

**The effects of the national curriculum
on infant teachers and their practice**

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
University of London
Institute of Education

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October 1995



Abstract

The study seeks to explore the individual responses of six teachers, faced with a major change in their professional lives i.e. the introduction of the national curriculum.

Chapter 1 traces the development of infant education and the emergence of teachers of very young children. It begins by exploring the role of governesses and goes on to examine images of infant teachers as they have been revealed through literature. It poses the hypothesis that female primary school teachers have, historically, had constraints on their career development in a way which men have not.

Chapter 2 gives an account of the growth of professionalism in teaching over the last 100 years. It continues with the theme of the feminisation of teaching, charting the progress of women's unions, especially those connected with teaching, and developing further the notion of women teachers suffering from low status.

Chapter 3 appraises ethnographic approaches and describes in detail the research plan used, involving case-studies. It goes on to evaluate the process of data-gathering with particular reference to the writer's own role.

Chapter 4 selects from the data three themes for detailed analysis: assessment, the status of subjects and the relationship between teachers and children.

Chapter 5 draws together the theme of feminisation raised in Chapter 1 and relates it to further issues arising from the teachers' situations during the study. It deals with individual responses to change and the effects of stress, in particular the loss of a sense of 'self'. It explores the role of ideology as a source of conflict and the perceived powerlessness of teachers. It looks forward to the future role of infant teachers in a 'back to basics' society and puts forward the notion that the skills needed for teaching very young children are not necessarily confined to women.

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The effects of the national curriculum on infant teachers' practice

Introduction

Ever since I was a small child I wanted to be a teacher. It is difficult to see from where my concept of 'teacher' derived, since I had not yet started school myself, but nevertheless I had a strong feeling that being a teacher was a desirable occupation.

When I did start school, however, my commitment waned as my perception of the role developed. As the war was not yet over there were still one or two cheery, married women in my school, brought in to fill vacancies created by male teachers having to join the armed forces, but for the most part the staff were stiff-looking matrons in late middle age who appeared to have very little liking for the job and certainly no liking for children. My first teacher had her hair tightly pulled into long plaits which were twisted into large coils over her ears, making her look austere and forbidding. She proved to be a fairly kind person as long as we were obedient and alert, but a screeching harridan if we were not. Many were the occasions when a sobbing five-year old stood in the corner of the room, face to the wall, for an hour or more, having been the perpetrator of some trivial misdemeanour.

It was by no means only women who behaved in this way. There were also many male, middle-aged students who were being 'emergency' trained, having been invalided out of the armed services and being used to alleviate the teacher shortage. It helped me to understand, in later years, to discover that the men were in all probability still suffering the effects of their war experiences and that the women would, in fact, have lost their jobs had they married. This, in addition to the insult of being paid less than the men, simply because they were women, was unlikely to produce a positive, well-motivated workforce.

Over the next thirteen years of schooling I grew to know, as does every child, the intense pains as well as the pleasures of learning. Every schoolchild learns how to survive schooling, how to play the game of appearing to conform in order to avoid the teacher's wrath. There is even a certain satisfaction in achieving well and winning prizes, being praised 'for bringing honour' to the school, but I am sure I am not alone in leaving school feeling that my true needs had been largely ignored. 'Teacher' in her (and his) many guises, ranging from the supportive to the downright sadistic, had by now become a very real figure. I knew that I still wanted to be one myself, but wondered how I would avoid becoming like the worst of them.

Perhaps this was the time when my ideal role model began to take shape. As long as I could be the complete antithesis of all those miserable people who had inflicted such terror on so many children, then it might just be possible to bring about a change. I was excited at the prospect of entering teacher-training. I pictured myself in a classroom full of light and colour, where I would be sitting on a low chair, a group of adoring children at my feet, hanging on my every word. And we would all be smiling.

By the time the 1960s arrived, my private image of the ideal teacher was becoming manifest in the educational orthodoxy of the time, in particular in the Plowden report (1967), in that schooling was becoming child-centred and student teachers were being told they must allow children to 'unfold', their learning must be individualised and, above all, they must learn at their own pace. I could, indeed, sit surrounded by happy children. We could sing, clap our hands, run across the field, listen to stories and even dance if we wanted to. Reading, writing and sums were important, of course, but not to the extent that they dominated the curriculum. And so it was that I spent twenty happy years acting out an idyll, hardly able to believe my luck at being paid for something I loved doing.

By the time there was talk of a national curriculum I was working in teacher education myself and as the implications of it began to dawn on me I realised that my main feeling was dismay. The Education Reform Act embodied two main proposals: firstly that pupils between the ages of five and sixteen should follow a centrally-directed curriculum comprising core and foundation subjects, and secondly that pupils should be tested at the ages of seven, eleven, fourteen and sixteen. The idea of centralisation and control seemed to run counter to the freedom I had enjoyed in my teaching years and suggested uniformity rather than individualisation. What is more, the model of a subject-centred curriculum seemed to be more appropriate to the secondary school rather than the infant school. It has been suggested (Kelly 1990) that its historical precursor is the English preparatory school where the curriculum is designed to introduce pupils at an early age to the firmly established public school tradition. Aldrich (1988) was more persuaded that it closely resembled the basic grammar school curriculum devised at the beginning of the twentieth century. Whatever its origins it was certainly a departure from the flexible, integrated ideal promoted by the writers of the Plowden report.

Infant teachers were going to bear a huge responsibility in that they were required to implement the new curriculum and ultimately it was they who would make the reforms work. What of all those teachers who had not only trained at the same time as I had but also believed fervently in the Plowden vision of good practice? How were they feeling? How were they going to cope? What would they think of testing seven-year olds? Would some areas of the curriculum be ousted in order to make room for the 'basics'? Would all of this affect their relationship with the children?

It seemed to me that there was an urgent need to investigate any changes to their attitudes and practice against the background of the changing demands being made on them. For these reasons I decided to do this research and devised a small-scale study involving two schools and focusing on three teachers in each. This would give me the opportunity to monitor their attitudes over a period of time and to observe at first hand

whether their practice was being affected in a significant way.

The teachers taking part would undoubtedly vary in the extent to which they were ready to accommodate the changes brought about by the national curriculum. There is enough evidence (Macdonald and Rudduck 1978, Fullan 1982, Galton and Willcocks 1983) to support the view that teachers, in fact, work hard to resist innovation, particularly if it is externally imposed without any real consultation. The lack of ownership on the part of the teachers results in, not only a failure to influence their practice (Macdonald and Walker 1976) but also the development of coping strategies which are more or less automatic and habitual rather than reflective (Schon 1983).

The importance of enabling teachers to develop their reflexive powers i.e. monitoring the 'self in action' (Elliott 1989) has been stressed by Holly (1989) as being the way that professional practice and educational theory may be established and tested. The model of the teacher as victim (Connell 1985, Meighan 1981) responding to external pressures may be an appropriate one in this study in that low self-esteem resulting from the idea that one's role has been reduced to that of a functionary may be damaging to teacher performance (Day 1988). The eventual response, as suggested by some writers (for example, Pollard 1982 Woods 1977,) is that teachers construct a personal solution which incorporates both the practical and reflective elements.

Both Pollard (ibid) and Aronowitz and Giroux (1986) have drawn attention to the threat posed by political conservatism to educational progressivism as characterised in many British primary schools. Education could now be seen in terms of its contribution to economic growth and cultural conformity, which goes against the philosophy of child-centred learning, supposedly the *status quo* in infant schools. If this is the case, therein might lie another source of teacher anxiety. The ORACLE research, however, (Galton et al 1980) found little evidence of the existence of child-centredness across the country.

According to both Bassey (1978) and DES (1978) didactic teaching methods were the most general mode in the primary school and the image of the liberal, progressive infant teacher was largely a myth. Simon (1979) would go as far as to say that rhetoric about primary education in the 1960s was deliberately exaggerated by those elements in society who wished to establish a strong reimposition of control. In any event, an analysis of progressivism (if it existed at all) had exposed it to criticism (Sharp and Green 1975, Apple 1979, Walkerdine 1983, Alexander 1984 and Morrison 1985) for its woolliness of conception and crude polarisation of child and society.

More recent research (Tizard 1988, Bennett and Kell 1989) has revealed that, in terms of teachers' organisational practice, 'grouping' consists of no more than the physical juxtaposition of children working on individual tasks. Furthermore, although the teachers concerned would claim to be child-centred they did not always demonstrate the skills of classroom management which this style of teaching requires.

An issue related to teaching approach is the coverage of curriculum areas within the parameters of the school day. DES (ibid) and Barker Lunn (1984) found that science was particularly disfavoured in the primary school, a situation which will be greatly improved by its rise in status to that of a 'core' subject. As mathematics and language work have been shown (Gammage 1986, Blatchford et al 1987) to dominate the infant classroom, it will be interesting to discover how much time will be spent in the future on the 'core' areas and in what way adjustments are made to the curriculum in order to make room for science. Campbell (1993) comments on the fact that the picture emerging from studies throughout the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates an unbalanced curriculum which was too heavily weighted towards literacy and numeracy, meaning that too little time was left for the rest of the curriculum. A national 'entitlement' curriculum would go some way towards redefining the questions of breadth and balance.

Evidence suggests that the quality of relationships with children is of immense

importance to infant teachers. Ashton (1981) discovered that teachers are far less detached from children's personal and social behaviour than from any other area of learning. Moreover, infant teachers identified a child's progress in terms of how successfully s/he had become socialised and settled in school. Willcocks (1981) concluded that teachers' perceptions about anxious children were extremely accurate, but conversely, Bennett and Kell (op. cit) describe typical infant classroom practice as 'crisis management' with little personal interaction in evidence. The needs of four year olds in a crowded reception class were found to be ignored, due largely to poor diagnosis by teachers of what the needs actually were.

There is already a considerable amount of testing in the primary school, both of a formal and informal nature (Gipps et al 1983, Gipps et al 1987) although neither had, traditionally, been publicly reported. Formative assessment has generally been based on informal judgements made by teachers which may be subjective and therefore inaccurate. Furthermore, teachers may feel so secure in their knowledge of individual children that they have tended to disregard any test score which did not match with their own views. The use of SATs, however, which are specifically designed to assess attainment targets and reflect programmes of study may affect teachers' judgements, for example, if there is a great difference between the SAT score and teacher assessment and they may come to mistrust their own assessment.

There were a great many questions to be asked and answered if I were to reveal the true situation as it was being experienced by the teachers in the two and a half years of the research. I could immediately foresee two difficulties. One was in preventing my own point of view from invading my investigations to the extent that I was seeing only what I wanted to see, and the other was in not allowing myself to become distracted by the children. They would be adjusting, as they always do, to whatever was required of them, especially as they had never known, at five years old, any other regimen. A natural inclination on my part to interact with them would have to be subdued in order to

concentrate on their teachers. After all, this was to be their story.

What follows in the rest of the thesis addresses some of these questions. First I shall trace the emergence of women as teachers of young children throughout the last hundred years, examining their historical and literary images. Then I shall explore the professionalisation of women teachers throughout the same period, paying particular attention to the feminisation of teaching. It is important to examine both of these concepts as all six teachers in the study are women, which implies particularised viewpoints and responses to change. I shall go on to describe and evaluate the research plan used, including the process of data-gathering. This will be followed by a detailed analysis of three themes; the relationships between the teachers and the children, the assessment used and the status of various subjects. Finally I shall return to the earlier theme of the feminisation of teaching in discussing the responses of individual teachers in the study to aspects of change, with some comments on the future.

Chapter One

Women as teachers of young children

Images and history

It was the initial intention in this chapter to chart the progress of teachers of young children from their informalised beginnings to their ultimate acceptance as professionals. Researching the literature, it became clear that, in state education, such teachers have always been women and one cannot describe their emergence as professionals without examining the wider economic and political transformations in society which have profoundly affected women as a social group.

This was of particular relevance as the six teachers in my study, like most infant teachers were women. Therefore, any analysis of how they might respond to the national curriculum and its assessment has to be set against a backdrop of them as women teachers.

Education of the poor

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the popular education of young children existed more or less as a rescue mission. It was intended by the philanthropic societies who provided it as a means of training disciplined obedience and good moral habits. Government action at that time was confined to investigation into child labour; whenever popular education was discussed in Parliament, 'school age' was defined as six to twelve, but the societies long resisted admission under seven as they aimed to provide instruction rather than child-care. It cannot be assumed, however, that very young children were, therefore, cared for by their families. Increasing industrialisation meant that many working-class mothers were away from home for two thirds of the day, leaving their young child sometimes alone or in the care of an older child. A common

solution was found in the 'dame' school, a form of mutual self-help which arose within working-class culture in this early industrial era. It was an *ad hoc* arrangement but some children in the care of these women may have been fortunate enough to receive instruction in reading or the alphabet.

The Industrial Revolution had also brought with it commercial expansion and the growth of the professional middle class. Since families of this emergent class owed their rise in status to a combination of capital and education, a sound pre-school preparation between the ages of about four and eight was considered to be highly advantageous and the fashion of educating girls at home spread to those families who wished to imitate the aristocracy and clergy. Tradespeople and manufacturers deemed it a sign of respectability to employ a governess. (Neff (1966) p152).

Governesses

Among the upper middle classes a common expedient was for children from several families to be assembled in the schoolroom of one household, to be taught by a governess. This was, in the case of boys, a prelude to being sent away at the age of seven to private schools, leaving the girls to be trained in female accomplishments. Being a governess was one of the few professions open to women at that time, but several writers, for example, Neff(1966) and Holcombe(1973), have documented vividly the isolation experienced by governesses in the Victorian household. They were, generally, poorly paid, almost entirely untrained, and socially despised. They were treated by their employers as a species of domestic servants and were granted the smallest possible degree of independence. They were, for the most part, middle-class girls who needed, for a variety of reasons, to earn a living. One of their difficulties, however, was, having been reared as ornaments, they had few useful skills. Thackeray's Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* is a famous example of this, having become an orphan at seventeen and, therefore, destitute she was taken in by Miss Pinkerton to be an articled pupil at her

Chiswick school. From there she went to be a governess to the children of a wealthy family. Perhaps she was luckier than most in that she was described as being an excellent linguist and musician, therefore probably considered to be well educated and highly prized.

Kamm (1965) describes a typical advertisement in *The Times* in 1843 offering £12 a year to a morning governess 'of ladylike manners, capable of imparting a sound English education with French, music and singing, dancing and drawing, unassisted by masters.' By 1850, 21,000 women were registered as governesses and there must have been many more who were not registered. The plight of the elderly governess was particularly pathetic, once being too old to be employable she had no home and no pension to support her in her old age. Indeed, most of the patients in the Institution for the Care of Sick Gentlewomen, which Florence Nightingale reorganised in 1853 were governesses. Charlotte Bronte, herself forced to take up the occupation because of difficult family circumstances, describes vividly in a letter to a friend, written in 1839:

"I see more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living rational being, except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfil"

(p.61)

She later refers to ...'a sternness of manner and a harshness of language scarcely credible' on the part of her employer towards her. Apart from suffering from homesickness, many in her position had to play the role of nurse, cook and housemaid, thereby adding exhaustion to their misery. *Jane Eyre*, largely the story of Bronte's own experiences, was an immediate success, possibly because it had the ring of truth. This portrayal, further developed in the character of Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, again shows the heroine as 'a hybrid between *gouvernante* and lady's maid'. (Bronte 1851). This is not

to say that the governess in popular fiction was not an alluring heroine. She has been represented in nineteenth and even twentieth century literature with a vividness and passion that is not always present in depictions of other working women. She appears in many of Henry James' novels, for example. It may be because a woman equipped to be a governess had, as Charlotte Bronte had, enough education to write about her state.

'She created a woman of dignity and force who did not allow her lowly occupation to deprive her of the esteem of her employer. Jane Eyre is the proud working woman who respects herself and makes others respect her'.

(Neff (op.cit.) p.185)

The emancipation of women

The unenviable position of governess in the large Victorian upper middle-class family was to change alongside other important socio-political developments at that time, in particular the role of women. Indeed, the development of teaching as a profession for women is inextricably linked with the history of female suffrage and emancipation. Throughout the nineteenth century, as the pattern of family life began to change, girls were seeking economic independence and educational opportunities. The governess system was the focus for some of these changes leading to the establishment in 1843 of a Governesses' Benevolent Institution for their protection which signalled the beginning of a definite reform, its most enduring project being the opening of Queen's College. A house was taken in Harley Street adjacent to the governesses' home, with the permission of Queen Victoria, and was formally opened in 1847. The important recognition of certificated governesses slowly gained ground. The classes, open to all girls over twelve years of age, were conducted by means of the lecture system, and divided into junior and senior groups. There were also preparatory classes for girls from nine to twelve. Moderate fees were charged for such instruction. The evening classes for governesses hired during the day were free and were attended in 1849 by seventy students. It has been said (Neff op cit) that there were serious weaknesses in the teaching as many of the girls

were too young and there were no examinations but at least governingess was growing into a profession instead of a misfortune.

Deem (1978) is of the opinion that capitalist society, the church and the charitable institutions in the nineteenth century all saw the education of working - class girls, not as an effort towards liberal reform and human rights, but in terms of the effects it would have on their families. Enhancing the education of women would ultimately raise the moral standards of the children and menfolk. A higher standard of care would be provided, thereby producing a healthier workforce. Smiles (1878) in Lawson and Silver (1973) claims that.....

'to instruct woman is to instruct man.....to enlarge her mental freedom is to extend and secure that of the whole community. For nations are but the outcome of Homes and Peoples of Mothers.'
(p.72)

Feminist educational campaigners at that time, therefore, had to be careful to disguise their revolutionary long-term aims by appearing to support traditional domesticity. Delamont (1989) gives an account of the debates which surrounded the appropriate amount of domestic teaching which should be included in the curriculum for girls and the fact that the most successful feminist pioneers were those who managed to minimise hostile reaction by manipulating the system rather than violating it. The experience of Mary Wollstonecraft, a champion of equal rights a century earlier, had showed that ridicule and abuse were the penalties for expressing opinions about the necessity for improving the education of women so that they might become the intellectual equals of men. She was called 'a hyena in petticoats' by Horace Walpole and vilified because of her ideas for a government co-educational day-school system.

The movement for the social emancipation of woman was making significant

progress by the 1870s. Some of these changes such as the Married Women's Property Acts and the Matrimonial Causes Acts reflected the changing status of women in the family. The growing popularity of the bicycle and the freedom it offered middle-class girls became a powerful symbol, especially in its effects on women's clothing. It was viewed, nonetheless, by many as, not only a dangerous activity, but one which was potentially contaminating in a social sense. Suitable clothing was devised to prevent girls from displaying too much of their legs and the whole experience became surrounded by multiple rules.

The notion that women were in some way psychologically and physically weaker than men and therefore not to be subjected to the strain of too much education, informed many of the attitudes which had an impact on the development of public education in the latter part of the century. For example, the school of which Winifred Holtby's Sarah Burton in *South Riding* aspires to become headmistress.(Holtby 1936).....

...owed its independent existence to masculine pride rather than to educational necessity. Thirty years earlier the County Council decided that a daily train journey to Kingsport, suitable enough to Grammar School boys, was unsafe for girls. Girls were delicate. Life imperilled them.'

(p.21)

.....and, having been interviewed, Carne, the only governor who opposes her appointment, shares his reservations with the reader.

'Clever she might be; but Carne wanted affection, he wanted experience and sympathy and a big motherly bosom on which a little girl could cry comfortably. Midge, he knew all too well, cried a great deal. Miss Burton was neither gentle nor a lady, and her bosom was flat and bony as a boy's.'

(p.29)

She is, nevertheless, appointed and manages, during her time at Kiplington, to pass

on to at least one of her pupils, Lydia, a joy in her own learning.

'For she was clever. It had not been a lie then, that ecstasy which visited her when she read "A Midsummer Night's Dream" on top of the railway coach last summer. It had meant something. She had understood something. She was drunk with an intoxicating wine of gladness.'

(p.172)

As Delamont (op.cit.) points out, the successful pioneers of feminism overtly agreed with the idea of domesticity for young ladies while quietly establishing new roles for themselves. The alternative roles appear to have been either the celibate career woman or the learned wife. The feminists' aim had to be to demonstrate that education did not render girls unfit for marriage, as many men quite liked having wives with whom they could converse, and it also provided a vocational purpose for those women who did not marry. A living could be earned in this new role as a schoolmistress or headmistress which was vastly different from that of governess because it was played out in the public arena rather than a private home.

The career women were not without their enemies. It is clear from the biographies of two of the foremost feminist educators, Frances Buss and Dorothea Beale, that both received proposals of marriage but chose to stay single and concentrate on their work. Yet, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the extent to which they advanced the cause of education for women, they were generally derided and lampooned.

*Miss Buss and Miss Beale
Cupid's darts do not feel
How different from us
Miss Beale and Miss Buss'*

This rhyme, popular at the time, suggests that any woman who eschewed marriage must be deviant and unnatural.

The image of the academic woman is often a negative one, as discussed earlier in relation to Miss Buss and Miss Beale. Roland, in *Possession* comments on Maud Bailey:

*'She was dressed with unusual coherence for an academic,
.....Her voice was deliberately blurred patrician; a kind of
flattened Sloane. She smelled of something ferny and sharp.
Roland didn't like her voice.'*

(Byatt 1990) p.38)

In the years between 1850 and 1870 Miss Buss had achieved a great deal. Gaining her own qualifications by walking each night from Camden to Harley Street to attend evening classes at Queen's College, she started her first school with 35 pupils in her own home while her family lived in the basement and attic. Her father and brothers assisted her by teaching art, science, Latin and mathematics. It is reported (Burchell 1971) that when some of the mothers realised that Latin and mathematics were to be included in the curriculum, they withdrew their daughters on the grounds that it would be injurious to their health or prejudice their chances of marriage.

