. A majority (16 of 21) qualified their responses with the fact that most relationships were at a polite, professional and acquaintance level. A small number of relatively young and inexperienced teachers (4) mentioned that their relationships with other teachers involved socialising outside of school. They did not see this as an essential prerequisite to good colleague relationships, but rather as more of a positive by-



product. One theme which emerged was that of teachers' views upon the role and responsibility of teacher managers in this area. Several teachers, both male and female and from all of the different school types, voice the idea that teacher managers should lead by example in terms of being collegial, communicating well and through affirming their staff's practice in general.

### **Teachers' Views and Ideas about Ideal and Non-Ideal Teacher Colleague Relationships**

*Question 7.a) How would you describe the 'ideal' colleague relationship?*

*Question 7.b) How would you describe the 'non-ideal' colleague relationship?*

Interviewees were generally surprised to be asked about their 'ideal' and 'non-ideal' teacher colleague relationship, but they all had clear views. The constructs which teachers had identified in relation to themselves as persons who were teachers, were repeated in interviewees' thoughts about ideal colleague relationships, and the same three main aspects were intra- and inter-personal qualities and the apparent stance towards teaching.

Table 4 shows that relatively few comments about teachers' intra-personal characteristics were made. Inter-personal qualities related directly with and overlapped with the final column, approach to teaching. The range and diversity of opinion was similar to that contained in Table 3, as evident from the degree of consensus, shared language and duplication of responses. Interviewees' responses to my questions about ideal and non-ideal colleagues invariably included much more about their perceptions of themselves as individuals than about relationships, in that the characteristics they had described in themselves as teachers were repeated. Table 4 offers a composite of ideal and non-ideal teacher colleague qualities and characteristics; numbers in brackets show the number of respondents who mentioned the same point.

A number of items feature in more than one column. In relation to the ideal teacher colleague qualities and characteristics:

'problem-solver' (4); 'a friend & colleague' (3); 'places high value on learning' (3); 'clear philosophy' (3), and 'team worker' (6).

**Table 4: Study 1. Teachers' Composite Constructs**  
**(Qualities and characteristics of ideal and 'non-ideal' colleagues)**

<b>IDEAL TEACHER COLLEAGUE</b>		
<i>Inter-personal</i>		
<i>Intra-personal</i>		<i>Approach to teaching</i>
	easy to get on with (2)	
fallible	good & honest communicator	professional, keeps personal
open-minded	(2)	feelings back (2)
patient	a whole person (2)	problem-solver (4)
not too serious or	problem-solver	not an advice giver
overpowering	humorous	places high value on learning
easygoing	down-to-earth	(3)
engenders respect	a friend & colleague (3)	clear philosophy (3)
honest	able to disagree & reach	team worker (6)
constructively	consensus	sharer
critical	loyal & trustworthy	competent (2)
		enjoys work
		supportive
		accepting

In relation to the non-ideal teacher colleague qualities and characteristics, these include: 'hard to get on with' (3); 'not supportive' (4); 'jobs-worth' (3), and 'destructively critical' (3).

**NON-IDEAL TEACHER  
COLLEAGUE**

***Intra-personal***

negative  
inflexible (2)  
over-confident  
self-centred  
makes ignorance a  
virtue  
not warm  
not sincere

***Inter-personal***

hard to get on with (3)  
critical (2)  
gossips  
non-communicator (2)  
rude  
inundates with paper  
not supportive (4)  
not open to change  
offloads  
antagonistic/hostile (2)

***Approach to teaching***

'jobs-worth' (3)  
inflexible (2)  
destructively critical (3)  
know-all  
over competent incompetent  
no real commitment  
self-interested  
too demanding (2)  
not a team player  
non-sharer  
abuses power  
competitive  
individualistic (2)  
not supportive  
no initiative (2)

Some items possibly conflict with each other, for example, it would be a fine balance to ensure both: 'fallible' and 'competent', 'whole person/honest' and 'keeps personal feelings back', and 'over-confident' and 'incompetent'. The idea of being a whole and congruent person, yet professional and emotionally contained, is a high demand and one not overtly stated but constantly required.

The issue of balancing management and colleague relationship demands is evident. When teachers were referring to the non-ideal teacher colleague who made too many demands, abused power and inundated one with paper communications, they were all referring to colleagues in management positions.

Another issue to arise is that of whether or not an ideal colleague should be a personal friend out of school. Three respondents raised this notion but qualified it by saying that if other optimal qualities such as openness, trust and being a whole person were present, it was hard *not to* become friends. However, they were not saying this was a necessary prerequisite for the ideal colleague relationship, rather a positive and welcomed side effect.

### **Teachers' Views on Relationships with Teacher Colleagues in their Current School Settings**

***Question 8} If you were to imagine the teaching staff group as a whole in your school and thought of that as a 'whole', as 100%, what proportions (percentages) would you give to:***

- a} The colleagues with whom you had a very good relationship?***
- b} The colleagues with whom you had a fairly neutral relationship?***
- c} The colleagues with whom you had a very difficult relationship?***

Responses were rather mixed. Nine interviewees saw relationships with colleagues in their schools as entirely positive, eight viewed them as entirely negative and four as mixed. Table 5 presents this data in more detail, and in terms of school type.

None of the special school teachers viewed relationships with their peers as negative. Fewer primary teachers than secondary teachers saw relationships with colleagues as being negative.

A surprisingly small number, i.e. four of twenty-one respondents, viewed relationships as a mixture of positive and negative.

**Table 5: Study 1. Classroom-based teachers' perceptions of quality of workplace relationships in their schools**

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>No. of respondents who view relationships* in their schools entirely positively</b>	<b>No. of respondents who view relationships* in their schools entirely negatively</b>	<b>No. of respondents who view relationships* in their schools as positive &amp; negative</b>
<b>Special</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Primary (school 1)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Primary (school 2)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>All primary</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Whole sample</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>

Responses which described relationships between teachers in respondents' schools as positive, refer to reciprocity, equality as opposed to hierarchy, co-operation, flexibility, respect, communication and openness. These themes will be pursued further in the discussion. The subjectivity, subtlety and fragility of the quality of relationships in complex school organisations, in some cases under the added pressure of OFSTED failure, were also strongly evident.

The question of what teachers do in terms of problem-solving and taking constructive actions about difficult relationships with colleagues, is not one that is addressed in respondents' answers. This omission may serve a purpose, i.e. that by not acknowledging problems in relation to their involvement in each other's work, teachers may consider that these problems will disappear or be of no importance. Rather than try to resolve these difficulties, it has been suggested that teachers make a concerted effort to maintain a professional teacher persona and leave such problems outside the classroom.

*'I think the students are very quick to pick up if you aren't getting along with someone else.*

**KC:** *Another member of staff?*

*Oh yes ....and that's bad from the point of view that if they see staff not getting on they say well why should we get on with staff if you don't get on with one another....so wherever I've worked, that's the thing with EBD [reference to previous work with students with emotional and behavioural difficulties] we tried never to let our differences go into the classroom with us.'*

(Jennifer, secondary teacher, 15 years experience)

The way in which I had worded Question 8 proved problematic for many of the interviewees. In almost every case they questioned the idea, implicit to the question, that *they* might have *any* difficult relationships with other teachers. Nineteen interviewees were able to answer the question. Three of the respondents did not feel that they could give any specific answer. One of these, the male special school teacher, said that he either had good relationships with everyone or none, and refused to say that he differentiated in any way at all between different colleagues. Another, a female secondary teacher, simply replied that no relationships were perfect and therefore it was not possible to put figures to them. I overcame the problem of these two respondents' difficulties in answering the question by placing their responses in the neutral category.

Teachers perceive their workplace relationships to be largely positive or neutral and rarely to be difficult. Sixteen of the nineteen respondents state that 5% or less of all possible workplace relationships with colleagues were very difficult, with thirteen saying that none of their workplace relationships were in the very difficult bracket.

Eight of the nineteen respondents, all female but from all of the different school types, estimated their very good colleague relationships as constituting 60% or more of the whole teaching staff group. This was surprising, given that in the secondary school, the number of teacher colleagues was in excess of 80 people.

There was little mention of conflict, tension and difficulty in relationships between teachers and my question about the proportion of difficult teachers' workplace relationships within a

staff group, elicited a common response of an estimate which was extremely small, i.e. less than 5%. However, when pressed for actual examples of conflict and tension between teachers, I got a sense of something very real, which usually related to different inter-personal styles, different pedagogies and philosophies of teaching.

The idea that such problems might relate to ‘personality’, the essential person, was disowned, placed in other colleagues or minimised as not happening in the current time and context, or else was expressed as something that had been ‘sorted’ or was trivialised as a minor blip or due to a human fallibility.

Interviewees frequently attributed problematic teachers’ workplace relationships as arising directly from resource shortages. Implicit in these responses is the belief that, given unlimited resources (material and human), there would be little to disagree about. The fantasy about such school contexts appeared to be strong, but also was one which was unrealisable and therefore was a way of justifying problematic situations. This train of thought would imply that generously staffed and financed schools could be relatively free of conflict and tension. My sample included such a school – the special school had classes with as few as four pupils and high levels of staffing in order to address a range of complex special educational needs. All of the four class teachers placed great importance upon the fact that the staff group were very mature, stable and experienced, but it was still apparent that this was a working environment which was by no means problem-free:

*....the other thing that I think affects, maybe hinders the effective teaching is staff morale which is sometimes at a very low ebb .....sometimes, not always .....it's just a case where most of the time there's enough strong people to keep everybody up but occasionally everybody starts to crack at the same time and it's usually towards the end of terms or like in OFSTED week when everybody was like whoooo as much as everybody was trying to be Mr and Miss Calm there is underneath that a ....deep ....so if staff morale is low then obviously that, I think, makes a big difference because if your morale is low it affects your whole attitude to being here.*

(Joyce, special school teacher, 19 years experience)

Another teacher from the same school context, said:



*I think staff-wise there are conflicts between staff, personality conflicts and you always feel there could be this tension, sometimes it's not there but you always feel there's the potential, just the way they rub each other up, like the kids. I don't feel I have that with any particular member of staff. I don't think I'm likely to explode with anyone in particular or say curt comments. I would make rude comments, not as a cutting comment but as a joke...it's humour sometimes I've been in staff meetings where comments have been quite cutting and you've known they've been meant and that is just a personality thing but I don't feel, I hope that I get on with everyone...and I suppose I have a moan about people ....*

(Rosina, special school, 4 years experience)

These extracts suggest that the dynamics and interactions between teachers in the school context are an important, complex and ever changing area.

### **Change Possibilities**

***Question 9} What ideas do you have for improving teachers' relationships in your school setting?***

The responses to Question 9 were analysed and categorised into three major themes, which were evident at either individual or organisational levels: communication, control and support. Many responses – which linked to the teachers' need and capacity for giving and receiving support – related to individual qualities of teachers, at all levels. The systems and structures of the school or possible contribution from colleagues in management positions were barely mentioned and, where they were, it was in connection with the problematic rather than as actively and positively supportive.

Under 'communication', interviewees collectively voiced an awareness of the need for and importance of good quality dialogue, information-giving and problem-solving. Again, as for 'support', attributions for this happening or improving were related to individual teachers' qualities. Very little mention was made of larger systems and strategy in the school organisation as a whole. However, again, formal power and the fact that this belonged to adults in the school context, and to some (in accordance with their positions), more than others, was an aspect of communication that was seen as problematic and difficult to acknowledge and address.

‘Control’ (as are ‘support’ and ‘communication’) is an issue faced by all teachers, is an organising construct and is problematic. This section was the largest of the three, being the focus for much of what teachers had to say about their working with other teachers and what facilitated them. The issue of teacher managers’ different and difficult role and function, i.e. in connection with adults in the school *as well as* students, arose repeatedly. Unlike data regarding ‘support’ and ‘communication’, much of the data did not relate to individual qualities of teachers but rather to school systems and structures:

*I would say in one sentence that a lot of people feel threatened by a lot of other people. Pupils feel threatened by teachers’ positions, teachers feel threatened by heads’ positions.....*

*...definitely the hierarchy, the management structure is not as it should be. Particularly here. It’s all done through phase managers. It’s all disseminated down. They don’t get, whatever people say ...you can call these phase managers little heads if you like, it’s not that it just goes to create a divide, a segregation of year groups within the school. And then the teachers don’t have the contact, that input, you know, just that sense of being connected.....If you take a step back it’s quite funny because, um, the people are resenting decisions being made for them, being given to them....the teachers can feel they’re not included, and it does feel like that at times.*

(Mike primary teacher, newly qualified)

## Conclusions

The main conclusions for Study 1A (the initial part of Study 1), conducted entirely with teacher managers, were, firstly, that an official stated belief existed that teachers’ involvement in each other’s work is generally unproblematic. Where problems between teachers existed, they were attributed to problematic individuals who, it was suggested, could be fulfilling a necessary function for the whole school system. Secondly, it was found that ensuring effective teachers’ involvement in each other’s work was deemed a management responsibility and yet the power differential between managers and classroom-based teachers mitigated against this. Thirdly, the potential unhelpfulness of outside agencies, such as OFSTED, in relation to teachers’ involvement in each other’s work, was highlighted.

In order to explore the above findings in relation to classroom-based teachers, Study 1B was

conducted. One finding was that teachers did not cite teachers' involvement in each other's work as a reason for entering the profession. In addition, in terms of teachers' personal constructs, there appeared to be a dichotomy between the individual as a person and as a teacher. Constructs could be categorised as either intra-personal, inter-personal or in terms of one's approach to teaching. Again, there was relatively little reference to teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Teachers did not tend to make connections between their involvement in each other's work and their levels of job satisfaction. Reasons for teachers' involvement in each other's work included the desires for belonging, accessing support, problem-solving, sharing responsibility and getting teaching work done effectively. However, despite these perceived benefits, some interviewees considered solitary practice to be a viable alternative. Teachers did not report a great deal of sharing of responsibility between them and colleagues, and it was more evident in classroom-based teachers than amongst managers.

Classroom-based teachers held the same official line about the importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work as teacher managers did. Few mentioned the negative aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work. Relationships between teachers were generally presented as positive, polite, professional, helpful and business-like. Friendship was not seen as necessary to ensuring good working relationships. However, a link was made between teachers' involvement in each other's work and staff retention. Where problems between teachers existed, they were referred to as personality clashes or attributed to limited school resources, and such problems were rarely owned by individual interviewees. There was little evidence of efforts to resolve such difficulties. Reasons for problematic teachers' involvement in each other's work included staffroom cliques, teachers' length of tenure, a lack of respect, collaboration and co-operation, blame, punishment, failure and criticism, and poor communication.

Ideal and non-ideal colleagues were described in relation to intra-personal qualities, inter-personal qualities and their stance towards teaching. Ideal teacher qualities were similar to teachers' own personal constructs, suggesting that similarities between teachers might lead to better quality teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Managers were seen to have an important role in relation to supporting teachers' involvement

in each other's work, for example, in terms of modelling collegiality. Power and authority, however, were seen to obstruct teachers' involvement in each other's work and the challenges of balancing manager and colleague demands were recognised.

The school setting may be a factor influencing the quality of involvement with colleagues. Teachers from primary schools considered a greater proportion of their involvement with other teachers to be more positive than their secondary counterparts did. Special school teachers saw an even greater proportion of their involvement with other teachers to be more positive than primary school teachers did.

Where largely positive teachers' involvement in each other's work existed, the following conditions were viewed as important: equality as opposed to hierarchy, reciprocity, flexibility, communication, co-operation, respect and openness. This was supported by teachers' beliefs about what was necessary for effective teachers' involvement in each other's work: openness, communication, trust, fairness, respect, tolerance, continuing professional development, a non-blame culture and sensitivity. Comments made in relation to improving teachers' involvement in each other's work fell into three categories: control, support and communication.

### **Questions for further exploration**

Leading from the findings from Studies 1A and 1B, the following questions arose:

- How much teacher involvement in the work of other teachers is and should be organised within the school's formal systems and structures by teacher managers?
- Are there any inhibiting factors and elements for teachers' involvement in each other's work, such as the involvement of outside agencies?
- Do selection, recruitment and training procedures recognise, investigate and/or privilege individual teachers/teacher applicants' capacity and commitment to work with other teachers?
- How are roles and responsibilities negotiated and made explicit when teachers work together?

- How common are problems related to teachers' involvement in the work of other teachers, what causes them and how are they addressed?
- Are there any facilitating factors and elements for teachers' involvement in each other's work, such as similarities between individuals?
- Does the involvement of teacher managers in actively supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work require particular intra-personal and attitudinal qualities? Does this involvement present any difficulties and what are these?
- How do teacher managers achieve a balance between personal and professional, colleague and manager?
- Do teacher managers consider that the school setting makes a difference in terms of teachers' involvement in the work of other teachers?
- At what level is teacher involvement in the work of other teachers perceived to be going well and what contributes to this perception?

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Results from Studies Two and Three**

In order to address the questions arising from the analysis of the 36 interview transcripts with teacher managers and classroom-based teachers from Study 1, Study 2 was carried out with deputy head teachers. Transcripts from interviews with deputy head teachers in Study 1 demonstrated that these participants had a lot to say about teachers' involvement in each other's work, relative to classroom-based teachers and head teachers. This indicated that deputy heads had previously given this topic some thought, whether or not they had articulated it. Deputy heads appeared to view teachers' involvement in each other's work as key to carrying out their own jobs, and they made more connections between teachers' work together and other aspects of their schools. A number of strong themes arising from the findings of Study 2 are presented in this chapter.

The aim of Study 3 was to find out if highly experienced, non school-based Local Authority Education Officers would identify similar issues to those raised by deputy heads in Study 2. The rationale for conducting Study 3 with LEA officers was that most of the participants in Study 2 considered their views to be of a local nature, i.e. specifically related to their own school situation. By interviewing local authority personnel, I hoped to clarify school specific aspects of the findings and find out if any of the findings might apply more widely, i.e. from the viewpoint of an education professional working in many different schools and with large numbers of teachers. Some strong themes arose from Study 3, and were similar to those in Study 2. This can be partially attributed to the questions that were asked; however, these questions were sufficiently open-ended for the similarities between Study 2 and Study 3 to possess real world validity.

In this chapter, the results from Study 2 and 3 have been presented together in order to compare and contrast the views of two groups of education professionals, whose positions and roles afford different perspectives. In this way, the research is designed to identify any pervasive themes which will contribute to a better understanding of views about teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Study 2 was based upon a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix XII). Following interviews with 13 participants, a coding frame was developed, based on points arising from the literature, findings from Study 1 and from the initial reading of the Study 2 transcripts.

The key codes identified were:

1. The perceived links between whole school function and teachers' work involving other teachers
2. The perceived links between effective school management and teachers' work involving other teachers
3. The perceived links between teaching effectively and teachers' work involving other teachers
4. The perceived links between teachers' well-being and teachers' work involving other teachers
5. Views about teachers' work involving other teachers within the life cycle and development of a teacher
6. The perceived benefits, and function, of teachers *not* being involved in work with other teachers.

The 13 transcripts were organised according to the six areas of the coding framework. It was striking that all items within the key code area 'perceived benefits, and function, of teachers *not* being involved in work with other teachers' cross-referenced to the first five areas. In effect, participants had expressed the view that for every beneficial effect of teachers working together, a parallel disadvantage existed.

Further in-depth analysis of Study 2 transcripts suggested these six codes did not sufficiently capture all of the data and, therefore, the following seven themes were developed in relation to teachers' involvement in each other's work:

1. Intra-personal and inter-personal aspects
2. Practical implications
3. Teachers' learning and development
4. Ownership
5. School management and school policy
6. Teacher retention
7. Government



The above seven main themes arising from Study 2 are represented diagrammatically in **APPENDIX XVII**. Participants' perceptions about the relationship between these themes, in terms of the direction of influence, are also depicted.

Table 6 presents these seven themes in greater detail by including broad summaries of opposing views in relation to these themes.

**Table 6**  
**Study 2. Seven major themes**

Category			
<b>1. Intra-personal and inter-personal aspects</b>	<p>Work involving other teachers is supportive as it supports and reflects both aspects of individuals' personal and social characteristics.</p> <p>Engaging with other teachers and pupils is fundamental to being a good teacher.</p>	<b>OR</b>	<p>Work involving other teachers makes the job complicated and emotional and less efficient.</p> <p>Teachers can be good at teaching and relate well to kids and <u>not</u> engage in work involving other teachers and vice versa.</p>
<b>1. Teachers view the personal and social qualities of teachers as making a difference to the quality of the experience of teaching.</b>			
<b>Teachers need to relate well to pupils in their practice but this does not necessitate relating to other teachers.</b>			

<b>2. Practical aspects</b>	Work involving other teachers helps to get the practical tasks of teaching done.	<b>OR</b>	Work involving other teachers can hinder working effectively as it can produce more work, i.e. planning and communicating, and can result in feeling less in control.
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**2. Some teachers view involvement with colleagues as helpful in relation to some aspects of teaching work.**

<b>3. Teachers' learning and development</b>	The most effective continuing professional development involves teachers' work together.	<b>OR</b>	Teachers can feel held back by other teachers in their learning.
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**3. Teachers have different and individual styles of professional learning and some do not welcome involvement with colleagues.**

<b>4. Ownership</b>	Teachers get on with work involving other teachers and teacher managers should facilitate it.	<b>OR</b>	Teachers' involvement in other teachers' work needs to be supported by external professionals like psychologists and counsellors.
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**4. The work of teachers involving other teachers belongs to teachers, including teacher managers, or it can be supported by external agencies.**

<b>5. School management and school policy</b>	Teachers' involvement in each other's work should be managed as it affects the functioning of the whole school.	<b>OR</b>	Teachers object to their involvement in each other's work being managed.
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**5. Managers are responsible for actively supporting the involvement of teachers in each other's work but teachers can object to this aspect of their practice being managed.**

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<b>6. Teacher retention</b>	If teachers are involved in each other's work, teachers are less inclined to move on and more attached to their schools.	<b>OR</b>	If teachers are involved in each other's work, they are less attached to their schools and more likely to move on.
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**6. The amount of teachers' involvement in each other's work affects whether teachers remain in their post or change posts.**

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<b>7. Government</b>	Teachers' involvement in each other's work is influenced by government policy.	<b>OR</b>	Teachers' involvement in each other's work is beyond the scope and remit of government.
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**7. Some participants considered that teachers' involvement in each other's work was an area which was entirely outside of the remit of government.**

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The data from Study 3 was organised using the same seven themes developed for Study 2, as listed in Table 6.

The data for Studies Two and Three are presented according to these seven themes below, and interview extracts are presented in order to illustrate particular points.

Because of the small-scale nature of the study and the rich and individual nature of the views expressed, I did not extract data regarding the exact number of participants voicing particular ideas. Instead, I indicate, where appropriate, whether the general views are representative of a minority or majority of respondents.

## 1. Intra-Personal and Inter-Personal Aspects

### Study 2

One point about which participants were unanimous was that teaching inevitably involved relationships. Participants made many references to the importance of inter-personal connections between themselves and others members of the school population, which involved emotional ties, a sense of commitment, familiarity and time, to varying degrees, but the place of involvement with other teachers was not so clear.

Some participants saw the nature of teachers' involvement in each other's work as being reflective of healthy and helpful intra-personal and inter-personal aspects of individual teachers and the whole school system. Most participants expressed the view that the school was a better place to work in if teachers were involved in a positive way with each other. Several individuals made direct references to the effects on health and general well-being. A general view existed that the personal and social qualities of teachers made a difference to the quality of the experience of teaching and to pupils' learning.