Miss Beale also set a powerful example when she became headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies' College by extending its provision upwards to include a training department as well as downwards to include a kindergarten, a practice soon followed by all the schools of the Girls' Public Day School Trust.

The new education

The existence of the kindergarten itself represented a significant move forward, not only for the women who worked in them, but for infant education in Britain. Between the 1870s and the first decade of the twentieth century educational thought became as never before open to international influences. The ideas of Froebel and his pedagogy, centring as it did on the understanding of children's activities and ways of learning, had begun to exert an influence on early childhood education.

Froebel himself, influenced by both Rousseau and Pestalozzi, argued that play was a serious and deeply significant activity for young children. He wrote in 1896;

'The focus of play at this age is the core of the whole future, since in them the entire person is developed and revealed in the most sensitive qualities of his mind.'

(p.124)

The notion that children learn through play is a basic tenet of Froebelian philosophy and one which has been, and still is, embraced by many early childhood educators. He did not, however, believe that the activities should be unstructured. For him, play was too important to be left to chance. To further this end he devised a series of playthings and games which he called 'gifts' and 'occupations'. These formed part of Froebel's doctrine of innate ideas but were, in effect, the timeless playthings of childhood, for example balls, boards, sand and clay. In the Froebelian kindergarten the role of the adult was to plan the curriculum round these activities along with singing, stories and talk. At the time this would have presented a stark contrast with infant schools where the 3Rs preoccupied the daily routine. Although his books are no longer popular, many of the experiences on offer to children in present day nurseries and reception classes have their roots in the 'gifts' and 'occupations' of Froebel's kindergarten.

Maria Montessori, like Froebel and Pestalozzi, saw development as the inevitable

unfolding of a biological programme(Curtis(1986)p.7). She also believed that children learn from their own spontaneous activity and, therefore, a properly planned environment was important. Her method rested on a rigid sequence of activities which must be followed exactly with every child. As the environment was pre-planned, it was possible for the children to learn independently, the skill of the adult being of lesser importance than the method. Montessori's belief was that exercises and formal work must be carried out before creativity can occur; for her the child must learn the formal techniques of drawing before making a free drawing, a view which would run counter to most modern practices.

Another of her views which would today be widely criticised is in regard to play. She argued that the only valuable form of play was that which prepared children for adult life and interaction. The concept of imaginative play was unacceptable to her as she thought that the fantasy element was dishonest in presenting a false picture of reality. The rigidity of her methods did little to encourage language development or symbolic thought but, operating at a time when there was a growing search for a scientific approach to teaching, whereby learning could be broken down into small steps, she gained respect for her 'scientific pedagogy'.

Education for girls

Secondary education for girls, incorporating many of these ideas, was largely the creation of women such as Miss Buss and Miss Beale, but it catered almost exclusively for the middle classes. Queen's College itself received royal patronage and upper-class support as did both of Miss Buss's establishments and reservations were expressed about the potential dangers of a social mixture which included girls from all walks of life apart from the very poor. In spite of this, the Women's Education Union, founded in 1871, created the Girls' Public Day School Trust the following year, with the intention of

establishing good, cheap day schools for girls of all classes above those attending the Public Elementary Schools. By 1894 the Trust had thirty-six schools(Lawson and Silver(1973) p.343).

Education was being seen by women as a gateway to other rights and opportunities and by the end of the decade classes were being arranged for women at University College, London.This was, however, only of any use to women who already had a certain amount of privilege and there were many who were obliged to take a different route.

Most elementary teachers were former pupil-teachers who had served an apprenticeship to teaching combined with some further personal education between thirteen and eighteen. Entry into training college was severely restricted for both sexes, with the result that by 1900 nearly one third of certificated men teachers and over half of the certificated women teachers had never been to college. There was often status tension between those with certificates and those without. As the latter were mainly women they suffered from their lowly status in that they were always employed with the youngest children in the Elementary school where their abilities were never challenged beyond the most rudimentary curriculum.

The status of women teachers

There was already a high degree of inequality between male and female teachers and women teachers of the very young were even more sharply differentiated from other teachers. They were generally untrained supplementary teachers, with the exception of the Froebel or Montessori trained teachers. The training of women teachers in Froebelian Kindergarten methods had been started by the Home and Colonial Infant Schools Society in 1863 and by 1900 Froebelian practice had spread through training college departments, culminating in the establishment of the Froebel Educational Institute's college in 1894. In

practice, however, most Froebel trained students became nurses or governesses to wealthy families, probably because elementary classes were too large for the effective application of Froebelian methods. In any case the system of Payment by Results, introduced in 1862, was somewhat incompatible with Froebelian doctrine, as it emphasised rote learning and the proficiency of children's performances in tests in reading, writing and arithmetic, administered by inspectors, rather than individual development.

In the long run, influences such as Froebel, Montessori, Freud and Dewey, conflicting as they often were, greatly enhanced public appreciation of the importance of the early years in education and thus of the women who taught the very young. Nevertheless, the woman teacher in Victorian society accepted her inferiority. Even at the level of headmaster and headmistress the pay differential between the sexes was quite significant, permeating down through the ranks until it reached the most lowly – the infant teacher.

One of the factors accounting for this may have been the lack of alternatives for educated girls and the ease with which one could become an uncertificated teacher. It has been argued (Tropp 1954) that this enabled the profession to be flooded with women who regarded teaching as an episode between leaving school and getting married. However, the movement of working-class girls into a 'white blouse' occupation such as teaching did not by any means involve a leap into middle-class status. State elementary school teaching in the late nineteenth century would have been considered far too rough an occupation for a middle-class girl (Holcombe(1973) p.38).

Demands for equality were by 1914 stronger than in any other occupational group. In the campaign for women's suffrage, schoolmistresses in the newly formed National Union of Teachers had provided much of the active rank and file and were in the

numerical majority even though men held all the power. It is not proposed at this point to highlight the part played by the teaching unions in bolstering the status of women teachers as there will be further discussion on the issues of professionalism in the following chapter. However, it is worth commenting at this stage that, as a career, teaching was supposed to hold different attractions for boys and girls. It was assumed to appeal to girls because of their 'natural' maternal instincts and other feminine qualities. Acker (1989) refers to the 1925 *Report on the Training of Teachers* which describes elementary school teaching as 'a field of effort for the girl of average intellectual capacity and normal maternal instincts', an image which contributed to its lower status as an occupation for men. Bitter battles were to follow in regard to the issue of inequality of pay and status between women and their male colleagues. It is clear that the increasing status of women teachers posed a threat to male teachers. In 1939 the President of National Association of Schoolmasters declared:

"Only a nation heading for the madhouse would force upon men - many men with families - such a position as service under a spinster headmistress" (Lewis (1984) p.104)

It later adopted as one of its slogans 'Men teachers for boys', claiming that no woman could train a boy in the habits of manliness.

Ursula Brangwen in *The Rainbow*, in her time spent as a pupil-teacher at Wellingborough Green, suffers not only the hatred and jealousy of Harby, the headmaster, but also the self-loathing which she feels as a result of thrashing the children with a cane in order to subdue them and gain his approval.

"So the battle went on till her heart was sick. She had several more boys to subjugate before she could establish herself. And Mr. Harby hated her almost as if she were a man.For he hated the teacher, the stuck-up, insolent high-school miss with her independence." (Lawrence (1915) p.405)

The First World War

It is ironic that the favourable conditions needed for women to gain the advantage were to be created by the outbreak of war. The First World War created far-reaching changes in society, one of which was the role of women teachers. Elementary education in the period preceding the war was beginning to show signs of change, albeit very slowly, due, in part, to the ending of 'payment by results' and a resurgence of interest in the 'new education' (Lawson and Silver (op.cit.) p.354). The training of elementary teachers was also undergoing a slow transition in that the number of pupil-teachers fell as the minimum age of acceptance was raised. The pupil-teacher system had been coming under increasing attack for putting immature and inefficient apprentices in the classroom and giving them extremely poor instruction. Training facilities therefore, sharply increased. But an immediate and dramatic effect of the war was the mass enlistment of males, which allowed back into the profession women teachers, some of whom had left because of local marriage bars. Not only were they welcomed back but they also received a War Bonus. The Board of Education, perhaps fearing that post-war schools would face a teacher shortage and a recruitment problem, set up a committee to consider the whole question of the salaries of elementary teachers. The committee eventually pronounced itself...

"satisfied that the work of the woman teachers, taking the schools as a whole, is as arduous as that of the men and is not less conscientiously or efficiently done".

(Stephens Report (1918)p.16)

Sex differentiation, however, was deeply entrenched, in spite of support for equal pay from various official bodies. Women were still imprisoned by the stereotypical icons of the homely, sympathetic, motherly infant teacher who probably had a husband to support her and the waspish spinster who was teaching because she had failed to find a husband. In the elementary schools the typical infant mistress was the former, the

untrained supplementary teacher. Supplementary teachers were only required to be vaccinated and approved by an inspector. "Miss Read's" Dolly Clare is an example of this. She was the daughter of a thatcher, a pupil-teacher at Fairacre at thirteen and infant mistress there for forty years. She created an atmosphere of serenity and the children were very fond of her. Long after retirement she still looks at the clock and imagines herself standing in front of her class.

" Prayers would be over, and as it was so fine, no doubt they would be getting ready to go out in the playground for physical training."

('Miss Read' (1958) p.98)

Miss Clare had 'carried the school' during World War 1, but after the war ended was passed over for the headship which went instead to a man.

Laurie Lee, in his account of his early schooldays, describes his infant teacher as an 'opulent widow'

"She was tall, and smelt like a cartload of lavender; and wore a hairnet, which I thought was a wig. I remember going close up and having a good look-- it was clearly too square to be hair."

(Lee (1959) p.51)

The post-war years

The post-war months, proved to be a false dawn for women's hopes of professional equality. Many post-war aspirations were the victims of industrial slump and a general strike. Unemployment rose dramatically between 1920-1921 making discussion about the exact terms on which women should take their place in the educational system seem unrealistic. Eleanor Rathbone, one of the first women in Parliament, wrote...

"women were, with few exceptions, not at all anxious to call attention to themselves by demands for equal pay, provided they could stay in employment on any terms."

((Rathbone 1946) p.69)

During this period of economic crisis the search for professional status was further undermined by cuts in teacher's salaries. Married women, in particular, were often considered to be dispensable. Some authorities introduced rules preventing married women from being employed as permanent teachers, women who intended to marry were required to resign and only single women could be employed as supply teachers. At the same time the age for entry into school was raised to six, thereby giving even less opportunity to teachers of the very young. Lewis (op cit) is of the view that ideas about the 'proper' role of married women in particular lay behind the introduction of the marriage bar, which assumed "that all married women could be treated as a reserve army of labour because of the primary responsibility to home and family and because they could be expected to rely on their husbands for financial support."

Freda Corbet (cited Partington 1976) who was forced to give up teaching because of the ban wrote...

"I threw my career to the winds in 1925 and got married. It was a very incautious thing to do ; it was a very rash thing and perhaps a very unwise thing. For ten years I have eaten my heart out because I have not been able to do the thing I liked and loved. I have found that a married woman may do quite well for no remuneration what she may not do for remuneration."

(p.33)

In spite of such constraints, however, many women not only succeeded in making a career for themselves in infant teaching, but also became pioneers whose innovative thinking inspired many others. Miller (1992) goes as far as to say...

'Women's presence as teachers has quite simply altered childhood: how it is lived and how it is understood and managed in

contemporary societies, and it has also influenced patterns of work, who does it, how it is done, and how it is rewarded'.

(p.21)

The level of poverty, overcrowding and malnutrition in the slums of the larger industrial towns was leading to demands for better social and medical care for the children of the poor. Educational services were being pioneered. School meals in particular and a general preoccupation with child welfare was being promoted. A leading role in all these developments in child health was played by Margaret McMillan. Impelled by a passionate belief that children's lives could be transformed by fresh air, cleanliness and emotional nurture, she created a nursery garden for underprivileged children in the slums of Deptford, where she was able to establish herself as a heroine of childhood rescue and reclaim her own childhood (Steedman 1990). In 1926, under her influence, the Bradford Independent Labour Party appointed a commission to prepare a report on the socialist conception of education. Part 1 of this report was devoted to the nursery school and recommended the setting up of nursery schools for all children from two to seven years of age, and the progressive disappearance of the infant department. As a former governess herself, she understood the great gulf between the experiences of the middle-class child and the working-class child and based her curriculum on healthy outdoor play where learning would be inevitable. The vision of Margaret McMillan and her sister Rachel added further credibility to the role of those women who worked with very young children. Just as elementary education had been provided by voluntary, philanthropic effort in the previous century, nursery education had similar origins in the twentieth century, although for the Board of Education the welfare of under-fives was still a low priority.

Another major influential figure in the increased prestige attached to early childhood education was Susan Isaacs. Her work on the pioneer experiment carried out at the

Malting House School in Cambridge contributed a great deal to our understanding of social and intellectual development in young children. During the years she spent at the school she kept meticulous, detailed records of the children and it was these observations which formed the basis of her teaching to higher degree students and in-service teachers at the University of London Institute of Education. Her major contribution to early childhood education led to her being closely consulted by the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education which later produced a report under the chairmanship of Lord Hadow and it seemed that finally the real difficulties of the task of teaching young children were being recognised. And yet, the Report appeared to place more emphasis on the infant teacher's affective rather than intellectual attributes. It stated that ...

"...the first essential was the right temperamenta real love and respect for children", while "the possession of a pleasant voice is of first importance".

(Hadow 1933) p.53)

....attributes which do not appear to correspond very closely with the scientifically based theory of education Susan Isaacs hoped to promote, nor those which would raise the status of the teaching of younger children.

Infant teachers, however, began to enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy. Rigid timetables were being abandoned in favour of allowing the individual teacher discretion to allocate time flexibly according to the children's interests, which should not be unnecessarily interrupted. Froebelian and Montessorian approaches were to be combined in the new infant school, in that the basic skills of reading, writing and counting were to be taught, formal instruction should not begin under six and only then if the child was ready or interested. The influence of 'progressivism' was beginning to be felt.

The Second World War and after

Oram (1988) has attributed the slow rise in status of female primary school teachers to 'the deeply embedded familial ideology of the school: the man as head of the family, supported by women teachers, who were supposed to be particularly suited to the education of the younger children.' For whatever reason, the promotion prospects of women teachers did worsen after World War II in comparison with men's. The suspension of the marriage bar during the war years had been implemented in order to alleviate a desperate shortage of teachers rather than in response to a consideration of equal rights.

The reorganisation of the primary school system has also affected women's position in teaching. Owing to the the implementation of a break at eleven and the ensuing separation into junior and senior schools, women had a decreasing number of girls' schools open to them and were more likely to compete with men for jobs. This led to a much more rigid demarcation of the sexes in relation to promotion.

By 1947 new population trends had developed. The rapid rise in the number of infants enrolled in school led to a shortage of women teachers in several cities. Their scarcity value seemed to enhance their status, as a Working Party on the Supply of Women Teachers in 1949 mounted a campaign to attract young women into the profession. This later developed into a steady expansion of the teaching force, including those women who had left to have children. It was a period of growth which finally culminated in equal pay in 1955, meaning that at least as far as the statutes were concerned, women did not suffer discrimination.

Pressures from returning teachers led to demand for an increase in nursery provision, although this did not really grow rapidly until 1972. A stimulus for further change in primary schools was the publication in 1967 of the Plowden report on *Children and their*

Primary Schools. The priorities of the 50s and early 60s had been mainly those of secondary and higher education, but with the construction of some imaginative primary school buildings in the post-war years and some innovations in the curriculum, progressive methods began to return. An important issue emphasised by the report was the relationship between the school and home background of the pupils. Both of these developments were bound to have an impact on the importance of the role of teachers of the very young. A nursery /reception teacher had to increase her understanding of children to include, not only the appropriate curriculum, but also the social factors which may be impinging on an individual child's ability to respond to it.

Conclusion

The progress of women teachers through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries cannot be assessed without looking at the social and economic factors pertaining to women as a group throughout that time.

A powerful ideology is that which ties together women, marriage and children and the complementary belief about men's role as breadwinners. Acker points out that....

'Over time the image of a woman teacher has changed from that of a dedicated spinster to married woman. The images hold contradictions; the spinster, of uncertain sexuality and not quite a 'real woman', is a second-best model, yet 'normal' married women teachers, by working outside the home are also compromised.'

(Acker op.cit.)

Hence, there are constraints and prohibitions on both sexes, especially in terms of career opportunities for women. Compared with secondary school teachers, those employed in the primary phase have a relatively 'flat' career structure (Pollard 1985) in

that there is little differentiation between the teachers, especially in the smaller schools. Secondary teachers have greater chances to increase their salaries with allowances for middle management responsibilities. Women may also have an alternative model of 'career', especially if they have children. This may explain why they apply for promotion in schools in which they already work instead of in the wider community, thereby reducing their career prospects (Grant 1989). Deem (op.cit.) asks whether the idea that women teachers are different is merely a myth which helps to perpetuate the existing ideology and structure of the sexual division of labour in society. On the other hand she cites Bennett (1976) who found few differences of opinion or teaching aims between male and female teachers.

Another of the reasons for differentiation may lie in the low self-esteem of women in many of the professions. McAuley (1987) points out that women's image of themselves when conducting academic debate has a very different 'edge' to it from that of men. Women tend to be facilitative and constructive whereas men behave more destructively and competitively.

' Interviews conducted with both sexes suggest that women see the teaching situation as one in which there is potential for mutual learning, in which teaching is essentially concerned with the journey towards knowledge.....Teaching is essentially a personal, interactive matter.'

(McAuley (1987) p.73)

For some, this model of the intuitive, sensitive female teacher is one which reproduces itself in the girls who are taught by her. Models of women presented through the literature read to girls in the primary school, especially through fairy tales (Steedman 1982), convey clear messages as to the behaviour which will gain the approval of the teacher. Steedman describes the female characters in fairy tales as *'innocent and*

beautiful, so passive that they are almost dead, or profoundly and monstrously evil'.(p.142) The heroine is always 'she to whom things are done'. Yet, as Steedman says, this is not an accurate representation of the circumstances of many children's lives, as, particularly in this decade, the female is often the breadwinner and pivot of the household.

But it may also be the case, according to some writers, (Blyth 1965), Steedman (1982), that the virtues of patience, sensitivity and the capacity to listen are already firmly rooted in little girls when they start school. What is more, open approval is given by the teacher for their obedience and thoughtfulness...*'their obedience counted on as the linchpin of classroom discipline and organisation'*.(Steedman (ibid)p.4) Will good, obedient, passive little girls in their turn, become good, obedient, passive women and teachers?

To summarise, women teachers have historically occupied a relatively powerless position in society, which has made them vulnerable to external manipulation. Where they began to gain social and professional ground, initially in the nineteenth century, through the interest of middle-class girls in pursuing an education, and later as theories about the importance of early childhood became legitimised, two prevailing images militated against them; that of the abnormal spinster who had turned to professional life because she was unable to find a husband, and that of the soft, motherly woman who had been drawn into teaching young children because it was an extension of her maternal role, and who remained there tacitly accepting the superiority of a male-dominated hierarchy. Both are symbols which are of relevance when looking at the situation of the six teachers in the study who, being women affected by externally-imposed change, may reflect these images in the way they cope with, and respond to, change.

Chapter Two

Professionalism and the woman teacher

This chapter explores the development of infant teaching as a profession, beginning with the rise in social status of teachers. It charts the progress of women's unions and the ensuing professionalisation of women teachers, a concept which is helpful in framing the responses of the six teachers in the study.

The growth of teaching as a profession

The history of teaching in England in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is that of the rise of a professional body of elementary-school teachers working in publicly supported schools. In 1875 there were 13,200 elementary schools in the country with 1,873,200 pupils in average attendance, and in 1914, 21,000 schools with 5,392,600 pupils, while the number of elementary-school teachers increased in this period from 23,656 to 165,901. Among these teachers women represented a rapidly growing majority, probably always recruited from girls of the working classes. Indeed, the key to the growth of this particular professional group may be sought in the interaction between the continuing process of industrial expansion and the English social structure. Teachers, it could be argued, are open to being manipulated by those who wield political power so that they might be kept socially and economically as an underclass in order for the prevailing social order to be maintained. In a society where women already existed in this sense as an underclass themselves it is not difficult to see why their progress towards professional emancipation was slow. As we have seen in the previous chapter, women of the middle classes generally shrank from the prospect of entering the earliest elementary schools because of the..

'crowded, noisome classrooms where as many as eighty unkempt, unruly lower-class children, often suffering from hunger and

*disease, had to be subjected to a dull, mechanical round of work and examined periodically by that alarming person, the government inspector.*¹

(Holcombe 1973).

Under the pupil-teacher system instituted by the government in 1846, students completing their elementary education at the age of thirteen were apprenticed for five years in elementary schools recognised by the state for the purpose of their training. They received from the headteacher special instruction, for which the government laid down a syllabus, and helped with the teaching of the younger pupils, receiving small salaries which increased with each year of service. At the age of eighteen pupil teachers could take the Queen's Scholarship examination for admission to teacher training colleges established by the voluntary religious societies, which since 1839 had received grants from the government for buildings and maintenance. The government paid most of the Scholarship student's expenses and effectively dictated the curriculum to be followed by means of its certificate examinations, which students took at the end of the course in order to obtain teaching certificates. There was still, however, a large body of women who were uncertificated and known variously as supplementary, additional or "Article 68's" - from the code of 1890 sanctioning their employment. They were excluded from the National Union of Teachers until 1919 and had their own separate organisation, the National Union of Schoolteachers. This was the first body of teachers to affiliate with the Trades Union Congress and, since 90 per cent of its members were women, it supported equal pay.

Gradual improvements in the schools themselves, whereby class sizes were reduced, food, clothing and medical attention were provided and a broader curriculum introduced, helped to dispel some of the middle-class prejudices against them. The establishment of secondary schools for pupil teachers, sanctioned by the government in 1880 also proved to be successful in drawing in more of the middle classes. Furthermore, the Education

Act of 1902 led to the introduction of the bursary system which soon replaced the pupil teacher system completely. This new system provided grants to enable prospective elementary school teachers who had attended school until sixteen to continue their education for another year or two before entering training college.

Another important development was the raising of teachers' professional training to university level. The Education Department in 1890 began to pay grants to day training colleges established under the aegis of universities and university colleges where it was considered that students had great advantages over training colleges sponsored by religious societies in that the latter "*being denominational in character, residential in organisation and staffed largely by former elementary school teachers, they could be criticised as producing teachers of generally narrow outlook and of imperfect education and culture*" (Holcombe op.cit.). Moreover, the fact that the new training colleges were non-residential helped to remove middle-class qualms about mixing with social inferiors in the denominational residential colleges.

Moves towards the resolution of the issue of equal pay, for example, might also be attributed to the presence in teaching of the more privileged women in society. Public self-confidence would not, after all, come easily to ex-pupil teachers whose training had emphasised discipline and restraint and whose experience of the world was limited, whereas an enormous degree of self-possession and courage was required to fly in the face of the resistance to feminism prevailing at that time.

A clear distinction must be drawn here between the status of elementary schoolteachers and secondary school teachers at this time. Teachers of the very young were largely drawn from the the working class families, whereas secondary education for girls was to a great extent the creation of women such as Miss Buss and Miss Beale and catered almost exclusively for the middle classes. There seems little doubt, however, that

the confident voice of these middle-class women enhanced the standing of women teachers in general. Nevertheless, even today the Registrar General's classification distinguishes between primary and secondary teachers.(Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1990)

The number of children attending elementary schools rose rapidly from 26 per cent in 1871 to 46 per cent in 1881. It continued to rise steadily to 57 per cent in 1891, reaching 62 per cent at the turn of the century and 70 per cent by 1911.(Bergen 1988). It is against this background of extraordinary growth that the changing position of teachers must be examined. The status of elementary school teachers would have risen in the public estimation as a result of these improvements in their training, and no doubt the teachers themselves began to develop corporate self-esteem. Trained as they were by a government which subsidised them and working in conditions which were prescribed by government code, they were developing professional solidarity which led to the formation of professional associations, which in turn sought to improve and uphold the status of their new members.

Ozga (1988) is of the opinion that the huge expansion in elementary education in the early nineteenth century would function, in part, as a means of inculcating bourgeois values in the working classes and as a means of socially controlling them. This assertion is supported (Simon 1960) in a speech by Robert Lowe in 1867 in which he affirmed that there were two distinct branches of education, one for the middle or upper class and the other for the poor. Both needed reform in that power had passed into the hands of the workers and out of the hands of the higher classes. In Lowe's view the upper classes must gain a superior education and cultivation, so that they might '*assert their superiority*' over the workers, a superiority ensured by means of '*greater intelligence and leisure*' and so '*conquer back by means of a wider and more enlightened cultivation*

some of the influence which they have lost by political change'. (p 31).

The prevailing attitude contained '*vestiges of condescending charitability mixed with a healthy dose of regard for an educational system functional for middle-class society*'. (p.41) This may be one of the factors which contributed to a gradual rise in the status of teaching as an occupation, as growing numbers of middle-class women saw it as a respectable way of earning a living. They were certainly regarded by those in authority as desirable recruits to teaching. The Cross Report of 1888 refers to '*the valuable influence of women of superior social position and general culture*' on elementary schooling. This did not, however, mean that they would find promotion any easier than other women in teaching, as the Report later states that, whilst it should be possible for elementary teachers to rise to the rank of inspector, '*inspectors should continue to be men of wide and liberal training*'.

In practice the promotion, even of male teachers, to the Inspectorate did not happen in the way that elementary teachers had hoped. Even before the Revised Code, introduced by Robert Lowe in 1862, they had requested that the Inspectorate be thrown open to them but on each occasion the Newcastle Commission had rejected them. The Commission did, however, allow them to be inspectors' assistants, providing they had been teaching seven years and were under thirty, with a view to relieving HMIs of the drudgery of payment by results. In effect these teachers were paid low salaries, offered no opportunity to become a full inspector and became feared and despised by their former colleagues, confined as they were to the routine testing of children. It was not until 1893 that the first sub-inspector was promoted to the full Inspectorate, followed by a further six ex-elementary teachers up until 1902. The whole system was then reorganised whereby a new grade of 'junior inspector' was instituted. It then became clear that the government intended that these new inspectors, whose power was immense, should be recruited from Oxford and Cambridge, once more removing all chances of promotion

beyond the rank of headteacher from the elementary teacher. It is interesting to note that twenty years later when a Departmental Committee was set up to report on the training of teachers for public elementary schools, over 85 per cent of intending teachers were being recruited from the 'less well-to-do classes'.

During the period between the wars, it is possible to trace a rise in the social status of the teaching profession. Indications such as the growing number of teachers chosen as candidates for municipal or parliamentary office and the increasing number of teacher magistrates. This was the result of many factors. There had been a decline in the number of uncertificated teachers and an increase in the entrants from grammar schools as well as more graduates. The ending of 'payment by results' had made schools happier places for teachers and children, corporal punishment was diminishing and there was a growing recognition of the importance of a good teacher in the child's later life. Teachers were also able to avoid the mass unemployment which was afflicting society at that time, as well as being able to preserve their salaries intact in a period of falling prices. The NUT had a measure of success in securing pensions, influencing the Burnham Committee set up in 1919 and generally enabling teachers to become more autonomous.

Teachers and their Associations

The earliest teachers' associations were largely denominational, tended to develop in the metropolitan areas and were mainly for men, for example, the Associated Body of Church Schoolmasters, the British Teachers' Association, the United Association of Schoolmasters, the Metropolitan Church Schoolmasters' Association and the Elementary Teachers' Association. One of the most severe tests of their strength was the prolonged controversy over the proposed Revised Code of 1862, which would reduce teachers' status and put them at the mercy of their school managers. Much of their vitality and funds became exhausted in the attempt to take an active part in the debate, resulting in most of them becoming dormant or even defunct. For the next five years they were to be

preoccupied with the constraints and pressures of meeting the requirements of the Revised Code.

From 1867, however, once the initial shock had begun to be absorbed, teachers' associations began to revive. While the reinvigorated ones were denominational in character, in some provincial districts non-denominational ones were formed. There were also indications of a willingness to unite on certain issues, greatly aided by the foundation of the *Educational Reporter* in April 1869. It soon achieved a large circulation and from its first issue campaigned for an inclusive national union.(Tropp 1954).On 25 June 1870, a meeting of about 100 teachers was held in King's College, London, to further the discussions and finally, on 10 September, 1870, the first conference of the " National Union of Elementary Teachers " was held. It was not until 1889 that it dropped the word 'elementary' and became the National Union of Teachers.

In a sense the use of the word 'union' is misleading in the context of teaching, as the diversity of interest groups within it has led to divisions and organised rivalry. It is on the basis of this that eight separate teachers' associations can be sustained. The NUT's greatest preoccupation in the inter-war years was to establish a strong professional identity. One of the major sources of contention throughout those years, along with pay and conditions of service, was the question of equal pay, which is discussed later in this chapter. Littlewood (1989) has pointed out the paradox here, in that whilst the cornerstone of the NUT pay policy of the 1950s and 1960s was the achievement of an unequivocal professional status for all teachers, the government's campaign to recruit married women could be regarded as a threat to the professionalisation of teaching and an attempt to deskill the occupation, so undermining the union's pay bargaining position.

'The NUT could not press for better conditions of service specifically for married women because of the risk of alienating many of its male members and losing them to the NAS.'

(p.188)

In 1935 the NUT passed a resolution to place teaching on a par with other professions and its recommendations were placed before the Executive's Advisory Committee on the Training of Teachers. The Committee expressed concern as to the financial implications and the possible exclusion of students who came from poorer homes. As a result, at a later conference in 1936 a further resolution was passed to investigate the whole issue of teacher training and to prepare a report, bearing in mind the need to safeguard the interests of poorer students. The final report published in 1939 made ninety-five principal recommendations, the most important of which were:-

- (1) *Qualification of Teachers:* (a) That in the interests of a unified education system and a united profession, it is essential that every teacher should be of graduate status and trained.
- (b) Training courses should be varied but in no case should the full course be less than four years.
- (c) Every Training College should become an integral part of a university and should provide an alternative but equivalent form of training to that followed by the student working for a degree.
- (d) The degree taken at the end of such a course should be an award of the university.
- (e) Students who are taking University degree courses should receive their professional training with other students in training for the teaching profession.
- (f) The teachers' qualification carrying recognition to practise as a teacher should be awarded on satisfactory completion of such courses.
- (g) No teacher should be so recognised before his twenty-fifth birthday.

(Extract from *Educational Reconstruction* p.30 cited Tropp (op. cit.))

The McNair Committee, reporting in 1944 fell far short of these ideals, but as it stressed better conditions in schools, i.e. smaller classes and improved buildings, it was

welcomed by the unions.

Moves towards equality

One of the first women to challenge inequality was Miss M.E.Lane, an elementary school headmistress in London, and a keen worker for the Benevolent and Orphan Fund of the NUT. She complained that men and women paid equal subscriptions, but the maximum grant available, should they need it, was less for a woman. After years of campaigning she succeeded in 1903 in securing a change to the rules so that equal benefits became payable. A year later an equal pay resolution was moved at the Portsmouth conference of the NUT, and although it was greeted with bitter hostility, the initiative led to the founding of an Equal Pay League. Pierotti (1963) describes one of many meetings where physical force was used to prevent Miss Lane and her colleague from speaking. *'Whistles were blown, feet stamped, comic songs sung by the organised opposition and finally the meeting had to be adjourned and broke up in disorder'.*(p 8) For several years it existed as a pressure group within the NUT rather than an alternative, as its aim was to recruit more women members with a view to establishing more women on its executive.

The 1912 and 1913 conferences of the NUT again rejected the idea of sympathy for women's equality amidst a similar atmosphere of rancour, but at least the issue was on the agenda. The 1919 referendum on equal pay, nevertheless, became a source of deep discontent to the point where a group of men broke away from the NUT and resolved to form a new association for men only. Originally named the National Association of Men Teachers, it eventually became the National Association of Schoolmasters.

A strong move towards equal pay came, in fact, through industry, which, no doubt, added weight to the teachers' cause. Many women had replaced men in the metal and

engineering trades during the period of the war and when a War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry was set up under Sir George Atkin there was general support for the principle, although the fear was expressed that in teaching this might attract women with higher qualifications which could drive men out.

The Royal Commission on Equal Pay had its origins in the defeat of the government on 28 March 1944 in a vote to amend the 1944 Education Act. A leading Conservative feminist, Mrs Cazalet Keir, moved an amendment to the effect that in approving salary scales for teachers the Minister of Education should not differentiate on the grounds of sex. Mr. Butler was unsuccessful in his plea to the House to reject the proposal and the amendment succeeded by 117 to 116. The NUT supported Mr. Butler as did most of the educational press which eventually led to the amended clause being deleted from the Bill. It was, however, impossible to let the matter rest there as a strong pressure group was developing and on 9 May the Prime Minister announced the setting-up of a Royal Commission under Sir Cyril Asquith, supported by four men and four women. Their report was not issued until October 1946.

Partington (op.cit.) describes the Commission as being hostile to equal pay, mainly because it would make teaching less attractive to men as a career and this must be the prime consideration. This certainly aligned with the response of the NAS which claimed that it may well drive men into celibacy and discourage early marriage. They asserted that...

'there are two jobs, teaching boys and teaching girls. These jobs are not interchangeable and no individual can perform them both. Perhaps infant boys might be taught by a woman, but not boys after seven. Reactions of the pupils of the other sex will always be a partly closed book to the teacher. No course of study can give a woman that sensitive understanding of a boy's needs of thought and feeling'.

(p 63)

The NUT insisted that the rate for the job should determine salaries and family responsibilities could be ameliorated by tax concessions.

By the time the report was published public opinion had begun to sway in favour of equal pay, possibly through the wartime experience of many women, and although the Commission did not recommend it, it seemed very likely to be implemented at some time in the future.

It was not until 1956 that the Burnham Committee reached provisional agreement on new salary scales for teachers in secondary and primary schools. The scale for women was to rise by yearly increments to full equality with men by 1961. The differential, however, between primary and secondary teachers was increased, but in spite of this a special conference of the NUT voted in favour of the award. It is difficult to understand how the discrimination could be justified at a time when the government was expressing concern over the shortage of women teachers and were making efforts to attract married women back to teaching.

The period since the Second World War saw an expansion in the opportunities available to women, working classes and ethnic minorities, yet it is doubtful whether formal education was the protagonist for these changes. Lowe (1988) has reservations.

'Did it, as apologists would claim, act as a catalyst, smoothing and clearing the route for the underprivileged, actively fostering a society where opportunities were more widely shared? Or is it the nature of the English education system, making only partial adjustments to changed social circumstances, one key reason why elite groups have been able to retain most of their characteristics and many of the accompanying privileges?'

(p 2)

The rise of women's unions

The first union for women only, The Edinburgh Upholsterers' Sewing Society, was established in 1872 (Neff op.cit.). Until that time women workers had been combined in the same unions with men, according to the department in which they were employed. The contentious issue of equal pay and status was the impetus for several groups of women breaking away from the parent body to form unions which they believed would more truly represent their interests. In teaching this was certainly the case. The major union formed by and for women, the National Union of Women Teachers, was not founded until 1920; it was notable for the way in which it battled relentlessly in and outside the classroom to create a new vision of the role in society for which education should prepare girls. And yet its activities have been hidden from later historians as its archives were undiscovered for more than twenty years. When it was finally wound up as an organisation in 1961 an embargo was placed on its records and their whereabouts remained unknown, eventually being located in the London Institute of Education.

The NUWT defined itself as...

'a separate women's organisation ...to provide an avenue by which the women of the teaching profession may give clear and unmistakable expression to their opinion'

(The Woman Teacher 1929)

Its origins lay in an Equal Pay League formed in 1904 within the NUT and in 1909 it changed its name to the National Federation of Women Teachers, which worked as a separate body although still officially part of the NUT in spite of relationships becoming increasingly strained because of the lack of support for women's suffrage. By 1920 its

membership had grown; the NFWT became the NUWT and there was increasing hostility between it and the newly-formed NAS. The women's organisation became totally independent to the point where dual membership of the NUT and the NUWT was banned in 1939. King (1987) comments on the enigma which surrounds the reasons for many women choosing to remain in the NUT in spite of suffering disadvantages in employment as their female colleagues in the NUWT were. There is very little evidence in the records of its members' personal history, but NUT records show that its Ladies' Committee was not very active during the inter-war years and for a long time the Union had no paid female officials. The women who did turn to the new organisation sought an alternative to one whose rationale had been defined by men, one which reflected their interests and aspirations, one of which was to challenge the inequalities they perceived in society.

Its history is one of inordinate activity. Younger members were encouraged to speak in public and there were many social and cultural events which made the union important in its members' lives. They were politically active in deputations, lobbying, questionnaires to MPs and giving support to any bills, for example the 1927 Married Women (Employment) Bill, which seemed to be furthering their cause, yet although they were involved in challenging every aspect of women's subordination, they still saw themselves as primarily an educational body. In the inter-war years there was a great deal to be accomplished as the majority of elementary school girls were still perceived as heading for domesticity.

Overall, the NUWT had little success in changing official policy, but this must be viewed against the backdrop of opposition and confusion about gender roles which prevailed at that time. The patriarchal power relationships which dictated the curriculum and school policy were too deeply entrenched, based as they were on fear and prejudice, to be overthrown easily. Nonetheless, their courage and their unrelenting devotion to their cause is not to be underestimated.

Having identified some of the benchmarks in the gradual unionisation of teaching, it is appropriate at this point to take stock of what teachers had, in fact gained. Had they achieved greater credibility, or a code of conduct to follow, or some kind of protection for themselves? If they had established for themselves a variety of 'professional' associations, they must have believed that being a professional was something worth striving for. Can the concept of professionalism, therefore, be clearly be defined?

Professions: definitions

Barber (1963) offers the following model of an 'ideal type' of profession.

1. A high degree of generalised and systematic knowledge.
2. Primary orientation to community interest rather than self-interest.
3. A high degree of self-control of behaviour through codes of ethics internalised in the process of work socialisation and through voluntary associations organised and operated by the work specialists themselves.
4. A system of rewards (monetary and honorary) that is primarily a set of symbols of work achievement and thus ends in themselves, not the means to some end of individual self-interest.

Occupations are then analysed in terms of this ideal construct to determine their degree of professionalisation. Teaching would meet the criteria for the Barberian model as an ideal-type, but one of the problems with this particular categorisation is that it treats the concept of professionalism as if it were 'neutral rather than sociological' (Bergen in Ozga (1988)). Bergen refers to work by both Chapoulie (1973) and Larson (1977) who reject the construction of an ideal-type on the grounds that, not only does it tell us what a profession pretends to be rather than what it is, but also that it operates as largely independent from the class structure in society. Larson is of the view that what is needed

in order to explore how professions negotiate and maintain their special position is close observation of actual practice.

Larson's work centres on the unavoidable link between profession and class. She develops a convincing argument for professions being situated in the middle and upper-middle levels of the social stratification system. In referring to professionals she would go as far as to say that '*their relative superiority over and distance from the working-class is, I think, one of the major characteristics that all professions and would-be professions have in common*'. (p. xvi). Larson goes on to examine the way in which those occupations which we call professions have organised themselves into marketing their own special knowledge and skills i.e. they have translated their scarce resources into social and economic rewards. It is true that in teaching, when certain areas of expertise become 'shortage subjects' they attract special advantages such as a shorter training period or extra increments, but in general, teachers have very little power to manipulate their employers for monetary reward. This is especially true of the primary teacher who, historically, has always been a generalist. It would also exclude the militia and the clergy who do not offer their services in the marketplace, yet may be called professionals.

Ozga and Lawn (1981) refer to a discussion of teachers' class position by Ginsberg, Meyenn and Miller (1980) where it is asserted that teachers are members of a 'new middle class' which is neither productive worker nor capitalist. Teachers, whilst sometimes sympathetic to the working class, still exploit it economically and oppress it ideologically. Ozga and Lawn are of the opinion that such an argument ignores the way in which teachers' organisations were able to use the ideology of professionalism to effect changes in their own working conditions. As their book was completed before the advent of the national curriculum, the dissolution of the Burnham Committee and teacher appraisal, it may be that their views on the location of teachers within a structural class would be different at the present time.

Harris (1982) develops a similar argument. He moves from very simple criteria by which we might judge whether teachers are middle or working class, for example, do they receive a monthly salary or weekly cash payments in brown envelopes? Are they 'white-collar' workers or are they involved in physical labour? Teachers exert managerial functions over some members of the working class during the course of their everyday work e.g. cleaners, the secretary or the caretaker. Therefore they must be middle-class. Finally, teaching is rarely called a 'job'. It is sometimes elevated to a vocation or demoted to an occupation but most commonly it is referred to as a profession, therefore remaining distinguished from 'workers' and the working class. Harris then takes up a point made by Alexander (op.cit.) in regard to the high standard of esoteric knowledge on which teachers as professionals would claim that their practice is based. Harris states; *..many would argue that the 'esoteric knowledge' required is nothing more than common sense; common sense which is now being dressed up in scientific jargon; and that on this ground teacher-professionalism is basically fraudulent*'. (p.37)

Hoyle (1970) in deliberating on the word 'profession', uses criteria which are similar to those of Barber's 'ideal-type'. A profession is:-

- (a) founded on a systematic body of knowledge.
- (b) performs an essential social service.
- (c) requires a lengthy period of academic and practical training.
- (d) has a high degree of autonomy.
- (e) has a code of ethics, and
- (f) generates in-service development.

He goes on to offer a view of teachers which echoes Larson's in that they both focus on the relationship between professions and the class structure. Hoyle differs from Larson, however, in that whilst he avers that teaching meets the more widely accepted

criteria of a profession, its location within the class system restricts its being considered as being of equal standing with other professions, such as medicine and law. This is largely due to the social background of recruits to the profession where entry to teaching has been a means of upward social mobility for the intelligent working-class individual. This has been increased further by the influx of mature students who have previously worked in other occupations and whose backgrounds, and here Hoyle cites Altman (1967), are predominantly working-class.