Several participants stressed the personally and emotionally supportive aspects of teachers working together:

*It facilitate teachers working together... ..if people are more upbeat it benefits the children. We have less sickness. It is much more open and people are prepared to take risks without feeling worried about making mistakes.*

(Frank, primary school, 30+ years)

Positive involvement of teachers in each other's work was also construed as contributing to a healthy and effective inter-personal climate in the school as a whole, and was deemed a positive social model for the students:

*I do really believe that how the adults behave definitely affects how the children behave and if the adults don't model it (working together) how are the children going to learn?*

(Bulut, primary school special deputy, 5+ years experience)

However, various reasons for inter-personal problems between teachers were suggested. One participant said that these problems related to divisions between staff and teachers *not* working together:

*there are ways you want to work and ideals that you have but things can break down ....there are little clumps of people having a go and passing it around and it's like a domino effect.....it's usually stuff that people aren't talking about and it gets stored up and it's very destructive..it can be a real disease that can really spread if you are not careful about how it's managed.*

(Bulut, special primary school, deputy, 5+ years experience)

Most participants thought that teachers should ideally have good relationships with both pupils and other staff:

*The baseline is liking children, but teachers that can work with other teachers they immediately seem to have a bigger connection and understanding with the purpose of teaching and they seem to have a bigger impact in the classroom.*

(Dave, primary school, 30+ years experience)

*They [good teachers] can read people and it is recognised that they have a command of children and it is all down to personal relationships....working with other teachers fits into this.*

(Helen, primary, 15+ years experience)

However, the relationship between teachers' inter-personal behaviour towards each other and teaching effectively would not appear to be a straightforward equation. One view that was expressed was that it was possible to get on well with other adults but not so well with the children:

*I have known lots of people who can relate really well to the adults and are great in a team but their classroom practice doesn't work. I wouldn't say that's uncommon either.*

(Dave, primary school, 30+ years experience)

All participants thought that relationships with children was core to their work; another perspective held by some participants was that it is the inter-personal skills possessed by teachers in relating to children that enables them to teach well, and that good inter-personal skills with peers is not essential:

*I think that some staff that I know like to work independently, maybe because they have a certain kind of relationship with the students and they don't want that interfered with.*

(Kristy, primary school, special, 15+ years experience)

*It is possible to be a good teacher and to not work with other teachers. ....It can happen with certain teachers. In every school there are some that work like that. I think in every school you are going to get one or two who have an element of isolation and they have their reasons for doing so and as long as they are not feeling left out of the scenario.....that's their style of practice.*

(Emily, primary school, 10 years experience)

However, another view was expressed in that some teachers often allied or related to pupils at the expense of their teaching effectiveness and the optimal function of the school as a whole:

*you will fail children if you don't work well with other teachers. If you don't work in a team you are colluding with the children and not with the staff – being a part of the whole team – knowing your part.*

(Carol, special secondary school, 10+ years experience)

### **Study 3**

Participants viewed the intra-personal and inter-personal aspects of teachers' work together as contributing both positive and negative experiences. In terms of the positive: fun, enjoyment, companionship, stress relief, support, alleviation of isolation and increased morale, prestige and confidence were mentioned. One participant, speaking of the development of more collaborative approaches to teachers' professional development and school development said:

*In the early 60s changes in the curriculum and teaching practice were developed more and more by the actual teachers. The pleasure and fun of working together, of interactive working was enormously important in all of this.*

(Marion)

When considering the negative, the following were described: criticism between colleagues, a lack of mutual respect, conflicts and tensions, inequities of power and voice, less control and more risk, difficulties within group dynamics and difficult and/or unpopular individuals:

*The process of reaching a consensus may not be straight forward and the hierarchical nature of schools means that not everyone has equal voice or say so and this affects who is selected, who is content and/or who sets agendas.*

(Linda)

*There is an issue regarding how adults respond to other adults because they have less control than when they are in a power position with children.*

(Madeleine)

Another participant talked of the 'ego defences' of individual teachers and the resulting rigidity. He thought problems could arise through a lack of self-awareness:

*in terms of teachers being self aware regarding how their personalities fit into the whole picture.*

(Bill)

A further example of difficulties, this time driven by a view that personal agendas could obstruct teachers' involvement in each other's work, was:

*I remember in one collaborative project one member of staff, a certain person who was very involved in union activity, was difficult and made everything problematic. He saw the project as slowly eroding his maintenance of the status quo and he was very negative in general. It took time to put him in his place because he used the project as a platform.*

(Cassie)



However, she offered yet another perspective in relation to the effects of individuals on group dynamics between teachers:

*It is 50% about personality and 50% context. Some teachers work brilliantly in collaboration in one school but then move and don't collaborate in another.*

(Cassie)

The task of managing the dialogue between colleagues within organised staff group sessions relating to teachers' and school development, was highlighted as an area which could be problematic. One participant spoke of how, for some individual characters, *not* working together could be functional:

*a very self confident young woman was attending the panel meetings and held forth on Key Stage 3 assessment -- she over-talked and did not listen and she actually wasn't as good as she thought she was but she dominated the group.*

(Marion)

*when there is a particularly powerful character and it is hard on the facilitator and upon the rest of the group. It can affect group processes and roles in groups very destructively.*

(Marion)

As has already been mentioned, the solution to some of these issues was seen to lie in providing input on work with colleagues during initial teacher training and also in empowering, developing and supporting the school's management. The inter-personal climate of the school's management team was viewed as setting the scene for the staffroom and in the school as a whole. Time for dialogue between colleagues was viewed as very important. Another proposed solution was to ensure that dialogue between colleagues within organised staff group sessions relating to teachers' and school development was managed skilfully.

Overall, the interviewees thought that a supportive and positive inter-personal climate in the school required a delicate balance of sensitive and skilled management, which provided a structure and conditions for positive inter-personal relationships, actively modelled positive relationships with colleagues and managed and learnt from conflict so that teachers themselves could be open and constructive. The point made by Marion about the capacity of an external facilitator to shuffle staff around and to get them to work in different combinations and to have different interactions, is an important one because of its implications for leadership and for leadership support in schools:

*This is the big skill of leadership . Establishing groups that work takes time and skill. You need confidence and you must negotiate with everyone.*

(Marion)

The question of how such a climate might be developed was seen as core to teachers' and school development and facilitating groups was seen as a key skill necessary for school managers' and external facilitators' work together. Various aspects of this work were highlighted, i.e. the importance of identifying and working with leaders within groups, the need for open agendas and agreed priorities, an explicit and shared awareness of potential conflict and individual risk within group dynamics.

## **2. Practical aspects**

### **Study 2**

Participants spoke of the benefits of teachers working together as relating largely to human resources issues, i.e. cover and support teaching:

*Teachers welcome it in terms of having additional staff who can come in and help and support such as behaviour support services coming in and also doing some work with new teachers I think all of that is welcoming ....but the difficulty is fitting it in with everything else. ....where does the planning time come from, I know we have the workforce agreement but ...*

(Amanda, secondary school, 30+ years experience)

However, a number of participants saw teachers' working together as potentially involving more work, i.e. additional communication, planning, adapting to different ways of work and increasing the emotional strain. Working alongside each other was also seen as contributing to increasing teachers' role strain through its requirement for teachers to operate in a more interchangeable way.

Some participants also viewed involvement in each other's work as contributing to a less business-like approach to the work and to a less curriculum focused practice:

*I think that time is always going to be a key issue.*

(Amanda, secondary school, 30+ years experience)

However, an alternative view was that this way of working was too business-like:

*I don't think it is necessary. I think it can run as an institution without it. It would be more like a business.*

(Ina, secondary school, 17+ years experience)

Although most interviewees saw involvement with colleagues as helpful, this was very conditional upon the existence of right conditions for detailed planning and role clarity being in place, i.e. time and support to do this. There were some very clear ideas about what practical measures would make teachers' work together more possible:

*It would have a great effect if we had two full time cover teachers.*

(Dave, primary school, 30+ years experience)

However, some participants thought that extra staffing could actually make teaching more difficult if these conditions were not ensured, as it extended teachers' remit to include managing other adults.

### **Study 3**

Interviewees talked of the many beneficial effects of teachers' work together, such as: planning across or between subjects, problem-solving, assessment, addressing the needs of children with SENs, delivering the curriculum, providing good models of social behaviour to the children and generally working with children directly. Some specific examples included: the work of a hearing impairment unit; work in an ESBD setting; teachers in a secondary school and feeder primary schools working together to make secondary transfer go more smoothly; staff year group teams meeting for planning curriculum and national curriculum levels, and teachers preparing resources or a sequence of lessons or working on the pupils' files. One participant also highlighted a positive by-product of teachers being practically involved in helping each other to do their work:

*Examples I have come across recently tend to be where teachers are working in a topic/subject based way – they tend to be happier.*

(Jack)

A commonly expressed view was that teachers' working together would save time spent on planning and ease the load:

*The demands upon teachers are such that you can't do everything yourself.*

(Marion)

A negative aspect of teachers' sharing the practical work of teaching included the idea that younger and/or fragile pupils would be adversely affected by arrangements such as job-shares, which would entail pupils having to cope with numerous staff and the resulting changes and different teaching styles.

One participant pointed out that where teachers' involvement in each other's work is viewed as being a good idea but not considered practically helpful, it may, in reality, be little more than physical proximity in the workspace of the school:

*You actually see little of teachers working together It seems a bit like children's parallel playing in which the staff work alongside rather than with each other.*

(Madeleine)

The assertion was made that teachers' involvement in each other's work should arise from a genuine need and should not be of a tokenistic nature. Commenting upon a project involving a secondary school and primary school, a participant stressed the need for real pupil and school development needs to give rise to effective projects:

*The pupil needs underpinned and drove this piece of work.*

(Cassie)

It was recognised that different types of teaching work could mean that requiring staff to work together would not be meaningful or useful, for example, requiring early-years teachers to work with Key Stage 3 and 4 teachers on curriculum planning. This is especially true of teachers in a one-form entry school where there would perhaps be less need to plan or work together for their everyday curriculum work, although the need for staff to come together for new whole school initiatives would continue.

It was agreed that a model that supported teachers' work together had to allow space for individual practice. A relaxed and sociable model of facilitating teachers' work together was seen as particularly useful:

*Sometimes if staff get together and share a bottle of wine there can be more of a relaxed atmosphere and they can sort out things like SEN and planning for classes.*

(Linda)

All agreed that there should be planned room for informal and formal collaboration between teachers, and that staffrooms were important places for enabling this as long as the climate of communication was a constructive one.

It was frequently acknowledged that that the sheer quantity of work intrinsic to teachers' involvement in each other's work meant that more time would be needed and would have to

be built in by management, who would also need to take a long-term view of the benefits. One interviewee thought that some of the most innovative collaborative work between teachers tended to get cut before any other projects because the effects were not apparent immediately:

*It ensures value for money but it does need facilitation and initial investment which results in a longer term payback; there are many benefits and it influences so much.*

(Cassie)

Participants considered that staff needed a classroom-related reason for coming together and that supporting teachers' work together in a meaningful way required managers to be present in classrooms and/or to have their own classroom practice. The view was also expressed that classroom-based teachers' increasing management role in managing support staff should be utilised across the whole school teaching group. In this way, there would be a greater available pool of expertise for supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work in order to support the practicalities of teaching.

### **3. Teachers' learning and development**

#### **Study 2**

Participants emphasised the benefits of teachers' involvement in each other's work to teachers' professional development, stating that it supported growth and learning:

*actually going and seeking help and support, new ideas and not being stagnant in what you're doing.*

(Amanda, secondary school, 30+ years experience)

*We all have areas of expertise and I give advice and ideas so we can work as a team. Staff have to do this for each other.*

(Matt, primary school, 30+ years experience)

*Yes, teachers can't develop in isolation at all. Some of the most successful INSET is when good practice is videoed and shared with the staff and when peer observations are arranged.*

(Len, secondary school, 32+ years experience)

*I think it [the advanced teacher initiative] is a great idea to be honest because it's using skills you know are in a good school with good support and management and stuff but maybe there are other schools where the management can't always do that or aren't as skilled or whatever.*

(Bulut, special primary school, deputy, 5+ years experience)

There were also a number of comments about the part played by teachers' work together in supporting the development of NQTs:

*Newly qualified teachers always find it difficult and they need support as a priority.*

(Helen, primary school, 15+ years experience)

However, the situation was not seen as completely positive and some drawbacks were voiced:

*If you are the brightest of a bunch of NQTs you know and you are sort of sitting through the sort of line 'em up it is the same dilemma and most of the time you are happy to do it and the brightest one in the group is happy to do it but there are times when you just think let me get on with it.*

(Ina, secondary school, 17+ years experience)

Government initiatives such as the 'extended school' initiative were viewed as requiring teachers to extend and develop their usual teaching role and to work together more. However, the view was also expressed that being required to work with other teachers could add extra stress and make it less likely that teachers would choose to meet and communicate with each other spontaneously in their everyday practice.

The issue of the sheer cost and time required to support teachers' work together, was seen as being difficult to justify in the short-term:



*considering the amount of funding we get in a school of this size it won't pay for non contact for every member of staff and so we need to think creatively.*

(Emily, primary school, 10+years)

Participants spoke of the different individual styles, needs and stages of individual teachers' development and a need for this to be recognised in the facilitation of teachers' learning and development. More experienced teachers expressed the view that the whole concept of working with other teachers was something which came more easily to experienced teachers; in other words, it could be construed as a stage in the developmental lifecycle of teachers:

*It's something that I think it takes a long time in teaching to understand what working together with other teachers are because certainly when I started you didn't want to work together with other teachers, you almost wanted to be by yourself and you know, allowed to sort of invent your own practice...by about three years after I started teaching it became more apparent how people reacted and worked together...*

(Dave, primary school, 30+ years experience)

These participants also viewed more experienced colleagues as being more likely to understand and appreciate their colleagues.

### **Study 3**

Participants considered that teachers' work together played an important and intrinsic part in professional development within the development of the school as a whole and in terms of facilitating management policy agendas. The view was voiced that teachers' working together was intrinsic to school change. Also, participants thought that the complex processes involved in this work together made it essential to allow adequate time and to resist external pressures to improve too quickly, i.e. Local Authority and Government, in adopting off-the-peg, quick-fix approaches. The level of teachers working together was seen as reflecting the whole school ethos and, where there was a poor ethos which was closed to learning, it was thought unlikely that much work together would be evident. One participant said:

*It shouldn't feel like supervision... "It should be an aspect of reflective teaching, the way the whole school works.*

(Rebecca)

Working with other teachers was seen as an important criterion for individual professional excellence:

*I can't think of any examples of very good teachers who do not want to work together. Most of the best teachers whom I have known are willing and want to share.*

(Marion)

Teachers' work together was also viewed as core to developing new ideas and to professional development:

*it means deepening and broadening teachers' pedagogies – through the art and science of teaching, though methods, approaches, techniques. This is completely underpinned by professionals' views of the importance of relationships.*

(Jack)

*Your ideas can be supported and weaker situations can be supported so that things can improve.*

(Marion)

Interviewees made a distinction between management-led instruction and teacher colleague-led training, favouring the latter and stressing the importance of a task-focused, curriculum-centred approach. Professional development, which included peer support and mentoring, was seen as the most successful professional development approach.

Links with authority-based training, websites and 'best practice registers' were made, and teachers' working together was viewed as the ideal vehicle for utilising these. The trend towards school-based as opposed to centre-based training and to peer observation was viewed as being supportive of teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Group level professional development arrangements for teachers were viewed as important:

*In terms of the group aspects, teachers' language develops, their ideas develop through talking about them to colleagues and rehearsing them. Having established beliefs and ideas challenged can be difficult but some groups make the experience less uncomfortable, actually help to open people up.*

(Marion)

However, there was another, less helpful aspect of this mode of professional development, in that it could actually make it harder to highlight and address individual professional weakness:

*When someone is very weak – it is difficult to pull someone up or be critical in a situation where teachers are working together.*

(Marion)

Whilst school-based, group level initiatives were viewed as an ideal means for supporting professional development, they were also seen as potentially problematic. For example, the opportunity for overly didactic and self-promoting individuals to use these professional development experiences as personal platforms could adversely affect group dynamics. In this situation, it was considered vital that skilled and knowledgeable, external group facilitators could be involved and could deliberately encourage staff to interact in different ways.

Teachers' involvement in each other's work together was seen as particularly important for NQTs. One participant made the point that until two or three years ago, teacher training and initial standards for NQTs did not include anything on work with other staff in the school and, even now, work specifically done with other teachers was not generally featured.

In terms of effects on practice and the development of better ideas, teachers' work together was seen as helpful but the view was also expressed that some more experienced staff might actually obstruct work with newer colleagues in order to repress new ideas and the imperative for change, or that newly qualified teachers would feel inhibited by older staff in offering and developing new ideas.

One participant brought up the subject of integrating new staff:

*People need to be conscious of the need to bring other people in, especially newcomers. More should be done to integrate new staff.*

(Marion)

The core principle of inclusion is unlikely to be enacted in a school in which new members of staff struggle to belong and where established members of staff are not actively supportive in integrating new staff.

#### **4. Ownership**

##### **Study 2**

The question of who ‘owned’ teachers’ involvement in each other’s work came up in the majority of the interviews. Most of the participants saw it as a phenomenon that was key to the school’s effective functioning and therefore required managing:

*We have to act as one whole machine but support the weak parts. OFSTED now want to see evidence of self-evaluation in schools and this needs collaboration.*

(Matt, primary school, 30+ years experience)

For several participants, teachers’ involvement in each other’s work constituted an explicit management strategy. In the following example, Amanda describes the coaching training being undertaken by staff:

*it’s staff to staff, for example, E, M and I are coaches and we will be working with the middle managers who are going through the coaching process and the expectation is they will use that process to work with their own teams of staff, problem solving together as opposed to OK, give me that job and I’ll do it.*

(Amanda, secondary school, 30+ years experience)

Linked to the above participant’s comments, was another point about the policy of senior managers all working in the classroom as well in order to ensure their credibility with staff.

Here is an implicit statement about the difficulties that teaching management structures contribute to teachers' involvement in each other's work:

*a classroom based teacher and teacher manager, their role view is different and that is one of the reasons why X (head teacher) has the whole of the senior management team teaching...the reality is you have to keep your feet on the ground.*

(Amanda, secondary school, 30+ years experience)

*My strategic role in the school - it's actually to spread communication and part of my thing is staff welfare and you notice that people get stressed and strained and it's when systems get broken down.*

(Dave, primary school, 30+ years experience)

*My job is about team building and CPD. Trying to get people to lead themselves, examples would include: team teaching, planning together, meeting together, teachers supporting one another, informal chats about children, teaching objectives, moving children on, support from EMA (ethnic minority achievement), SEN....*

(Helen, primary school, 15 years experience)

Another view expressed, was that teachers did not require managing in this area and should be allowed to just get on with their work with colleagues:

*They just get on with it....and I don't play much of a role.....they do most of it informally themselves on a day to day basis.*

(John, primary school, 12+ years experience)

The question of who might be best placed to support teachers' involvement in each other's work was answered in nearly all cases by the view that the deputy head was the key person. However, two participants raised the possibility that supporting agencies such as educational psychologists and counsellors might be best placed to do this:

*I think in teaching, supervision with people like psychologists or counsellors, you know, things like that, would help the team work.*

(Kristy, special secondary school, 15+ years experience)

*It's great to get an outside perspective.*

(Bulut, special primary school, 5+ years experience )

However, not all participants saw the presence of external agencies as helpful in terms of teachers' involvement in each other's work together:

*where outside agencies have come in and we've been having difficulties. They don't know the children, the local population and it's all been very counterproductive.*

(Helen, primary school, 15+ years experience)

*it can even have an incredible negative effect, it can work in reverse so you actually deflate people.*

(Dave, primary school, 30+ years experience)

Most participants thought that the work of teachers involving other teachers 'belonged' to teachers, and in this sense, teachers required choice and autonomy. However, in this study with deputy head teacher managers, the majority of interviewees also expressed the view that it was a complex aspect of their jobs, which they had to manage. A small number of participants thought that unwanted and unhelpful involvement by managers or external agencies could actually worsen staff interactions and involvement. Two individuals expressed the view that teachers should be left entirely by themselves to sort out this aspect of their practice. None of the deputies interviewed spoke of any formal support or input for this area of their work.

### **Study 3**

The idea that teachers' involvement in each other's work could not be viewed as an unproblematic and established basis for supporting the government's achievement agenda was expressed:

*If it was easy to achieve we would have achieved it a long time ago.*

(Madeleine)

Participants also stressed the managerial ownership and responsibility aspects. The government and LEA initiatives such as the 'Waves' Literacy programme were viewed as an opportunity and mechanism for head teachers to enable and facilitate teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Whilst it was generally agreed that schools' senior management teams should lead on ensuring teachers' involvement in each other's work, because of their responsibility, formal position and familiarity with the school, there was also the reservation that this could be too strong and too directive because of the hierarchical, power-based aspects involved. Participants thought that managers could not force collaboration and teachers needed to be able to choose from different options for working with colleagues. Solutions to this included head teachers and school managers being much more actively involved and informed about classroom practice in order to engage with teachers, and also ensuring that time for formal and informal collaboration was built in.

Compatibility and personal preferences of teachers were considered to be aspects that should be thought about in the planning for teachers working together, although it was acknowledged that a tension existed between individual interests and the school as a whole and some limits to this were needed. Notwithstanding this, it was felt that teachers had to own and manage their collaboration as part of their individual practice.

In general, participants thought that active management in consultation with teachers was the most appropriate arrangement for supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work, but that external support should also be available. Participants' thought that teachers' work together involved complex psychological processes and required a high knowledge and skill level and that LEA officers such as EPs were key in this area. All participants agreed that any



external professional had to be positioned as an *invited* source of support and could not work independently of the school's management in this area.

A number of points were emphasised in relation to consultancy support, including the need for a non package-based response, clarity and realism about the school staff's particular wishes and needs, acceptance from staff and a different, separate, perspective:

*Consultancy is of no use without internal support- this makes it real. External input is never as good if it is not presented with an internal person but when this happens it is amazingly powerful. You need to present in a collaborative manner.*

(Marion)

*As an outsider you offer the capacity to be heard in a different way and to bring a authority.*

(Marion)

*I have a problem about the package approach to working with school staff. You must work to the school's agenda.*

(Marion)

Experienced teachers were also seen as having a 'stake' because they were so familiar with the school's issues and possibly keen to develop their practice as well as the school as a whole. It was equally possible that experienced teachers with no management responsibilities, might even work against supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work, in order to strengthen their own position and influence within the school system. However, no assumptions could be made with respect to this, as the motivations of individual experienced teachers could vary as they had no management responsibilities. One participant actually thought that experienced teachers were more open to developing practice with other teachers:

*Often the very experienced teachers are more flexible and have less to prove and the new teachers are usually more open. It's probably teachers who've been doing the job for five or ten years who are hardest but then again there is too much individual variation to generalise.*

(Bill)

*Length of service will be a factor. There is a bell curve to one's career and an optimal learning time where you work hard to stay up to date but of course there are lots of individual factors influencing this so I would not necessarily generalise.*

(Cassie)

Initiatives such as teacher mentoring and advanced skills teacher accreditation recognise teachers' experience to some degree, but the contribution this may make to or demands this may make about teachers' involvement in each other's work is not a particular focus.

## **5. Management and school policy**

### **Study 2**

Most of the respondents spoke of their work as managers in ensuring the smooth running of the whole school organisation, as being facilitated by teachers' involvement in each other's work.

*As deputy I was dependent on them to get the work done. Really I depended on their co-operation to put ideas into practice. I had a strategic role, mostly, to think about the curriculum and the timetable ....If there wasn't a good relationship the work that we hoped would get done wouldn't get done.*

(Kristy, special secondary school, 15+ years experience)

*they work together across the whole school discussing whatever and planning whatever.....they work together in discussing different strategies we might use, different policies, they work together on any jobs that might need doing like playground duties.*

(John, primary school, 12+ years experience)

The central place of teachers' working with each other in the core philosophy and pedagogy of the school was voiced:

*It's certainly part of the thinking, the understanding and the strategic overview of the school as far as the management is concerned.*

(Amanda, secondary school, 30+ years experience)

*I think that it's about the whole cohesion of everything isn't it and that actually if you don't have that working partnership then you are not going to be very cohesive.*

(Bulut, special primary school, deputy, 5+ years experience)

In other words, the absence of teachers' involvement in each other's work could adversely affect the whole school and, by implication, be an indicator of poor school management.

A large proportion considered supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work to be an implicit part of their roles as deputies, and one which required continuous problem-solving from them:

*My role is obviously if there is difficulty within the team I would be the first line of call to help to resolve that.*

(Frank, primary school, 30+ years)

*I definitely spend a lot of my time encouraging teachers to work together.*

(Gail, primary school, 5+ years experience)

However, a minority of the sample thought that teachers should be left alone to organise the involvement they wanted and that they could even object to being managed with respect to this aspect of their practice.

On the other hand, some thought that this aspect of school life, i.e. teachers' involvement in each other's work, was a fairly low level phenomenon which teachers just got on with:

*I don't know what my role is in the school really.....just about anything and everything....so I don't think I play a role in their work together. ...they just get on with it.*

(John, primary school, 12+ years experience)

Some teachers actually objected to this aspect of their work being managed or having to manage this aspect, and this is suggested in some participants' views:

*The head teacher was against team working but he is moving on.*

(Matt, primary school, 30+ years experience)

*people kind of go off into their little holes of secretiveness.....it's my thing that I'm doing.....it's about your own ego and you're not going to be managed.*

(Bulut, special primary school, deputy, 5+ years experience)

*Teachers can feel there is always someone watching and that there is this over-direction and then there is a lack of open-ness between staff.*

(Matt, primary school, 30+ years experience)

Another point was that teachers' involvement in each other's work actually supported quality standards and consistency of professional practice:

*while teachers are allowed to work on their own and not collaborate or not work with others, it's very easy to not do the work, it's very easy to not be following that scheme of work to let things slip let things slide, whereas if you are working in a team and it's up to week 45 you've got to be up to that.*

(Amanda, secondary school, 30+ years experience)

One other view that was expressed was that not supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work was a kind of management strategy:

*I have worked in a school where you were actively prevented from talking to other people because the head wanted to, needed to, divide in order to rule. It was a management strategy.....you had staff meetings where you sat and listened but you did not talk.*

(Ina, secondary school, 17+ years experience)

This links with the idea that an absence of teachers' involvement in each other's work is indicative of poor management and suggests core problems with the whole school system.

Participants made many different links between teachers' involvement with each other and school management. On the whole, they viewed managers as being in some way responsible for supporting the involvement of teachers in each other's work, even if it was by default. However, teachers did not necessarily welcome this.

### Study 3

Interviewees viewed teachers' involvement in each other's work as central to school structures and thought both children and the school organisation gained:

*It is enormously important. The importance cannot be overestimated. You cannot do the job without this. Schools are collegiate places by definition.*

(Marion)

Participants' definitions of teachers' involvement in each other's work were closely linked to school management and policy implementation. They saw it as core to curriculum planning, school development, overall achievement and the function of the school as a whole:

*supporting consistency across the institution, the sum of more than one teacher being greater than adding the individual parts (teachers) together.*

(Michael)

It was also seen to be key in ensuring quality standards:

*From my own experience if I had known when I was a teacher what I know now I would have taught more alongside other teachers. It would have been much easier to achieve standards.*

(Madeleine)

Effects of teachers' involvement in each other's work were also seen as potentially wider, for example, playing a part in the development of cross-school moderation, curriculum delivery and syllabus content in local authorities. Participants thought that teachers' involvement in each other's work was evident in staff meetings and in curriculum planning meetings, both within schools and between schools. The implementation of local authority initiatives was

seen as fundamentally but problematically linked with teachers' involvement in each other's work:

*There is more and more clustering between schools where they share ideas but putting collaboration into practice is much harder.*

(Cassie)

One participant talked of a project in which three schools worked together to develop the authority's provision for children with communication difficulties. She emphasised the crucial part played by management, which involved planning, resource allocation and clear structures and systems:

*Even though there was a real will to do the work and people were well disposed to it there was a need for energy, dedicated time and management.*

(Cassie)

The importance of a situated approach to supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work and recognition of individual school and teacher differences was also emphasised:

*Teachers are not a homogeneous group. They work in different circumstances. They need management support at all levels and how to support collaboration needs thinking about.*

(Cassie)

One view of teachers' work together was that it represented the opposite of a top-down instruction/management model. Development of non-hierarchical and more flattened school structures and the collegiate structures and groupings in the whole school, was also seen as a way of reducing isolated teachers and supporting effective management:

*Without teachers working together the top-down management drive sets in. However there is an overload on managers and teachers become disengaged. If you lose this engagement it is at your peril as a manager.*

(Michael)

The idea was voiced that some schools had cultures of collaboration already, which were core to their planning and outcomes, structures and systems and evident in the staff's enthusiasm.

Practically supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work was seen as a management task, in making the time and cover available and also by handling difficulties between teachers. It was also seen as an important management task to define and clarify roles of staff working together:

*The management input is important. It can be as little as giving permission, allowing time and prioritising collaboration, creating the opportunities and setting the context. But management cannot force collaboration..... people need choices and must be able to make their own priorities and work within their own comfort levels.*

(Cassie)

An absence of teachers' involvement in each other's work was viewed as contributing to a lack of development, school improvement and realisation of the school's vision statement, e.g. by reducing the pupils' voice and categorising pupils with labels, stereotyping parents and sabotaging national good practice.

Many problematic aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work were described by participants, such as the economic aspects and lack of school budget capacity, the competing demands of a management agenda, an overcrowded curriculum and curriculum development, and existing school structures, including decision-making mechanisms:

*The process of reaching a consensus may not be straight forward and the hierarchical nature of schools means that not everyone has equal voice or say so and this affects who is selected/content/who sets the agenda.*

(Linda)

Participants also thought that the school's overall philosophy might not allow any opportunities for teachers to be involved in each other's work. In addition, the central training of the local authority such as the literacy and numeracy strategies, might not account for or support collaboration and there would be implications for the local authority in terms of



funding cover, training, planning and implementation of new initiatives, e.g. The Wave 3 programme:

*There was a suggestion that heads manage this extra time, how would they know that it is used well? This is a chance for managers to enable and facilitate teacher' work together through this mechanism. Some schools have been freeing up staff to work with support staff.*

(Madeleine)

A different view was that teachers' involvement in each other's work ensured uptake and development of new initiatives, for example, the 'thinking skills' initiative being piloted in the authority.

A participant spoke emphatically about his view of a generally problematic context, characterised by a pushing, task-driven managerial style to do with targets, budgets and processing of information by the local authority for government. It also featured less involvement with the processes of local communities in which schools developed. Another interviewee expressed a similar view:

*There is a major problem with the hierarchy in schools and personality issues of the HT and SMT. An authoritarian versus democratic family structure can result in marked boundary issues.*

(Bill)

One participant described how teachers' involvement in each other's work involved complex psychological processes such as issues relating to ownership, group processes, identity and commitment. He also thought that the overall education context meant that there was less opportunity for professionals to engage in dialogue because managers were too busy managing rather than working as equivalent professionals alongside teachers in the classrooms in professional, supportive engagement with each other, and that the whole unhealthy, anxious culture needed to change. Staffrooms in which teachers could let off steam, were viewed as important places and the quality of dialogue within them was very much influenced by the head teacher and senior management (SMT) style.

When considering what supported teachers' involvement in each other's work, various ideas were offered, such as: active planning that involved management actively supporting and consulting with teachers; management consciously seeking compatibility between teachers using devices like the 'sociograms' used for children's friendship investigations, and making sure dedicated time was available.

The head teacher was seen as a key figure:

*The head teacher sets the scene, models and gives permission for things like room bookings for staff to meet, emotional support for staff to engage in this work. They also have a responsibility for not overloading the external agenda on staff, filtering this in order to free up limited staff time.*

(Michael)

The head teacher's strength, enthusiasm and capacity to model collaboration, good communication and good conflict management was linked to the cohesiveness of the SMT and to teachers' involvement in each other's work in general. One participant described how he had seen members of a school's SMT paired together to very good effect. Another point was made with respect to school managers' own support systems from other head teachers:

*Head teachers already work with each other up to a point within the LA, around some questions. There is, of course, a lot of variation.*

(Bill)

It was also acknowledged that supporting teachers' work together was complex, skilful, emotional and relational work which happened over time, and that there were few absolutes. It was suggested that training was needed to gain the sensitivity, skills, confidence and professional development required in team building.

The active management of teachers' involvement in each other's work was viewed as necessary:

*Teachers need support and facilitation.*

(Bill)

However, although it was seen as part of the SMT's (Senior Management team's) responsibility and formal position, this input was potentially problematic because managers had the position and the familiarity within the hierarchical system of the school, and this could be too strong and too directive. The solution to this tension was suggested as being in the active involvement and informing of managers about classroom practice in order to engage with teachers at classroom level, as this was not commonly the case at the moment:

*Whoever is involved in supporting teachers' work together must be close to and in touch with the classroom and the business of teaching and learning.*

(Jack)

Participants' awareness of the hierarchical and power-based aspects of school structures was implicit within the assumption that teachers should be responsible for supporting support staff's involvement in each other's work – the deputy head for teachers and the head for everyone in the school.

The performance management systems were seen as possibly being used by management to feed back to staff on their work with other teachers and to set 'objectives'. However, this aspect of professional practice was seen as open to being manipulated and the power and inequity issues within these, requiring careful consideration. In other words, managers needed to be aware of the need to remain objective and fair and in not encroaching into the personal aspects of individual teachers' relationships with colleagues.

Possible sources of support for school managers were seen as being influenced by the school setting, i.e. primary or secondary and included LA officers such as EPs, as they had a special relationship with the school. Experienced teachers were also suggested as they were so familiar with the school's issues and frequently wanted to develop their practice as well as the school as a whole, although sometimes this experience could be withheld in a destructive and unhelpful way. All participants thought that supporting teachers' work together had to be led by those who were most familiar with the school but that invited and trusted external

agencies could be very helpful and could bring a neutrality and knowledge which was very supportive:

*External staff can facilitate dialogue as they bring neutrality (as long as they are not evaluating/monitoring) and understand the processes and issues, and who have an ongoing connection with the school over time.*

(Linda)

The question of whether or not teachers' personal choice should be catered for was responded to in various ways but, generally, it was agreed that teachers had to manage their own practice and also manage collaboration at the same time and be comfortable. One participant said that it '*shouldn't feel like supervision*'. There should be planned room for informal and formal collaboration between teachers. Personal choice was important but there was a tension between individual interests and the school's as a whole, and some limits to this were needed. One view was that it was an aspect of reflective teaching and the way the whole school worked.

When considering how management and school policy might impede teachers' involvement in each other's work, various suggestions were made, including a closed school management, the headship style, a poor ethos where everyone was closed to learning and external factors such as the OFSTED process and bureaucratic procedures of local authorities (LEAs). The LEAs were viewed as responding to the monitoring and evaluation imperative from government, i.e. strict timescales, wording/vision external to the LA, and were not driven by best practice *with* individual teachers but rather acted as the agent of government. The external pressures, which constituted an initiative overload and entailed a lot of extra work, such as workforce remodelling, were also seen as unhelpful, as was the general ethos driving major education initiatives:

*The Teacher Training Agency promotes the idea of teacher collaboration and collegiality in management. There is an overemphasis on the product rather than the processes, which impede. There is a badly managed focus upon outcomes such as league tables results and this is likely to impede teachers working together ...the government. It has lost trust in teachers' professionalism and overloaded with targets and evaluation.*

(Michael)

The idea was also voiced that external professionals could be viewed as monitoring and evaluating, as negatively critical and as obstructing teachers' involvement in each other's work, causing teachers to be defensive and not open to being honest in relation to faults, conflicts, and tensions. But teachers being involved in each other's work was seen as something of an antidote to this problem as teachers were more likely to feel supported and then able to improve their practice. One participant described how it was very helpful introducing open agendas where priorities were agreed and where there were high levels of choice within groups. Her ideal model of facilitation for teachers' involvement in each other's work included an external facilitator working closely with one or more school managers:

*This is where an external facilitator can shuffle staff around and get them to work in different combinations and actively encourage different compositions and interactions. This is the big skill of leadership.*

(Marion)

She went on to stress the importance of school managers being in touch with staff at all levels and of supporting and being directly involved in different groups.

**Table 7** in **Appendix XVI** summarises the LA participants' views regarding the facilitating and obstructive influences of school management upon teachers' involvement in each other's work.

## **6. Teacher retention**

### **Study 2**

Several respondents thought that the amount of involvement with other teachers affected teachers remaining in their posts or changing posts, and that the quality of relationships with colleagues could be important:

*If working relationships were bad I would be looking for another job.*

(Bulut, special primary school, deputy, 5+ years experience)

*You can't work with someone you're hating and they're hating and you're hating each other, that just cannot happen.*

(Kristy, special secondary school, 10+ years experience)

Kristy illustrated her point very vividly by resigning from her post shortly after the interview. I was aware that staff relations were a large contributory factor. In addition, the effects of teachers leaving, the effectiveness of schools and the role of management were highlighted:

*at the end of a long term you occasionally get a couple of members of staff where there are clashes, maybe room arrangement problems.....for things to be better we'd prevent this at the start of term. Retention is key, staff can leave in droves .you see the effects this has on students' behaviour and achievement.*

(Len, secondary school, 32+ years experience)

One teacher linked teachers' well-being and durability to the capacity to work with other teachers:

*I know of several teachers who are absolutely outstanding but they are very much loners and they have been able to do it but I don't think you can do it for long like that, I think that you burn out. They never lasted that long.*

(Frank, primary school, 30+ years experience)

All of these extracts suggest that involvement with colleagues is key to supporting teachers over time, and that even an absence of this involvement rather than actual acrimony or conflict is likely to result in staff leaving.

### **Study 3**

Participants considered that staff morale was affected by the degree to which teachers worked together and that this directly affected teacher retention:

*Where teachers worked in isolation they did not tend to choose to stay.*

(Michael)

The idea that teachers' skills and knowledge benefited from staff coming together was voiced and that in some situations this contributed to teachers continuing to practise:

*a failing geography teacher started to come to the geography panels I was running – within five years his teaching had become exemplary and he progressed to become head of faculty.*

(Marion)

Another view was that where teacher retention issues existed, such as in the inner city where a high turnover of staff occurred, older staff with years of experience in a particular school would be less inclined to work with other teachers as a way of coping with the challenges of ever-changing staff groups.

## 7. Government

### Study 2

There were a range of views in this area but most of the interviewees thought that governmental priorities did not include a commitment to understanding the conditions and factors for supporting teachers' involvement with each other. They also considered that teachers' work together was assumed and implicit to many major initiatives:

*lots of the things we have or we receive from government are often sort of cover all things, it's lip service and it's only when local authorities or schools actually grab them and run with them .....teachers working together.....is not actively encouraged although you are thrown a bone but it is not facilitated by the government, certainly not.*

(Dave, primary school, 30+ years experience)

*yeah...it is obviously fed through the DfES, I think so, because you know, X [the authority] are encouraging lots more literacy, numeracy co-ordinators together, primary strategy*



*meetings.....especially excellence and enjoyment.....I don't think they will have come up with that vision for schools without realising that they are going to have to share practice more now and share ideas and I think with any new initiative now I don't think government would even launch something new without thinking that.*

(Gail, primary school, 5+ years experience)

*I don't think there is a strategy being that the very nature of being tied down to you must do this.*

(Frank, primary school, 30+ years experience)

*I don't think it is part of government's thinking for teachers to work together. No, the way they bring in so many initiatives. It is not really thought through.....we have to keep running to stand still.*

(Len, secondary school, 32+ years experience)

*I don't think it is necessarily so [that it is part of government thinking at this time]. I mean particularly in the way that schools are going, the fact that they want them to have after school clubs and breakfast clubs they want it be much more critical in the community. I think that may break down elements of communication in a way because that brings extra stressors.*

(Emily, primary school, 10+ years experience)

*This is a difficult question to answer. I mean it is high on union agendas, which sort of tells you it's high on the political agenda. because they have campaigned and got more built in time and everyone is banding around this phrase work life balance.....I would think that it must be there somewhere but I haven't noticed it is high on their [government's] agenda.*

(Ina, secondary school, 17+ years experience)

The general view of participants was that government was fairly unaware of the complexity of teachers' work and especially where it involved other teachers. Views suggesting that government policy was reductive, tokenistic and not thought through were all expressed. At the same time, participants thought that government policy very much needed teachers to be

involved with each other and that this need was likely to increase. Some participants considered that teachers' involvement in each other's work was an area that was entirely outside the remit of government.

### Study 3

When asked to consider teachers' involvement in each other's work and the influence of government, all but one of the responses were of a problematic nature. For example, the perceived governmental imperatives to share good practice, to implement large-scale policy initiatives and to actualise ideology, were all viewed as obstructive of teachers' involvement in each other's work. Reasons for this included a sense that teachers felt their status, agency and autonomy were reduced, the unrealistic and inadequate funding, the sheer quantity of work involved and the lack of relevance for their particular context. There was also a view that the governmental style of direction, pushing and emphasis upon targets, budgets, inspection and processing information *on behalf* of government, was very unhelpful, disconnected and demoralising:

*The overall context in Education means there is less opportunity for professionals to dialogue because managers are too busy managing rather than working as equivalent professionals alongside teachers in the classrooms in professional, supportive engagement with teachers. The whole unhealthy, anxious culture needs to change.*

(Michael)

Examples of government initiatives, which assumed that teachers work together, specifically referred to by interviewees, included: National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, OFSTED, workforce reform and 'Every Child Matters', 'The Behaviour Improvement Programme' (BIP) and 'Behaviour and Education Support teams' (BESt) initiatives.

Participants made connections between government and the approach adopted by the LEA in its work with schools, which was far-removed from the best practice of individual teachers and schools and was organised around being an agent of government rather than of professional collaboration. At the same time, there was an awareness that the budgets of schools were growing whereas those of the LEAs were reducing. In addition, many participants thought that government had set them up as external agents, to be viewed as professionals whose core function was monitoring and evaluating in a critical and structured

way. This was seen as reducing individual schools' and teachers' capacity and power to voice views and impeded their work together.

Ironically, the idea that collaboration and collegiality were management ideals, had high currency in government rhetoric, but because this was a stated aspect of the distant governmental agenda, lacked congruence and meaning in local contexts. The view was expressed that in effective schools, teachers already worked well together *despite* rather than *because* of governmental imperatives.

One participant who viewed government influence in a different and less problematic way, felt that the 'Every Child Matters' imperative to focus on individual children's needs and to work in a multi-disciplinary way, would actually support teachers being more collaborative in general, and that this would support their work with other teachers:

*A complete change in the culture in schools in the context of 'Every Child Matters' via extended schools and education initiatives. These provide a better framework for teachers to work together.*

(Bill)

Such a view expressed a very managerialist perspective and was distinctive from classroom-based participants, who voiced little support for government.

**Table 7** in **Appendix XVI** summarises LA participants' views regarding the facilitating and obstructive influences of the government and local authority upon teachers' involvement in each other's work.

### **Summary of Findings from Studies Two and Three, Comparing and Contrasting the Views of Deputy Heads and LEA Officers**

Both studies highlighted the benefits of effective intra-personal qualities and inter-personal skills as manifest in teachers' involvement in each other's work. Deputy heads emphasised the relationship between the inter-personal skills of teachers and teaching efficacy. Interestingly, the distinction between good inter-personal skills with children and with

teacher peers was made and some participants suggested that an emphasis on one at the expense of the other, had a negative impact upon the function of the whole school. However, it was also seen as possible to have relatively poor interactions with other teachers and yet still be an effective teacher. Participants from both studies highlighted the potentially problematic contribution of hierarchy and structural divisions between teachers in relation to inter-personal aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work. LEA participants went into far more detail regarding problematic aspects of teachers' interactions and the underlying factors such as lack of personal self-awareness, personal agendas, the interaction between intra-personal characteristics and context and a shortage of expertise in facilitating dialogue between teachers. LEA interviewees also offered a number of solutions for these problems, including improved teacher and school manager training and support.

Both deputies and LEA participants highlighted the practical benefits of teachers' involvement in each other's work, although, deputies focused upon human resource benefits such as extra supply cover and LEA officers listed many more benefits. Deputies expressed numerous problematic aspects, for example, communication, time required for planning, adapting to new roles and subsequent increased role and emotional strain, and the idea that there were benefits to teachers not being involved in each other's work. LEA officers raised the problem of staff continuity, particularly for young and vulnerable pupils. LEA officers had a great deal to say about the possible solutions for utilising teachers' involvement in each other's work and about increasing practical support for teachers. They stressed the importance of a genuine need for this involvement, a relaxed and sociable approach to facilitation, sufficient time and a long-term view of the benefits and the need for managers' classroom experience and classroom-based teachers' management experience to be utilised.

Deputy head teachers and LEA interviewees voiced the benefits of teachers' involvement in each other's work for teachers' professional development and individual excellence, with particular reference to NQTs. LEA participants also highlighted the benefits in terms of creativity, innovative practice, school development and school ethos. In terms of the problematic, deputies emphasised resources and the way in which enforced involvement with other teachers could prevent this from naturally occurring. Participants from both studies highlighted the potential for teachers' peer group learning arrangements to be problematic. Deputies suggested that this mode of learning could hold more able individuals back and LEA interviewees suggested that this way of learning could make it difficult to manage

difficult individuals, whether weak practitioners or overly vocal and dominant. Both groups commented on the importance of acknowledging teachers' level of experience. The LEA participants considered that particularly experienced teachers could inhibit the contribution offered by NQTs and less experienced teachers. Deputies believed that experienced teachers find involvement with other teachers' work easier and appreciate it more. LEA participants had most to say in terms of suggestions for supporting teachers' involvement in each other's learning and development, i.e. that it should be peer-led, group-based, with skilled external facilitators, and be school-based, moving at the school's own organic pace.

Participants in both studies mentioned the question of ownership in relation to the difficulties in managing teachers' involvement in each other's work. The hierarchy and power imbalance between management and teachers was seen as an obstruction to this, and the importance of teacher managers having a practical presence in classrooms was emphasised by deputies and LEA officers. To some extent, it was considered that teachers should be left to organise their involvement in each other's work on their own. However, both groups stressed the need for teachers' involvement in each other's work to be skilfully managed, given the possibility that individual needs and interests could dominate. LEA participants proposed that, ideally, a balance between management and support of teachers' autonomy via the mechanism of professional consultation could be achieved. Participants from both studies mentioned the role of external support for teachers' involvement in each other's work and the benefits and challenges presented by this. LEA participants stressed the importance of external support being invited by management and presented by an insider as a collaborative venture tailored to the needs of the individual school. LEA officers also suggested that experienced teachers might have an important role to play in facilitating teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Deputy head teachers and LEA participants considered that effective involvement of teachers in each other's work was important for the functioning of the whole school in terms of enabling managers. Deputies emphasised the role of teachers' involvement in each other's work in creating a positive school ethos and considered that a lack of teachers' involvement in each other's work reflected badly upon management and the school as a whole. LEA officers highlighted the importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work in terms of policy implementation, school development, meeting quality standards and pupil needs.

They also stressed the importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work in cross-school projects and implementation of LEA initiatives.

Participants in both studies viewed managing teachers' involvement in each other's work as part of the manager's role. Deputies viewed this as a role that involved both encouraging teachers' involvement in each other's work and addressing related problems, and saw it as one that was challenging as teachers frequently resisted direction in this area of their work. Deputies also suggested that lack of teachers' involvement in each other's work could be an actual management strategy, i.e. through a 'divide and rule' approach. LEA officers viewed the management role, with regards to teachers' involvement in each other's work, as one of ensuring time, defining roles, problem-solving, creating opportunities and providing contexts. However, it was stressed that teachers' involvement in each other's work should be subject to teachers' choice rather than be mandatory.

LEA officers provided numerous obstacles and challenges potentially faced by managers in relation to teachers' involvement in each other's work, such as limited resources, management agenda, hierarchical school structure and decision-making mechanisms, external evaluation, and the need for time not being recognised when allocating resources for the implementation of policy. All of these things lead to defensive teacher practice.

LEA officers also offered numerous suggestions with regards to what would help managers support effective teachers' involvement in each other's work. These included taking a situated rather than a manualised approach and also taking a non-hierarchical approach, i.e. more democratic and collegial consultancy. Consideration of compatibility between teachers, providing dedicated time, space and emotional support and removing additional pressures was suggested. In addition, modelling effective communication and conflict management and seeking their own peer support was viewed as crucial. The importance of receiving training regarding team building skills, engaging with teachers at classroom level, setting open meeting agendas, using experienced teachers and invited and trusted external agencies if familiar and of a neutral orientation, was also voiced. However, a problem associated with giving experienced teachers responsibility for supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work was that of them being perceived as having a surveillance function.



Both deputies and LEA officers recognised that teachers' involvement in each other's work had an impact on staff morale and retention. Deputies made the point that not only poor quality relationships but isolation between teachers was associated with retention difficulties. LEA officers suggested that the greater voice, personal development and job satisfaction enabled by teachers' involvement in each other's work improved retention. LEA participants also talked about how, where retention problems existed, a vicious cycle could develop of established staff not supporting the integration of new members of staff, as a self-protective strategy.

Deputies made the point that government assumes, utilises and needs teachers to be involved in each other's work and that this need is likely to increase. However, deputies also highlighted the government's lack of interest and understanding and ignorance regarding the complexity of teachers' involvement in each other's work. Others considered that teachers' involvement in each other's work was rightfully outside of the government's remit. Only one LEA participant thought that the government policy might support and increase teachers' involvement in each other's work. The vast majority of LEA officers were of the opinion that government imperatives obstruct teachers' involvement in each other's work. Reasons for this negative effect include: poor funding, increased workload, reduced status, agency and autonomy of teachers, lack of fit between high level policy and local context, reduced teacher voice, the demoralising effects of excessive targets, inspection, evaluation and a generally unhealthy, anxious social context, and managers with excessive management tasks that are to the detriment of teacher-orientated work-based dialogue with teachers.

## **Conclusions**

The findings indicated that the quality of teachers' involvement in each other's work resulted from the interaction between individuals and their particular school contexts. Ideally, teachers would possess the intra-personal and inter-personal skills that enabled effective working relationships with both children and professional peers in order to support the functioning of the whole school as well as getting the job of teaching children done. The benefits of teachers' involvement in each other's work were wide-ranging and included practical issues such as ensuring good cover and teacher retention, professional development, supporting NQTs, contributing to positive school ethos and whole school development, meeting pupil needs and policy implementation at both LEA and government levels.



Challenges to teachers' involvement in each other's work were seen as including communication, time, adaptability of role and emotional strain. Schools' hierarchical structures were repeatedly referred to as problematic in that they were viewed as divisive and antagonistic to collaborative professional practice. Following from this, enforced or even mandatory involvement of teachers in each other's work, was seen as counter-productive to genuine involvement. Governmental policy assumption and utilisation of teachers' involvement in each other's work was highlighted as being paradoxical, given the seeming lack of interest in the reality of teachers' involvement in each other's work and the complex processes involved. Teachers' involvement in each other's work was seen to be reduced as a result of the pressures exerted on teachers and managers due to policy implementation and external evaluation.

Participants made many suggestions regarding ways of supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work. The importance of collaborative and democratic principles and the importance of an individualised approach underpinned these suggestions. Teacher and school manager training and support, and the importance of addressing a genuine need and taking into account individual teachers' levels of experience, were mentioned. Managers were seen as having a clear responsibility for teachers' involvement in each other's work and a facilitative management style was viewed as being incorporative of a personal exemplification of constructive involvement with teacher colleagues, taking a long-term view of the benefits and the provision of time and opportunities and problem-solving. The importance of achieving a balance between teacher autonomy and management via consultation was highlighted, as were the benefits of managers having a classroom presence and classroom-based teachers' management experience being recognised. Skilled facilitation of teachers' involvement in each other's work was advocated many times, and external support was seen as valuable as long as it was invited and of a trustworthy nature.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

There is no shortage of rhetoric about teachers' involvement in each other's work, however, few empirical studies have examined the components and processes implicit to this (Jenni et al., 2004).

In the study described in this thesis, a wide variety and range of views highlighted the complexity and subjective nature of the research topic. All participants considered that the involvement of teachers in their work is important and that they generally take this for granted as a helpful phenomenon. However, some anomalies were evident. In Study 1, both classroom-based teachers and head teachers did not consciously view the involvement of their colleagues as being a factor in their initial reasons for becoming a teacher, for making their work possible, as key to their own unique teacher identity, or as a strong influence in the levels of satisfaction they experienced from their work.