In a later discussion, Hoyle(1974) develops the notion of teachers being 'limited' professionals. He puts forward two theoretical models, that of the 'restricted' professional whose *'core professional act lies in his transaction with pupils'* and that of the 'extended' professional who is *'not limited to classroom skills alone but embraces a wider range of knowledge and skill'*.(p.315) Hoyle makes the point that teachers' *raison d'etre* has always been through their engagement with their pupils, but if they widen their experience to accommodate theory derived from professional literature and in-service, although it extends them in one sense towards career development, it restricts them at the classroom level where their expertise ultimately matters.

In considering the concept of professionalism in relationship to teaching, the issues are apparently made more complex by the presence of women as a majority. Hoyle (op.cit.) sees this as a further barrier to the status of teaching. He points out that the preponderance of women, who have always had a lower social status than men, causes the general status of the profession, when compared with the other professions which are usually dominated by males, to be diminished. Apple (1986), on the same topic, has the view that in every occupational category women are more apt to be proletarianised than men, probably because of sexist practices in recruitment and promotion, patriarchal power relations and the relationship between teaching and domesticity. He points out that



the overwhelming majority of primary teachers are women and yet many more men are the headteachers of those schools. He claims that we cannot understand the history of the effects of proletarianisation on teaching and the ensuing loss of control, unless we see the connection between the two dynamics of class and gender.

Partington (op. cit.) examines the views of some sociologists of education who believe there is a difficulty in regarding any occupation involving a large number of women as being fully professional. He cites Lieberman (1956) who believes that '*a preponderance of women must prevent the effective organisation of teachers as a coherent professional group*' (p. 242), Rosenberg (1957) who expresses the fear that genuine occupational competition between men and women might pose a threat to the institution of marriage, as *the mutual antagonism developing between the sexes might have serious complication for the social norm of romantic love*' (p. 52) and Etzioni (1969) who regards women as '*more amenable to administrative control than menless conscious of organisational status and more submissive*' (p. XV). Occupations with a majority of women, therefore, can only, in the views of these writers, rank at best as a semi-profession. Yet, as Partington later points out, there is not a clear correlation between feminisation and a decline in professionalism, as in the latter half of the nineteenth century the proportion of men in teaching dropped significantly, but the NUT developed into a coherent and forceful organisation; furthermore, in the 1960s and 70s as the proportion of men increased, teachers' organisations became fragmented. Delamont (op.cit.) would go even further to say that, despite a liberal ideology, the professions and semi-professions have managed to marginalize and exclude women and that analyses of these occupations must, therefore, be limited.

'...women's failure to be accepted as full members of the occupation is due to the fact that many aspects of the occupation's habitus, especially the indeterminate aspects of job performance, are hidden from a substantial proportion of the members, including the women and the ethnic minorities,

This refers back to the key theme in Chapter One concerning the low status of women in the teaching profession, especially those who are engaged with the very young. Drummond (1989) emphasises the fact that the task of a teacher of young children is undervalued and misunderstood. There is the assumption that, as caring comes naturally to women, not much training or reward is needed. Even women themselves have been known to remark that a school with an all-female staff 'needs a man to instil discipline'.(p.17)

The issues are further blurred by the fact that teachers, in common with all workers, are in themselves a differentiated occupational group. They will differ in religion, ethnicity, social class, political affiliation, sex, age, family situation, whether they are graduate or non-graduate, specialist or generalist, union member and in the type of school they work in. It may be that only their individual biographies and career experiences would yield the sort of information which might help us to understand how they conceptualise their own professionalism. It is clear from research such as Ginsberg et. al.(op.cit.) that interviews with teachers, whilst drawing a clear distinction between professionalism and trade unionism, for example, exhibit a wide variety of views as to what those phenomena actually comprise.

The introduction of the national curriculum

This study is examining the impact of the national curriculum on these teachers' practice by studying them at a particular time in the history of teaching.

Simon (1988) draws parallels between education reform and reform of the national health service. The fundamental difference between the two, however, is that in the health

service debate, the issues are funding, efficiency and choice. Professional skills, expertise and judgement are not being called into question. In education the profession itself has been under attack, their pedagogical integrity being replaced by a system which can be publicly measured. He sees a dilemma for the Government in that it ..

'cannot design and build a new state monopoly without the active collaboration of professional educators, because the task of simplifying, standardising and monitoring the curriculum is a task that calls for sophisticated professional skills'.

(p.81)

Teachers are destined to become the implementers of curriculum they did not devise and yet will be judged, nevertheless, by its success. Apple(1986) sees it thus: as a result of 'restructuring', teachers are being simultaneously located in two classes. They have been involved in a steadily increasing restructuring of their jobs and are becoming de-skilled because of the encroachment of technical 'control procedures', such as pre-specified teaching competencies and pre-packaged curricula. It is wise to think of them, therefore, as sharing the interests of the petty bourgeoisie and the working class.

It was important for the purposes of the study to examine the concept of the 'professional', especially in regard to the point made by Hoyle that the women in any profession will present a restriction on the status of the profession itself, and to what extent teaching is 'gendered labour'. As all six teachers in the study are female they will have views of themselves as members of a profession, which will in turn affect the way in which they view, and, perhaps respond to, change. Apple's notion of women teachers operating in a context which leaves them more vulnerable to proletarianisation than men is also a useful one. He emphasises the importance of professionalisation to women as it has given them the power not only to win equal treatment from the state in regard to pay and conditions but also the opportunity to retain a degree of self-determination. The concept of professionalism is crucial when looking at the effects of curriculum reform on

teachers' practice, in order to discover whether they do, in fact, as Apple suggests, stand outside the change and retain a degree of self-determination or act as Steedman's 'good, dutiful women'.

Chapter Three

Conducting the research

The research approach

The focus of the study, as described in the Introduction, was to be the monitoring in detail of some teachers' responses to the changing demands made on them. As it was my intention to investigate specific ways in which individuals might deal with institutional change it seemed appropriate to employ a case-study approach, with the intention of illuminating specific situations, the 'cases' in this instance being six teachers in two infant schools. Stenhouse (1982) draws a distinction between case study research and research conducted in samples.

'Sample-based research is concerned with establishing a relationship between a sample studied and a target population to which the findings in the sample are to be generalised. In case study the relationship between a case and any population in which similar meanings may apply is essentially a matter of judgement'.

(p.265)

For the purpose of my research I wanted to adopt a qualitative, in-depth stance which would illuminate the teachers' situations in a more intense, particularised way involving interviewing and observation as methods of gathering information. The intention not to search for generalities does give the researcher a certain amount of freedom in that s/he may, at least in theory, leave aside the need to look for common denominators and concentrate on the particular setting. Adelman et al (1976) describe case-study as " the study of an instance in action" in that

'a bounded system (the case) is given, within which issues are indicated, discovered or studied so that a tolerably full understanding of the case is possible. The most straightforward

examples of "bounded systems" are those in which the boundaries have a common sense obviousness, e.g. an individual teacher, a single school, or perhaps an innovatory programme'.

(p.49)

Hamilton (1980) on the other hand, refers to a point developed by Cronbach who argued that every setting is empirically unbounded and that the primary aim of social science, should become 'interpretation in context' not generalisation. The 'bounded system' in my research was to be the six teachers, who were examined as entities operating in, and, therefore, bounded by specific contexts at particular times. My aim was 'interpretation in context' and not generalisation, and any theory developing from the data would arise from those specific instances. Within my case studies I employed an ethnographic approach. I observed and interviewed in the two schools over six terms and worked in an intensive, descriptive way.

Case studies, being the study of particular individuals, incidents and events allow the researcher to capture and portray those elements of of a situation which give it meaning. Walker (1986) describes some of the difficulties encountered by users of case study methods, which include the problem of the researcher becoming too involved in the issues, events and situations under study. He highlights a further problem in that even triangulation tends to lead to a relative view of the truth in terms of the perceptions of different observers, although the case study worker may produce data which is internally consistent and acceptable to all those involved.

Marshall and Rossmann (1989) suggest that, in order to counter challenges about the *external* validity of the qualitative study, the researcher must operate within a framework which makes explicit how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models (p.146), thereby stating the theoretical parameters of the research. It is then possible for others to make research studies within the same parameters to determine

whether the cases described can be transferred to other settings. In my particular study I tried to ensure that my methods of data collection and analysis were clearly defined and that the rules of procedure were strictly kept.

I was aware that case-studies may be viewed as highly selective accounts, because the researcher focuses on what s/he considers to be the key aspects of events observed, so that some are foregrounded and others recede into the background. There is a sense in which all research is subjective in that the data are interpreted by the researcher and will almost inevitably be analysed from a value position.(Bausell (1986)) As Walker (1986) puts it...'case study methods rely heavily on human instruments (researchers and subjects) about which only limited knowledge can be obtained and whose private expectations, desires and interests may bias the study in unanticipated and unacknowledged ways'.(p199) Shipman (1972) sees this as the fundamental dilemma of social science wherein 'involvement is necessary for understanding, but science is a detached activity' (p67). One of the drawbacks of the use of intensive, in-depth case study techniques is that involvement in a complex human situation, where emotions are brought into play, does not promote objectivity or match with the more neutral systems of sociological theory. If the observer, however, distances herself too much from the situation, there may be an accompanying lack of insight. Hence, in order to discipline my own subjectivity, I tried to follow an approach which, although it was intensive and open to subjectivity, was consistent across the different settings, as I adhered to the same observation schedule, observed for the same period of time and on equal numbers of occasions across the six classrooms. Similarly, field notes were collected and interviews were conducted under circumstances which were the same for all six teachers. A schedule of interview questions was sent to each teacher in advance and each one saw and agreed the transcript of her own interview.

Related to this is the question of the reliability of the data. Reliability relates to consistency. The case study researcher should strive to achieve consistency by setting out concise rules of procedure, adhering to them and triangulating the data collected through confirmation by the other participants. Even then the data may only be dependable to an extent, as no-one remembers events in precisely the same way, but by using the same 'instruments', my observation schedule, coding procedure and interview schedule, I hoped to reduce the degree of variability. My research plan is outlined later in this chapter.

The term ethnography, especially in its use in anthropological studies, implies description. Woods (1985) likens the ethnographer to an artist, who works with great care to capture the essential characteristics of a situation and the finer points which underpin them. The difference is that the artist has more freedom of interpretation. One of the main difficulties for the ethnographer is that immersion in the detail often prevents him/her from developing a broader perspective leading to theory construction. As Woods says "*Immersion and retraction do not go well together*" and one may be left with endless descriptions which are unlinked to any larger social system. Hammersley (op.cit.) seems in his more recent writing, to have lost his faith in the conventional ethnographic approach and moved towards the view that ethnography '*suffers from disabling problems and requires major reconstruction*', especially in regard to classroom interaction. So often, in his view, educational research had been primarily concerned with categorising behaviour according to concepts pre-defined by the researcher. The result is a failure to understand the social processes involved in classroom interaction. For my part, I intended to avoid this by operating in a sphere I knew very well, although this in itself might also have its attendant problems. I was reassured by Woods (1986) in his opinion that many teachers are natural ethnographers and it could be argued that teaching and ethnography are similar art forms. He also

reinforces my own belief that it is more important to internalise the ethnographic spirit than to memorise techniques in the hope of producing polished reports. Moreover, as Woods says, it represents a singular view of a culture frozen in time, described by the ethnographer who is totally immersed in its detail and focusing on the primary tasks of..

'the delicacies of gaining access, the intricacies of data collection, the niceties of the ethics involved - and the root question of validity, the essence of the ethnographic achievement'.

(p.151)

Knowing myself that infant school life often reflected contradictory things and very rarely went according to plan, once I was in the classroom I would have to be flexible and responsive yet cling to the structures I had devised if I were to collect anything worthwhile. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) support the view that, although the course of ethnography cannot be pre-determined, this does not mean that there is no need for pre-fieldwork preparation nor that the researcher's behaviour should be haphazard. Indeed, they argue that research design should be a reflexive process operating throughout every stage of a project. It has been said (Burgess 1985) that the hallmark of being a field researcher is flexibility in relation to the theoretical and substantive problems on hand.

'However, such a position leads to work of this kind being branded as subjective, impressionistic, idiosyncratic and biased. Field researchers are then confronted with questions of validity.....

(p.143)

According to Woods (op.cit.) this is not conducive to the generation of theory and he notes an a-theoretical trend prevailing throughout the early 80s. He refers to the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) who recommend the development of 'grounded theory', that is the main emphasis is on discovery rather than the testing of theory. Categories and their properties are noted and 'saturated', that is, themes emerging from data collection are

checked and re-checked against more data and gradually a substantive theory develops. Woods is of the opinion that theory does not simply emerge or become revealed, but that the researcher must make a leap of the imagination in order to conceptualise field notes. He would prefer to see ethnographic description as theoretically laden and part of the general research enterprise, advocating a marriage between methodology, which involves discipline and control, and a mental state conducive to the production of theory, which requires liberation, imagination and creativity. He has been criticised (Hammersley 1990) as not taking his argument far enough in that he fails to explain how ethnographic practice will have to change in order to facilitate the development and testing of theory and what is really needed is a major reassessment and reconstruction of ethnographic practice itself.

Although the overall aim of the research was to provide detailed information about the changes in the teachers' classroom practice as a result of the implementation of the national curriculum, the teachers taking part would undoubtedly vary in the extent to which they were ready to accommodate these new requirements. They would also vary in the degree to which they felt threatened by my presence as a researcher in the classroom, although they were all volunteers. I believed that my exploration was going to be of interest to them and, perhaps, other members of the educational community, but for them I could understand that they might feel they had to 'get it right' or even that they may not want to admit to their real fears in case they were seen to be unable to cope. It was also possible that I might be both intrusive and obtrusive, making the teacher self-conscious, perhaps causing her to change her usual behaviour and thereby interfering in her professional obligations. These and other problems had to be overcome and I must own up to a great deal of anxiety at the outset as to whether my choice of method was suitable for the purpose and whether it was 'pure' enough to be academically respectable, but I was heartened to discover as I read others' accounts of ethnographic studies that textbooks often represent idealised conceptions of how educational research is designed

and implemented and that the reality is often messy and ill-conceived. As Walford (1991) says...

'..natural science research is frequently not carefully planned in advance and conducted according to set procedures, but often centres around compromises, short-cuts, hunches, and serendipitous occurrences '.

(p.1)

However, I did plan the research carefully and followed set procedures, which I explain below.

The research plan

The focus of the research was to illuminate the six teachers' current practice and how it might change over time. There were several aspects to this:-

- (a) What is the physical organisation of the classroom?
- (b) How are the children grouped?
- (c) Is there any ancillary help (including parents)?
- (d) What do they do?
- (e) How much time is spent on the core subjects?
- (f) How are the teachers making their own assessments?
- (g) What is the nature of the teacher/child relationships?

In order to answer (a) and (b) I began each observation by spending a few minutes noting the position of work areas, furniture etc. Much of this had already been done in the preliminary observations and was unlikely to change a great deal on each occasion. It was merely a scene-setting exercise.

For (c) I discovered beforehand if there was to be another adult in the classroom as well as the teacher and went in with the specific purpose of observing what she did for

fifteen minutes using the same type of record as the teacher observation sheet.

In the integrated, thematic approach to teaching the basic subjects often found in infant schools it is difficult to separate out the subject areas. Information on (d) derived from initial interviews with teachers and a further five minutes or so describing the kind of task on which each group is working, using E, M, or S to indicate which core area dominated. This audit was examined in conjunction with the teachers' own forecasts and evaluations to give a fuller picture.

Some information about (e) (f) and (g) was gathered by means of a second round of interviews, and emerged from the observation schedule but some indicators were identified from the record sheet, in terms of the teachers' immediate response to the childrens' work.

Judging from reports, articles and materials produced by professional associations at the time, for example, AMMA (1990) and NUT (1990), it seemed clear that there were certain aspects of infant school practice which were going to be affected by the national curriculum more than others. It must be acknowledged that I was entering these classrooms with particular foci which I felt were important because of my own experience, which is why I decided to focus on three themes, which to me were key issues.

Firstly, would there be changes in the status of some curriculum subjects? What was to be the status of core subjects in relation to others?

Secondly, knowing the immense importance attached by infant teachers to the quality of their relationships with the children, this could be a source of anxiety for them if the

national curriculum monopolised more of their time. I was, therefore, keen to monitor the quality of the relationships between teachers and children.

Thirdly, the notion of more formal assessment of children would, probably, be disquieting to most infant teachers. I would, therefore, need to discover the types of assessment already in use and follow closely the administration of the first round of SATs.

The cases in question comprised a reception class teacher, a middle infant teacher (Year 1) and a top infant teacher (Year 2) in two schools. There were several reasons for choosing the two schools in question. The schools themselves were geographically close in a mainly rural setting, thereby making them more accessible to the researcher, yet very different in the style of building and organisation, which would enable me to compare teachers' responses in contexts where there were contrasting styles of management and environment. Although the two schools were near to each other in an older part of a town which in the post-war years had grown into a large new town, and the numbers of children in them virtually identical, there were significant differences between them.

The research method

(a) Observations

The research involved close observation in all six classrooms and I was aware that this might be where I could encounter a potential problem. It was my intention to carry out the first phase of my observations in the autumn term of 1989 in the form of a pilot study, in order to familiarise myself with the setting in which I would be working and also to allow the children time to become used to seeing me about the school. Although I felt this to be a useful, positive strategy, I realised that there may be a 'familiarity' problem (Becker 1971 in Burgess op.cit.). In Becker's view the more the observer is on

familiar ground, the less she can single out events that occur, and in many ways, the aim of the ethnographer should be to make the familiar strange. However, I believed that, unless I took this first step, I should waste time trying to absorb details which might prove to be irrelevant and distracting at a later stage. There is, of course, the danger of being on ground which is too familiar in this particular instance, in that young children are naturally curious about any adult in their classroom, especially one who is using a tape-recorder, and the more frequently they see the observer the bolder they become. There may also be an additional difficulty for the observer in trying to remain detached when her natural responses to young children are involved. I was interested to read King's account (King 1979) of how he established his non-participant status with young children. He remained standing to create a social distance, he showed no overt interest in the children's activities and he avoided eye contact. My difficulty would be, I knew, in sustaining such techniques as they were so unnatural to me.

Having completed the first round of observations in the six classrooms I then began to sharpen the focus in preparation for the more structured observations in the spring term of 1990. I considered some of the literature on classroom observation and tried to devise a model which would be appropriate for answering the questions I needed to address. Walker (1985) offers the warning that, although it is easier to choose techniques 'off the shelf', those techniques may have factors built into their assumptions which distort the task to a point where it no longer relates to the initial problem.

My procedure was to enter the classroom either at the same time as the children or very soon after as I believed this would minimise the effects of my presence. A door opening to admit a visitor carrying a tape-recorder and various papers, at a time when the class was listening intently to instructions from the teacher, would be more disruptive than the children gradually becoming aware that there was someone different in the room,

by which time they would be engrossed in their work. After putting down a few short sentences on the back of the record sheet describing the scene and the curriculum focus of the lesson, using the coding described earlier, I then switched on the recorder and wrote down in as much detail as I could a description of the teacher's language and action, noting particularly the kind of interaction she had with individual children. At the end of twenty minutes I could then leave the classroom as unobtrusively as possible, hoping to fill any gaps in my written account by playing back the recording.

Observational research ethics require that all the subjects of the research are informed about the procedures and the purpose of the study so as to be given the opportunity to withdraw and this was not a difficulty with the teachers, but there is, of course, a strong difficulty where very young children are involved. Even though they were at an age where they were very curious about any visitor to their classroom, they could not be informed about the study in a truthful way as it would be beyond their comprehension and yet their questions must be answered. I decided to 'play it by ear' and meet their queries as they occurred. The question of their opting out was not a reality, but I comforted myself with the thought that it was really their teachers I was going to be scrutinising and the children were not to be the 'subjects' of the research.

An aspect of my observations which is important to mention is the additional information of an informal type which I gathered whilst I was in an *ad hoc* situation, such as sharing a coffee break, listening to staffroom talk, or chatting in the classroom with a teacher long after I had put away my notebook. Much of what I gleaned was impressionistic but it added to my overall picture of how change was affecting the individuals I was concerned with and the school itself. I tried to remember any particularly revealing points, sometimes scribbling them down in the carpark. This seemed to me to be preferable to the practice of overt use of a fieldnote diary as I did not

wish to be seen to be making capital out of any casual conversation taking place when the respondent's guard was down. Once her trust had been gained it was important not to betray it.

(b) interviews

What I hoped to explore was the 'inner perspective' referred to by Patton (1980) that is, finding out what is in and on someone else's mind. A qualitative tool such as interviewing would, it seemed to me, yield rich material to enable this to happen. Furthermore, if Roberts (1981) is right in her assertion that women tend to share a common language, and as all the teachers were women, these interviews would be important facilitators. Spradley (1979) has also referred to the fact that the qualitative interview is more successful if the researcher understands the school culture and feels at home in the setting.

As Powney and Watts (1987) say,

'there seems to be a temptation to think of interviews rather like thermometers-they can be inserted almost anywhere in the body of the research and simply read off to provide a series of trustworthy observations'.