They did see it as a positive and supportive influence, which could help them practically and emotionally and support their general well-being and confidence, capacity to problem-solve and to meet the needs of children, especially those with additional needs. Despite these substantial perceived benefits, participants did not engage in discourse or reflection at any organised level on this topic, but were aware of it in most aspects of their work. Deep collaboration on a pedagogical and shared ideals basis appears to be rare and was not described by any of my respondents. There would appear to be an assumption that teachers' involvement in each other's work just happens and requires no active thought or facilitation.

This study supports much of the existing understanding about teachers' involvement in each other's work. The seven main themes emerged in Studies 2 and 3 and according to which the data was analysed, all link with themes which emerged from the literature review. Some new ideas are also introduced. Similarities between both the findings from this study and those within the literature and new findings are discussed in terms of implications for individual teachers, school management structures and whole school effectiveness.

## **Individual Teachers' Well-Being**

### **Teaching culture**

According to the literature, which includes recent government material, e.g. information for would-be teachers (The Training and Development for Schools website: <http://www.tda.gov.uk>), the teaching culture is predominantly individualistic. However, this was not explicitly referred to by participants.

### **Job satisfaction**

Both the literature and this study highlight the finding that teachers appear to neither seek nor find a great deal of their job satisfaction in their involvement with other teachers, as their main source of satisfaction is from their interactions with pupils. Recent research on teaching (DfES, 2005), however, indicates that teachers' involvement in each other's work may exert an influence upon teachers' levels of job satisfaction and their reasons for leaving the profession.

### **Social and relational aspects**

The literature describes teachers' involvement in each other's work as being mainly of a social nature. Participants made many references to the importance of inter-personal connections between themselves and others. Reber's work (1985) on relationships suggests that for a relationship to exist, the following components are required: emotional ties, a sense of commitment, familiarity and time. Teachers did not necessarily allude to these aspects in their talk about colleagues but the theme of relationships between teachers recurred throughout all three studies. It appears to feature in teachers' thinking in the same way as involvement with other teachers in general. They saw it largely as a given and helpful phenomenon, implicit to schools' structures and systems and not consciously planned for or actively supported.

Teachers in Study 1 viewed relationships as one aspect of and possibility for teachers' involvement with each other. On the whole, they did not consider it to present particular difficulties or challenges. They did not view personal friendship and professional collegiality as being synonymous. They did not express the view that it was necessary to personally like

colleagues or even to have professional respect for them. The findings of this study suggest that participants viewed friendship as a possible and positive by-product.

In addition, the view was expressed that relationships between teachers could not be controlled, manipulated or part of management strategy. The question of relationships between teachers in schools does not appear to be one that is raised in a formal way, and staff do not appear to have expectations of this either. It appears to be a natural phenomenon that may or may not occur, and one which is managed by and between individuals similarly to how it occurs in their private lives.

Findings from Study 3 with LA personnel included an acknowledgement that the personal gains to individual teachers, which may potentially be available through the involvement of colleagues, is absent. This suggests that the culture in which teachers are working does not actively acknowledge the need to support adults' psychological needs and implies that it is possible to put these to one side during working time. However, it may not support the continuity, stability and well-being of staff. LA participants' views are likely to reflect the most dominant and powerful discourses in education, given their status and positioning, and this suggests that there is relatively little expression of individual teachers' views and needs at government and LA levels.

## **Benefits**

Both the literature and the findings of this study identified the benefits of teachers' involvement in each other's work as including emotional and practical support and a point of professional identification.

Some participants made explicit reference to the benefits to teachers' professional development from their work together. Reasons included: the need for interaction and new ideas in order to carry on developing and not to stagnate; the opportunity to utilise the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of individual staff through drawing upon the shared pool of knowledge and expertise, and the high applicability and relevance of material gained from observing peers' good practice.

All of the above bears out the findings from cross-cultural studies (Steiner in Schwile, 1993) but is at odds with Miller's (1996) research into teacher culture and pupil behaviour. Miller's work on supporting teachers in managing pupil behaviour (ibid.) bemoans the absence of sharing of ideas from professional development and the subsequent implications for teachers' practice.

One aspect of teachers' professional development and teachers' work together, which participants highlighted, was that which occurred in relation to supporting newly qualified teachers. Some previous research relating to this area looked at the systems and practices for supporting and inducting the newest members of the profession (Hargreaves, 1999), and found a marked lack of collegiality and collaboration. Participants generally viewed this area positively but a different view was also voiced: that particularly bright individuals might feel held back by a collegial approach. In Study 3, participants particularly raised the importance of teacher collaboration in teachers' learning and development for teachers at all stages of their career, including trainee teachers, newly qualified, very experienced, and/or management staff.

The classroom level benefits to individual teachers, articulated by classroom-based teachers and teacher managers, did not feature directly but were implied by LA participants. Bryk and Schneider's work (2002) on this subject categorises the benefits in three ways: instrumental, i.e. in supporting teachers' work through the day-to-day routines of schooling; moral, i.e. in meeting the needs of children, and hedonic, as in underpinning teachers' sense of self-worth and identity. One possible benefit of teachers' involvement in each other's work, which fulfils instrumental, moral *and* hedonic imperatives, is that of the positive influence of teachers' involvement in each other's work on students' pro-social behaviour. Only one deputy head teacher articulated this benefit. The last category of benefits, hedonic, is articulated least by all interviewees.

Recent DfES research (2007) on teachers and teaching identifies a further benefit of teachers' involvement in each other's work, suggesting that teachers would like more time to collaborate with colleagues because of its perceived positive effects upon the public's regard for the profession:

*Workload reduction, time for collaboration with colleagues, and an expanded community role were deemed likely to have a very positive impact upon status.*

p. 101

## **Difficulties**

The literature suggests that teachers' involvement in each other's work can make the job of teaching more difficult but contains relatively little about possible reasons for the problematic aspects. Pomson's secondary school case study (2005) is an exception to this. He found much potential for friction between teachers, stating that '*day to day school work, like family life, does not lack emotional intensity*' (p. 747). He paralleled the adult inter-personal world between teachers and that of teachers and parents, and suggested that the latter is generally less problematic because it is more defined with clearer roles and responsibilities:

*They are less ready to surrender their autonomy to colleagues because in the collegial realm, the balance of power between teachers and their partners is more ambiguous.*

*Perhaps precisely because it is so hard to keep parents out, teachers are determined to preserve the boundaries that protect their space from colleagues.*

Pomson, 2005, p. 796

Hing Fung Tsui's (1995) study of collaboration between classroom-based and special needs teachers in Hong Kong Primary Schools offers another explanation for difficulties in relation to teachers' involvement in each other's work. She found that teachers working alongside each other in the classroom for different purposes, i.e. teaching the whole class or providing special educational needs input, could be very problematic. She attributed this mainly to difficulties in relation to role, i.e. role conflict, role isolation and role ambiguity.

Findings from the study described in this thesis indicate that what might make teaching more difficult is the greater need to communicate, adapt roles and the related emotional strain involved. Duck's (1989) work on relationships highlights the link between circumstantial interactions and emotional control:

*Some relationships – perhaps most relationships – are composed and constructed by circumstances over which partners have little emotional control, yet which bring us together.*



My findings suggested that the further away from the teaching interface participants were, the more they were able to acknowledge the problematic aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work. Participants in Study 1 made very little reference to this and only referred to negative aspects as historical or hypothetical and usually as incidents of an isolated nature. Classroom-based teachers' attributions for negative aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work related to school management structures and to individual managers. Teacher managers' attributions largely referred to individual teacher characteristics, i.e. individual staff with perceived very poor intra-personal qualities. LA participants spoke of the reality of difficult 'staff dynamics' and referred to the existence of alliances and divisions. On the whole, they did not attribute them to particular aspects of school or individuals but to teacher training systems or to government influences such as innovation overload. This fits with O'Neil's (2000) observation, as cited in Johnson (2003), that the normative and unproblematic model of professional collaboration 'tend [s] to develop worrying surface cracks which may indicate far more structural faults'. In addition, they did not express any ideas about how these could be addressed or prevented, rather positioning them as an inevitable aspect of any staff group and something which had to be managed. The idea that compatibility between individuals could vary and that some individuals 'naturally' worked well or less well together was expressed by LA respondents. This view was not expressed by participants located within particular schools and could indicate that personal collaboration preferences are not expressed or are overlooked, or possibly both. This in turn could link with the general finding that problematic aspects of teachers' involvement with each other are not generally articulated.

An unstated agreement appeared to exist within all the schools used in this study, namely for teachers at all levels to not acknowledge disagreement and to rarely engage in disagreement. This appears to be evident in the absence of thinking, supporting and planning in relation to this aspect of the inter-personal climate of schools. Education staff located outside of the school, i.e. the LA participants, were a little more expressive and did acknowledge difficulties. They appeared to adopt a rather unquestioning and reactive stance, becoming involved in addressing the issue of teachers' working together only if invited by school managers to give their support.



## Choice

The literature indicates that teachers need to have choice in relation to the amount and nature of their involvement in each other's work in order for this to be successful. The notion that teachers view themselves as being able to elect or not to be in a relationship with their peers seems to pervade the data, and is reminiscent of Lortie's egg-box metaphor for teaching staff groups (Lortie, 1975). More recently, Clement and Vandenberghe's (2000) research on how teacher's collegiality and autonomy relate to one another in Flemish primary education and how this may affect teachers' professional development, investigates and finds a tension between teachers' need for autonomy and the issue of collegiality. The study, like Hargreaves' (1994) work, found that there was a need for the individuality and autonomy of teachers to be respected and allowed for but that, ideally, this should be within a school context where:

*learning opportunities and learning space are created in a professional way*

and where:

*teachers can become professionals who not only are technically apt, but who are conscious of the moral and political implications of the work they are committed to.*

Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000, pp. 98-99

Participants in Study 1 did not express the view that it was a viable option for teachers to choose minimal involvement with colleagues. A small number of classroom-based teachers suggested, within their descriptions of ideal and less than ideal colleagues, that involvement with colleagues was a positive trait and an absence of this, the opposite. However, in Study 2, deputy heads did speak about this possibility and saw potential benefits to teachers in terms of teaching effectively, saving on the time required for meeting and communicating with colleagues, more autonomy, depth of relationships with pupils, best use of resources and for the effective operation of whole school structures. The view was expressed by a secondary deputy head that teachers would be subject to less surveillance and, by implication, more free to set their own quality standards. Another view was that the really important teacher interactions were with pupils and that it was perfectly valid for teachers to choose to put their

social energies into these rather than with other adults in the school context. This may well be another manifestation of the lack of acknowledgement of adults' hedonic needs and impulses (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Study 2 participants thought that experienced classroom teachers were the most likely to organise themselves in a way which accessed these benefits. The possibility that other benefits exist, such as the increased likelihood of risk-taking and innovation, was not raised by the participants but has been written about in the literature (McGregor, 2000; Allen, 2004). Two other possible advantages, found by Johnson (2003) in his study with two secondary and two primary Australian schools, namely avoidance of inter-personal conflict and factionalism within the staff group, were not expressed.

Choice and control have consistently been central themes within participants' views, particularly those of deputy head teachers. Many connections were made with the hierarchical structure of school organisations. Possibly, their particular role in which they straddle management and classroom practice is responsible for this awareness. On the whole, class teachers are involved with managing classes and dealing with pupils whereas school managers are relatively occupied by whole school initiatives and local authority, and possibly national education imperatives, and therefore are fairly removed from the inter-personal life of the school. This may explain the deputy head teachers' particular focus and clarity on the choice and control issue. Bush and Wise (1999), researching the role of middle managers, focus particularly on the deputy head and the need for dedicated support for them in their facilitation of teachers' involvement in each other's work:

*the dual role of teacher and manager imposes a heavy burden, and may not be sustainable without additional resources.*

Bush & Wise, 1999, p. 194

The Wise and Bush paper, written very much in relation to the development of the role of middle managers since the implementation of the Education Reform Act, DFE, (1988), places a great emphasis upon the personnel monitoring aspects of deputy head teachers' work. My study suggests that some deputy head teachers framed their role and work at a deeper and more complex level than this, i.e. one which encompassed support for emotional and relational processes within the teaching group. This may be a reflection of the sample group who, on a voluntary basis took part in my study, but it could also indicate a growing

awareness of an increasing need to consider these aspects. This should not be surprising, given the wider educational context in which the concepts of emotional intelligence and mental health are increasingly voiced within discourse at all levels.

Participants from all three studies highlighted how much teachers needed to work in their own individual style and to construct their teacher role in a way which was personally comfortable and supportive of their most effective practice. Sometimes other teachers featured in this, but not always. What mattered to teachers at all levels was that they could experience some personal freedom in their choice to work with colleagues or alone. Ironically, the development of individual style is unlikely in the absence of knowledge and experience of the practice of colleagues, who act as a reference point. The literature highlights the importance of teachers' having the choice and agency to sometimes *not* work with colleagues. This view was expressed by deputy head and LA participants but not individual classroom-based teachers or head teachers in Study 1.

LA participants acknowledged the need for some individual choice and autonomy for classroom-based staff regarding how teachers should work together and with whom, but took it as given that the choice would be in favour of involvement and concentrated on how this was supported and/or challenged. This may suggest that there is scope for supporting a greater awareness of the different possibilities and arrangements for collaborating with colleagues and teachers' capacity to make choices.

### **Intra- and inter-personal aspects**

The relational nature of teaching (as highlighted by Little, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994 and Bryk and Schneider, 2002) was referred to by many of the participants. The capacity to create and maintain good relationships and to have good inter-personal skills was seen as an important feature of being a good teacher. Whether or not teachers believe that their own relational style was important in supporting pupils' emotional and social development and learning and whether or not they have the knowledge, skills and competencies has not been subject to empirical research. Few participants offered insights on this topic.

A major theme to emerge was that it *was* possible to be an effective, even talented teacher and not relate to other staff as long as relationships with the students were sound. The view

was voiced by some that relating to adults did not ensure relating to and effective teaching of students. This suggested that teachers who were entirely occupied in management tasks involving other adults, were not necessarily seen as good teacher practitioners and that this could threaten their credibility with other teachers. However, another view was that teachers could become so invested in the satisfactions of relationships with students that they risked losing their distinct adult role and professionalism and actually made work for all staff more difficult. This related particularly to issues in connection with student behaviour.

Definitions of the term 'relationship' make the distinction between primary and secondary relationship (Reber, 1985). The first refers to a long-lasting connection in which emotional commitment to another is made and the other cannot be easily replaced. The second is a relatively short-term connection between persons with more rule-bound and limited interactions and explicit social roles. Where teachers developed relationships with students of a more primary nature, their role clarity and authority as teachers in the rule-bound school system were eroded and affected by other teachers who chose to interact with students on the basis of relationships of a secondary nature.

Participants in the present study highlighted the particular importance of individuals' intra- and inter-personal qualities. Individuals who were perceived as being deficient in intra- and inter-personal skills were linked to negative involvement with other teachers, and contributed to a lack of teachers' involvement in each other's work.

## **School Management Structures**

### **Benefits**

According to the literature, a school policy of encouraging teachers' work together can be helpful and has been linked to increased teacher job satisfaction as it can make the work easier. Participants agree that teachers' involvement in each other's work is beneficial for the function of the whole school, LEA and government policy. The topic of teachers' work together and school management's role in relation to this yielded many views. Many of the participants thought that teachers' working together, aided school management and vice versa. The deputy head teacher interviewees all saw their roles as being connected with

supporting teachers' work together in terms of team building, facilitating joint work, problem-solving between staff and ensuring good systems of communication. This is very much in accord with Rosenholtz's (1989) ideal scenario of teacher collaboration, which is actively supported by teacher leaders and in which *'requests for and offers of advice and assistance seemed like moral imperatives'*.

The deputy heads in Study 2 placed a particular emphasis on and saw relationships as a central issue which impinged on all other aspects and influences on teachers' involvement with each other's work. For the deputy head teacher participants, good relationships with other teachers was an important but not essential aspect of being a good teacher, which benefited teachers, management and the whole school. In addition, they sometimes viewed it as part of the job of a deputy to facilitate relationships between teachers and to manage and address situations in which problematic inter-personal interactions affected and/or reduced teachers working together well. The most positive views supported the findings of Nias (1988) and Little (1990), highlighting the personal and emotional support possibilities and the links between this and a healthy inter-personal school climate, general school function, personal development and pupil behaviour. There were also some links made between poor teacher relationships and lack of staff well-being, rates of staff retention and sickness.

### **Problems**

Described in the literature are initiatives designed to support teachers' work together, which assume the benefits and does not appear to take into account the problematic aspects such as unique organisational factors. One problem that is identified is that of the teacher manager role in supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work, as it relates to teachers' professional development. In her research on teachers' professional development, Carnell (1999) found that the collaboration facilitated by professional development initiatives was more likely to continue if facilitated by external agencies, and she speculates that teachers' need for supportive collaboration with external facilitators enabled them in a way which their managers were unable to do.

Schools currently have a range of external agencies which they can call upon for supporting whole school projects, for example, local authority advisory staff, school improvement staff, behaviour improvement staff and educational psychologists, and many others. However, the

involvement of external agencies is not without problematic aspects. One pitfall is the inherent potential for a kind of feeding frenzy scenario in which individual professionals and agencies compete for this special place in the school's life.

Another problem with the involvement of external agencies is that the criteria for their selection is often unstated but frequently has to do with having a special relationship with the head teacher or school members of the school management team. This is not necessarily a recipe for informing productive change. If it is the case that only external agencies known, trusted and related to by school managers are involved in supporting schools' adult interpersonal climate, this also begs many questions in terms of the qualifications of personnel involved. Such work requires a high level of understanding of schools and education and learning in general. There is also a need for clearly stated ethical principles for professional practice, including a commitment to impartiality and neutrality. Another essential component would appear to be a knowledge of group dynamics and basic social psychology principles.

Participants in this study also gave the impression that teachers' involvement in each other's work was a problem-free area and few interviewees owned up to any personal experience of problems. LA interviewees in Study 3 spoke of the importance of teachers' relationships to a lesser degree than school-based participants. They emphasised the difficulties and challenges relating to conflict, politics and control issues within schools and bemoaned the absence of any input on this to teachers during their training. A view that school management had an active role to play, possibly in collaboration with invited and trusted professionals from external agencies was expressed.

The more removed from specific school contexts teachers were, the more ambivalent the views were regarding relationships between teachers. School-based respondents voiced the least problematic and most positive views. However, the non school-based respondents expressed more views in which teacher relationships were seen to be influential, in a negative sense, upon teacher well-being and staff retention. This suggests that the more relationally embedded teachers are, the less it is possible to take a clear and measured view but the less relationally involved, the more overtly negative the views become. Maybe the fact that deputies continue to be close to the classroom context and actively supporting teachers whilst



being part of the management structure and being more distant from classroom-based teachers, i.e. the dual role, results in their views being less polarised.

### **The challenges and solutions to supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work**

In the literature, school managers are viewed as having a special role in supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work, but this is a difficult task in a culture of collective individualism.

Deputy head teacher participants in Study 2 talked generally about teaching as an endeavour in which difficulties in relationships featured regularly, i.e. between teachers of all levels, teachers and pupils, teachers and parents, and other professionals. They attributed this to the power and authority aspects of the teacher role, which were compounded by school systems and structures. Management style and communication in the school were seen as areas which could support a better inter-personal climate, but which required a stated and active commitment to values-based collaborative learning. However, teacher managers appear to be particularly ill-equipped to take this work on at this time, given the rise in unfilled head teacher posts and accounts of head teacher dissatisfaction and stress (Croll, 1996; DfES, 2007). Certainly, the head teacher participants did talk about prioritising active school development work in this area and, presumably, the head teachers I spoke with were quite well-disposed to the topic, given their agreement to participate in the study. This raises questions about how a discourse related to teachers' involvement in each other's work might be raised and supported.

Throughout all three studies, an issue that arose repeatedly was the issue of teacher managers' different and sometimes difficult roles, which required them to connect and work with adults and children and with the interaction between these. In some respects, the deputy heads appeared to live out the dilemma of juggling being a teacher and also a teacher manager. On the one hand, as a manager, teachers' involvement with each other was viewed as a given and necessary phenomenon, vital for pushing school policy and development through. On the other hand, the class teacher's viewpoint was that it was just an arrangement to be chosen and utilised as the need to do so arose.



Classroom-based teachers referred surprisingly little to the support potential of colleagues but did seem to have expectations of management. Teacher managers in Study 1 did make particular reference to this but gave no specific examples. The deputy head teachers referred to this being an important part of their role and function, i.e. as managers of affect within the staff group but without a formal brief and certainly no formal training or support for them in doing this. Skills and knowledge about complex topics such as conflict mediation, problem-solving, team dynamics and team building, effective communication, integration of new staff and accommodation to staff changes do not appear to be ensured in any formal sense. This lack of specific input, e.g. peer mentoring or professional coaching is articulated by Kruse and colleagues in their study of Jewish day schools:

*In one set of cases, in a so-called integrated day school, where Jewish and general studies staff taught alongside one another all day, teachers complained about receiving no guidance in how to work together.*

Kruse et al., 1995, p. 797

This is in a teaching context where the structural arrangements and stated expectations are that it is a necessity to co-teach, yet communication between staff is hurried, not supported and there is no time, social facilities or human resources available.

*While the curriculum organisation of day schools does require teachers to co-operate with one another, few teachers form (or are capable of forming) solid, collaborative relationships without active nurturing.*

Kruse et al., 1995, p. 797

Views upon the nature of managers' involvement in supporting teachers' work together did vary, from being explicitly stated within the school's structures to that of a more low level nature which took the form of encouragement and everyday incidental support. This latter was a position which two participants adopted because of their view that teachers' work together should be left to teachers to get on with in their own ways and did not require management or direction.

Deputies suggested that teacher managers may need to be in the classroom, teaching students directly, to establish credibility with teaching staff. The relationship with children was seen as all important within the role and function of teachers and, whilst it was possible to be a good teacher and not relate to and work well with other adults, it was not possible to not relate to children and to be a good teacher. The individual's prowess and reputation as a teacher was the important thing, not being inter-personally skilled with other teachers.

Participants offered various suggestions in terms of what would help teacher managers support teachers' involvement in each other's work. These included a democratic and collaborative management style, training and support for managers, a clear job description, including the aspect of facilitating and modelling good working practices with other teachers, and skilled external agency support that is invited rather than mandatory.

LA respondents spoke of the need for school managers to be supported by non-partisans, i.e. school-based, trusted colleagues from external agencies. This was viewed as a way of balancing the tension between being a part of the school system and also being able to detach enough to see clearly and to take a neutral and facilitatory role. Tensions regarding roles, involvement and detachment appear to feature in many of the views expressed.

### **Limiting teachers' involvement in each other's work**

According to the literature, some school managers may limit teachers' involvement in each other's work in order to maintain control, i.e. divide and rule. Participants also talked about head teachers *not* supporting teachers' work together, as a way of reducing interaction and communication and as a means of controlling staff. This links with the work of Acker (1991), Burgess (1983), Yeomans (1985) and Hoyle (1969), all of whom see the head teacher's distinct role in the school system as being highly influential on all aspects of the school, including the inter-personal climate in which teachers operate. This might explain another perspective voiced by one participant, who saw teachers' work together as a way of ensuring quality standards and good practice. It is important to resist making simplistic generalisations on this topic, as the formal power structures of schools in interaction with dynamic and changeable staffroom dynamics, i.e. alliances and divisions (Hargreaves, 1972) may give rise to many different perceptions regarding head manager styles.

### **The importance of an egalitarian and non-blame school culture**

As previously stated, the literature contains references to the use of teachers' involvement in each other's work as a management strategy but an overly directive management style can result in teacher resistance to being managed in this area and to working together *per se*. Both the literature and this study's participants suggest the essential nature of an egalitarian culture of non-blame in order for constructive teachers' involvement in each other's work to thrive.

School structures are seen as not only the context and medium within which teachers can work together, but also the key facilitating and obstructive factor. The roles of the head teacher and school management team are viewed as crucial in modelling the existence or the lack of professional collaboration, and as key to the inter-personal climate of the whole school. The particular relationship between head teachers and deputies was described as an important one. In Study 2 and Study 3, interviewees generally saw this as a model to the staff group and one which was not straightforward, requiring development over time. A great deal of importance was placed upon the head teacher's capacity to model professional collaboration in general and also to facilitate and inspire teachers to want to collaborate (Barth, 1990). Eraut's (1998) studies, within a range of occupational settings, found that the dynamics within management structures, offered a micro-culture reflection of the entire organisation. The findings from my study also support this viewpoint and have implications for school management teams.

The degree to which school managers can model and utilise a collaborative and consultative approach was seen to be key in management being successful in facilitating teachers' work together, and this is in line with the work of Pomson (2005), Hudson (2005) and Wise et al. (1999), who highlight the resistance teachers can present to being directed by management to being collegial in their practice. The view was expressed by several participants in Study 3 that the head teacher especially could benefit from some support in facilitating teachers' involvement in the work of other teachers, through using skilled and trusted members of external agencies who were appropriately qualified, e.g. educational psychologists. The requirement for head teachers to have freedom of choice in who, how and when they involved such support was seen as vital.