(p.vii)

...whereas the research interview is a very particular kind of data collection method and should be used with caution. They go on to describe the considerable growth in educational research during recent years where interviewing has become a widely used research tool, but they are of the opinion that it must be conducted and reported as rigorously as any other method if it is to be treated seriously. They point out that it is usual to find questionnaires in the appendices of a research report but rarely an interview schedule.

On the surface it seems dangerously easy to put down a few questions on paper and work through them systematically with the person in front of you, but anyone who has tried this will agree that it is far from simple. One may often finish up with unsatisfactory answers in spite of a great deal of talk and the respondent may have only dealt with the agenda formulated by the interviewer rather than the issues s/he would like to have covered. Nor is it the same as having a conversation. Burgess (1983), for example, in his ethnographic study of Bishop McGregor school, preferred to use a series of conversations, emphasising the sterility of interviews conducted and reported in a vacuum. One of the problems for the amateur researcher is that there is a large amount of skill involved in the process but one is untrained and inexperienced, which raises major questions of validity. Simons (1981) points out how open-ended interviewing, relying as it does on the skill and judgement of the interviewer, is also open to manipulation and distortion. She advocates strict rules of procedure so that all parties share a similar perspective on issues such as confidentiality. Sophisticated techniques for overcoming the problems of interviewer bias, human error etc have been developed by professional agencies, but for the single interviewer working on a small-scale project it is not feasible to use these.

Cohen and Manion (1989) outline four kinds of interview which may be used specifically as research tools. There is the *structured* interview where contents and procedure are organised in advance, the *unstructured* interview which has greater flexibility and freedom, the *non-directive* interview where the respondent has the freedom to express subjective feelings as fully as s/he chooses and the *focused* interview where the interviewer can introduce more explicit verbal cues into a non-directive situation. In my first (and some subsequent) interviews with the six teachers, I had a written list of questions (see Appendix 1), but encouraged the interviewee to develop her

her answer as she chose, even to the extent of asking secondary, supporting questions to clarify a point, it would be difficult to see where this would fit into Cohen and Manion's typology. Perhaps *semi-structured* is the most accurate description of this particular style. This is not to imply that it was thoughtfully selected by me as an officially recognised method of rigorous data collection, but more that the technique was developed more or less intuitively as the best means of drawing out the information required.

I used a respondent rather than an informant style, that is, even when the questions were loosely structured and there was plenty of space left for the individual teacher to develop her answer, it was I who had retained control throughout by the intentions behind my questions. I like to think that my conduct of the interviews was not stifling to the respondent, but I do remember one of them apologising for 'rambling on' and forgetting what the original question had been, almost as if she believed that I had specific ideas about the content of her answers. Measor (1985) referring to the phenomenon of 'rambling', reminds us that it is still the researcher's job to remain critically aware of what the interviewee is saying, even though the qualitative interview involves entering another's person's world. She describes it as '*interviewers needing to keep their antennae up for pointers....for data which fit into the themes of the research*' (p.63)

Woods (op.cit.) underlines the need for a feeling of trust and rapport which must be established before a successful interview can take place. The respondent has to feel that the interviewer is an understanding person who is genuinely interested in him/her and, moreover, one who would not make value judgements about the views expressed. The special character of interviews in ethnography aims to penetrate the experiences of others, empathise with them and almost 'walk in their shoes'. In fact Woods goes as far as saying that they are themselves a form of participant observation. As he puts it ...

'There would have to be a relationship between us that transcended the research, that promoted a bond of friendship, a feeling of togetherness and joint pursuit of a common mission rising above personal egos'.

(p.63)

I was fortunate in this respect in that I had been on good professional terms with all six teachers, one of the headteachers had been a fellow probationer with me many years earlier and I had also taught the children of one of the teachers. This did make for a relaxed feeling about the interviews, most of which took place in the teacher's own classroom when the children were out or in the staffroom when the teacher had been given a free period. I always used a tape-recorder which I explained to the teachers was not only a means of playing their own interview back to them for verification but also an aide memoire for me, even though I was making written notes. Setting up interviews in this context did mean, however, that the time available was limited by the usual demands of school life, such as playground duty, staff meetings etc. How fortunate to be in the situation of Nias (1991) who talked to her teachers until the caretaker shut them both out, whereupon the conversations were continued in pubs, railway stations, cafes, parks, homes and, on one occasion, an art gallery. Small wonder that she calls it a 'rich seam of data'.

Carrying out the research: the rules of procedure

The headteachers of both schools were very interested in the proposed research and offered to raise it as an item on the agenda of the next staff meeting, when it was hoped that some of the staff would volunteer to participate. Some time later, both heads telephoned me with the names of three teachers who were willing to take part, and times were arranged for me to meet them. The headteachers readily agreed to discussions with me at the end of each phase of the fieldwork and showed great interest in the research.

Interviews

The interviews were fixed either during the lunch hour or after school, depending on the commitments of the individual teacher. Before the first round of interviews I sent copies of the schedule of questions (see Appendix 1) to both schools so that the six teachers could not only begin to think about them, but that they would also have an idea of the format they could expect. It was agreed that the interviews would be taped and that I would show the teachers an edited transcript of their own interview (see example in Appendix 2) so that they could acknowledge it as a true record. We agreed that the tape should be stopped if we were interrupted, or if, for any reason, the teacher did not want to continue to be recorded. My aim was to discipline my own subjectivity, to represent the teachers' views fairly and be as consistent across teachers as it was possible to be. When analysing the interviews I adopted the comparative coding method recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Observations

The teachers and I agreed that I should vary the days and times at which I would observe, in order to see a cross-section of the curriculum and to allow for fluctuations in individual energy levels, i.e. to avoid seeing the same teachers always late in the school day when they might be tired, which in turn might affect their responses. We also agreed that I should have a timetable prepared two weeks in advance for them to confirm. This would allow for any unforeseen changes such as illness and school timetable alterations. Because of my own teaching commitments elsewhere it was necessary for me to plan at least six weeks ahead, which I did, hoping that there would be few changes to the two-weekly plan. In the event, very little adjustment was needed.

We agreed that observations would last twenty minutes, that the teachers would be

shown the proposed schedule for use during the observations, that the observations would also be taped (to support my written notes in the event that I was not able to catch everything that was said if the teacher spoke too quickly) and that I would be making written notes, which I would show to the teacher concerned to ensure their authenticity before they were used for analysis. The observations were structured in order to achieve consistency, in that I was looking at the teacher's behaviour at one minute intervals, focusing on her action, language and non-verbal interaction (see Appendices 3 and 4). Each teacher was identified by a code, the first letter being the school and the second being the age-group e.g. AR was the reception teacher in School A, AM the middle infant teacher and AT the top infant teacher. These codes were still retained not only when the teachers subsequently changed age-groups after the first year, but also following the introduction of the new national curriculum terminology.

The model developed by Sylva et al (1986) for the Oxford pre-school project was helpful in providing a schedule for detailed targeting of children. In the account of their research they describe how, after months of study and experiment, they decided to adapt to their purposes with young children, the 'focal animal' technique originally developed by ethologists.

'Concerned with the evolution of behaviour they sought precise information on the ways that animals adapt to the environment. Although ultimately interested in the behaviour of classes of animals, for instance young infants or mature males, they first had to amass quantities of information about individuals'.

(p.21)

This seemed an appropriate technique for my purposes and I, therefore, developed my own version of the schedule based on the Oxford model, except that where it used a target-child approach involving focusing on a child for a set period of time, recording at

one-minute intervals every social and verbal interaction engaged in by that child, I would instead be focusing on a teacher. Ultimately I carried out a total of seventy-two observations i.e. ten in each class initially, then a further six in each of the two Year 1 classes.

For the purposes of my case-study the 'subject' of the target was to be a teacher rather than a child, but I intended to use a sheet similar to the Oxford one to record her action and speech. (see Appendix 4). Observations were hand-written and supplemented by codes e.g. T is the teacher and C is the child. Thus, I observed the target teacher for twenty minutes using the record sheet divided into intervals of one minute. It would be possible to note positive and negative interaction (P or N), in addition to her speech, so that her tone of voice, facial expression etc. may also be included to avoid misinterpretation of the language. For example, the same phrase may be uttered in several ways, conveying completely different feelings on the part of the speaker, so that, in my case, writing down the teacher's words in the 'Language' column of the observation schedule would be insufficient to convey the quality of the communication. One of the main foci was the quality of the relationship between the teacher and child. The pilot stage yielded information which enabled me to design a method of encoding the interaction between the teachers and the children in a way which could be done quickly yet effectively by the lone observer, hence the 'P' and 'N', 'P' being positive responses by the teacher to a child, either in her language, tone of voice or facial expression, and 'N' being negative responses using similar indicators. As I was trying to ascertain the nature of the teacher/child relationship I needed to be able to reflect its subtlety, and, therefore, a 'P' or 'N' would help to clarify any ambiguity and allow me to indicate the teacher's mood, stance etc.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) emphasise the usefulness of studying not only what

people say with their lips, but also what their body movements reveal. The study of body motion and its accompanying messages is a technique known as *kinetics*. The motion of the body may be analysed systematically in a way which allows the researcher to see and measure significant patterns in the communication process (p 90). To aid my analysis I noted (for example see Appendix 4) not only what was said, but also the way in which the teacher made comments to a child, such as 'sharply' or 'smiling' to convey her tone of voice, and recorded whether she was bending over a child, speaking from across the room, or confronting him/her. The example shows that BM initiated what I considered to be 12 negative and 2 positive interactions (see below), all of which were verbal. It also shows that there were 6 groups of children all engaged in different activities in the core areas, some of which were practical. In the background to the observation (see Appendix 5) I noted that BM was tense throughout because of the disruptive behaviour of three boys.

Marshall and Rossman point out, that novice researchers (such as myself) may tend to misinterpret or trivialise aspects of body language behaviour. But, I made judgements of 'positive' and 'negative' on the basis of speech and non-verbal communication, my interpretations of which I was able to verify with the 'subject' concerned when the observations were discussed. The record also indicated the initiator of the contact e.g. C->T (from Child to Teacher). At the same time I tape-recorded the sequence of events to act as a further check on my written commentary. Ultimately, it was a case of counting the number of 'P' or 'N' symbols to determine whether the observation had shown predominantly positive or negative interactions, but I had the additional information in the form of the written descriptions in the schedules and summaries. Over time these gave a detailed picture of the teacher's behaviour and enable me to assess any qualitative changes when comparing one observation with another. The observations themselves were also verified by the teacher involved.

On the reverse of each observation schedule I recorded the subject areas in evidence during the observation. This was often declared by the teacher at the outset, but occasionally it developed further as the children finished one piece of work earlier than anticipated and chose to move to another. This way of recording enabled me to see the most prevalent curriculum area over time and assess any changes in this balance by comparing observations.

The schools

School A attracted the more affluent families (although the head described them as *nouveau riche*), perhaps because of its age and long-established reputation. It was a single-storey Victorian building with high windows, intersected by a long corridor which divided the classrooms from the lavatories and the playground. At a later stage a hall had been added, but the children still had to go outside the main building to reach the dining-room. As the classrooms were small, the lack of space had meant that there was no home-corner, water play or sand in any of them, although the corridor space had been used successfully to accommodate this kind of play on a shared basis. The school seemed well resourced and the headteacher, a woman in her late forties with a degree in psychology, who had been at the school for five years, was always keen to provide the kind of resources which would enable each teacher to teach a broad curriculum and make the most of her individual expertise. There were six classes in the school, all of which operated an integrated day and there was considerable parental help in the classrooms on a regular basis. In addition, there was a nursery class in a separate building. It was an all female staff.

School B was by contrast a spacious 1960s building of brick and glass surrounded by a large playground and fields. There was a junior school on the same site which was once a separate concern, but the two schools had then become amalgamated under the

same headteacher. She herself had been a head elsewhere in the town and been called in by the LEA to take charge of the school on a temporary basis as the head had left suddenly. Having decided to stay, she had been there for four years. There seemed to be a high proportion of disadvantaged families in the catchment area. There were five infant classes and a rising-five early years class. The organisation was mainly integrated under a topic heading although it seemed that the core areas generally took place in the morning. The infant school staff were all female.

The teachers

AT, the Year 2 teacher, was trained to teach infants and had remained with this age group for thirteen years. School A was the second school in which she had taught.

AM, the Year 1 teacher, was trained for infants and had a total of nineteen years' experience. Her first six years were spent elsewhere in the country; she then had a break of ten years during which time she had her own two children. She then did supply teaching for a year, before coming to School A two years earlier.

AR, the reception teacher, originally took a degree in sociology, followed by a post-graduate course. She then took a break of seven years to have children, after which she taught for a year in an F.E.College. This was followed by four years as a part-time teacher in an infant school and subsequent full-time post at School A for two years.

BT, the Year 2 teacher, had trained to teach juniors, but, in fact, apart from two terms in a special school, had taught infants for seventeen years. She had had six years out of teaching to bring up her two children and came to School B three years earlier.

BM, the Year 1 teacher, had trained to teach infants as a mature student. Apart from a short period of junior supply teaching she had taught infants for seventeen years, four of them at School B.

BR, the reception teacher, had trained to teach infants and juniors, but had taught infants for fifteen years, five of which had been spent at School B.

The basic plan for my research was as follows:-

The pilot stage:- In the Summer term of 1989 I conducted one interview with each of the six teachers (see Appendix 1 for questions) and carried out a preliminary round of unstructured observations in each of their classrooms. My intention was, firstly, to familiarise myself with the settings in which I would be working. 'Open' observations of this kind allowed me to become more aware of those features of the setting which I could regard as extraneous and enabled me to focus down on the essential ones. Secondly, observing in this way would help me to decide on the kind of schedule I would need for later observations. Once I had a flavour of the general way the teachers operated I devised a semi-structured instrument of observation to ensure consistency and give me the qualitative detail I needed for analysis. It was at this point I adapted the schedule taken from Sylva. Had the schedule needed further adaptation at the point of completing the first structured observation, it would have been possible to do this, but in the event the schedule proved suitable for my purpose.

In the Spring and Summer terms of 1990 I completed the semi-structured observations in all six classrooms and interviewed the teachers and headteachers.

In the Autumn term of 1990 I interviewed the teachers in their new classes as they started another school year.

In the Spring term of 1991 I carried out more semi-structured observations of the two Year 2 teachers doing their own assessments, followed by interviews with both of them.

In the Summer term of 1991 I was present in both schools during the application of the SATs and observed in the two relevant classes, followed by interviews with the two Year 2 teachers. This completed the fieldwork.

Problems and successes

Access to the two schools was a simple matter as I had been a frequent visitor to both of them in my role as a supervisor of students on teaching practice. This made it easy for me to explain the aims of the study to all the staff and after a period of time, during which I gave the two headteachers the opportunity to discuss it with the staff, six volunteers emerged. Schools being hierarchical systems I had little choice but to approach the headteachers first, but I was aware that this could have put pressure on the teachers to agree to take part. In later discussions it was clear that they had not been pressurised and that choices had largely been made on the basis of the age group each teacher had in the class. I also gained the approval of the Chief Education Officer. Access to the six classrooms was not a problem once the teachers had been identified and negotiations had taken place as to the timing of my visits. The six teachers expressed a great deal of interest in the project and seemed pleased to be the focus of such a study. The general feeling seemed to be that research in the primary school usually meant junior-age children and to their best knowledge very little had been written about infant teachers. They took huge pride in the 'good groundwork' that took place in the infant school and felt that the good start they gave to the children was rarely appreciated or even acknowledged.

From the beginning I was aware that the observation schedule I had devised for recording the interaction between teacher and child may be something of a 'blunt instrument' where the process being observed was such a delicate one. Systematic observation is a term conventionally used for observational research which involves carefully defined rules for recording and observing and which normally reports the results of such observations in quantitative terms. It became clear to me as time went on that I was trying to quantify something which was probably unquantifiable and that nuances of behaviour cannot be recorded in terms of symbols without losing some of their sensitivity. My additional notes on the tone of voice, facial expression and body

posture, therefore, added a useful dimension. Furthermore, short background summaries of each observation, written soon after the event, allowed me to describe the preceding context and comment on the teacher's, or children's, demeanour where appropriate. Systematic observation as a technique would, therefore, be a misnomer for my approach. On the other hand, as it was important to collect evidence of these relationships and I was the sole observer I could not think of a more manageable way of doing this---and in a sense it seemed to inject more of an element of objectivity into an activity which is essentially very subjective, especially as I was using the same schedule in all six classrooms. In any case, I would verify the results with the teachers themselves to clarify any ambiguity. Croll (1986) emphasises that the specific purpose for which an observation is being conducted is crucially important in deciding on appropriate procedures and definitions. In his list of possible purposes, 'monitoring teaching approaches' comes the closest to my own purpose and in the circumstances I felt I was being as systematic as I could. My intention was not to observe according to pre-determined categories, as the ORACLE observers did, using Boydell's pre-specified coding systems, nor to follow the style of Flanders who developed procedures for coding teacher-pupil verbal interaction, but rather to achieve depth with rigour.

Paradoxically, the aspects of data-gathering which I had expected to cause difficulties were not, in fact, the ones which ultimately did. I had anticipated that the children would find my presence distracting and that I would find it hard to resist responding to them, but in fact there was only one of the six classes where children came to me and wanted to know why I was there. One child actually tried to sabotage my recording by shouting into the microphone and flicking the buttons on the tape-recorder, but I later discovered that he had particular emotional problems and was given to difficult behaviour. What I found problematic here was that, in other circumstances as a teacher in the classroom, I would not have tolerated such behaviour and dealt with it quite spontaneously, but as an

outsider, a point I will come to later, I felt powerless.

A practical difficulty which I should have foreseen was that the variation in the voices of the teachers meant that the quieter ones could not be heard at all on the tape. One teacher had such a gentle, intimate style of interacting with the children when she bent over them at their work that, even though I was sitting very near to them I could only hear a whisper. Tizard and Hughes (1984) describe how they dismantled microphones to make them lighter and sewed them into padded pockets in specially adapted tunics for the children, which was obviously an appropriate solution, although not one which I could easily have followed not only because of the expense, but also as my 'subjects' were adults, neck-microphones would have been restricting, especially in P.E. lessons.

A further practical problem was in trying to write up the observations afterwards and match the recording on the tape with the particular piece of written observation. I had intended the tape to be an *aide-memoire* to support the written information on the observation schedule, but as time went on and my hand became tired from writing quickly I resorted more and more to a kind of shorthand which I thought I would understand later. Subsequent deciphering of my notes proved difficult and I had to resort to re-running the tape over and over again which was laborious and time-consuming. However, I was able to write up all the observations.

Generally I was greeted with smiles from both teacher and children and left in peace to carry out my observations. There were some occasions when I did feel ill at ease, however, and these were mainly because I could see that something in the school situation was making the teacher tense and I felt that my presence was adding to her anxiety. In any school there are political tensions in staff relationships, even in small, friendly infant schools and I occasionally felt that what the teacher wanted was a

sympathetic ear rather than someone sitting in the corner observing them. Under the circumstances they were all amazingly tolerant. I did experience one situation where I was quite obviously seen as a confidante and felt unprepared to deal with it. (see Appendix 3) I had fixed up an interview with the teacher in question, who at the start seemed her usual self, but very quickly became distressed. This was during the SATs period and her source of anxiety was, not only the fact that she felt overwhelmed and unable to cope, but that the headteacher was putting pressure on her in comparing her with the parallel Year 2 teacher. There was no choice for me but to switch off the tape and offer some words of encouragement. In fact, I was glad to be able to do this. It made me realise how I could have a dual role in the research without giving myself or the other person problems, as after a time she invited me to switch on the tape again and the interview was resumed.

I did, nevertheless, find the observations very valuable. Bennett (1976) found that some of the teachers in his study described their own practice in a particular way which was not borne out by the subsequent observations; in other words we do not always see our own behaviour objectively, and I believe that I was gaining information from my observations which was a useful adjunct to that which was yielded through interviews. I could then ensure that, in a specific situation, our understanding of events (the teacher's and mine) was similar.

Measor and Woods (1991) use the terms 'breakthroughs and blockages' when describing the problems and successes in their *Changing Schools* project. One such blockage occurred for me when I had written an article for an early years journal and, as I had a deadline for submitting the script which happened to be in the school vacation, I did not ask a teacher's permission for a particular observation to be used. It was, in fact, a very small part of the observation and the teacher had already seen it, but she objected to

the way I had used it. Whereas I had intended it to be an illustration of a teacher under stress, she had seen it as a teacher being harsh and unsympathetic with two children in the class. The headteacher telephoned me on her behalf to say how upset she was and after a long telephone call the same evening I managed to convince the teacher of my intentions in using the piece. I had clearly underestimated the extent to which she felt inadequate, even though she was an extremely effective and conscientious teacher, which, incidentally, I had also said later in the article. This mixture of over-reaction on her part and thoughtlessness on mine resulted in an event which left an unpleasant feeling with me and showed me how easy it is to forget the rules of procedure. This passage from Smith (1980) struck a chord for me:-

'The most uncomfortable residual issue for me is to know that the portrait that has been painted of a particular individual and a situation is as accurate and as careful as we could draw, to know that it is different from his self-conception, and to know that this is painful to him. Obviously all of us must face the truth around us at various times and in various ways. However, being a part of making a semi-permanent record of a particular individual has a humbling and disquieting aspect to it'.