Participants in all three studies expressed the view that management style could obstruct teachers' work involving other teachers if of a directive and/or didactic nature, whereas a consultative and collegial model of management was seen as desirable and facilitative. This raises the question of how much the involvement of teachers in each other's work needs to be organised. Participants in Study 2 and Study 3 emphasised the benefits derived from professional development initiatives. Their comments were restricted to formally organised initiatives rather than everyday ongoing professional development within professional practice. My study suggests that this distinction should be considered. If it is the case that teachers' well-being, practice and development, overall school function and pupil achievement and inclusion in general gain from the involvement of colleagues in an everyday, incidental way, school managers and LA staff need to find ways of actively supporting the phenomenon. The importance of constructing a more explicit dialogue between teachers and a curiosity about the topic is also highlighted.

Most interviewees referred to the 'ownership' or interest in teachers working together as being a shared one between individual teachers and school managers in their oversight of the whole school. The idea of supporting teachers' work together as an actual management strategy was voiced and linked by one school's policy of having all senior managers teaching in classrooms in order to facilitate this. There was also an indirect reference to the likelihood that OFSTED inspectors evaluated staff collaboration positively. Hudson's (2005) work highlights the implications of staff collaboration for management, finding that authoritarian leadership ran counter to teacher collaboration and also that teachers could not be directed in this area, but could be facilitated (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990; Little, 1990b). Pomson (2005) stresses the necessity for teachers to have room to make choices, but none of the deputy head participants in this study made this point. This may be a reflection of their teacher manager status and could be an area for further investigation through a large-scale questionnaire follow-up study.

There was also a view expressed that LEA and government monitoring and evaluation practices hampered teacher managers in supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work. A recent 'Model Performance Management Policy for Schools' publication by the DfES (2007), produced jointly with major teaching and education unions, offers guidelines for classroom observations of teachers. These include advice regarding qualification, training and status of observers, frequency and notice of 'drop ins' and teachers' rights to appeal on

‘findings’. This aspect of involvement in each other’s work, i.e. managing teachers in the classroom, appears to have become increasingly politicised and problematic. The media have been quick to report on this strategy in a way to suggest that teachers’ autonomy and freedom from being spied upon needs to be protected; ‘Teacher Net’, the online discussion facility for teachers, provides evidence for this view. Empirical research with a range of individual teachers investigating this topic is not available.

The deputy head teachers in Study 2 had significantly and noticeably more to say about things which related specifically to the research topic than the teachers and managers in Study 1 did, although this could have reflected the more focused and tighter nature of the questions of Study 2 than in the initial scoping study. In addition, deputy head respondents generally viewed teacher collaboration as being something that was central to their roles and positions, and which they were employed to support and manage. They were unequivocal in the view that involvement with other teachers was key to all teachers’ work, irrespective of position, length of experience or school setting. Paradoxically, however, the view was also expressed that it was possible to be a good teacher with minimal involvement of colleagues in the work. The space and choice for individual teachers of all levels to negotiate how much involvement and the nature, timing and location of this, appeared to be viewed as important. This suggests that understanding and working with the resulting dynamics of the teacher staff group, is a complex aspect of the deputy head teacher’s role.

A small number of participants in Study 2 thought that the type of school and/or size affected how much teachers could and needed to work together but it was interesting to note that none of the secondary teachers voiced this perspective. This may reflect structural aspects of different school types. In the primary and special school sectors, a high onus is placed upon the quality of teacher and pupil interaction. It is one which is generally more like that between adults and children in family contexts, i.e. one offering familiarity, continuity, personal presence and connection. Children spend relatively large amounts of time with just one key adult as compared to the more distant arrangements in secondary schools, where teachers can expect to work with a much larger number of different groups of students. This could mean that the personal and social needs of adults are more apparent in the primary and special school settings and that involvement of other staff is therefore more sought after and supported. Research which specifically explores and compares the level of importance

attributed by teachers to involvement with other teachers in different school settings might illuminate this.

Deputies challenged the idea of teachers' working together being constructed as a management strategy or as a success criterion for management. This would require management to take a very controlling position and approach. Participants voiced the view that teachers themselves had to have control of this aspect of their practice and this meant a certain amount of choice and freedom to negotiate on an individual level. They also expressed the view that government did not have the subtle, in-depth and situated knowledge and proximity to become involved in this area in any way other than its present position of policy-making and articulating of good practice. This indicates that teacher managers must encompass support for teachers' involvement with each other without openly articulating or formulating policy and practice management in relation to this. They must adopt strategies such as modelling, amplifying the benefits of collaborative daily practice, arranging staff and school development initiatives with the support of skilled and knowledgeable external agencies, and actively taking part in these collaborations, primarily as colleague teachers.

### **Experienced teachers**

The idea that experienced teachers could have a key part to play in teachers' involvement in each other's work, was raised by participants in Study 2 and 3. However, none of these participants spoke of formally organised school arrangements using such staff as suggested by Lieberman et al. (1995), who wrote about the idea of peer-elected, experienced teachers to act as key colleagues and facilitate collaboration but who do not have formal leadership roles, i.e. '*internal networkers*'. Participants in my study expressed the view that experienced teachers could actually obstruct teachers' involvement in each other's work. The view was expressed that experienced staff might actively split and sabotage the teaching group as their way of resisting the management agenda and/or asserting their status in the informal hierarchy of the staff group.

The idea that there could be benefits and functions to *not* working with other teachers, as proposed by Hargreaves (1994) and Clement and Van der Burg (2000), is supported by my study, particularly Study 2 with deputy heads, which highlights the teacher developmental cycle and school structure aspects. Also, in my study, experienced teachers who do not hold



management positions were considered to be most likely to resist work with other teachers, as their own practice, developed over time within a specific school context, was not viewed as benefiting from work with other teachers and might even be threatened. This suggests that the energy and influence of experienced teachers is not understood well, and that more consideration and greater understanding of the possibilities for utilising this more constructively is required. Within the literature there is a notion that an understanding and commitment to the benefits of teachers' work together, comes with increasing experience and length of service (Newberry, 1977; Feiman-Nemser, 1986). This raises the question of whether or not supporting teachers' work together should be linked with a management role or whether experienced teachers could be involved more. Carnell (1999) argues that the hierarchical structures of schools must be reduced for an optimal collaborative adult learning context to develop and function. My findings suggest that teachers, regardless of school position, view existing school structures as necessary to ensuring active facilitation of professional collaboration, including professional development.

Paradoxically, the research also suggests that experienced teachers may feel that they have least to gain from involvement with colleagues. They already have demonstrable knowledge, experience and competence in their practice. They are not invested in management agendas in terms of their role. Perhaps many of the advantages for not being involved with their colleagues pertain to them especially, i.e. autonomy, choice, freedom to practise in their own style developed over a period of time. This may also increase the likelihood, however, of them being more isolated, less able to receive the emotional and social support available through involvement with colleagues and less able to access professional development material from contact with colleagues' practice and ideas.

Initiatives which involve external agencies such as educational psychologists/school counsellors, and local authority officers which utilise peer learning professional development methods, have been employed for some time. These could be subject or phase-focused, not necessarily based in schools and involve mixing groups of teachers across schools, e.g. bringing more experienced teachers and middle managers together in order to help new conversations and introduce more new ideas. However, it has been found that this does not necessarily affect the quality and frequency of work, largely of an informal nature, with other teachers on a daily basis in school contexts.



## **Effective Whole Schools**

### **Practicalities**

According to the literature, teachers' involvement in each other's work supports the practical aspects of getting the job of teaching done, with which participants from both Study 1 and 2 agreed. The way schools are structured means that certain groups of teachers are more likely to be involved with other teachers, i.e. newly qualified practitioners going through processes of supervision and induction, and teachers in management positions responsible for co-ordinating and supporting initiatives across the whole school. It would therefore seem likely that classroom-based teachers, particularly the most experienced ones, have fewest opportunities to be involved with colleagues, as they spend the large majority of their time within the classroom and with pupils.

Teacher managers stressed how much easier it was to address staff shortages and provide flexible cover for staff absences if teachers were working well together in the school generally. These views were expressed by participants from the range of schools represented in the study. Links with supporting inexperienced teachers were made, as well as supporting transitions, e.g. between school years and actual school settings and generally meeting pupils' needs. The positive relationship between teachers' involvement in each other's work and policy implementation, the quality of communication throughout the school, quality control issues in teaching and learning, the school's development, work with parents and student behaviour were made.

Views in this area were not completely positive though. The viewpoint that enabling teachers' work together was costly in terms of time and staff was referred to, and also that it made for less business-like, efficient teaching. This perspective was one not encountered in the literature. Study 2 deputy head participants could also see benefits to the whole school's function of not being involved in each other's work, and although participants saw the aspects of their work which involved other teachers as predominantly positive, unlike with the first study, they described the less positive aspects as well. A body of school reform literature exists (Flinders, 1989; Johnson, 1990 and Lieberman, 1988) which attributes isolated teacher practice as being an adaptive and helpful response to scarce teaching resources and to the ecological and physical characteristics of schools. The particular position of deputy heads might well be responsible for their different view. Local authority

staff outside of individual school settings, and classroom-based teachers and head teachers who are school-based, all saw collaborative practice as the ideal practice. For every benefit of involvement with colleagues, deputy head participants could suggest disadvantages.

The complexity and ambivalence of teachers' views in terms of the benefits and disadvantages of teachers' involvement in each other's work highlighted in my study, is in accord with a number of previous studies. For example, work by Jenni and Mauriel (2004), which investigated 49 schools over eight years that claimed to practise and apply quality management techniques, revealed some interesting differences between respondents' stated desires and perceived practices. These differences were consistently and especially wide on questions about the value of cooperation and collaboration among teachers within the schools.

Several participants thought the degree of importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work, in terms of benefits to the whole school, was dependent upon the type of school setting. One primary special school participant and another primary mainstream school participant thought that a secondary school setting was likely to be more subject-orientated. Another primary participant, in a large three form intake school, thought that a one form intake primary school would require less work with other teachers. The secondary special school participant thought that the size and nature of her key stage 3 setting meant that teachers actually had no choice but to work together. None of the secondary participants expressed views about the effects of different school settings. The variety and range of views highlight the complexity and subjective nature of teachers' thoughts about the impact of school settings on their work involving colleagues.

The hierarchical school structure has also been associated with the likelihood of teachers working together in a way that supports school development. The literature suggests that experienced teachers could have a particular role in facilitating teachers' involvement in each other's work and, by doing so, would dilute the traditional hierarchical model of school management and contribute to an increased propensity for collaborative practice. Participants also suggested that a more democratic school climate would support teachers' involvement in each other's work that related to whole school development.

## **Teacher retention**

Nias's (1998) ideas about the importance of other teachers in their provision of peer reference groups in the emotional and intellectual commitment involved in teaching work, is highlighted by Hudson (2005). He speculates that an absence of this support might be responsible for teachers leaving their careers, but this is not substantiated in the available literature. Teachers in my study made a direct connection with the role of other teachers in their work and with the important topic of teacher retention. They considered that it actually kept teachers in the profession and reduced movement between posts in different schools. Participants in this study voiced views that if work with other teachers was difficult, or tensions existed between teachers, or if teachers were isolated, then this would result directly in staff leaving. The cost and time involved in supporting teachers' work together was a concern for some participants, but they weighed this against the implications of not supporting teachers' involvement in each other's work and the possible consequences in terms of teacher retention. This indicates that, further, more school-focused research is needed in order to achieve a better understanding of the influences affecting teacher retention and continuity of staffing.

## **School development initiatives**

LA participants expressed the view that teachers' involvement in each other's work could be utilised by management to ensure quality of professional practice. Given LA participants' roles to support, evaluate and demonstrate effective whole school and LA initiatives, this focus is unsurprising. LA participants spoke almost exclusively of the gains from teachers' work together, in terms of the effects on the whole school, on teacher management, on the pupil group and also on other professionals' input to the school.

According to the literature, teachers' involvement in each other's work supports their professional development, which in turn facilitates whole school development, but the literature also suggests that the general culture of teaching mitigates against this due to its essentially individualistic nature. Large-scale initiatives within education have been based upon the assumption that teachers see the benefits of involvement with colleagues and want to work together, and an implicit assumption that school development projects can utilise teacher collaboration within schools and between schools. An example is the national DfES

strategy, 'Leading Edge Partnership programme' (2002-2007), part of which involves 205 partnerships, each consisting of a lead school and a number of partnership schools, each allocated funding of £60,000:

*The programme offers funding distributed via a lead school for use across their partnership to work on locally determined learning challenges. Partnerships are committed to working collaboratively to inspire, design, test and adapt professional practice to raise standards of teaching and learning where improvement is most urgently needed.*

[http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/leadingedge/what\\_is\\_leading\\_edge/?version=1](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/leadingedge/what_is_leading_edge/?version=1)

A major governmental initiative, 'Every Child Matters' (DoH, 2004), seeks to ensure inter-professional collaboration between all professionals involved in public services targeting children and young people. The government's achievement and inclusion agenda in education, spanning the last four decades, has alluded to the importance of teachers and other professionals working together (DES, 1967; DfES, 2005).

If teachers' interactions with each other are problematic, this is likely to hold implications for interactions with other adults within the school community, although this is not particularly evident in the literature. A national questionnaire survey commissioned by the DfES (2004) on the deployment and impact of support staff in schools makes no explicit reference to collaboration, and yet the numbers of other involved professionals, support and volunteer staff are increasing. Therefore, what is communicated or modelled by teachers is likely to be of some importance. This would appear to be of increasing importance as professional collaboration between different professional groups, let alone within a professional group, requires better understanding.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools has increasingly emphasised the importance of colleagues for supporting teachers in both their professional practice and the effective functioning of schools. Teachers' involvement in each other's work is also considered to be central to the growing imperative for teachers to support the emotional and social development of their students. For example, a publication 'Developing Emotionally Literate Staff: A Practical Guide' (Morris and Casey, 2006), devotes a chapter to supporting staff development and begins with a statement about the importance of staff's continuing professional development and involvement in each other's work over time.

It is assumed that teachers are willing and ready to reflect upon their own emotional and relational experiences (DfES, 2005) together in staff development sessions. The government's 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' strategy (DfES, 2005) includes the requirement for teachers to be willing to develop greater self-awareness regarding their own emotional and relational styles with colleagues:

*The experience of going through some of the material with a more personal focus helps us become aware of our own strengths and those areas for emotional literacy development.*

Morris and Casey, 2006, p. xix

The importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work has continued to be written about within governmental policy and strategy documents in relation to the teaching profession (DfES, 2007). Much appears to be invested in the ideal of collaboration but most of current knowledge about individual teachers' views is based upon assumption and generalisation.

Participants' views on the relationship between government and teachers' work together were that government had not considered this topic in any way other than a fairly incidental and superficial way. Some participants thought that the climate of frequent and large-scale innovation, particularly in relation to the imperative to work with other professionals and within the community, actually impeded teachers working together. Pomson (2005) makes the point that the daily job of converting rhetoric about the benefits of teachers collaborating into a working reality is a 'messy business'. Participants' views supported this.

## **Design and Methodological Issues**

### **Researcher involvement/positioning**

The relationship between participants and researcher is an important factor in any research project (McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993; Olmedo, 1999). Although the literature contained many references to the phenomenon of teachers' involvement in other teachers' work, there

were relatively few studies which focused specifically on this area. My experience of gaining access to participants for this study suggests that difficulties in relation to this could account for this dearth of research. My decision to use my existing professional position and connections in education as an entry point for the study arose from the consistent finding expressed in the few existing studies on teachers' involvement in each other's work, namely that access was problematic. Were the data to have been collected by a researcher with no existing connections or familiarity with the research context, the access may have been so challenging and costly that it would not have been viable. Also, the degree of authenticity may also have been reduced.

My dual role as EP and researcher incurred the possibility that would-be participants did not volunteer to be interviewed because their school contexts or individual situations were too problematic and they considered the risk of being negatively evaluated too high.

A further potential disadvantage of holding a number of different roles, in my positioning as a researcher, professional colleague and co-worker, was that this might influence the content and style of how teachers talked to me. Using my EP researcher position may have meant that whilst access was facilitated, the LA officer aspect of my EP role could have affected what participants were prepared to share with me, i.e. they may have been more inclined to present an unproblematic, polite, 'rosy' view of their school contexts. Although their views may have been influenced by their knowledge of my particular EP input to their schools, as this aspect was not researched, this can only be speculation.

In order to encourage openness from participants, I made every effort to be very clear and boundaried in my researcher capacity, and to communicate this to participants. An additional strategy to reduce ambiguity within participants' perceptions about my dual role as EP and researcher arose from focus group discussion with colleague EPs, during Study 2. This consisted of the possibility of writing to participants to enquire about their experience of the interview, however, the idea was not viable in terms of professional time.

The dual role of EP and researcher may also have influenced my expectations and the focus of analysis. For example, in Study 1, the participants who reported relatively low levels of positive relationships between teachers in their schools and relatively high levels of neutral relationships seemed particularly authentic to me. This is possibly because, as an objective



and experienced psychologist and interviewer, I was discerning a genuine and honest account, or because it reflected most closely my own professional experience and expectations. This question highlighted the complexity of the interaction between me and the participants and was discussed in supervision. Over time, as themes were repeated in the data, and alongside an increasing personal awareness of the research relationship, I became more confident that these themes were authentic.

Again, during the data analysis process, I questioned to what extent my dual role as EP and researcher influenced the way in which I interpreted the data. This process began with an in-depth examination of one interview transcript. Within this transcript, the themes of control, judgement, task, feelings, complexity and reality appeared to centre around issues to do with management of the school, which was unsurprising, as the participant concerned was acting as head teacher at the time of the interview. I wondered whether my own role and function as an EP prioritised management. My entry point and access into the school system was that of an LA officer. As such I came with a certain status and perceived professional identity, in which my relationship and dialogue with the school's management was key. Subsequent access to classroom-based teachers depended upon school managers deciding that EP involvement was necessary and desirable in the first instance. It is perhaps no coincidence that the starting point for the research commenced with an interview study with teacher managers.

### **Access and sample**

Access was extremely difficult and I had to be very persistent over a long period of time, and also had to try many different and sometimes repeated approaches. As already mentioned, the study's development and access to participants was facilitated through using available school and local authority structures, i.e. school managers and LA officers. In order to do this I had to adapt initial plans and, in so doing, maximise opportunities for accessing participants, which I could create in my EP work. The sample may have been positively biased towards the involvement of teachers who felt able to talk about themselves and to give time to this research which focused upon the research topic. Due to my EP involvement with and knowledge of the particular schools from which the participants came, I was able to judge the sample group to be one which, relative to the school's entire teacher group, was open, positive and engaged with teaching and the school. It was also obvious from the interview



transcripts that these were teachers who largely experienced satisfaction and expressed a degree of feeling effective as teachers.

### **Ethical issues**

Part of the motivation for conducting this research and key to the ethical foundation for the work, was the desire to articulate and share the experiences of individual teachers, with the hope that the research findings might have implications for change at an organisational level.

Simons, in Park (1997), refers to such a process:

*organisational actors whose voices may have traditionally been marginalized are intentionally elevated, transgressing the dominant cultural norms of elevating the experiences and voices of the uppermost strata within organisations. In so doing, previously silenced and individualised stories are shared, resonating across diverse organisational actors and rippling out into the wider organisation and beyond, offering a forum within which private, painful stories can be told, shared by others, thereby contributing to the building of a community, sensitised to the power of relational and reflective knowing.*  
p. 289 (Ch 3)

In practice, the research fulfilled an ethical function in terms of interviews being experienced as supportive and beneficial. A number of participants suggested that they found the interviews to be helpful, enjoyable and even therapeutic. This is in line with Ortiz's (2001) finding of beneficial side effects of research interviews for participants. I also noticed that most participants experienced some enjoyment and affirmation through talking about their work as teachers. This multiplicity of researcher role and the unexpected capacity of interviewees to derive personal benefit from the interview experience, highlighted the need for me to be aware and flexible in shaping the research as I conducted it. The novelty effect of participants having this time to reflect on their work may also account for the relatively large amount of extraneous material within the interview transcripts.

It is possible that, as participants perceived their interview experiences as being therapeutic, they could have felt unduly exposed. However, everyone who took part in the research had the opportunity to raise issues with me and to amend or withdraw any aspect of their interview responses some time after the interview. This, plus the fact that all contributions would be anonymised and confidential was made clear in initial discussions with prospective participants and at the start of interview sessions. Another measure was suggested in the

focus group discussion with colleague EPs, during Study 2. This was the idea of writing to participants to enquire about their experience of the interview. As mentioned previously, this idea was not practical. Anonymity and the lengthy timescale of the study were considered to be sufficient protective measures to ensure participants' confidentiality.

### **Single interview method**

My priority in the study was to collect rich, authentic and personal data from many individual participants. At the same time, it was important that it would not be too demanding of participants' time, energy and goodwill. This meant that I judged that single semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate means to collect data. Individual semi-structured interviews also seemed to offer a way of enabling individuals to express their views in a relatively informal manner and private context. My finding that the involvement of other teachers in participants' work was rarely thought about consciously or in a planned way, indicated that the 'one shot' interview approach could have been supplemented by follow-up interviews, even via telephone or in writing, and these would probably have yielded more 'thought through' data as the interviewees would have been primed to consciously reflect on the topic. However, the very small amount of feedback which I received from participants when I sent back the transcript of their interviews for verification, suggests that any further demands upon respondents' time may not have been viable. Certainly, in the initial study, where I had regular contact with participants, I am aware that many other demands upon the participants' time existed. It would have been possible to discuss the material further and this simply did not happen. It is important to acknowledge that silence or non-communication, is in itself, a communication, albeit of a default nature. The very small amount of feedback about raw transcripts suggests that participants considered the material they had given as being comprehensive and in no need of changes or additions. A longer timescale for engaging with participants could also have allowed me to probe and explore participants' views in more depth, but some attempt to do this happened in that interview transcripts were sent to participants for comment and amendment prior to analysis. Further respondent validation could be enabled through circulating the findings of the study and inviting comment either through written feedback, follow-up interview or focus group interviews. However, as mentioned previously, this is likely to have been impractical.

## **Context for the research**

The research topic could have been approached through a single or even repeated case study research design, such as that employed by Hudson (2005). This would have engaged with the detail and variance of perceptions within a single institution. However, the claim towards findings which could inform better understanding from a wider and larger scale and be more representative of teachers generally, would have been sacrificed. My study draws upon interviews with 59 different teachers from 18 schools and two different education authority contexts. The variety of viewpoints arising within and between the many contexts in which this research took place, justifies future development of this enquiry, across an even larger number of contexts.

## **Data analysis**

The transcription and data analysis were extremely time consuming and developed gradually through interaction with the data. Although a data analysis programme such as 'NUDIST' (2002) might have reduced the number of hours expended, I considered that this would have resulted in a loss in terms of my familiarity with and immersion in the data. It would also have restricted my capacity to diversify and experiment with different approaches and different perspectives at various points within the study. For example, it is unlikely that I would have made the decision to undertake an extremely detailed analysis of one participant's data, which involved an initial coding exercise using over 400 different codes. I consider this aspect of the study at such an early point to have been an important development which provided a very focused and specific perspective at a time when the sheer size and scale of the topic was hard to engage with. Verification of what came out of this close analysis resulted from subsequent interviews within each study but no preconceptions were made and each subsequent study was justified in relation to the broader, more general themes arising from analysis and collation of a large number of individual interviews. During the early stages of the research in particular, I had to suspend judgement, stay open and rely on the 'intelligent knowing' (Thomas, 2004) developed over years of professional practice, from many interactions with numerous individual teachers in different schools and LAs. The concepts generated in Studies 2 and 3 came from repeated examination of the data and from links with themes from preceding studies.

## **Conclusion**

A summary of the points raised in this chapter and a synthesis of the findings and their implications is presented in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

### Conclusion

#### The Research Journey

Gaining some insight into many different teachers' unique and situated perspectives on the involvement of other teachers in their work has taken over a decade and has required me to be detached yet involved. I have achieved this through drawing upon a combination of the perspectives available to me as a teacher, psychologist and researcher. My researcher positioning has helped overcome problems of access and, along with my supervision and the length of this research project, my personal lived experience has supported my understanding and analysis of the findings and an exploration of the influences of school management structures.

It seemed that my research introduced a topic to which teachers had not given much explicit thought and that my invitation to focus specifically on this subject was a new experience for them. This may have accounted for the fact that large amounts of the interviews featured talk about aspects of teachers' experience which did not relate to other teachers and also the absence of follow up comment or co-construction of meaning from the interview data. The problems I experienced in accessing participants, suggests that the topic is not one that teachers in general felt able to engage with very readily, and that it is one which my voluntary participant group may have been particularly positive about and interested in.

My use of single, semi-structured interviews suited the practical requirements and encouraged openness amongst participants. The variety of contexts further added to the richness of the data. The rejection of a 'package' approach and my repeated immersion and familiarity with the data were recognisant of the complexity of the research topic.

Participants' largely positive and idealised views about teachers' involvement in each other's work were surprising and I frequently gained a sense of listening to well-rehearsed scripts and 'official lines', i.e. polite accounts. This did not match with the day-to-day contact which I had on a regular basis with teachers in schools. Even before embarking upon my study, I would have found this puzzling for, in my many years of experience within education, I had

been aware of many individual teachers who, at an inter-personal level, appeared to have some difficulties in maintaining positive and relaxed relationships with other adults. Also, the gaps and contradictions within the interview transcripts refuted these offered social realities. Interview experiences often felt like emotional encounters and several interviewees made post-interview comments about how helpful, even therapeutic the interview had been for them. In this sense, the research served an ethical purpose. It gave participants an opportunity to talk safely, i.e. anonymously, about a seemingly little discussed aspect of their work.