(p.202)

My own role

The part played by the ethnographer turned out to be much more complex than I had imagined. Oakley (1981) has identified a dissonance between textbook descriptions for interviewing and the manner in which her own studies were accomplished. She claims that this is the result of traditional methodology owing '*a great deal more to a masculine social and sociological vantage point than to a feminist one*' since it stresses '*such values as objectivity, hierarchy and science*'. (p.38) As all my interviewees were women, I have to agree that I found it easy to relate to them and our discussions were relaxed, but at the same time I felt guilty that I might not be behaving like a 'proper'

interviewer and should be more formal. I also had the feeling that I was identifying far too much with the teachers I was observing and that, in a perverse way this was the wrong approach to the task. I could not, however, go as far as Oakley in saying that traditional interview techniques are masculine in character and, therefore, unsuitable for use with female respondents. Is she really saying that it is impossible for a man to interview a woman sensitively? Or that a woman-to-woman interview always yields richer material?

Being the 'outsider' in any setting often means that a certain amount of self-justification takes place and there is a strong desire to show that one has some credibility in that specific situation. As Burgess (op.cit.) says, teachers are suspicious of researchers who only have an academic understanding of education and who are unable to demonstrate their skills as practitioners. Hammersley and Atkinson (op.cit.) make a similar point in emphasising the need to learn the culture or subculture of the people we are studying as observers, in order to interpret the world in the same way as they do, although this is, in actual fact, impossible. Therein lay a source of tension for me in that, on the one hand I was trying to show that I was an *aficionado* and on the other I was attempting to remain detached.

To return to a point I made earlier about the values one might be superimposing on a situation one is observing. As an experienced teacher myself and one whose current professional role in teacher education is that of the assessor observing student teachers, I occasionally found myself relaxing into that mode of practice when making fieldnotes on a teacher. If I saw instances of children misbehaving, I sometimes wanted her to deal with it in a particular way, even to the point where I had to stop myself from drawing her attention to it. It was sometimes uncomfortable for me to sit amongst what I considered to be rowdy behaviour and too much noise, when as the detached observer I should have

been concentrating on the teacher.

Most of the time, however, I was able to keep to the task in hand. The only occasion when I simply stopped note-taking was during the observation when the boy who had been flicking the buttons on my tape-recorder went to play in the home corner which was very near to where I was sitting. His play and the scenario he was setting up with two girls became fascinating to me to the point where I had to listen. Later, thinking about the day's observations, I reflected on the impossible task teachers are faced with in trying to 'know' their children when they have little time for close observation of individuals who may be going through a difficult time and how interested this particular teacher was in my account of the scene in the home corner.

One other aspect of my role which I had not anticipated was the way in which an outsider may be used politically within the school. Burgess (1984b) relates how he found that he was perceived differently by individual members of staff. In the two schools in which I worked I found how easy it would be to fall into the trap of taking up a particular position on school policy when talking informally, and how important it was to remain as neutral as possible. The scene where the teacher became distressed was sharply focused on the head as being the cause of the problem and I was aware of the fine line between being sympathetic on a basically human level and appearing to agree with her in her opinion of the head, which would have made my position as a guest in the school untenable. The internal politics of the school were a minefield, especially at the time of the SATs and I felt the danger of being drawn into them. I also found it difficult not to show my own opinions of some of the tests, although I was frequently asked.

To summarise, I started out having read quite a lot about how to do research and naively believing that, although my methods were going to be primitive as I was on my

own and inexperienced, I knew enough about the 'field' to feel confident that I was operating on homeground and clear about my intentions. What I had not bargained for were all the complexities within the situation and the conflicts within myself. I did, however, learn an enormous amount about both.

Analysing the data

Having described the method, the next task is to describe how the data was analysed. Drawing inferences and coming to conclusions should, in a sense, be a simple matter; after all, as Miles and Huberman (1984) state...

'People are meaning-finders; they can make sense of the most chaotic events very quickly. Our equilibrium depends on such skills. We keep the world consistent and predictable by cognitively organising and interpreting it.'

(p. 215)

The critical question is whether the meanings found in qualitative data are valid. Miles and Huberman offer strategies for verifying data which range from straightforward counting to a more abstract appraisal of the relationship between one piece of evidence and another. One of the twelve tactics they suggest for generating meaning, especially when analysing interview data, is '*noting patterns and themes*' which, for the kind of data I had acquired, was appropriate, but just as the human mind finds meaning rapidly, it may also find patterns too readily. Moreover, according to Ross and Lepper (1980), once found, the belief in the existence of a pattern may be remarkably resistant to new evidence. Lofland (1971) describes it thus:

'...the analyst assumes the task of constructing patterns that appear to exist but remain unconceived in the phenomenology of the participants. It is this latter task of observer construction that is the most hazardous and most subject to the legitimate charge of

imposing a world of meaning on the participants that better reflects the observer's world than the world under study.'

(p. 34)

Lofland goes on to ask in what sense analysis is necessary to sociological studies. He likens unanalysed reports to the Andy Warhol film in which a man does nothing but sleep for eight hours, which although enlightening, can become repetitious and boring. If the object is to bring an audience closer to a particular world, the dullness of such detail would repel them. He goes on to make the point that, if one does not then present everything, one is, in fact, engaging in analysis and it is more useful to do it consciously than to '*obscure it under the mantle of inarticulate intuition*'.

There is a danger, of course, in seeing the analysis of data as a distinct stage in research instead of an ongoing process which starts in the pre-fieldwork phase and continues into the writing-up. Hammersley and Atkinson (op.cit.) describe much ethnographic research as having a characteristic 'funnel' structure in that it becomes increasingly focused in one direction over its course, instead of allowing a reflexive relationship between analysis, data collection and research design. If this crucial stage of theoretical reflection is omitted it is easy to lose sight of the original premise of the research. Where there is progressive focusing, it is only in the final stages that one discovers what the research is really about and it is not uncommon for it to be quite different from the original question. In Hammersley and Atkinson's view, theory building and data collection are dialectically linked. Croll (op.cit.) makes a similar point in stressing that the analysis strategy must be decided on before, not after, the process of data-gathering, as all too often the way the research was set up or the way the data was collected precludes the kind of analysis necessary to investigate the ideas underlying the research.

Elliott (1990) has identified further problems in validating case-studies, one being the basic differences in researchers' conceptions of what a case-study is, manifesting radically different paradigms of knowledge. Another difficulty is that the observer is not separate from the 'objects' s/he observes, but in a way invents them because of his/her particular focus, operating at a different level from another researcher whose focus might be similarly subjective. Further subjectivity develops in the process of selecting individual views in the analysis, again allowing for the possibility of bias.

A factor identified by Elliott, (but one which had not occurred to me), is the symbolism used by a researcher in a piece of descriptive writing. He uses examples from his own work to illustrate the emotive metaphors often used and comments on the way the use of such language militates against objectivity. Applying this to my own observations I can see that, not only has it happened to a large extent, but also that I have quite obviously used it as a means of making the scene more vivid. There is a situation where a child is 'weeping' rather than merely crying and the teacher 'takes no notice' rather than appears to take no notice, which would be more accurate.

One strategy for generating meaning is the approach which I used, suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) which they term the 'constant comparative method' in which there are four stages.

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category
2. Integrating categories and their properties
3. Delimiting the theory
4. Writing the theory

This method is a continuously growing process – each stage after a time is transformed into the next - earlier stages remain in operation simultaneously throughout

the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage until the analysis is finished. The authors claim that their theory '*makes probable the achievement of a complex theory that corresponds closely to the data, since the constant comparisons force the analyst to consider much diversity in the data*'. (p.114)

The purpose of the constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically by using explicit coding and analytic procedures. Yet it is still dependent on the skills and sensitivities of the analyst in that 'it is designed to allow, with discipline, for some of the vagueness and flexibility that aid the creative generation of theory.' That is to say that it does not guarantee that two analysts working independently with the same data will achieve the same results, as no attempt is made to claim universality. According to Glaser and Strauss, the data collected is not coded extensively enough to yield provisional tests, but only enough to suggest theory. It was with this hope that I employed their techniques in contemplation of the data I had collected on assessment, although as I had been dealing with very small numbers of respondents in the interviews, the constant comparative coding may be too sophisticated a technique in that particular instance. First I took all the interviews in chronological order from the Summer term 1989 until the Summer term of 1991 and extracted all the references to assessment in order to analyse their content: I followed a similar process with references to relationships between teachers and children and the status of subjects. I looked for categories which suggested themselves as I examined the individual teachers' responses in the interviews, identifying dominant themes. This process of distillation eventually became refined until the themes could be discussed with some confidence and in order that, in moving away from the substantive material there was not too great a degree of abstraction, I provided appropriate quotations from the data by way of corroboration.

The observations carried out during the same period yielded information about firstly, assessment, including the SATs in the Summer term of 1991, then the quality of relationships and finally the changing status of subjects. Detail recorded under the column headed 'Activity Record' showed me if there was any formal/informal assessment taking place. The coding procedures enabled me to count the numbers of positive and negative interactions for each teacher, thereby giving indications as to their relationships with the children. Details recorded on the reverse side of the observation schedules showed the curriculum areas most in evidence during the observation and I was able therefore to plot these over time by counting the number of times they occurred. All three foci could then be triangulated by reference to the themes emerging from analysis of the interviews.

I now turn to the analysis of the data focusing on the three themes of assessment, relationships between teachers and children and the status of subjects.

Chapter Four

Analysing the data

The three themes

Having described the schools, the teachers and the research approach, I shall now look at all the information I have collected in relation to the three main themes of assessment, relationships between teachers and children and the status of subjects. During the first term of the observations, **AR** and **BR** were the reception teachers, and **AM** and **BM** were the Year 1 teachers, the 'M' standing for middle infants, and **AT** and **BT** were the Year 2 teachers, the 'T' standing for top infants. In the following autumn, the start of a new school year, **AR** had become the Year 2 teacher, **BR** was 'floating' for a term, **AM** had become the reception teacher, **BM** had remained with Year 1, **AT** was now with Year 1 and **BT** was now with Year 2. Therefore, in the spring and summer terms of the final year, when I was looking solely at the Year 2 teacher assessment and SATs I observed only in the classrooms of **BT** and **AR**.

I shall be presenting the analysis as follows: initially, some of the general issues arising from the data will be discussed, then I shall take each of the three themes in turn, firstly dealing with the interviews relating to the theme, secondly, the observations relating to it and finally, drawing some conclusions from them before moving on to the next theme.

Where a quotation from an interview with teachers is used, it has either been selected because it represents the view of a minority (for example **BT** on p 114), usually one teacher, or because it is a succinctly expressed example of the majority view (for example p 95). This is made clear in the text as I refer to the number(s) of teachers involved.

It could be said that the weakness of my observations, and probably of observations

generally, is that there are usually too few and they are not done frequently enough, but the strength of my study is in the extent to which I have observed over time and that the observations are matched and supported by the interviews.

Some general issues

All six teachers were interviewed in the Summer term 1989 before any observations began, as I wanted to find out how each teacher felt about the impending national curriculum and how prepared she believed she was to deal with it. (see Appendix 1 for list of questions) It was also an opportunity to get to know the teachers and describe to them how I intended that the research would develop. I needed to know the *status quo* as it was, not only for the individual's psychological and emotional approach to change, but also the current practice in her classroom before the ripples of institutional change began to affect it.

In the event, their initial reaction in the weeks leading up to the publication of national documents was one of unanimous dismay. There was a fear that it might be too rigid, that it was something 'dreamed up by experts but the poor teachers had to do it' and that it was a return to the Revised Code. One teacher did, however, remark that it did mean that there would be standardisation, which would be good as children often started off in life with unequal opportunities. Once the documents had begun to be disseminated to schools, all six teachers were reassured that they were not only better than they had thought, but also that they embodied practice which was not very different from their present one. One teacher expressed her misgivings about being able to cover the work in the time allowed, whilst one believed that it could have positive effects and it was up to her to make it work.

To *precis* their feelings at that time, although they were reeling from the amount of information they had to absorb and their INSET days had varied in their usefulness, especially a poor input on English, they were all confident that the requirements matched fairly well with their current practice and, with some tightening up of their record-keeping,

they could cope.

The main task in the Spring term 1990 was to focus on each of the target teachers in both participating schools and collect information by means of interviews and observations. Towards the end of the term (and in one case on the last day of the term) the six teachers were interviewed individually. The list of questions (see Appendix 10) indicates the basis of the interviews, although they were not necessarily used in that order or that particular wording. The aim was to encourage the teachers to give their impressions of how the term had progressed. This proved to be fairly stressful for the three teachers in School B as they had for most of that week been involved in parent-teacher interviews discussing the progress of individual children. As there had also been a grand farewell party in school for the secretary who was retiring after forty-seven years, there had been additional demands on their time, which meant they were tired and looking forward to a break.

With the exception of **BT** the national curriculum had become a significant part of their practice, particularly at the planning stage. The two Year 1 teachers (**BM** and **AM**) were showing the most signs of pressure, especially **BM** when describing the frenetic approach which was a characteristic of her classroom. **BT** seemed unsettled and unresponsive and referred to the 'occasional' awareness of having included the national curriculum in her practice. As one would expect, the training outside school had been concerned mainly with the core areas, particularly science. The teachers had welcomed the county advisers' aiming for breadth across the curriculum and using an approach which was suitable for young children i.e. topic work. There was a strongly positive attitude to the range of activities and all the teachers, apart from **BT** believed it had all been useful and enjoyable. The responses to the question about in-school national curriculum training reflected a difference in management style in the two schools. Although School A took the demands of the national curriculum seriously, local documentation was filtered through the headteacher who acted

upon it or not, according to her assessment of its importance and each teacher was expected to work out her own salvation, whereas the headteacher of School B had a more democratic style in that she had given the ownership of change to the teachers themselves. Both schools were dissatisfied with their records of the children's attainment and intended to update them before the end of the following term.

There seemed to be two major stumbling blocks for the teachers in their response to the difficulties they had encountered during the current term – time and space. It was surprising that they did not include the lack of resources. The need for more adult help in the classroom was an urgent one for these teachers as they were already discovering the impossibility of supervising and assessing more than thirty children whilst keeping to a structured framework. Already some children were spilling over into corridors and libraries to work with parent helpers in both schools, which was a practical response to the immediate problem. However, it takes time to develop a working relationship with a parent to the point where the teacher has implicit trust in his/her abilities. Furthermore, the parent may only be prepared to stay with the class as long as his/her child is a member of it, which was the situation faced by **BR**.

Assessment

Roger Knight, in an article critiquing the SEAC publications 'A guide to teacher assessment' sent to schools in 1990, referred to assessment as the 'new tyranny' in schools. In his view teachers were its servants and children its victims.

Angela Rumbold, on the other hand, interviewed on Radio 1 on 21 March, 1990, believed that teachers would be greatly relieved and reassured when they saw the pilot schemes and would be able to *"scrap some of the sort of rather complicated documents that they've drawn up for themselves in the absence of any other guidance.....I think they have quite genuinely tried to overload themselves."*

Self-inflicted or not, the word 'overload' seemed to be significant where the target teachers were concerned, even in the early days of the first interviews. More recently, both the NUT and the NAS/UWT have urged their members to boycott the government's imposed assessment and testing arrangements and have asked for the support of governing bodies in doing so. Despite an Appeal Court ruling on 23 April 1993 that boycotting the tests was a legitimate trade dispute, John Patten, Education Secretary, reaffirmed that national curriculum testing would still take place. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the NAS/UWT, described the ruling as...

'a scorching victory.....the Government cannot plough on with reform after reform without any regard to the workload they impose upon teachers'.

(The Daily Telegraph 24 April 1993)

Both unions are not opposed to testing in principle, but the NUT, in particular, has campaigned for an alternative approach based on moderated teacher assessment. It was only in the light of growing protest about the 1993 tests that Doug McAvoy, the general secretary of the union, wrote to the Secretary of State calling for them to be suspended. In the ensuing Parliamentary debate, Dame Angela Rumbold described the tests as 'experiments', yet insisted that they should take place, whereas in the same debate, Eric Forth, the Minister for Schools said that...

'testing is designed to ensure that schools are doing their job. That is the object of the exercise. That is the form of testing in which we believe'.

(quoted in a letter to Teacher Governors from Doug McAvoy April 1993)

---an open admission that the tests were not about the educational development of pupils. Against this backdrop it will be interesting to look back at the attitudes of the six teachers in 1989 and how they coped with the increasing workload which ultimately

provoked their colleagues into taking dramatic action.

The Interviews

Preliminary interviews: Summer term 1989

The teachers were responding to the main question about assessment in the first interviews.
(question 9 in Appendix 1)

Question: What do you feel about the testing of seven year olds?

The predominant mode of response (four of the teachers) suggested that, generally, the teachers were taking the view that it was better at this stage to wait and see what kind of tests were going to be presented to them, rather than anticipating government requirements. Two teachers were unhappy about the whole idea....

*'I don't like the idea of it at all' and
Testing him! It's as much as I can do to get him to
write his name'*

and the rest were singular responses ranging from a dismissive attitude pointing out the absurdity of the whole notion of 'testing' young children and the claim that even the so-called experts could not offer any solutions, to the much more positive intention to find out more about the tests, which might, in any case, help teachers to explain their work to parents.

Interviews: Spring term 1990

The teachers were responding to question 9 in Appendix 10.

Question: How do you assess your children at the moment?

This had been intended to mean the process of assessment but all six teachers sometimes talked about record-keeping as assessment. It is not that they were confused as to the meaning of the term but more probably that they saw the two as being concepts which were

inextricably linked. Four of the teachers believed that their own existing records were very useful to them, although it is interesting to note that both headteachers had told me informally that they were not satisfied with their school's methods of assessment or the records of the children's attainment, but they were waiting for more information from the eleven schools in their county which were taking part in the pilot project which was evaluating the administration of the SATs the following term, before producing their own policies. Conversely, two teachers found their own records inadequate. In common with most infant teachers, reading records were kept by the individual teacher as were maths. records to a certain extent. Science records had started in both schools but were acknowledged to be very difficult and time-consuming as they depend on observation on the part of the teacher. There would also seem to be a prevalence of assessment information which was kept 'in their heads'. Interestingly enough, one of the teachers who rejected the whole idea of testing children on the grounds that it led to individuals being 'labelled' early on in their school life, seemed oblivious to the fact that she was herself already doing this, as illustrated by her comments...

The round table near the door is the group I feel needs a lot of help, especially in maths. R. and J. can do fairly good work if they put their minds to it, but they need pushing. M.'s group and T.'s are the high-fliers right across the board.'

In fact, four of the six teachers grouped their children by their ability in maths.

One teacher had developed a successful system of assessment already, which involved the invaluable help of an unpaid ancillary. It involved the teacher and the helper agreeing on the assessment pointers which would be looked for and both of them using the same list to record their comments during an activity. The comments were then kept by the classteacher for use in completing her official records.

Question: How do you feel about assessment in the future?

This question was intended to elicit information about the teachers' reactions to the SATs they would be taking part in the following academic year. Documentation for the pilot project had been carefully guarded, although there was a great deal of speculation and some 'leaks' in spite of the secrecy surrounding it. All six teachers were showing anxiety about future forms of assessment, mainly because they knew very little about it. Not knowing the form it will take they are unable to plan for it. Fears seemed to centre round the time it would take the ordinary classteacher to assess every child in her class properly with all other demands made on her, the impossibility of one person alone completing the task, the questionable fairness of the concept of a 'one-off' test with young children, who are prone to being inconsistent as part of their development pattern and yet great store might be set by their performance on this one occasion.

For example...

'I'm concerned about the time it takes. The mechanics of it. And will it be fair if it's a 'one-off' test? For instance, I tested A. with the magnets and I knew he could do it but on that occasion he didn't. I couldn't believe it. In any case, how do you get round 32 children and test them thoroughly?'

Another area of concern was the degree of precision which might be expected from the results, given the lack of time to carry out the assessment thoroughly. Strong opinions were being expressed about the way in which children can change almost overnight and it was, therefore, difficult to be certain about what they could do. One teacher felt it was all going to be 'humanly impossible' to implement testing, especially as the experts running the INSET courses on assessment did not have any answers to the problems.

Interviews: Autumn term 1990

The purpose of the interviews at this time was to find out about changes in personnel and organisation as it was the start of a new school year. I knew already that some of the teachers

were going to change age-group and those who were not changing would, of course, have different children and I wanted to record the teachers' impressions at an early stage. There was, therefore, very little reference to assessment (see transcript Appendix 6). It did emerge, however, that in School B, **BR** was 'floating' this term and one of her tasks was to develop the school's assessment and recording system for the youngest children, **BM** in her role as maths. co-ordinator was developing the school assessment policy in maths., regularly collecting samples of the children's work and giving them oral tests in maths. She also had sixteen hours a week of ancillary help, taking into account welfare assistants, language support and parent helpers. Having had a very difficult class the previous year she commented on how different she felt having a co-operative and kindly class to work with. **BT** was taking advantage of the presence of a supply teacher on a regular basis to observe the children. In School A, **AR** had attended an assessment course for one afternoon a week during the last six weeks of the previous term, and **AT** had a part-time teacher for one hour a week so that she could observe. Both schools seemed to be taking assessment seriously and being given practical support from the headteachers in the form of supply or part-time hours in order to facilitate observation.

Interviews: Spring term 1991

The interviews this term were sharply focused on teacher assessment (see Appendix 7 for schedule of questions). As this was the case I only interviewed the two Year 2 teachers who were going to be involved in administering SATs later in the term. (**BT** and **AR**) What follows is a summary of their responses to the questions which were specifically concerned with assessment.

Question: How are you assessing your children this term?

BT began the term by looking at all the work done by the children the previous term and checked it against all the ATs covered, recording this inside the covers of their books. This

information was then transferred to a large teacher's record book, but only when there was evidence to support it. She occasionally did a class activity with the specific intention of assessing it. She was also collecting examples of the children's work in the core areas in individual folders.

AR had two sessions during the week when a part-time teacher released her to assess. She also had extra help for a child with special needs and was making full use of this, "when it was not being eroded by one thing or another". This term she was concentrating on measuring and data-handling, (although she admits that it is "more incidental than systematic"), using checklists and aide-memoires which correspond with ATs.

Question: How are you recording your assessments?

BT had a folder for each of the children and was trying to cover maths. ATs with specific activities.e.g.probability. She also tried some direct observation when the class situation allowed it i.e.when a parent was hearing some children read and the rest were working on a class activity.

BR used parental and welfare help to "illuminate and reinforce" her own judgements. For example, she gave them a detailed checklist when they heard children read so that they could be looking for the same specific things. She then discussed this with the helper. She also used a tape-recorder when she was having a discussion session and listening to a child reading. This was in addition to written evidence in the form of children's work.

Both teachers felt that they survived by using their lunch times and breaks to hear readers and check through individual children's work 'even though I know I shouldn't.'

Question: Do you use any ancillary help in the process of assessment?

BT had had no help at all, although she had heard that she was to have a supply teacher

the following week.

'...but I'll believe it when I see it'

AR felt that she had covered all her ancillary support in the previous question.

There was a distinct contrast between the approaches of the two teachers to the task of assessment. It centred mainly on the amount of support they were receiving and the degree to which they felt 'special' because they had a greater burden than the rest of the school. **BT** appeared to be anxious and confused as to what was going to be required of her and how she was going to cope with it, (indeed at a later stage the burden becomes almost too great for her), whereas **AR** had marshalled as much support as she possibly could and organised her own method of maximising it.

Parents were used in School B as part of the assessment process in reading in that the children were encouraged to take their books home so that the parents could hear them read. Cards accompanied the books for the parents to write a short comment on the way in which the child had tackled the book and any specific decoding problems the child had shown. School A had had a general inspection and been told that they should have more of a 'real' books approach which they were beginning to adopt.

Both teachers admitted to being very anxious. **AR** was putting in many hours of work but felt she was getting nowhere. The parallel teacher was proving to be very helpful to her as, in **AR**'s opinion, the former was better organised than she was, although her own haphazard way was more comfortable. She did refer to the appalling class which she had inherited from **AM** and that this was a problem to her especially as it was the first time she had had 'tops' (Year 2). **BT** was finding it difficult to avoid stress. She admitted that she had always found planning and record-keeping difficult, but the parallel teacher had been very

helpful to her. (This teacher was a former secondary school teacher who was retraining for the age-group). Her greatest problem, she felt, was that the Year 1 teacher, **BM**, was always being referred to by the headteacher as the perfect model of planning and **BT** found this very demoralising. Her way of coping was to keep a social life going to take her mind off the problems.

SATs Interviews: June 1991

These interviews took place with both Year 2 teachers after the SATs had been applied in their classes, during which time I had also been observing (for transcripts see Appendices 8 and 9).

Both teachers were of the opinion that one of the problems they faced in implementing the SATs was that of organisation. Even with the reading tests being administered by someone else, both classes had to be reorganised in terms of ancillary help and the general pattern of the day.

'...without a considerable amount of support I don't know how we would have got through them'.

AR and **BT** both claim to have had difficulty in interpreting the criteria of some of the SATs, in spite of eliciting further information from the moderator. The question of the meaning of 'recall' in maths, in particular, seems to have been unclear for both of them.

'In the national curriculum document it isn't stated clearly that it has to be recall although in the SAT it was. If you could see them working it out they couldn't achieve it, which I didn't think was fair. Some could do it, but very, very few.'

A further problem arose for both of them in regard to some of the tests in English and maths. In that ambiguity led to a false picture of the children's ability being reflected in the results. Although both agreed that there were no serious mismatches overall and the SAT

result generally corresponded with their own assessment.

A strong point was made by both teachers in regard to the overuse of time and resources, particularly vast quantities of photocopied sheets. They believed that the SATs had dominated the curriculum and taken much longer than they had expected, with normal teaching being suspended for three weeks. It is interesting that **BT** felt strongly about the level of aggression when her class was out in the playground being due to too much physical inactivity. She spoke quite emotively about the SATs being a waste of time.

'I felt it was such a waste of three weeks which those children will never regain...they've been blighted. I hope it's not severe.'

A related point was made about the way the SATs had overburdened the timetable. Several important areas of the curriculum had to be dispensed with in order to make room for the organisation of the tests. **BT**, especially, became very bored with them herself by the time she had repeated them with each group.

Both, however, believed that the activities had been enjoyable and interesting for the children and generally useful to teachers for future practice. The experience of working at close quarters in a small group seems to have been beneficial for both teacher and children, as some individuals who often deliberately escape the teacher's attention and thereby give a false impression of their ability, are unable to avoid scrutiny in the test situation, for example...

'She scored far higher on the SAT than I had assessed her, simply because in class she never finishes anything. She came out at Level 3 in the science because, working in a small group she couldn't get away with anything. I knew deep down she could do it but now I actually have the evidence'.

The observations

Preliminary unstructured observations: Autumn 1989

As these were scene-setting observations, and not related to assessment at all, they have more significance for the relationship between the teachers and the children. I have, therefore, given a full description of them in the section which examines the quality of interaction between the two.

Observations: Spring term 1990

The aim of these observations was mainly to evaluate the quality of the interaction between the teachers and the children and to monitor the presence of different areas of the curriculum. Of the 46 observations carried out in this term it is difficult to comment on overt assessment as there were no obvious instances of it. The teachers may, indeed, have been assessing the children informally as they moved about the classroom, giving help and suggestions for improvement to the children's work, but it was impossible for me to know this. McCallum et al (1993) encountered a similar difficulty in attempting to elicit detailed, explicit accounts of how teachers made their assessments. It is, of course, a continuous subconscious process which a constant part of a teacher's work, but one which the outsider would find it difficult to identify and of their own admission they kept a great deal of the assessment in their heads. The examples of record-keeping I had been given were in the form of checklists which were completed summatively as information for parents. Any other records were kept by the individual teacher and, therefore, not offered to me for duplication. Both schools were in the process of developing assessment policies, but I was not party to the discussions.

Observations: Autumn term 1990

In the first observation **AR** was discussing a piece of prose she had just read to the class about sizes, after which she moved on to discuss the relative heights of the children. It was clearly an excellent opportunity for her to assess the children's knowledge of this particular

topic, and in fact this was clearly what was happening, although this was not the specific intention of the session as she expressed it to me. Part of the observation in **AM**'s classroom was spent watching the teacher setting a different piece of work for each group in the class, which must have involved some assessment of individual needs beforehand, but there was no actual assessment taking place. **AT** had a parent in her room hearing readers but there was no indication that she had agreed with her to work on specific aspects, as each child seemed to read two or three pages and leave, then another child took her place. The teachers' comments to the children often indicated that they were making 'on the spot' judgments about the children's attainment, e.g. reminding a child that he had done nothing in the last ten minutes. (**AT**). **BM** also made remarks of a more encouraging nature such as 'Well done. That's lovely.' and 'You've worked very hard. Good girl.' She was, again, assessing all the time, but not in a formal sense. **BT** also spent much of the observation checking sums in the children's books as they waited by her desk, or moving round the room from table to table to see where a child needed help to continue with the task. Much of the infant teacher's method of assessment has to be of this kind.

Observations of Teacher Assessment: Spring term 1991

During these eight observations I was closely focusing on the process of teacher assessment solely in both Year 2 classes in the term preceding the SATs. The observation schedule may be seen in Appendix 11. Once I was seated and ready to observe, I again set the scene by describing the adults in the room, the activities which the children were going to be engaged in, the curriculum area (using the officially accepted national curriculum coding e.g. En, Ma, Sc), how the children were grouped and the classroom environment. Throughout the observation I recorded in written form what was being assessed by the teacher, how it was being assessed and the method being used to record it. My attention was also focused on whether the teacher indicated to the children that they were being assessed or if the children themselves realised that they were. I also closely monitored the teacher's awareness of

individual needs and any feedback she gave the children as to their success or failure. Furthermore, I needed to take into account any children who were not being assessed and what was happening to them. Where possible I followed up the observation with a short interview with each teacher to make sure that I had correctly interpreted the events and for her to clarify anything she felt might need further explanation. At this point I was able to find out what would happen to the results of the assessment.

There were three sessions which had deliberately been set up by School B as assessment events, in that part-time supply teachers and ancillary help had been enlisted to work, either with groups, or taking the residue of the class whilst the teacher worked with groups. Any other assessment was incidental and carried out by both teachers in the course of their general questioning and discussion. The rest of the observations were carried out on normal school days when assessment of a less overt type might be taking place.

The first, third and fourth observations in **BT**'s class were not specific assessment sessions. **BT** confirmed that there was no overt assessment taking place, but that she was bearing in mind their responses to her questions as they stood by her side discussing their work. Her questioning was careful and she gave the children positive feedback. She said later that it would be helpful when she came to complete her TA records. I was surprised to find that the Home Corner and the painting table had disappeared from the room since my last visit, the explanation being that the headteacher had suggested it would make more space and avoid having queues round **BT**'s table. During the ensuing observations there were as many as eleven children queueing and never less than six. The follow-up discussion with **BT** after the first observation had to be abandoned as she became very distressed and was clearly under a strain.

In a second observation in her class a few days later she was much more in control and the afternoon had been set up as an assessment session. There were two other adults in the

room, both of whom have groups working on specific tasks. They were recording on pads of paper which are on the table near them. There appeared to be another activity where the children are waiting but were unsupervised. This later turned out to be the responsibility of the welfare assistant who should have been working at the water bowl on some floating and sinking activities, but had been called away to unpack some stationery from County Supplies. **BT** looked annoyed. She herself was monitoring the children's drawing of the soil cycle, although she was not making written notes. The children had been told that they were doing 'special' tasks. All the afternoon's notes would be transferred into the TA records.

After the fourth observation **BT** showed me her completed TAs. She felt that in most cases they matched exactly with her own informal opinions about the children without carrying out any TAs, although she was not absolutely sure that she had done them correctly.

Of the four observations in **AR**'s classroom two were planned as specific assessment events. In the first one the majority of the class was being taken by a part-time teacher whilst **AR** assessed a group in science (the main stages in the human life cycle). She was holding a clipboard on which there was a list of the relevant ATs and took the children out of the room in small groups into the corridor. She later commented that the clipboard must have indicated to the children that they were doing something different. Two children who have not been assessed out of the room were asked to stay behind rather than go into assembly and **AR** chatted to them about their families, making notes on her clipboard as she talked. This information would be transferred to the TA records later.

The second session was a continuation of the same science ATs with the rest of the class. (This was three days later). The same part-time teacher was taking the rest of the class. Again the children being assessed were taken out of the room.

In another observation **AR** sustains a twenty minute discussion about the making of a robot and, although, as she later confirmed, there was no formal assessment taking place, the discussion allowed her to assess their individual knowledge informally. She intended that her positive feedback would encourage them to offer answers even when they were unsure. The final observation took place on the last day of term and, as **AR** was giving out work for the children to take home, there was no assessment. In the interview afterwards she admitted to me that, as time went on she began to realise that there were not going to be any surprises, and if she were short of time, she completed the TAs according to her own knowledge of the child. She also made the point that, if the SATs proved to be very much like the TAs, it would be nonsense to do them again.

It seemed to be the intention to keep the situation as natural as possible in that, either the children not being assessed are working with a teacher they already know (for example in **AR**'s class) or they are engaged in work which is similar to the group being assessed.

As both teachers are very much aware of each child as part of their normal teaching style, I did not detect any difference in their approach to the children as individuals during the periods in question, although there were two girls fighting in **BT**'s class which went unnoticed for some time.

Both teachers gave praise and encouragement as feedback and seemed to be trying to optimise the children's opportunities for success. **BT**, however, also gave negative feedback on three occasions.

SAT observations: Summer term 1991

There were three observations in each of the Year 2 classes. Using a schedule similar to the ones I had used for the TAs, I observed at two or three day intervals over a period of ten days. As before, I described the setting before I began, noting the adults in the room and the

arrangement of the furniture. I then made extensive written notes once the testing began, attempting to write down all the activity and as much of the speech as I could. The teacher and I had agreed that it would not be appropriate to tape the observation as it would be an added pressure on the children.

In **BT**'s classroom, she had set up a SAT station in the shape of a horseshoe with herself in the middle, resting a notepad on her knee. It was positioned in the corner of the room, where all the testing equipment was already prepared, so that the children, in addition to being told by **BT** that they were going to do 'something special', must have known that they were being tested. During the three observations the rest of the class worked in absolute silence throughout the tests. In the first observation, the headteacher supervised seven groups of tables, leaving the children in no doubt by her body language, that they were to remain silent as they worked in their exercise books. There was also a parent helper present who went to children with their hands up. **BT** was assessing three boys and one girl in science (Sc1 L2+3-balancing, floating and sinking). Each child had a small pile of objects on the table in front of him/her as the activity involved predicting which of them would float and sink and then trying them in the bowl of water.

Before the children used these, they had to complete a test involving balances. Looking at my notes at this stage, so far removed from the event, I am still struck by the description of the extent to which the children were bored by the activities. Their facial expressions, yawning and body language conveyed withdrawal and restlessness, unless **BT** was speaking directly to them. Twice the children seemed to be operating on their own private agenda rather than being interested in the task. The balancing test, in particular, did not seem to engage their interest, although they became more lively when they could try out the objects in the water, especially the ones which sank and needed to be retrieved. There was also the difficulty of one child interrupting another with the answer to **BT**'s questions and seeming constantly frustrated that he could not butt in. The whole session took more than double the

allotted time, which was largely due, I think, to the slow responses of one of the children. This ultimately led to **BT** rephrasing questions and prompting him to the point where she was almost teaching him. She herself was clearly trying to relax the children by smiling and telling them not to look so worried.

For the second observation the 'station' was arranged as before, but this time there were four children and the core area was maths. The headteacher had the rest of the class in a corner of the room for quiet discussion. Again she had her notepad on her knee. At first concentration was good, until the rest of the class moved from their discussion to their tables and started working, which seemed to disturb the group being SATted. Once more I was struck by the children's boredom and how, when they are not being directly addressed by **BT**, they played with the equipment in the way they probably would in a more normal situation (making towers with the unifix and looking through the holes to simulate binoculars). This, at one point irritated **BT** as it was distracting the child being questioned, so they had to play more furtively. Once again **BT** had to allow one child three attempts and rephrase the questions for her so that she managed but with a lot of help. The session should have taken half an hour but stretched to fifty minutes.

The third observation again took place at the SAT base. The rest of the class were being supervised by **BM** and welfare assistant. The four children had just completed a maths. task involving piles of counters and were moving on to one which required them to collaborate with one another in order to devise a maths. game. This was eventually abandoned as, in **BT**'s opinion, it had proved too difficult. In my position as an observer it seemed to me that the position of the tables did not lend itself to discussion, nor did the presence of an adult. Once **BT** had left them to come over to talk to me, they began to talk quite freely, although as she had engaged my attention by this time I could not say if they were discussing the task. Her comments to me centred on (a) how hard the SATs were on the rest of the class who had

to keep quiet (b) how great the leap was from the first maths. activity with counters to the collaborative one (c) how exhausted she herself was and (d) how much the children had enjoyed doing the SATs!

In **AR**'s classroom the SAT was a mathematics one-subtraction of money. Three quarters of the class were working with the welfare assistant completing worksheets or writing and drawing about dinosaurs. The tables were grouped as usual and **AR** was sitting at one of them with four children. On the table in front of her there was a box of money, a box of unifix and a checklist. She had a set of sheets in her hand which she gave out to the children. The situation was very much underplayed by **AR**, as she referred to the 'game' they were going to play, carefully explaining and re-explaining the task all the way through, finally allowing two of them to use unifix cubes instead of the money, when it was becoming clear that they were having difficulty with subtracting coins. At one point there was a rising level of noise from the rest of the class, which prompted **AR** to ask the group if they found it distracting, but as they assured her they were not being disturbed, she did not intervene. She seemed very willing to encourage the one girl who was slower than the rest, although she was careful not to affect her performance of the task and congratulated her when she eventually finished. It was clear that **AR** was trying to keep the classroom as normal as possible, adopting her usual friendly, benevolent manner. The children were not under pressure and, although they were not very quick or adept, they were clearly interested in what they were doing.

The second observation, again maths.(mental arithmetic) was not quite as stress-free. The room was as before, with the majority of the class being supervised by the welfare assistant and **AR** was sitting at the same table with six children. The tension arose from the nature of the task as it was prescribed, as **AR** later confirmed, in that the children were told that it was speed rather than accuracy which was important. "*Think, don't count*". If she could tell that they were counting she then passed over them to the next child. We both agreed in our later

discussion that children of this age, especially if they are not taught by rote, find it difficult to make accurate responses to abstract questions at speed. They still need to visualise something inside their heads which they can count. The room was also noisy and probably distracting. However, the setting was natural and the children could not have felt that it was a 'test' situation.

The third observation was very different in that it was a class activity, concentrating on spelling. **AR** had the assistance of the nursery teacher and a welfare assistant. The essence of the task was for the children to write a story, trying for themselves to spell the words they needed, then putting up their hands to ask an adult if it was right. Throughout the observation **AR** was generally encouraging, especially to a child who had special needs, although she firmly reminded children if they were not concentrating. Although it was rather an intensive use of adult help, it was obviously an efficient way of completing the test as all three adults were able to give an immediate response to the children. The two ancillary helpers were also invaluable in sharing with **AR** their information about individual children, during and after the session. As the class is very rarely taught as a whole group, the children must have sensed that it was an unusual occasion.

Conclusion

Assessment, both of a formal and informal nature, was taking place in all six classes throughout the period of the observations. Techniques of discussion and questioning were often used and the resulting information sometimes recorded on checklists or record-books, but in addition there was a great deal of informal information-gathering, the results of which were stored in the memories of the teachers themselves.

Assessment in the form of SATs was not a problem in itself, in that the activities were interesting, but the size of the class, adequate supplementary help from other adults in the classroom and the presence in the class of children with learning difficulties all had a bearing

on the extent to which the assessment went smoothly. Abbott et al (1994) point out that the 1991 SAT Sc 1 (Floating and Sinking), later to be abandoned, and Ma 3 were both vulnerable to variations of this kind and, therefore, difficult to standardise. Further concerns have been raised (Davies and Brember 1994) about the reliability of the mathematical SAT as a result of comparison between children's performances in this and a standardised NFER test for 7 year olds, where there was a range of higher scores in the NFER tests.

In the early stages of the SATs there was some anxiety on the part of the six teachers that the scores might vary in some degree from the teachers' own assessment. Shorrocks (1993) has commented on the fact that there were considerable discrepancies in the two sets of scores, but this did not turn out to be the case in the two research schools, where there was a close correlation between the two processes. Apart from some initial problems of potential misinterpretation of the tests by the teachers, and some anomalies in minor aspects of some tests concerning the performance of individual children, the overall results matched well with the teachers' expectations.

Relationships between teachers and children

One of the legacies of the child-centred ideology which grew during the period following the second world war, is the belief that teachers must make good relationships with their pupils and 'know' them well. It is on the basis of this that children learn most successfully and develop as confident individuals. Schulz (1983) puts it thus...

...the teacher will need to come to know the children in the classroom well. This will require a commitment on the part of the teacher to a learning environment whereby meaningful relationships with the students are developed, based on caring and concern, mutual trust and openness, along with a willingness to learn about children from children'.

(p.63)

In his view, a personal relationship such as this will allow the teacher to listen, and thus learn to provide a climate where children will develop the necessary skills for personal growth and self-mastery. The Plowden Report (op.cit.) concluded that there is a high level of anxiety amongst children, especially girls, who have 'obsessional' teachers as opposed to 'permissive' ones. Moreover, there was a greater incidence of isolates in their classes. Ginott (1972) is concerned that the way in which teachers respond to children is of decisive importance, in that their language can often convey rejection. Teachers must be made aware of the extent to which they can affect a child's self-esteem and work on developing a quality of process which conveys acceptance. He describes what he calls the 'insanities' teachers so insidiously hide in their everyday speech, techniques which brutalise, vulgarise and dehumanise children, such as..

'blaming and shaming, preaching and moralising, ordering and bossing, admonishing and accusing, ridiculing and belittling, threatening and bribing, diagnosing and prognosing'.