The research findings highlight the complex nature of teachers' involvement in each other's work and reveal the heterogeneous quality of views involved. To a large extent, this study confirms existing literature but also adds something new and challenges 'normative models of professional collaboration'.

### **The perceived importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work**

Every teacher interviewed in this study expressed the view that teachers' involvement in each other's work was a good and important thing, however, they also spoke of this phenomenon as being an optional one, i.e. not essential. My study suggests that teachers consider the involvement in each other's work to be important in terms of supporting whole school management and function, the practicalities of teaching, teachers' learning and development, relationships between teachers, the ownership of teachers' work and government priorities for teachers' work. The reasons behind the perceived importance of teachers' involvement in each other's work varied between individuals but trends relating to the degree of emphasis placed upon different aspects were evident, depending upon whether participants were classroom-based, held management positions or worked at the LA level.

Classroom-based teachers asserted that teacher' involvement in each other's work is important but not crucial to being a 'good' teacher, which instead was largely measured by the quality of interactions with the pupils. However, they recognised that good relationships with pupils at the expense of involvement with other teachers could be to the detriment of whole school effectiveness.

Many links were made between teachers' involvement in each other's work and whole school effectiveness in relation to issues such as: addressing staff shortages and providing cover, supporting inexperienced teachers, supporting transitions for pupils, policy implementation, communication, school development, public perception of the teaching profession, work with parents and the management of student behaviour. There was some evidence that teachers' involvement in each other's work impacts upon job satisfaction even if teachers are not consciously aware of this, and that this in turn affects teacher retention. This suggests that the costs of resources required to support teachers' involvement in each other's work might well be more than met as a result of improved teacher retention. Teachers' involvement in each other's work and management were seen as being reciprocally helpful to one another. Managers viewed teachers' involvement in each other's work in a positive light and LA participants emphasised the potential for teachers' involvement in each other's work to ensure the quality of professional practice and whole school development, and also with the efficacy and overall function of the school.

Although deputy head teachers seemed to be particularly aware of the importance of teachers' involvement with each other and their own role in relation to this, they, like classroom-based and LA participants, viewed the topic as a concern and a responsibility for all members of the teaching group and not just the management team. Teachers did not appear to consider that any individual or any group in the system has all the answers. Rather, they would seem to believe that collaboration between all involved is needed in order to gain some more ideas.

### **Quality and occurrence of teachers' involvement in each other's work**

I was aware of a large amount of ambivalence about quantifying the quality of involvement with teacher colleagues. Whilst participants generally described teachers' involvement in each other's work as positive, they appeared to have difficulties in articulating this in specific terms. In terms of the influences upon the quality and occurrence of teachers' involvement in each other's work, both supportive and challenging, individual teaching style and personal characteristics were referred to. Teachers' positions within the school's structures and their length of experience also appeared to be important influences. A particular emphasis was placed upon school structures and systems. This included management style, timetabling and



physical arrangements, whole school and professional development opportunities. In most cases participants voiced the assumption that teachers will support themselves or find some support as and when the need arises. It seemed that no allowance, either via designated roles, professional support or development, time or physical facilities exist and the available literature on staffroom cultures appears to support this 'sink or swim' type of culture. There was some evidence that school context or setting might have a bearing on the necessity and occurrence of teachers' involvement in each other's work with larger schools, and primary schools were seen to benefit more. It seems that multiple factors existing at the level of individual teachers, groups of teachers and the whole school organisation interact together and influence the occurrence of teachers' involvement in each other's work.

### **Disadvantages to teachers' involvement in each other's work – identifying the problematic**

I started this research with the assumption that teachers' work together is a 'given good' (Johnson, 2003), i.e. that collaboration for all teachers as much as possible in all contexts is desirable and that the main issue is to determine how this can be facilitated. However, it would appear that no simple assumptions can be made that teachers can or do work together, that they want to, or that it is a good thing.

The official line or view that teachers' involvement in each other's work is ideal professional practice is evident throughout the transcripts of my participants, however, both the helpful and unhelpful aspects of this ideal emerged. Teachers' involvement in each other's work could be positive and supportive practically and emotionally, but it could also be detrimental to the practicalities of teaching and teachers' emotional well-being due to the demands it can place on communication and role flexibility. It could aid professional development, particularly for NQTs, but it could also hinder some teachers' development. It appeared that there are many reasons for and functions of *not* being involved in each other's work. The possibility that professional practice featuring non-involvement with colleagues could be more helpful than collaborative practice was expressed largely by deputy heads.

When I asked about general relationships in respondents' schools, the answers had clearly suggested that this was not a problem-free area. In fact, at least half of the sample had described them as negative. However, when I actively explored the issue of difficulties

between teachers, participants did not volunteer very much on this topic. Teachers did not necessarily talk about avoiding involvement in each other's work for negative reasons and description of the problematic aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work appeared to be missing. When it did come up, it was generally recounted as having happened in the past, as very unusual, and always as something involving other people, i.e. not the participants directly. Classroom-based teachers attributed most difficulties to school structures and to managers within that. Managers attributed most difficulties to individual teachers who they viewed as having poor inter-personal characteristics.

The group that had most to say regarding the problematic aspect of teachers' involvement in each other's work was the local authority participants who worked outside of schools. This probably should not be surprising, given the personal and contentious nature of this area. There is less at stake for LA participants. Highlighting the problems that can occur between teachers is less stigmatising for them and there is less potential for them to be found wanting.

A more interactional view, i.e. that the difficulties related to individuals interacting with each other within systems, and that took into account factors such as teacher training and government policy overload, was expressed by the local authority participants. They saw these dynamics as an inevitable part of every school group, featuring both positive and negative aspects, and possibly, as a few local authority participants stated, material from which much learning could be derived. This is quite an important point, in that the external, less partisan view offers more potential for change, less likelihood of foreclosing on problems, giving up or rejecting either schools, in terms of staff moving on frequently, or individual teachers being positioned as responsible for systems level problems.

The discrepancy between teachers and LA participants, in terms of what the problematic aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work were attributed to, could be due to the perspective and objectivity that the distance from teaching affords LA participants. This possibility is supported by the fact that deputy heads who have a foot in both camps, i.e. teaching and management, appeared to have views that were less polarised in terms of the problematic aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work belonging either to individuals or systems.

It would seem that the involvement of teachers in each other's work is not always a 'given good' and that sometimes less involvement, limited to some contexts and aspects of teachers' work, is considered by teachers to be preferable. My study suggests that the main issues include judging when and for whom as well as how teachers' involvement in each other's work should be facilitated.

### **Teacher experience and position within the school hierarchy**

Teachers' particular working situations, level of experience and position influence their views on the subject of teachers' involvement in each other's work, and these views are not fixed. Participants were not consciously aware of an individualistic teaching culture. Poor intra- and inter-personal skills were linked to a lack of or ineffective involvement of teachers in each other's work. Individual teachers' needs in relation to involvement in each other's work do not appear to be recognised either at policy level or by themselves.

Whilst teachers were able to separate social involvement from professional collaboration, teachers did not talk much about involvement in each other's work in terms of it meeting their needs for interaction with other adults or of it offering the potential to support creativity.

Whilst deputies stressed the fact that teachers' involvement in each other's work was important to all teachers, regardless of position and experience, it seemed that experienced teachers might not feel that they benefit to the same extent as less experienced colleagues. It was suggested that experienced teachers might in fact feel that their position and status could be threatened by the involvement of other teachers in their work, that they might engage in a power struggle, split and sabotage such initiatives.

This raises the question of how experienced classroom-based teachers' powerful influence might be used in a positive way to support teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Deputy heads in my study saw themselves as having an intrinsic and key part to play in supporting staff working together. However, they highlighted the fact that it was rarely the case that they had the knowledge or skills to do the important, complex, relational, and emotional work that is involved in conflict mediation, problem-solving, addressing team

dynamics, team building, promoting effective communication, integrating new staff and accommodating staff changes. Deputies were not selected for having any particular qualification or competence in these areas. Participants at all levels placed relationships with pupils as central to being a teacher, and hence, promotion to management is generally related to competence as a teacher and in one's dealing with children first and foremost, rather than with other adults.

The hierarchical school structure and the power differentials throughout schools were seen as unhelpful and contributing to inter-personal problems. The view was expressed that whilst the government promoted teachers' involvement in each other's work, it actually gave it little thought, and that large-scale innovation, emphasis on teachers' involvement in each other's work and its being used as a management strategy or performance target/measure actually impeded its natural occurrence. The consensus amongst participants appeared to be that managers need to support rather than mandate teachers' involvement in each other's work. Managers were seen to have a key role in terms of setting the right conditions and creating an inter-personal environment that supports teachers' involvement in each other's work. A head teacher's ability to create such an environment was linked both to his or her intra- and inter-personal characteristics, and also to the levels of collaboration modelled between managers. Other constructive suggestions regarding how managers could support teachers' involvement in each other's work, included: managers spending some time in the classroom teaching in order to establish credibility with teachers; the selection of managers who are committed to collaborative practice and have experience that demonstrates this; training and support for managers; clear job descriptions regarding the facilitation of teachers' involvement in each other's work, and the availability of skilled external agency support. Managers were seen to need to strike a balance between involvement and detachment and to model their commitment to teachers' involvement in each other's work on a daily basis.

## **Choice**

The importance of choice arose time and again. There appeared to be a consensus amongst classroom teachers that involvement in each other's work needs to be an individual's choice. The construction of an environment featuring a regard for individual level needs and autonomy, which enables teachers' work together, appears to be valued a great deal more than mandates or directives from however senior a level. Although teachers varied in terms

of how much choice they thought it possible to have, it seemed to be the case that, where teachers' involvement in each other's work is enforced, it may be resisted. However, teachers' personal compatibility and preferences for working with certain colleagues over others does not appear to fit with the view of professionalism espoused by both government and individual teachers. Managers also wanted choice in relation to their role in teachers' involvement in each other's work. Some managers wanted simply to provide practical support and encouragement and leave teachers to get on with it. Decisions regarding who, how and when to involve external agencies was another area in which managers wanted choice. Deputies, unlike classroom teachers and head teachers, did not stress the need for individual choice. This may be linked to their particular role and the fact that choice might make their job more complicated.

### **Supporting Teachers' Involvement in Each Other's Work**

Little explicit acknowledgement and provision of investment of social and human resources to support teachers' involvement in each other's work appears to exist. None of the respondents gave examples of work specifically aimed at supporting teachers' involvement with each other, but did refer to several school development initiatives which they considered to have positive effects in this area. Deputies appeared to assume that they are the key people who should take this work on, usually single-handedly and without an explicit brief, professional development, support or resources. The view that every facilitator of teachers' involvement in each other's work was likely to have a unique approach and style was also expressed, and highlights the complexity of this work. It would appear that teachers' involvement in each other's work is a phenomenon which is possible to support and facilitate, but cannot be mandatory or subject to management control. Rather, it needs resources, and a collaborative management style was seen as helpful. Non-school-based LA participants did suggest that support should be available and that it should come from trusted, invited and appropriately skilled and experienced professionals from external agencies. Ironically, conscious collaboration between managers and teachers in the presence of invited external agencies was seen as the way in which to support teachers' collaboration with teachers.

## **Implications of the Research**

My study supports Thompson's (2005) secondary school case study in which he emphasised the need for engagement with the human dimensions, i.e. the ambivalence and anxieties that can cause teachers to prefer isolation to collaboration and the ongoing processes of the school's organisation. From this engagement, it is most likely that the development of the best, most realistic possibilities for teachers' involvement with each other will ensue. A better understanding is most likely to be achieved through an active enquiry undertaken by school staff as an aspect of every particular school's ongoing development and not as an add-on or time-limited project. The starting point would appear to require a greater and more collective engagement with the topic in the culture of individual schools and education generally. Thought is required about how such a discourse could be increased in schools, what would be needed to support it, and who would actually facilitate it. The study also suggests that there is scope for utilising the energy and expertise of applied psychologists within education at this time, i.e. educational psychologists. These professionals have a distinct contribution to make as they have a knowledge of school systems, psychological principles relating to the inter- and intra-personal, and they come equipped with research and professional practice skills which will allow them to embed studies within particular school contexts. Finally, opportunities need to be created for classroom-based teachers to be involved in each other's work if they so desire.

## **Future Research**

Ideas for future research in relation to teachers' involvement in each other's work are presented below:

- An exploration of deputy heads' role in supporting the emotional and relational processes within the teaching group, and what this means for adults within school systems.
- A systematic enquiry into the qualities considered to be important within particular schools seeking a new head teacher, in order to inform and improve the recruitment practices and training for would-be head teachers.
- Longitudinal, situated and participative action research, not explicitly linked to the school hierarchy, that involves newly qualified staff, more experienced classroom-



based staff, school managers and invited external agents, and explores the relationship between management and support of staff and levels of teachers' stress, sickness and retention.

- An investigation into the relationship between teachers' interactions with each other and their interactions with other adults within the school community.
- Using the unions in order to get the uncensored individual teacher perspective regarding the problematic aspects of teachers' involvement in each other's work, including the possibility of problems *between* teachers, i.e. the 'secret garden within education'.
- Research which focuses upon the views of experienced staff, possibly taking a case study approach and going into some detail over a period of time, in order to support a better and more constructive understanding of this area and of the possibilities for experienced teachers in terms of taking on a lesser management role.

### **In Summary**

Teachers' involvement in each other's work is important and can be helpful, but it is not necessarily perceived as crucial and can also be unhelpful. It would appear difficult for teachers to own/admit to problems in relation to their involvement in each other's work and to feel permitted to adapt it in order to meet their own needs. Teachers' involvement in each other's work is not consciously thought about or facilitated to a large extent, however, a teaching culture in which it is permissible to admit to problems in relation to involvement in each other's work and in which teachers have a degree of choice in terms of choosing to be involved with other teachers in a way that meets their own needs, could potentially reap enormous benefits to the individual, the whole school and the education system in general.

Hargreaves' (1972) 'significant gap' continues to exist but my research indicates that teachers at all levels within their particular teaching contexts should explore and use this as a creative space to support their own and the school's ongoing work and development. Involvement with other teachers is a task that every teacher has to manage. Classroom-based teachers need to find ways to utilise their involvement with colleagues to support their own best practice and to provide personal support. Very experienced teachers may also have a part to play in supporting teacher managers at a whole school level. Teacher managers need to manage their



own involvement with other teachers but have the additional task of ensuring a school context which is supportive and enables other interested colleagues in this work, i.e. external agencies and experienced colleagues.

## CHAPTER 9

### **A review of the study in light of recent developments in Education**

#### **Introduction**

Since completion of the analysis of interviews in 2005, many large-scale, government-driven developments in Education, involving teacher training, early and continuing professional development (EPD and CPD) of teachers, school effectiveness and improvement, curriculum innovation and development and general classroom practice to ensure the inclusion, achievement and overall well being of every pupil (DfES, 2005) have been undertaken. The requirement for every teacher to be involved in each other's work is clearly evident in most aspects of today's Education context. In this chapter I review the study and re-visit the methodology, methods and main findings in light of these recent developments.

#### **The research questions: appraisal of research questions.**

All interviews were carried out in order to address the question:

What are individual teachers' experiences and expectations of teaching and the involvement of other teachers in their work?

The participants referred to aspects of their work, in which other teachers were involved, such as curriculum development work, i.e. planning meetings, production of materials, whole school projects, including school productions, e.g. Christmas shows, assemblies, playground and lunchtime supervision, homework and after school clubs, parent evenings and general staff meetings. The range of examples offered reflected particular school and teacher situations and did not reveal any especially surprising aspects and therefore it was decided that the focus of the exploration would not be supported particularly through production of a typology of activities and situations such as that developed by McGregor (2000). Instead, the research focused upon the less discernible aspects involving individual teachers' expectations, which it was hoped, would become apparent throughout the whole interview conversation. My aim throughout every interview was to draw out and acknowledge the unique perceptions and meaning making of individual interviewees. Although all participants shared the common experience of working as teachers, the research emphasis was focused upon the rich and authentic detail of each participant's experience rather than the encapsulation, measurement and comparison of general differences between school contexts,

individual teachers and different teacher roles. To a large extent the research findings have realised this aim.

Two of the seven questions asked within the initial scoping part of the study, firstly with school managers and then with classroom-based teachers, asked specifically about the effects of school management structures, school contexts and length of experience. Because, as stated above, the research focus developed into an emphasis upon the rich detail of individual teachers' accounts, these questions were not addressed and in retrospect would have been omitted. Further research, utilising the rich data of this study, would be better placed to ask more directive and specific questions.

### **Methodology and methods**

The methodology and methods were hewn in a pragmatic fashion, from the interface of my own professional practice and the opportunities made available by the generosity of some teachers, teacher managers and LA officers, who clearly thought teachers' involvement in each other's work was an important enough topic to volunteer their time and experience. The research approach drew upon ideas from personal construct psychology, psychodynamic and feminist theory and was one which I had communicated to participants over time as part of my day to day educational psychologist input to schools, i.e. my choice of theory in practice (Thomas, 2004), prior to commencing this doctoral research. The methodology and methods did not replicate or be informed by the theory bases of preceding studies as few that were pertinent to this study were available.

I knew from many preceding conversations, in the years prior to the research that it was important that I approach the research interviews in as collaborative and flexible manner as possible. Structured interviews, involving closed questions, based upon my own preconceptions and the available literature, would have yielded little authentic and insightful material and would have threatened the professional rapport made possible through a less structured, more conversational approach and an invitation to participants to join me in reflection about this little researched, understood and enigmatic topic. This presupposes that teachers would even have agreed to the interview. The very first interviews happened as a result of many professional interactions between me and the individuals involved and a great deal of pre-interview priming, i.e. my description of the proposed research arising from a long-term curiosity about the subject. These discussions could not be documented as part of the study because they took place prior to the formal commencement of the research and were therefore outside of the ethical and procedural framework, integral to PhD studies.

Subsequent interviews were possible largely because I capitalised upon the generosity and encouragement of participants in Study 1 who made suggestions and actively encouraged Study 2 participants to agree to being interviewed. Participants in the final study 3 became involved because by this time I had presented and published findings from Studies 2 and 3 to these individuals, who together, constituted an opportunity sample, were primed from reading about my research in progress and well disposed to discussing the research topic.

My reading of the literature, professional experience and reflection on subsequent developments in education in relation to teacher and school development, supports the view that had my interviews been less collaborative and open, i.e. approached as an exercise in which I consciously viewed participants as equal professionals with equal status, knowledge and expertise, it is doubtful whether they would have agreed to become involved at all. In this sense, the limited amount of empirical research on teachers' views about the involvement of other teachers in their work was facilitative of the collaborative model of research I used. Philippa Cordingley's foreword on the web site for 'The Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) (<http://www.curee-paccts.com/node/2256>Date accessed: 12/08/2010), describes CUREE's central aim as:

*"building links between academic research and professional practice in order to support teachers' and schools' effective practice and development."*

The doctoral research project I commenced in 1998 was conceived very similarly. The research interviews were framed and presented as an opportunity for time and space to be made available for professional, collaborative, reflection and discussion about an aspect of everyday teaching practice, not usually made conscious and explicit. My invitation to participants to focus on the subject of teachers' involvement in each other's work, according to their particular situations, perspectives, experiences, was driven by the wish to understand better and with no specific agenda regarding policy, educational reform or school/educational development. As such it was distinct from the most of the work in this area and possibly more open to revealing ambiguity and contradiction regarding the core premise of teacher collaboration as a 'given good' (Johnson, 2003).

Although I considered the employment of a large-scale questionnaire study at one stage of the research, I rejected this approach because it is likely to have been received similarly to closed interviews by participants and prospective participants, for all of the reasons already stated. The closed question format of a questionnaire would have communicated a level of predecessor knowledge and understanding that could not be claimed and, at the time, would

also have threatened to reduce the complex social phenomena of teachers' involvement in each other's work to meaningless and tokenistic rhetoric, similar to that of some policy and guidance literature, not grounded on empirical research. However, this again, might be more possible now and the formulation of closed questions more possible also, giving scope for statistical analysis and more systematic generalisation

Ideally, a follow up interview or interviews would have been conducted. I did offer this possibility in a fairly low key manner but time and practical difficulties, such as moving work location, and the precedence of other projects, resulted in no formal follow up interviews being conducted. It also appeared that participants appeared to have offered as much as they were able during the interview and needed further time for reflection. The focus group interviews I attempted to set up as part of Study 2, probably failed for similar reasons, i.e. that the time, the readiness, for such discussion, was not right. Later in this chapter I will discuss the reasons for considering that this does not appear to be the case now, suggesting that the findings of this study could be employed in stimulating further discussion and research very profitably. However, the question of how to access individual teachers is an important one and utilising school's hierarchical structures, i.e. Local Authorities and head teachers, might limit the degree to which the sample is representative of teachers generally, i.e. ensuring the voice of classroom-based, teachers holding non-managerial roles. Ways of accessing teachers' views outside these powerful and sometimes inhibitory structures, i.e. through teaching unions, Teacher Net, popular publications such as TES, could be explored as a way of ensuring this access.

The interviews were conducted with a range of individual teachers from a selection of school types, representative of the general state school system, i.e. primary, secondary and special state schools. All participants were involved in a voluntary and unremunerated capacity. Ethical aspects relating to informed consent, withdrawal and confidentiality, were considered in full consultation with my professional colleagues and supervisors, my research supervisor and with participants themselves. As all data was anonymised and participants were referred to in the research write up through the use of pseudonyms, a substantial time after the interviews were conducted, the possibility of certain potentially contentious aspects of the data threatening the well being of participants, was minimal. In addition, the findings were written in largely general terms and did not make links to specific individuals and their particular school situations. In 2005, the 58 interviews were completed and subsequently analysed. Analysis of the large amounts of interview data consisted of thematic analysis, linking to the major themes identified in the literature search. On the basis of this the claim

of warranted assert ability was made rather than that of replicable findings, which was very much in line with the social constructionist/constructivist framework and rationale for this work involving multiple, complex social realities.

### **The findings in relation to recent developments in Education**

In this section I describe a number of developments, core to which is the necessity for teachers to be involved in each other's work, make links with my research findings and consider the implications.

#### **Teacher training**

Many developments, which require active and conscious collaboration between teachers, have occurred in the training of teachers in the last decade. These include a strong trend for school-based training, development of additionally funded training schools, the use of mentoring arrangements in which trainee teachers are mentored by experienced teachers and a changing role for teacher training departments in higher education, i.e. more facilitatory of developing professional practice in and with schools rather than taught and university-based. (Heilbronn et al., 2010).

A recent government spending review has resulted in large cuts in university based teacher training and many four year undergraduate programmes are likely to be axed (The Times Educational Supplement of 13/8/2010, p.5.). The profile of new entrants to the profession appears to be changing as student numbers on undergraduate courses have been fairly static in the last ten years, whilst postgraduate course numbers have doubled (ibid.). Postgraduates, by definition, have spent several years studying and are likely to be particularly keen to learn how to teach, in schools, with other teachers and the requirement for all teachers to play a greater role in supporting trainee teachers will increase.

Heilbronn et al. (ibid.) emphasises the need for collaboration between universities and schools "*that includes an explicit orientation to research*" and the development of a "*scholarly*" and "*critically reflective stance*" in line with Schön's (1983, 1987) reflective practitioner model of professional learning within teacher training. Heilbronn et al. (ibid.) also question the degree to which qualified teacher status (QTS) standards for teacher training (TDA, 2007), which promote teachers' active engagement in professional development and mentoring and coaching, conceptualise reflective practice in a sufficiently theorised and scholarly way and suggest that:



*“Defining a ‘critical approach’ in terms of what seems to be a performance management process casts the notion of reflection more in the discourse of technical rationality than within the rich concept of well-grounded reflection.”*

p. 30

Heilbronn et al. (ibid.), discusses further, the concept of Schön’s reflective practitioner and the use of reflective inquiry in trainee teachers’ practice, linking with Giddens’s (1991, cited in Heilbronn et al., 2010) construction of ‘reflexivity’ as an essentially discursive enterprise, which is, by implication, not a solitary way of working but one requiring frequent and on-going involvement with professional colleagues.

My research revealed that many teachers did not regard such involvement as necessary to their practice at all times and wanted choice and autonomy in the matter. For this reason the way in which they construed involvement with teacher managers could be problematic, especially where the emphasis was upon performance management and supervisory aspects rather than being listened to and supported in their complex practice and the development of increasingly effective practice. This suggests that all teachers, during training, induction, EPD and CPD need to actively engage in developing an increased awareness of and better understanding of the benefits and challenges of involvement with colleague teachers in their work through reflection and discussion, both informal and facilitated, in order to make informed and reflective choices in their work.

### **Early and continuing professional development of teachers**

The work of CUREE, as previously mentioned ( <http://www.curee-paccts.com/node/2256>Date accessed: 12/08/2010) is far reaching and involves links with individual schools, Higher Education institutions, the TDA, The National College, The Learning and Skills Improvement Service, the General Teaching Council and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, DfE and increasingly the governments of other countries. CUREE’s web site poses the question of what works in supporting teachers’ professional development in the increasingly de-centralised arrangements for ensuring teachers’ professional development in the current education context:

*“Three answers seem to be collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. First, working with other teachers in developing practice feels right – the chance to work with others is often the most highly rated part of CPD events. Second, teachers and leaders learn just as much, often more, from supporting other teachers’ learning as they learn from being supported by a*



*colleague. Third, schools are increasingly understanding the power and potentialities of comparing similarities and differences."*

The CUREE web site offers links to materials and resources relating to the use of coaching and mentoring in supporting teachers' professional development. Claims, based upon the review and analysis of effective professional development of teachers over many years, make the link between teachers working together on a sustained basis, over at least a term but more usually two or three terms and positive effects upon students' learning, motivation and outcomes, teachers' commitment, beliefs, attitudes, self-esteem and confidence in supporting effective pupil learning, teachers' range of strategies and capacity to meet the needs of students, provide relevant and effective curriculum experiences and to commit to their own professional development. This is in line with one of the central and repeated findings of my study that all participants considered teachers' involvement in each other's work to be important and to influence individual teaching practice, the whole school and Education as a whole.

The '[National Framework for mentoring and coaching](#)' (CUREE web site) has been developed from a comprehensive review of existing research and summarises the principles, key ideas and skills of coaching and mentoring, underpinning the approaches of many programmes of professional development for teachers. Peer support, either as pairs or groups of teachers is central to these approaches in combination with specialist support, planned meetings, processes for sustaining professional development over time, recognition and utilisation of individual teachers' existing knowledge and skills and a direct focus upon student outcomes and whole school development. Following development of the framework, CUREE has produced a range of resources, including six different training packs, covering specialist coaching, co-coaching, mentoring and whole school development. The packs are designed for use by CPD leaders in schools to: "*create sustained learning*" within "*an integrated programme*" consisting of "*bite-sized activities threaded into*" teachers' daily work and states that:

*"Coaching does involve making time for high quality, structured learning conversations rooted in day to day evidence about your pupils' learning experiences"*

(CUREE web site From web page <http://www.curee-paccts.com/node/2256> Date accessed: 12/08/2010)

The research evidence upon which CUREE's commitment to and promotion of mentoring and coaching is based, places the effective delivery and development of curriculum as central

to all professional development for teachers and assumes a willingness and commitment by teachers to be advised about the best route and method for achieving this, i.e. “collaboration, collaboration, collaboration.” (ibid.). My exploration of teachers’ views about the involvement of other teachers in their work, did not support this assumption and highlights the possibility of problematic aspects including resistance and/or alternative teacher views and practices, i.e. the case for more solitary practice at times, in some situations, for some individuals. Whilst it appeared that the greatest source of teacher participants’ job satisfaction was derived from their success in supporting student outcomes, they did not necessarily see collaboration with their colleagues as the means to achieving this, for many different and complex reasons.

Whilst focusing on the links between theories and models of professional learning in mentoring and coaching, Carnell et al.’s (2006) recent work promoting the use of mentoring and coaching in HE, does highlight the complex and situated nature of teachers’ involvement in each other’s work by underlining the many contextual and mentor and mentee requirements, i.e. attitudes, relationships, structures and material and human resources. The terms peer and specialist coaching and mentoring are defined and various versions offered such as Hay’s (1995) definition of mentoring as a “developmental alliance”, in which a relationship between equals is utilised to support professional development, Cordingley et al.’s (2004) definition of coaching as an arrangement in which a more experienced and knowledgeable colleague provided information and support, including that of other colleagues, to develop skills and advise on general welfare and career concerns and Rogers’ (2004) definition of a coach as an equal with whom collaboration takes place in order to facilitate change and action. It seems that the terms coaching and mentoring overlap to some extent as both seek to support the effectiveness, well being and learning of professionals, both use a direct, talk-based and regular involvement between mentor and mentee or coach and coached and both require focused, ethical, communicative and respectful involvement in professional practice. As previously stated, the rationale, aims, existing theory and prescribed practice are generally presented in such a way as to suggest the complete commitment of teachers and the absence of any problematic aspects, in their involvement in each other’s work.

Carnell et al.’s (2006) work promotes the use of social constructivist person-centred theories (Hobson, 2003 and Watkins et. al. 2002) of adult professional learning. Core to this approach is the use of conversation between professionals and the need for high quality

communication, including focused listening, trust, empathy, support and reflection. This level and quality of involvement between professionals does not simply occur but rather has to be acquired, developed and evaluated (Cordingley et al., 2004) and in its absence can be destructive and unhelpful to effective professional practice, well being and learning. Cordingley et al. (ibid.) suggest that possible obstructions to best practice mentoring and coaching could include: poor role and responsibility clarification and communication, lack of commitment, lack of respect, a reflection of the organisation's needs rather than the individual professional involved and a coach/mentor view of the process as a platform upon which to demonstrate their professional expertise, with no likely contribution from the mentee or person being coached. These suggested issues, do resonate with views shared by the teachers in my study and highlight the complex, particular and situated nature of each professional's professional practice and development needs.

In 'Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools – leadership guide (Guidance Curriculum and Standards) Dept for Education and Skills -09-2004, DfES 0444-2004 G, links between effective schools, best classroom practice and teachers' professional development are made repeatedly. This guidance includes twenty study guides for secondary teachers, which promote teachers collaborating across schools, within schools, subject and cross-curriculum in group and paired learning arrangements, using mentoring, peer coaching and coaching approaches and states:

*"An individual's development of their teaching is best achieved when it is shared and supported by another, often more experienced or skilled colleague, and where ideas for improvement can be tried out in the classroom, observed, reflected upon and discussed."*

p.5

and recommends that:

*"Teachers should have regular opportunities for collaborative working (e.g. joint planning, team teaching, observation and feedback, coaching)".*

The principles underpinning this collaborative approach to teachers' professional development include a systematic focus on teaching and learning and learning from good practice, collective ownership and leadership of professional development at school, team and personal levels, drawing upon the experience and expertise of all staff in collaboration (Hopkins et al., 2000).

p.2

As for previous examples, at the core of this guidance is the notion that teachers, at all levels, welcome involvement in each others' work and it demands that teacher managers work in a

consultative manner with teachers in order that they perceive themselves to have voice and influence within the school system as a whole. Like my own study, available research, indicates, however, that this aspect of government ideology, like collaborative teaching practice, is not as straight forward and easily achieved as the rhetoric would suggest (NFER/OPM, 2008).

### **Supporting the development of school leaders**

The National College for school leadership was established in 2006, at the University of Leicester (DfES, 2006) in order to support emergent and established leadership skills of head teachers and deputy head teachers. One of its core principles is to enhance knowledge and teaching skills through focused professional development: create time for staff to learn together and link with school improvement. As for other examples, the claims for and assumed unproblematic nature of teachers' involvement in each other's work is very clear.

### **School effectiveness and improvement**

A current review of teacher education by the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning for Northern Ireland 'Teacher Education in a Climate of Change' (2010) repeatedly links teaching and leadership as functions of every teacher's role. This is the case, whatever their status, where s/he is responsible for the work of other teachers in school development initiatives. The whole tenor of the paper is based upon the principle that following the implementation of a centrally driven curriculum (Education Reform Act of 1988), the professional judgement and autonomy of teachers should be supported and restored as it is a necessary aspect of competent, reflective, career-long professional development of teachers. It also recognises the diversity of professional development needs, the situated nature of teacher and school development and the core part played by the school as a centre of workplace learning, offering relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities. Throughout the paper the imperative for more cohesion and collaboration in the professional development of all teachers at all stages of their career, i.e. NQTs, early and continuing, is stressed:

*"Collaboration, based on respective expertise, should be an essential element in the process."*

p.15

This ethic of collaboration is urged also, between schools and higher education institutions. My study, focused upon the micro level interactions between individual teachers and the

views of individual teachers and suggests that this is likely to be challenging at all levels. The paper also raised the notion that all involved in teacher education should have had experience of recent teaching practice in schools. This precedent of professional, situated knowledge and expertise places a high onus upon teachers in schools to be constructively and consciously involved in each others' work. My study found this was not always in line with what teachers experienced or wanted and could be developed through further empirical work that contributes to raising awareness and addresses teachers' perceptions in order to understand and support the reality of teachers' involvement in each other's work.

The National Foundation of Educational Research and Office for Public Management 'Change Engagement Comparative Study' (March, 2008) was commissioned by the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools in order to inform the TDA's strategic input to performance management for modernisation of schools. A key and recurring finding was that partnerships and collaboration were consistently viewed by school leaders, teachers and support staff as key to school development:

*"Staff involvement is a critical success factor in implementing and sustaining change. Involving staff, beyond the school leadership team provides additional capacity as well as the commitment/engagement and sustainability of change.*

*p.v. (NFER/OPM, 2008)*

The NFER study (2008) also highlighted a need for awareness and commitment at all levels and by all staff, to change and that "bespoke, differentiated" approaches were required by individual schools in order for head teachers to exercise their autonomy and control through complex, creative and adaptive approaches with their staff. However, in this study over half of teachers' and support staff's responses revealed that staff considered they were informed rather than consulted, despite respondents feeling that collaboration with and involvement of all staff was key. Similarly to my study, responses made little reference to problematic aspects although some awareness of the influence of staff resistance was evident. Another key finding, which resonates with my study's findings was that the 'emotional buy-in' of staff was required and that school managers should work to ensure this through actually giving staff time together dedicated to 'change work' and should be supported in dealing with problematic aspects:



*“Leaders required more information on what to do when things went wrong and how to deal with the personal conflicts and team dynamics that become an issue when organisations experience change”*

NFER, p. 77

In my study the relationship between teachers’ involvement in each other’s work and the size and type of school was not explored in depth because, as already stated, the main focus was that of the rich detail of individual teacher views. Logically, teacher training, EPD and CPD, and mentoring and coaching practices, are likely to be affected by school size as small schools necessitate teachers engaging in similar work organised around similar curriculum, e.g. primary schools. They are also more likely to have to involve a greater proportion of staff in staff development work and support for teachers in training. Communication, consultation and delegation in relation to the work of the school may be practically easier as a smaller staff group size is involved, but it may also be experienced as more directive and intrusive. Respondents’ ambivalence and the mixed views on teachers’ involvement in each other’s work, in my study, may be explained by this. However, further research which focuses upon the effects of different school structures on teachers’ involvement in each other’s work is required before any degree of warranted assertion can be made.

### **Effects of teachers’ involvement in each other’s work and pupil outcomes**

Another of the many recent changes in Education, which is particularly significant to this study into teachers’ views about the involvement of other teachers in their work, includes that of workforce remodelling (DfE (2007) Children’s Workforce Strategy – Update Spring 2007: Building a world class –work-force for children, young people and families). In this document large numbers of support staff have been employed by schools to work with teachers and the development of extended services through the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda (The Children’s Plan, 2007, DfCS). Personalisation of learning, continued curriculum change, the imperative to develop an inclusive culture and to utilise a collegiate approach, a stronger focus on outcomes, performance and overall well being, are central aims for all involved in Education and require high levels of collaborative professional practice. In my study I asked teachers about the most satisfying and least satisfying aspects of their practice. Classroom-based practitioners located pupil learning and development as the main source of satisfaction and fulfilment for themselves as teachers and only about half of the interviewees referred specifically to work with colleagues. Therefore, my study indicates it is mainly as a

means to the end of achieving good results for pupils, that teachers are motivated to be involved with other teachers in their work.

Core to the many initiatives promoting the involvement of teachers in each other's work, is the rationale that pupil outcomes benefit. However, few empirical studies have investigated this premise. One relatively recent exception is that of Fletcher et al.'s (2008) study, which explores the effects of mentor-based induction programmes on pupil outcomes in three school districts in California through analysis of teacher to mentor arrangements and student outcomes data. The authors claim that the rationale and justification for teacher mentor programmes of reducing attrition in the teaching profession does not necessarily imply effectiveness in teaching and that the research base is largely composed of self report and individual satisfaction ratings. The most commonly cited aspects of successful mentoring by trainee teachers include: empathy, encouragement and help with teaching strategies, discussing ideas with peers, constructive feedback and criticism. The authors also claim that problematic aspects of mentoring have possibly been played down and include: poor matching of mentor and mentee, insufficient time, lack of preparation for the mentoring process, and lack of access to mentors from ethnic minority groups. Fletcher (ibid.) cites (Long's, 1997, cited in Fletcher, ibid.). Fletcher et al.'s study indicates that mentoring arrangements in teachers' induction programmes can have a positive effect on student achievement if the programme allows for weekly contact and mentor education and mentor selectivity is high and representative of ethnicity. These findings reflect the key finding in my study, that teachers required choice and can experience difficulties in relation to other teachers' involvement in their work and also the need for more research is highlighted.

### **The teaching profession**

The Teacher Status Project was carried out over four years, between 2002 and 2006. In this study, researchers from Cambridge University and Leicester surveyed public views, associated groups, school support staff, governors and parents and (17 national and regional newspapers) teachers' perceptions. Similarly to my study, teachers' reasons for entering the profession, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, were investigated. Also, similarly to the findings of my study, the subject of teachers' involvement in each other's work was referred to relatively little by respondents. However, collaboration between schools and sharing of good practice was viewed as necessary for continuing to support increased school effectiveness and that strong school leadership was required to engage the whole school in



supporting achievement and leading, teaching and learning and engagement between teachers and subject leaders. In addition, the study highlighted views in the general media of the teaching profession as being fraught with problematic working relationships between teachers arising from hierarchical school structures. Many participants in my study echoed this view and the finding that all teachers, regardless of their level of seniority, required choice and control in relation to the involvement of other teachers in their work. The implication for this finding is that active and skilled facilitation and support for teachers' involvement in each other's work is not necessarily available within existing school structures and that other possibilities for providing this should be considered, such as utilising the expertise of other professionals in Education.

My study indicated that individual teachers do not consciously aim or plan to be involved in each other's work but do so in response to the requirement to do so either by school managers, Local Authority or Government. The study itself served the function of priming individual teachers to think and possibly discuss the general topic of teachers' involvement in each other's work. The material derived from this study could be actively presented to a wider range of teachers and schools in different authorities and further discussion and reflection invited/facilitated in order to continue the process from this better primed and more conscious starting point and to achieve even greater understanding in the present educational context. If government, LAs and school managers wish to actively facilitate professional collaboration, reflective practice and partnership, as so many policy and practice documents list as essential to improving Education, then this would offer an important and fruitful initiative, worthy of piloting.

### **Implications**

Taking into account recent developments in Education, the following implications are suggested by my findings:

1. Involvement with other teachers is a task that every teacher has to manage. – including experienced teachers and teacher managers
2. It continues to be the case that a better understanding of this aspect of teachers' practice is required and that the complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of individual teachers' views should be taken into account in all initiatives relating to the effectiveness and development of schools. In essence, general prescriptions for teachers' involvement

in each others' work suggest that one suit fits all and this, according to my study is not the case.

3. Through a better and more realistic understanding of teachers' views about the importance of other teachers' involvement in their work, it is likely that teachers will benefit from heightened perceptions of being listened to and supported in their complex practice and more inclined to engage in the development of increasingly effective practice and in so doing contribute to the many aims and objectives of schools, Local Authorities and government for meeting the needs of pupils, school systems, the teaching practice and Education as a whole.
4. All teachers, during training, induction, EPD and CPD need to actively engage in developing an increased awareness of and better understanding of the benefits and challenges of involvement with colleague teachers in their work through reflection and discussion, of an informal and facilitated nature.
5. Every school should embrace the challenge to create and facilitate this increased awareness and understanding for all teachers. Very experienced teachers may have an important role to play in supporting teacher managers at a whole school level in this task.
6. Teacher managers need to be aware of and increase their own involvement with other teachers but have the additional task of ensuring a school context which is supportive and enables other interested colleagues in this work, i.e. external agencies and experienced colleagues.
7. All of the above should be reflected in the wider educational context as whole, i.e. Local Authority, HE teacher trainers, Education literature and government through a greater focus on the complex and ongoing everyday reality of teachers' work involving other teachers.

## Conclusion

Recent developments in Education have involved a reliance on teachers' involvement in each other's work, based on the belief that benefits arise for teachers' learning, during training, throughout early and continuing professional development and for classroom-based teachers and also those in school management positions. Benefits are also claimed for teachers' effective practice, pupil outcomes, school effectiveness and standards in education generally. In addition, teacher stress and retention of teaching staff are also seen as benefiting from teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Although a small amount of empirically based research and a large quantity of general literature on coaching and mentoring in schools, highlights the importance of teachers' commitment to being involved in each other's work, my study suggests that key ingredients such as consciously positive and motivated attitudes to this involvement, time and space and expertise, including skilled facilitation and management in schools, is not necessarily available. The gap between managers' espoused theories and actual practice (Agyris et al., 1974) has long been acknowledged and my study has highlighted this gap in the views of teachers in a variety of schools, in different roles, both management and class-room based about the involvement of teachers in each other's work. Further empirical, longitudinal research, which explores teachers' views about their involvement with each other, including the role and involvement of experienced teachers and school managers is needed in order to support a better understanding and to inform initiatives which require teachers' involvement in each other's work.

Hargreaves' (1972) "secret garden" claims, which I started to explore in 1998, do appear to continue to hold true to some degree, although the calls to cultivate this 'garden' have increased through the many centralised and formal imperatives for teachers to be involved in each others' work and the resulting increasing demands placed upon schools and teachers. It is highly likely that autonomy and choice within teachers' practice with respect to the involvement of other teachers is more necessary and yet more problematic now. The study's repeated finding that many complex and divergent views exist amongst teachers themselves, does need to be taken into account and a better understanding, and dialogue amongst teachers, sought and developed. This study emphasises the unconscious and assumption-laden nature of the topic and the possible benefits to teachers learning, effective practice and well being, of it becoming less so for actual practitioners.

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## END-NOTE 1.

### Personal Construct Psychology (PCP)

is the psychological practice arising from Personal Construct Theory. It is also referred to, sometimes, as Kellyian Psychology or Kellyian Theory, referring to the original perpetrator and theory creator, George Kelly (Kelly, 1955). Three main elements or ideas contribute:

1. The philosophical basis of 'constructive alternativism' which maintains the existence of a 'real' world and that all aspects/elements/processes of the world are inter-connected and in constant motion and interaction. This basis also presupposes the notion that individuals construe their own unique, personal and infinitely variable view of the world which is *real* to them.
2. The metaphor of 'person as scientist' which Kelly used to describe a person's way of making sense of his/her world. This metaphor sees every individual as a theory-maker, experimenter and hypothesis formulator and developer in relation to their own behaviour. It also represents a psychological system of 'normal' functioning which can inform and facilitate individuals whose behaviour, well-being and/or development is problematic or 'stuck'.
3. The theory structure consisting of the 'fundamental postulate' and 11 corollaries. The important points to note are that when trying to understand and utilise the meaning that individuals are making and basing their behaviour upon, the elicitation of that person's 'personal constructs' are key. 'Personal Constructs' are best thought of as core beliefs/ideas which the individual organises their own unique world view/experience through. A construct is always bi-polar, consisting of an 'emergent' and a 'contrasting' pole, and is elicited by a direct request such as 'what would X be like?' and, say the answer was Z, the emergent pole of the construct, a subsequent question would be: 'so what would an X that isn't Z be like?' This would be the contrasting pole of the construct.

Table 5: Teachers' core constructs about themselves as persons who are teachers, gives a large number of actual examples.

## END-NOTE 2.

### ‘Appreciative Inquiry’

Bushe , G. (1995). 'Advances in Appreciative Inquiry as an Organisational Development Intervention.' Organisation Development Journal (Fall).

This approach seemed to be particularly helpful and pertinent, given the school’s express wish that the research be undertaken in a way which was clearly positively constructive, affirmative and formative rather than punitive, destructively critical and summative. Not untypically of schools in Special Measures, many staff perceived the OFSTED inspection process as tending more towards the latter (Scanlon, 1999), and there was a clear need for something ‘solution-focused’, celebratory and generally optimistic.

‘Appreciative inquiry’ originated as a form of action research (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and has developed in two separate but related ways – as a form of social research method and as a means of facilitating organisational development. In essence it describes an approach in which participants' best and most positive experiences and views are deliberately elicited and the problematic is not elicited. Despite no ‘recipe book’ or ‘manual’ for conducting ‘Appreciative Inquiry’, the following key principles and characteristics can be identified:

- The capacity to act as a form of research method which leads to practical change as well as to new theory
- Involvement of ‘subjects’ as co-researchers
- Based upon socio-rationalist (Gergen, 1982) thinking, theory and paradigm, which sees social and psychological reality as dynamic, unstable, fluid, not fixed and ever-changing
- Thought and action as intrinsically related, co-determined and in constant interaction
- Solution rather than problem-orientated. Based on a view of the social world, organisations and institutions as intricate, complex ‘miracles to behold’ which constantly adapt and evolve towards their best possibility and which are essentially pro-social and cohesive entities.

In essence, there are three parts to Appreciative Inquiry:

- Discovering the best of an organisation's characteristics and practices
- Understanding what creates the best of (as for 1.above)
- Amplifying the people and services which best exemplify the best of (as for 1.above)

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### Letter to classroom-based teachers for Study 1A

Dear Colleague,

In January 1998, I registered at the Institute of Education in order to undertake PhD research into teacher collegiality. I am very aware that there must be many pressures upon your time but I was wondering if you might be able to spare an hour in the near future?

I am starting my research by conducting interviews with most of the head teachers, deputy head teachers and SENCOs with whom I work in Enfield because their positions entail an explicit requirement to work *with* other teachers and also to ensure that teachers work together.

Your contributions will be anonymous and confidential and soon after the interview I will send a verbatim interview transcripts in order for you to add, amend and/or comment upon any aspect either in writing/ telephone exchange or follow-up meeting.

I attach some information on the content and form of the interview and will be happy to provide further information as requested. I will telephone in the near future in order to hear your reply and, hopefully, to arrange a convenient time and date.

Yours sincerely,

Kairen Cullen

Educational Psychologist

## APPENDIX II

### Study 1A Participants' Experience in Education and Current Posts

(Names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes)

Participant pseudonym	Participant gender	Length of career in Education in years	Experience prior to current post	Current position	Current post – years in post
AGATHA	Female	29	English, secondary x 2 Special school class teacher & deputy head teacher	Special teacher head teacher	8
AMY	Female	18	Primary class teacher x 1 Special school class teacher x 2	Special school deputy head teacher	5
CURT	Male	20	D&T, secondary x 2 D& T special	Special school Deputy head teacher	10
JAMES	Male	35	Physics, secondary x 1 Head of science x 2 Deputy head teacher x 2	Secondary head teacher	2
MEG	Female	26	Geography, secondary x 3 Year head x 1 Deputy x 1	Secondary deputy head teacher	2

## Cont. Study 1A Participants' Experience in Education and Current Posts

(Names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes)

Participant pseudonym	Participant gender	Length of career in Education in years	Experience prior to current post	Current position	Length of service in current post
ISAAC	Male	22	History secondary x 1	Secondary school year co-ordinator	8
EVELYN	Female	16	PE, secondary x 2 Head of year x 1	Secondary school year co-ordinator	6
EAMON	Male	14	RE, secondary x 1	Secondary school year co-ordinator	4
LYNDSAY	Female	19	Geography, secondary x 2 Learning support x 1	Secondary school learning support co-ordinator	5
ANTHONY	Male	9	Primary classroom teacher x 2 Deputy x 1	Primary school head teacher	2
VICKY	Female	22	Primary classroom teacher x 2 Advisory teacher x 1	Primary school deputy head teacher	4
DYLLIS	Female	28	Primary class teacher x 3	Primary school SENCo	9
SUE	Female	23	Primary class teacher x 2	Primary school SENCo	4
PIPPA	Female	7	Primary class teacher x 2	Primary school SENCo	3

### APPENDIX III

#### Letter to classroom-based teachers for Study 1B

Dear Colleague,

In January 1998, I registered at the Institute of Education in order to undertake PhD research into teacher collegiality. I am very aware that there must be many pressures upon your time but I was wondering if you might be able to spare an hour in the near future?

I started my research by conducting interviews with most of the head teachers, deputy head teachers and SENCOs with whom I work in Enfield because their positions entail an explicit requirement to work *with* other teachers and also to ensure that teachers work together. A number of themes and patterns have arisen from the study, to date, and now I need to talk with classroom-based teachers, as they are obviously central to the processes and elements, which facilitate teacher collegiality.

Your contributions will be anonymous and confidential and soon after the interview I will send a verbatim interview transcripts in order for you to add, amend and/or comment upon any aspect either in writing/ telephone exchange or follow-up meeting.

I attach some information on the content and form of the interview and will be happy to provide further information as requested. I will telephone in the near future in order to hear your reply and, hopefully, to arrange a convenient time and date.

Yours sincerely,

Kairen Cullen

Educational Psychologist



## APPENDIX IV

### Approaches to classroom-based teachers for Study 1B

Teacher ID	Direct Approach	Letter (See Appendix IV)	Staff Bulletin	Additional request via another interviewee already interviewed
1	1	1		1
2	1	1		1
3	1	1		1
4	1	1		1
5	1	1		
6	1	1		
7	1	1		
8	1	1		1
9	1	1		1
10	1	1		
11	1	1		
12	1	1		
13	1	1		
14	1	1		
15		1	1	1
16		1	1	1
17		1	1	1
18	1	1	1	
19	1	1	1	1
20	1	1	1	
21	1	1	1	

## APPENDIX V

### Study 1B Participants' Experience in Education and Current Posts

(Names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes)

Participant pseudonym	Participant gender	Length of career in Education in years	Experience in education prior to current post	Current position	Length of service in current post
GINA	Female	7	None	English secondary	7
DOLORES	Female	1	None	Drama secondary	1
TIM	Male	12	EAL FE Secondary learning support x 1	Learning support	1
JEX	Male	5	Secondary, PE x 1	PE, secondary	2
MARY	Female	21	Secondary, English x 1	English, secondary	5
JENNIFER	Female	15	Secondary, Art x 2	Art, secondary	1
TERENCE	Male	3	None	Maths, secondary	3
DIANE	Female	7	Primary Class teacher x 1	Primary class teacher	5

### Cont. Study 1B Participants' Experience in Education and Current Posts

(Names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes)

Participant pseudonym	Participant gender	Length of career in Education in years	Experience in education prior to current post	Current position	Length of service in current post
PAM	Female	10	Primary school Class teacher x 2 Some experience in Australia	Primary class teacher	5
TOULLAH	Female	2	None	Primary school class teacher	2
MIKE	Male	1	None	Primary school class teacher	1
ENGIN	Female	24	Primary classroom teacher x 2 EAL support x 1	Primary school class teacher	5
SALLY	Female	17	Primary school class teacher x 2	Primary school class teacher	11
NANCY	Female	31	Primary school class teacher x 1	Primary school class teacher	17

## Cont. Study 1B Participants' Experience in Education and Current Posts

(Names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes)

Participant pseudonym	Participant gender	Length of career in Education in years	Experience in education prior to current post	Current position	Length of service in current post
<b>LAVERNE</b>	Female	4	Primary school class teacher x 1	Primary school class teacher	3
<b>MARTIN</b>	Male	16	D & T, secondary x 2 Special school class teacher x 1	Special school class teacher	5
<b>FRAN</b>	Male	21	Primary class teacher x 2	Special school class teacher	12
<b>JOYCE</b>	Female	19	Science, secondary x 1 Special school class teacher 2	Special school class teacher	7
<b>ROSINA</b>	Female	4	Primary class teacher x 1	Special school class teacher	1

## APPENDIX VI

### Information on research given to interviewees - Study 1

#### INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

##### INITIAL INTERVIEWER 'SCRIPT'

I shall be using a 'checklist/aide-memoire' as I conduct the interview. Broad areas to be covered include a little on:

- The interviewee's personal characteristics as perceived by herself in relation to herself as a person and then as a teacher, her motivations, expectations and hopes in relation to teaching and some personal history detail.
- Experiences of satisfying teaching and perceptions of effective teaching. Individual teacher characteristics, teaching methodology and behaviour and aspects of the school as a whole seen as contributory.
- Relationships with colleagues - the ideal and the problematic. Ideas for improvement.

I hope that the checklist will in no way limit what we cover and consider this time together as an opportunity to conduct a structured interaction/discussion as much as an information eliciting interview.

The interview will last for about 45 minutes and will be recorded. If at any time you wish for the recording to be paused please just say so.

I shall make a 'draft' transcript of the recording of our session and will then send this to you for verification. Please feel free to add and/or amend as you see fit at this point. I am also quite happy for us to have a follow-up meeting should this be helpful/useful.

With very many thanks,  
Kairen Cullen

## APPENDIX VII

### Interview Schedule for Study 1

#### Research Questions:

What sort of individuals become teachers? How do they perceive themselves in terms of intra-personal qualities and inter-personal skills?

*Who are you (W.A.Y. Ravenette, T. (1998))*

*1)i) I would like to know who you are. If I were to ask you to say three things to describe you, what would you say? Who are you?*

*What is important about being.....?*

*ii) If someone were not..... What would they be?*

Why do individuals want to teach?

What do individuals hope for/expect in relation to teaching?

*2) When you were considering teaching as a career, and during the process of applying to do teacher training, what were your main reasons for doing so? What did you expect?*

What do teachers appreciate, enjoy about teaching?

*3) What is it about teaching that you enjoy?*

*3a) What is it about teaching that you do not enjoy?*

When do they consider themselves to be successful as teachers?

*4) Describe some time/s when you consider yourself to be teaching successfully. What are you doing/thinking/being at such times?*

*4a) Describe some time/s when you consider yourself not to be teaching successfully. What are you doing/thinking/being at such times?*

Which aspects, elements of schools' structures, organisation and culture support/hinder teachers in obtaining job satisfaction and teaching in a way which they perceive to be successful/unsuccessful?

***5) When you consider successful and unsuccessful teaching experiences, can you identify any aspects of the school's organisation or general ethos which contributed to the experience?***

Do the inter-personal climates of schools (particularly between adults) influence pupil outcomes, i.e. academic performance, behaviour, pupil retention? Which elements and processes contribute to the inter-personal climates of schools' teaching staff groups?

***6) How would you describe relationships in general between all members of your school community?***

How do teachers interact with pupils and with each other?

***7) Describe your relationships with: a) Pupils, b) Other teachers.***

***7a) How would you describe the 'ideal' colleague relationship?***

***7b) How would you describe the 'nightmare' colleague relationship?***

***8) If you were to imagine the teaching staff group in your school and thought of that as a 'whole', as 100%, what proportions (percentages) would you give to:***

***a) The colleagues with whom you had a very good relationship***

***b) The colleagues with whom you had a fairly neutral relationship?***

***c) The colleagues with whom you had a very difficult relationship?***

***9) What ideas do you have for improving teachers' relationships in your school setting?***



## **APPENDIX VIII**

### **EP focus group discussion materials: Summary of findings from Study 1 and proposed questions for Study 2**

#### **Summary of Findings from Study 1**

The findings from these studies indicated that teachers in general, irrespective of type of school, or nature of post, i.e. classroom-based or management:

- Did not view relationships with colleagues as contributing to their reasons for choosing teaching as a career, their self-images as teachers or to their general satisfaction with teaching
- Held clear views on what constituted an ideal teacher colleague, which encompassed intra- and inter-personal qualities and pedagogies
- Did not see personal friendship and professional collegiality as correlating in any significant way
- Held views about what supported collegiality which related to three main themes: control, support and communication
- Saw support as coming mainly from individuals and being of a personal nature
- Saw control as an aspect of whole school and education structures and systems
- Viewed communication as a process to be considered at every level of school systems, i.e. individual and whole school
- Referred to negative and conflictual aspects of teachers' work with other teachers in relation to others and not themselves, in hypothetical situations and usually in the past
- Consistently voiced the view that collaborative practice was a good thing and did not contest this principle.
- Did not describe systems or arrangements within schools which were actively constructed to support the principle of collaborative practice.

Findings specific to classroom-based teachers included:

- The idea that work with teacher colleagues was a phenomenon that happened in a spontaneous and 'natural' way

- The view that the most helpful teacher colleague characteristics related to individuals' capacities for giving practical and emotional support and information sharing
- Attributed negative and conflictual aspects of teachers' work with other teachers to the hierarchical nature of teacher management structures.

Findings specific to teachers in management positions included:

- The idea that supporting teachers' work together was core to their role and function
- The view that the most helpful teacher colleague characteristics related to individuals' ideology and pedagogy
- Attributed negative and conflictual aspects of teachers' work with other teachers to individuals' intra-psychoic and inter-personal qualities.

**EP focus group discussion materials: Proposed questions for Study 2:  
A Exploratory Study on Teachers' Views on the Involvement of Other Teachers in  
Their Work**

**Pilot focus group**

**Questions**

<b>1</b>	<p>When you were a teacher, how did you work with other teachers?</p> <p>What have you observed as an EP &amp; as a teacher, which could be described as teachers working together?</p> <p>What constitutes teachers' work together?</p> <p>What are the positive aspects of teachers' working together?</p> <p>What are the negative aspects of teachers' working together?</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>Do you think that teachers' work with other teachers is a consideration within recruitment, selection, and training procedures used by and for teachers?</p> <p>How important is the commitment and capacity to work with other teachers for a teacher?</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>What views do you hold in relation to facilitative and/or inhibitive aspects of individual teacher colleagues, with regard to teachers' work with other teachers?</p> <p>Is friendship/social contact an essential aspect of this?</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>What views do you hold in relation to facilitative and/or inhibitive aspects of schools' systems and structures, with regard to teachers' work with other teachers?</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>Do you think that major differences exist between classroom-based teachers and teacher managers' views on the research topic?</p>
<b>6</b>	<p>What are teachers' views on the part played by work with colleagues on individual professional development and school development as a whole?</p>
<b>7</b>	<p>Do you have anything else to add? What are your views on this focus group experience as a way of eliciting information?</p>

## APPENDIX IX

### Letter to head teachers about proposed focus group study: Study 2

To: Head Teacher, (sample 1)

Dear

RE: 'TEACHERS VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF OTHER TEACHERS IN  
THEIR WORK' RESEARCH PROJECT

*Last term I wrote to all Islington head teachers in order to locate teachers who would be willing to participate in a focus group interview. However, the release of teachers proved to be problematic and I heard from only a very small number of volunteers, all of whom were deputy head teachers.*

I have therefore been looking at other ways of developing the study. I have already carried out an interview study with over 30 individual teachers and I would like to speak with teachers about the findings from the first study, which suggested that teachers saw work with colleague teachers to be an important area, and one which required better understanding as it related to:

- Their efficacy as teachers and student achievement
- Teacher morale and effects on recruitment and retention
- Staff and school development
- School ethos and student behaviour

I have decided to conduct further individual interviews, specifically with deputy head teachers. My rationale for this is that particularly rich data was gained from interviews with deputy heads in the first study, and also, staff in these positions are likely to have a particular interest in the topic of teachers' work together and occupy a good vantage point within their schools from which to form views.

I am writing now, to ask you to pass the enclosed letter to deputies who would be willing to do an individual interview with me this term. The interview would last about 60 minutes and can take place at the most convenient time and venue for participants.

I do hope that you will be able to encourage participation in this research. The imperative to engage in collaborative practice seems to be increasing; certainly the Primary National Strategy and the Key Stage 3 Strategy refer repeatedly to the need for collaboration amongst teachers as do so many other policy and guidance documents. The reality of what this means in practice is most likely to be understood and supported fully by hearing the views and ideas of teachers themselves.

With Best Wishes,

Yours Sincerely

Kairen Cullen Senior educational psychologist

## APPENDIX X

### Staff Bulletin item re the research

Dear

*How important is teacher collegiality to you?*

*Can you spare 10 minutes to share your ideas?*

*I'm the psychologist for XXXXXXXX. I am writing to you directly because I need some views and ideas from teachers who are classroom-based. Here are a few extracts from interviews I've carried out with teachers from other schools. Are their views ones that you share?*

"I don't agree with team bonding...things like that. I think people have to make their own choices and it's difficult because at the end of the day I can say people should take the chance to get to know other people and if they don't necessarily want to do that then you can't force them."

"You to need strong managers. I'm committed to teamwork and I try to put that across. I order for the school to be a communicative, understanding place I think the children need it; to see adults getting on, because you're what they're going to grow up into."

"It's my relationships with other teachers that keeps me going. It's the make or break factor. If that bit is going well then most other aspects of the job are do-able. On the other hand; if I'm having a hard time with colleagues then I've got less energy for the students."

If you can help, please telephone me, any time in the next 2 weeks. We can either have a discussion over the phone or we can arrange to meet. I'll even provide lunch!

Kairen Cullen tel. no.:

## APPENDIX XI

### Study 2 participants' biographical details

Participant code	Participant gender	Length of teaching career	Experience prior to current post	School context Primary P, Secondary S, Special Sp	Length of service in current post
AMANDA	Female	30+	Secondary subject teacher	S	15+
BULUT	Male	5+	2 yrs mainstream junior school, 3 Outreach teacher	Sp Primary PRU	2 (Recently took up Dep HT)
CAROL	Female	10+	Secondary PRU	Sp KS3 PRU	18 mnths Recently offered acting HT
DAVE	Male	30+	No previous school experience. Range of posts held at current school	P	30+ Dep HT/early yrs manager for last 12 years
EMILY	Female	10	1 Primary school; Different roles; 1 previous Dep HT (post 5)	P	2
FRANK	Male	30	No previous school experience. Held a variety of posts at current school – PE co-ordinator, science co-ordinator, acting deputy head	P	2



### Cont. Study 2 participants' biographical details

Participant code	Participant gender	Length of teaching career	Experience prior to current post	School context Primary P, Secondary S, Special Sp	Length of service in current post
<b>GAIL</b>	Female	5	Some teaching in private schools	P	1
<b>HELEN</b>	Female	15	Has held a variety of roles at same school; NQT, English co-ordinator, inclusion manager, Child Protection senior teacher	P	15
<b>INA</b>	Female	17 yrs	Sec schools, tech college	S	Assistant HT
<b>JOHN</b>	Male	12 yrs	No previous school experience. At this school has held a variety of roles	P	12 yrs Dep HT, supports NQTs and student teachers
<b>KRISTY</b>	Female	15 yrs	10 yrs as a sec mod languages teacher, head of languages post special ed home visiting teacher	Sp KS 4 PRU	2.5 yrs KS 4 PRU Dep HT (recently left to take up teenage pregnancy post)
<b>LEN</b>	Male	32 years	MG, head of history, humanities, advisory	S girls	9 yrs

**Cont. Study 2 participants' biographical details**

<b>Participant code</b>	<b>Participant gender</b>	<b>Length of teaching career</b>	<b>Experience prior to current post</b>	<b>School context Primary P, Secondary S, Special Sp</b>	<b>Length of service in current post</b>
<b>MATT</b>	Male	30 yrs	ESBD unit HT & primary posts	P	5 yrs

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**APPENDIX XII      Deputy head teacher interview introduction and questions**

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**Introduction:**

- 1 Thanks
- 2 Name, post of responsibility and a brief description of teaching experience
- 3 Timing – 45 minutes
- 4 Confidentiality, possible use of verbatim quotations to illustrate the final write-up of the study but no identification of interviewees
- 5 Broad questions, to answer and expand upon as much as possible
- 6 Clarification/break from interview any time on request
- 7 Interview to be transcribed and sent to participant for verification and supplementation purposes before analysis of data

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**1. What does 'teachers' work together' mean to you?**

Can you give me some examples of what you understand by this term?

**2. How much is supporting teachers' work together part of your role as deputy head? How do you do this?**

When is it important for you to engage in this?

Is the work welcomed?

What are the positive aspects for you in this and for the teachers with whom you work?

What are the negative aspects for your?

And for the teachers with whom you work?

**3. Do you think that working with other teachers is part of your view of being a good teacher?**

What would you say are the features of a good teacher?

How does working with other teachers fit into this?

**4. Is it central to how your school operates, that teachers work together?**

If so, why and how?

**Do you think that it is central to other schools?**

If so, why and how?

**Do you think that it is part of government thinking?**

If so why is this?

**5. How satisfied are you with your working relationships with other teachers?**

How would you rate these on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being no room for improvement?

How would working relationships rated as 10 be? And as 1?

**6. What ideas do you have for supporting and/or improving teachers' work together?**

**7. Is there anything you wish to add, or anything that I have not given you the opportunity to talk about in relation to this topic?**

## APPENDIX XIII

### Memo to Assistant Education Director regarding focus group proposal

# Memo

**To:** Assistant education director

<b>From:</b>	Kairen Cullen
<b>CC:</b>	principal educational psychologist
<b>Date:</b>	2003

**Re:** PhD Research – Focus group proposal

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#### **RE: An exploratory study of teachers 'views on the role of other teachers in their work**

You may recall that during my interview for inner London LA (ILLA) I spoke of the PhD research with which I have been engaged since 1998. During the last year in ILLA I have been supported in continuing this study and am now approaching the final stages. I am writing now to ask if we could meet and discuss the attached proposal\* for a focus group study which I expect to be my final data collection.

As you will see\*, I have already carried out an interview study with over 30 teachers from primary, secondary and special school settings and now want to carry out a further study consisting of six focus groups at the end of this term. The focus groups will explore teachers' views on the issues which came up in the interviews, i.e. The importance of other teachers in the work of teachers, the influence of individual teacher characteristics, school systems and structures and of Local Authority, DfES and other national structures, and the differences between views of classroom-based teachers and teachers with management roles.

I have discussed my proposal with PEP, Primary EO and secondary EO and I have also given details of the work to Personnel and Sarah Reis and inclusion EO, for comment. The feedback has been encouraging. It is clear that this relatively unresearched topic of teachers' views on the role of other teachers on their work constitutes a workplace phenomenon, which would benefit from better levels of understanding. My experience, from the interviews already carried out in another authority, and from ongoing daily professional practice is that by asking teachers to consider this topic, a positive change is effected in teachers' thinking about their work and has implications for their efficacy as teachers, student achievement, teacher morale and recruitment and retention, staff and school development and school ethos and student behaviour. I think that the focus groups will be a way of raising awareness and increasing understanding of this important topic and will be helpful for schools as organisations and for ILLA in supporting schools to function effectively. As so much school practice requires or is enhanced by collaborative practice, the views of teachers themselves is an important source of information in ILLA and schools' work on the development of improved systems and arrangements within schools to support teachers work together.

I would like to carry out 6 focus group interviews in the final two weeks of this term and will need to write to all head teachers in Islington in order to locate and contact potential participants. The attached proposal contains the letters. I hope that you will be able to support this initiative and look forward to discussing further with you.

Kairen Cullen - senior educational psychologist



## APPENDIX XIV

### Study 3 Participants' Experience in Education and Current Posts

(Names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes)

Participant pseudonym	Participant gender	Length of career in Education in years	Experience prior to current post	Current position	Length of service in current post
<b>MICHAEL</b>	Male	30+	Secondary subject teacher Educational psychologist	Principal educational psychologist	15+ years
<b>LINDA</b>	Female	16	Primary teacher Educational psychologist	Educational psychologist	12 yrs
<b>REBECCA</b>	Female	14	Special teacher Educational psychologist	Educational psychologist	10 years
<b>JACK</b>	Male	30+	Head of Infants Early Years manager	Head of primary Outreach team	2+ yrs
<b>MELANIE</b>	Female	30+	Primary head x 3 School inspector	School improvement officer (inclusion)	5 years
<b>BILL</b>	Male	30+	Secondary teacher Head of ESBD school	Deputy head of Behaviour Support Service Behaviour Improvement Plan (BIP) manager	5+ years

### Cont. Study 3 Participants' Experience in Education and Current Posts

Participant pseudonym	Participant gender	Length of career in Education in years	Experience prior to current post	Current position	Length of service in current post
WENDY	Female	30+	Social work manager School counsellor	'Excellence in Cities' co-ordinator Manager of learning mentors/ Inclusion manager	5+ years
CASSIE	Female	35+	Trained as an Education Welfare Officer and became Educational Welfare Service manager. Transferred to SENs and became manager	Education Authority SMT, Head of SENs	10+
MARION	Female	40+	Secondary teacher Humanities head of faculty, head of 6 <sup>th</sup> form HMI – geography, equal opportunities, failing inner city schools Teacher training OFSTED inspector	Advisory teacher in geography for several Local authorities; input to PGCE course at Institute of Education, UOL; input to Chartered London Teacher Scheme; independent consultancy	5+

**INTERVIEW SCRIPT****Interview introduction points and questions**

---

**Introduction:**

- 8 Thanks
- 9 Name, post of responsibility and a brief description of teaching experience
- 10 Timing – 45 minutes
- 11 Confidentiality, possible use of verbatim quotations to illustrate the final write-up of the study but no identification of interviewees
- 12 Broad questions, to answer and expand upon as much as possible
- 13 Clarification/break from interview any time on request
- 14 Interview to be transcribed and sent to participant for verification and supplementation purposes before analysis of data

**Questions:****1. What does ‘teachers work together’ mean to you?**

Can you give me some examples of what you understand by this term?

How does this occur?

Have you any direct experience of teachers working together?

**2. How important is teachers’ work together?**

What are the effects of teachers’ work together upon individual teachers, schools and the local authority?

Do you see positive aspects of teachers working together?

Do you see negative aspects of teachers working together?

**3. Is teachers’ work together problematic in any way?**

For individual teachers? How?

**4. What kind of factors might support teachers' work together?**

**5. Is active management and direction required?**

Is personal choice important?

**6. Who is best placed to support teachers' work together?**

Teacher managers, classroom-based teachers, external agencies such as educational psychologists/school counsellors, local authority officers?

Does length of service affect a teacher's capacity and commitment to work with other teachers?

What impedes teachers' work together?

At individual, school and local authority levels?

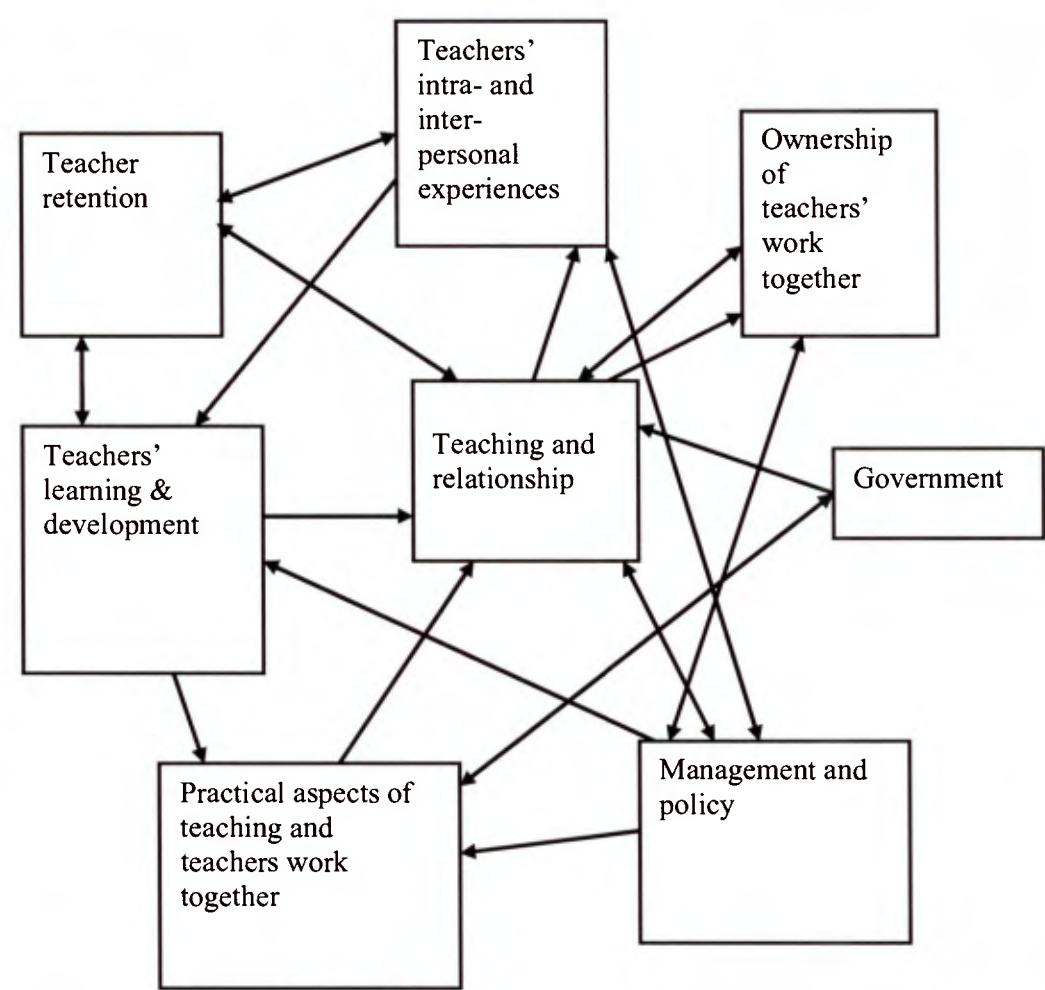
## APPENDIX XVI.

**Table 7: Local authority staff's views about the influences upon teachers' involvement in each other's work**

Facilitating	Obstructing
GOVERNMENT & LOCAL AUTHORITY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Funding and support for an improved status &amp; positive image for the teaching profession</li> <li>◆ Realistic timescales &amp; pace of policy &amp; new initiatives</li> <li>◆ Funding, initial training &amp; CPD for experienced teachers &amp; ongoing support specifically for TWT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Lack of funding &amp; support for improved status and positive image for the teaching profession</li> <li>◆ Policy &amp; initiative overload</li> <li>◆ No or little funding, initial training &amp; CPD for experienced teachers &amp; ongoing support specifically for TWT</li> </ul>
SCHOOLS: HEAD TEACHERS, MANAGEMENT TEAMS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Recognition and explicit vision that TWT is core to whole school function and intrinsic to aims for learning, achievement &amp; inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ No recognition and explicit vision that TWT is core to whole school function and intrinsic to aims for learning, achievement &amp; inclusion</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ School structures &amp; systems which actively support TWT, e.g. open agenda in staff meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Absence of school structures &amp; systems which actively support TWT, e.g. closed agenda in staff meetings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A budget for providing time/cover/accommodation &amp; conditions for TWT – informal and formal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ No budget for providing time/cover/accommodation &amp; conditions for TWT – informal and formal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Realistic &amp; managed new initiative programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Overload of new initiatives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Consultative, collaborative, facilitative management style which actively models good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Closed, directive, didactic management style, entirely evaluative &amp; outcomes-based;</li> </ul>

communication, management of conflict; open to learning	avoidant of conflict
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Presence in classrooms. Professional dialogue between teachers and managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Absence in classrooms. Little professional dialogue between teachers and managers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Use of skilled external agencies to support management and staff, e.g. EPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ No external input to support management and staff</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX XVII. Study 2. Participants' connections between major themes**



Connection between themes.  
 Arrowhead denotes direction of  
 perceived influence.





# APPENDIX XVIII

## DIAGRAM 1 RESEARCH DESIGN