(p.82)

It is true that teachers have a unique power to affect a child's life for better or worse and

the influence of a good teacher can stay firmly rooted in one's memory. Woods (1979), in his ethnographic study of a secondary school, found that when a teacher was considered to be 'good' by the pupils he interviewed, it was not so much that she made the subject interesting, but that she was quiet and kept control without having to raise her voice. Woods then asks if that is the secret of winning everybody's respect, to which the girl replies that *'We all get on very well with her. Mrs. N. just has to stand there and the room fills with her personality'*. Few teachers are blessed with this kind of charisma, but it makes the point that merely transmitting the subject matter is not the most important prerequisite in good teaching. Humour is also an element which is prized by the children interviewed by Woods, along with fairness. Bennett (op.cit.) refers to evidence from observational studies (Rosenshine and Furst 1973) and (Dunkin and Biddle 1974) which showed a correlation between pupil gain and the teacher's warmth and enthusiasm, although from his own study, Bennett concluded that, not only was informal teaching more of a rarity than had been claimed by Plowden, but also that a formal teaching style led to better progress in maths. and English, albeit it of a mechanical kind. Tizard (1988) concluded that infant school classrooms were business-like places where the most common type of teacher behaviour was 'task-teach' i.e. explaining, communicating facts etc. In fact, social and personal contacts between teachers and children were observed in less than one per cent of all Tizard's observations, which, as she points out herself, runs counter to Rosenshine's research, although she offers no explanation for this. Pollard (1993) refers to the *'warm, informal relations which many teachers have seen as lying at the heart of good, English primary school practice'* and how he found in the PACE project in 1990 that 21 per cent of the teachers interviewed said, not only had there been no change in their teacher-pupil relations, but that they would *'hotly defend their existing relationship with the children against any outside influences, since it was of such central importance to the teaching/learning process'*. The crucial point seems to be that there must be structure and content albeit that the style of delivery is relaxed and caring. A warm relationship based on mutual respect appears to be a critical factor whatever the age of the pupil, but the question is to what extent institutional features impact in a negative way on the

teachers themselves and are mediated through them to the pupils.

The interviews

Preliminary interviews: Summer term 1989

All six teachers were interviewed this term (see Appendix 1) before any observations began so that I could get to know them and their apprehensions, if any, about the potential changes in their classroom relationships. As they had all volunteered to take part in the research, and they were all experienced teachers, I was expecting a certain amount of confidence from them.

Question: How important to you is your relationship with your class?

All six of the teachers stressed the importance of a good relationship with each child, giving reasons such as '*it helped to get the best out of them*', it led to more understanding of children with special needs, and '*at this age you're a surrogate mother*', although **BM** added the reminder that, ultimately, she was there to teach them and she could not right the wrongs of the world.

*'Sometimes I do feel sorry for them but it's for their own good
that they get on with it.'*

Question: Do you think this will change?

All six teachers felt that the national curriculum would create pressure on them in that they would have to please so many masters, especially during assessment. Five of them believed that it was up to them to protect the children from this pressure as it was unfair that they should be affected. **BT** was afraid that ...

*'We may lose some of the nice things, like chatting informally
whilst the children are painting or sticking'*

whereas **BM** did not see her role as that of protector and felt that it was inevitable that the relationship might change.

'I mean when you're coming up to assessment, what happens if a child is sick or upset? You can't say 'sorry he didn't do this bit'. If the pressure is on us it'll be transferred to the children, it must be.'

In the event she was right, as observations in her class were to demonstrate later.

Interviews: Spring term 1990 (see Appendix 10 for questions)

The aim was to find out whether the teachers themselves had noted any change in the quality of their relationships with the children. As I was observing in their classrooms shortly after this I was interested to see if their opinions would be borne out by my recording of events.

Question: Do you think your relationship with the children has changed this term?

Five of the teachers were quite sure that the changes happening all round them had not had much impact on their rapport with the children in their classes, although they felt pressurised themselves. **BT**, however, was equally sure that her relationship was suffering.

'I feel under pressure to account for every minute which means that I get irritable with the children, I think. There's a lot less time for fun.'

Subsequent observations in her class did not indicate that this was the case, in spite of having some very disruptive boys in her class, but the significant thing may be that she felt that she was more irritable.

Interviews: Autumn term 1990

As this was the start of a new academic year, the children in each class were different from

the previous year. **BM** and **BT** had stayed in the same classroom and received children of the same age-group as before, whereas **BR** was without a class as numbers in the new intake did not warrant having two reception teachers and she was, therefore, performing a variety of roles to support the headteacher. All three teachers in School A had not only moved to different classrooms, but also changed age-group. I wanted to find out the teacher's first impressions of the new class so that I could, at a later stage, discover how their relationship had developed. It would also be interesting to see if the teacher herself changed as she responded to a different group of children.

Question: What are your first impressions of the new class?

In School A, **AT** seemed pleased with the new class, although she recognised that *'one or two boys were potentially difficult'*. Her main concern was in regard to her own expectations of the children as she had had 'tops' for seven years and was not used to the shorter concentration span of five year olds. In addition they were of mixed ability and she could foresee a problem in fitting in the national curriculum. **AM** was delighted with her class as they were physically smaller than she had been accustomed to and there were fewer of them. This meant that there was more space and she could have more active learning. **AR** was disappointed in her class as she found they were *'not well trained'*. She claimed to be spending too much time teaching the boys basic skills which they should have learned the previous year, but did acknowledge that perhaps her expectations were too high.

A similar claim was made by **BT** in that she found her new class *'very definitely immature and lacking in the basic skills'*. It is interesting that she noted as a 'problem' a boy who had just joined the school and come into her class. He had, in fact, come from **AM**'s class in School A. **BM** showed the most dramatic change in her comments and attitude in that she was struck by *'how co-operative and kindly they are'* and how well they had settled considering that they had come from a large unit. She went on to describe the difference in herself and the atmosphere in general now that she no longer had the previous year's class

with its contingent of very difficult individual children. Later observations were to bear out that there had, indeed, been a most marked change in her.

At the start of the year the signs were hopeful that children and teachers had struck up a rapport, which would enable them to form the strong working relationship they would need, not only to meet the demands of the national curriculum, but for some of them, stringent assessment later in the year.

Interviews: Spring term 1991

As this was the term during which teacher assessment would be taking place, the questions in these interviews were focusing almost solely on assessment. Furthermore, the questions were addressed only to the two Year 2 teachers (**BT** and **AR**) as they were the only ones who would be involved. The final question on the list (see Appendix 7) was intended to elicit any general feelings of stress from whatever source and how the individual teacher was coping with it, rather than being specific as to its effect on the children.

Question: How are you avoiding stress in your job e.g.using deliberate strategies such as careful planning and hard work, or are there incidental factors such as supportive colleagues, an effective headteacher or your own personality?

BT was sure that she was not avoiding stress and cites, as the source, **BM** who is always being '*held up as the perfect model and I find it very demoralising.*' In her case the answer to alleviating stress was '*to keep a social life going to keep my mind off all this.*' **AR** was more positive in that she deliberately planned carefully, but still felt that she was '*putting in a lot of hours but I feel I'm getting nowhere*'. She admitted to worrying more than usual but offset this by reminding herself that they were '*an appalling class anyway*'.

At this point in the term, both teachers were looking anxious. **BT**, in particular was near

to tears as she talked about being overshadowed by **BM** whose merits were frequently endorsed by the headteacher, something which I had observed informally in the staffroom. This was obviously undermining **BT** at a time in the term when she was under considerable pressure. **AR** was uncharacteristically depressed and tired, although she seemed to be saying that most of this was due to her misfortune in having a difficult class.

SATs Interviews: June 1991

These were again carried out with **BT** and **AR** as they were the only teachers implementing the SATs. The main purpose of my questions was to discover if the teachers had encountered any problems with the tests themselves, and as such, there is no specific question about the teacher's relationship with the children. However, as we talked it emerged that both teachers, although they believed that their relationship with the children had not worsened, were of the opinion that the children themselves had shown signs of stress from time to time. As **BT** said...

'By the middle of the second week, the noise level outside that room was horrendous. It was as if they had exploded. The behaviour had certainly worsened and aggression increased'.

whilst **AR** added...

'When they were struggling and you couldn't tell them if they were right or wrong, they looked a bit stressed. You could feel the strain there'.

..and went on to say that she did not think there had been any advantages in the SATs for the children at all, in spite of the activities themselves being interesting and enjoyable.

Both teachers felt that they had been unfortunate in having difficult classes. **BT** described her class as *' nice kids as individuals, but they can be quite nasty to one another. As a*

group they just don't work together. It isn't a group.' She was uncertain how much of this could be attributed to their having to complete the SATs and how much of her own anxiety had transferred itself to them. Her final appraisal of the situation seemed to be that the class was a group which probably would never have 'gelled', but the tests had not helped.

There was undoubtedly a great deal of strain on both teachers at this time, and, as professionals of some years' experience, it cannot have been the first time they have had difficult classes. It seems reasonable to suggest that their own tension could have been transmitted to the children from a very early stage and that this was one of the factors in their failure to 'gell' in **BT**'s class. For **AR**, the supreme diplomat, whose classroom had, in earlier observations been the epitome of peace and gentleness, to admit that her children were 'appalling' and showing signs of stress, must point to a measure of anxiety in her, as she subjects them to a ritual she quite clearly does not believe in.

The observations

Preliminary unstructured observations: Autumn 1989

These were descriptive pieces which helped me to become familiar with the setting in which I would be working. I felt that it would also save some time during the later structured observations, enabling me to be less distracted by specific features in the room at the same time serving to set the scene for the research. It was helpful in that it indicated to me the way in which each teacher organised her activities and her mode of interaction with the children. **AR**, for example, had a variety of small group activities, the supervision of which she shared with a Language Support teacher, a welfare assistant for a special needs child and a work experience student. The atmosphere was calm and busy in spite of the fact that the children chatted freely to one another and **AR**'s demeanour was kindly and helpful. By contrast,

AM's classroom was very noisy, a fact which she puts down to the predominance of boys in the class, although during the observation the disruptive behaviour emanated from groups of girls. There were varied activities, mostly at floor level, most of which were chosen by the children themselves as they had finished their given tasks during the morning. Throughout the observation **AM** calmly heard nine children read whilst simultaneously dealing with arguments erupting from the various groups and responding to children who came up to her to show her models they had made. Her composure amid the general *melee* was admirable. **AT**'s classroom was also arranged into groups, although four out of the five were working at the same task. There was a busy, pleasant atmosphere in the room and **AT** gave individual help and encouragement. Most of the time I was unable to hear her voice as she spoke in a whisper to the children. All three rooms were full of attractive displays of the children's work.

In School B, observing in **BR**'s classroom, I was struck by the teacher/child ratio. There were five adults to sixteen children and an additional four fourth year junior children who came regularly to work with the class. **BR**'s interaction with the children was friendly and instructive as she moved about the activities or worked with a group of emergent writers. **BM**'s children were also grouped and working on a variety of activities although she was alone in the room. The pleasant atmosphere was regularly broken by her constant engagement with a particular boy who did not settle to any of the tasks and needed her attention much of the time. She later explained to me that, although he might appear to be naughty and deliberately disruptive, he suffered from a disability which actually prevented him from concentrating on anything for more than a few minutes, which is why she constantly needed to remind him of the task in hand. She was brisk and helpful as she kept the children motivated. **BT** was assisted by a work experience student who accompanied children out of the room to look for reference books. The observation began with ten minutes of silent reading followed by group work. There was a pleasant atmosphere and **BT** was encouraging and helpful as she moved about the groups, until a disagreement broke out

between two boys, when she became very cross.

There are three critical factors which seem to me to influence the success of any activity in the infant classroom, as illustrated by these early observations. One is the number of children in the class, one is the number of adults in the class and another is the presence of individual children who for one reason or another have special needs. All six teachers in the observations had differing experiences even though the provision in each case was appropriate for the age-group and they had planned a variety of stimulating activities. Five of them smiled a great deal when engaging with the children; **BM** seemed generally positive in her manner and comments to most of the children, but it was clear that she was very tense because of the boy who demanded more of her attention.

Observations: Spring term 1990

Throughout these observations I had been closely monitoring the kinds of interaction the six teachers were having with the children, using the coding system previously described. During the seven observations carried out in **AT**'s class, she interacted with the children constantly, putting her hands on their shoulders or crouching down to their level. She was gentle and kindly towards them, rarely raising her voice above a murmur. Her classroom was peaceful yet busy as the children moved about freely looking purposeful and unflustered. All her codings were positive ones, (see Chapter Three for a detailed account of how I identified positive and negative interactions) with the exception of two negatives on one occasion, for example when she was reacting to what she considered to be undue noise and had to raise her voice and remind the class to be quiet, and on a later occasion when her patience was being stretched to the limit by two of the more immature boys and she was obliged to reprimand them sharply for their disruptive behaviour. She had three negative codings relating to this, making five in all.

AM, by her own and the head's admission, had a very difficult class, mainly boys who were disruptive and noisy. This meant that in spite of the fact that her manner and language used towards the children was helpful, smiling and patient, her codings were mainly negative, as she was constantly being pushed to the limit by the children's bickering and restlessness. Her children often came in from the playground in varying states of distress which she would have to deal with before work could start; on one occasion, for example, it was six minutes before she could quell the disturbance. There is one observation which was difficult and unhappy for everyone concerned, during which time **AM** amassed twelve negative codings in addition to saying 'shh' thirteen times. She was clearly stressed and miserable during an incident involving a boy who refused to sit down and start his work. Having removed his chair, which caused him to howl and hurl abuse at her, she returned the chair as he was upsetting the rest of the class. He then went under the table and spent several minutes shooting crayons across the floor. During the whole of this observation **AM** never once raised her voice, but sounded very tired and at the end of her tether. During the nine observations which took place in her classroom, she had twenty-three negative codings and six positive ones, but it must be said that the children were relentless in the demands they made on her and the situation in the classroom was an extremely stressful one, despite her attempts to provide interesting activities. In the circumstances, **AM** showed great patience.

There were eight observations in **AR**'s classroom. Her room was peaceful, the children's work structured and her demeanour extremely gentle and pleasant. She ultimately has a total of forty positive codings and three negative ones, which points to the fact that, not only has she great skill in dealing with the age-group, but also that the children are a most amenable group.

BT acknowledged in her interview at this time that she felt more under pressure to '*accomplish things*' and was, therefore, more irritable with the children. Eight observations took place in her classroom, and although she eventually had a total of eleven negative and

five positive codings, six of the former had been earned by the same boy. The class in general was not difficult to manage, but there was a group of very disruptive boys, to whom this particular boy was something of a role model. **BT** often found his behaviour frustrating. Another occasion worthy of note was when the headteacher entered the room and she and **BT** had a quiet conversation, after which **BT** was very snappy with the children once the head had left. Her general demeanour usually was pensive (e.g. *'I don't really feel I can cope with them today'* or matter-of-fact rather than predominantly cross or smiling, even to her style of classroom management, in that she more often than not remained seated on the chair at her table, whilst the children brought their work to her, thus forming a queue of up to seven children at one time whilst she dealt with them individually. It contrasted with the other five teachers who constantly moved from group to group providing frequent interaction. On two occasions she had set up the work for the children so that she could prepare materials for another group who were waiting quietly in their seats, thereby reducing her opportunities for interacting with the class.

Out of the eight observations in **BM**'s room, there emerged a total of thirty-five negative codings and eighteen positive ones. It must be remembered that she had a class in which there were some very difficult individual children. Many of her negative remarks are addressed to three boys in particular who repeatedly strayed 'off task'. There is one observation which is worthy of note as it accumulated twelve negative codings all of which were directed at these same three boys, who in twenty minutes had made very little progress with a task which the rest of the class had almost completed. **BM**'s style of classroom control involved the use of her voice as a constant reminder of the shortness of time and the need to 'get on', to the point where she talked continuously, even throughout a period of sustained silent reading. When any child needed kindness and sympathy, however, even in the midst of chaos she immediately gave it her full attention, in spite of the fact that she was angry and flustered at the time.

Throughout the six observations in **BR**'s classroom, she accumulated a total of twenty-four positive codings and ten negative ones. Her negative score often equated to facial expressions of disapproval or the child's name being spoken in a disappointed way. (e.g. when she asks for children with white vests to line up and two boys with blue vests stand up). She never raised her voice or looked angry and in general the relationships in her classroom between all adult helpers and children were open and warm. **BR** usually spoke quietly and intimately to any child who approached her and showed great sensitivity towards a distressed child on one occasion stroking her hair and gently wiping away the girl's tears with her fingers. Some of the children are not yet five years old and it is obvious that the team in **BR**'s class have the children's care and welfare needs as a priority as well as providing a stimulating learning environment. Schulz (op.cit.) stresses the importance of this kind of interaction with children.

'When we attend, we do so both physically and psychologically. We strive to 'be with' the child fully by looking at him or her, facing and receptively leaning towards the child, as well as through our non-verbal signals'.

(p.87)

It is not easy to sum up a complex network of relationships and feel confident that one could reach any firm conclusions. Human activity of any sort is difficult to monitor, particularly in institutional settings which have developed their own individual culture, as schools are apt to do. All one can do is to identify some threads of consistency in the teachers' behaviour. **BM**, with the highest number of negative codings, is generally talkative and anxious in her dealings with adults out of the classroom which might make it difficult to be sure that it is the classroom setting which is causing her tension. Moreover, many of the children in both schools were extremely problematic in that they were noisy and hard to motivate, to the extent that I, as an observer, and an experienced teacher-trainer, was astonished at the teachers' self-control and forbearance. The age of the children also has a

bearing on the teacher's manner in that it seemed that the youngest children enjoyed the closest relationship with their teachers, who took great pains to preserve the quality of the interaction.

Observations: Autumn term 1990

As **BR** was without a class this term there was no observation of her teaching. I returned to semi-structured observations of the remaining five teachers, using a number of foci, one of which was relationships.

BM, who had the same age-group as the previous year, was observed for one continuous hour with her new class. Her style of relating to the children was, as it was before, one of overt commentary with hardly a pause, but this time her comments were all positive. e.g. *'Good girl. That's splendid!'* and *'You've really listened. Good boy'*. There was no sign of her former anxiety as she congratulated children on their work and explained the task patiently to a boy who had not understood. The children chatted happily and approached her confidently when they need help. Her one remark which could be construed as negative was to remind a girl that it was dangerous to put a pencil in her mouth, but even this was said kindly.

BT, also observed for an unbroken hour, was clearly under stress, although she smiled on two occasions, once when she spoke to the Language Support Teacher and once more when she was reading a boy's work with him. Although on this occasion she moved about the room she was followed by a queue of up to five children who wanted her to look at their work. She seemed to be suppressing anger when talking to the children and one boy, in particular, caused her to be cross enough to remove his chair and put it on the other side of the room, with the comment *'Right. We'll take that away as you can't sit on it.'* The children generally appeared to be absorbed in what they were doing and, apart from a busy hum and some chatter, there was no disruptive behaviour.

AR's room was a pleasant place to be observing in as she was relaxed and smiling throughout the forty minutes I was there. She respected each child's answer to her questions and gave praise to those who were prepared to try. At one point, when two boys were being a nuisance, **AR** merely had to stare at them for a moment and they stopped. Apart from this, the class was completely absorbed in the discussion and listened intently to **AR's** reading of a piece of prose.

AM's matter-of-fact style of interacting with the children in this observation is in direct contrast to her dispirited response to her class's frenetic behaviour the previous year. The observation lasted an hour during which time she no longer looked or sounded tired and the atmosphere in the room was busy but calm. She conducted a discussion, about the visit from a falconer the previous day, looking relaxed and attentively listening to each child's answer to her questions. When the children had settled down to some group activities, she was able, without interruptions, to walk round the tables, giving help and directing the children in a brisk, cheerful manner. The Language Support Teacher was also in the room.

AT showed a range of positive behaviour during her observation which lasted an hour. The atmosphere in her room was calm, controlled and busy as she moved between two of the tables where children were engaged in writing activities. At one point she was able to spend three minutes talking to an Asian boy who receives help with his English, later sharing a joke with one of the girls. All her comments were kind and encouraging e.g. *'Well done. You've worked really hard.'* apart from one instance when she pointed out to a boy that he had done nothing in the last ten minutes. She also had an adult in the room who was hearing readers.

Each observation on its own, being one hour and therefore too short to allow definitive comment, nevertheless can be seen in the context of a series of observations and interviews which are cumulative over time and lead to a broader picture of each teacher. These, in

particular, are further illustrations of the difference made by the presence of another helper in the classroom and the nature of the group of children. **AM** and **BM**, for example, were certainly adversely affected by the particular classes they had the previous year and, once they were in different circumstances, they were almost unrecognisable as the same teachers. They and **BT** also clearly benefited from the presence of another adult to lighten the load, which in its turn must help them to keep a sense of equilibrium.

Observations of Teacher Assessment: Spring term 1991

This term I observed using a list of assessment pointers (see list in Appendix 9). Although the purpose of these eight observations was to focus on the process of teacher assessment, I was able to use two of the assessment pointers to serve a dual purpose i.e. those relating to the teacher's awareness of individual needs and feedback I could use to assess the interaction also taking place. The observations were only carried out in the classrooms of **BT** and **AR** as they were the only ones doing Teacher Assessment.

The first observation in **BT**'s class lasted forty minutes, during which time she was endeavouring to give individual feedback on a science task. She was painstaking in the amount of time she gave to each child, which led to a queue of eleven children forming at her side. She seemed angry with the class, ringing a handbell from time to time and shouting, often calling a child to come to sit by her on the floor. There was a welfare assistant in the room but both she and **BT** seemed unaware that two girls had been fighting on the carpet for some time. The follow-up discussion I had planned for myself and **BT** had to be abandoned as she became too distressed to talk about assessment. Henderson (1979) describes this type of teacher stress as 'burnout'...

*'The teacher feels guilty, incompetent as an educator and finally inadequate as a person. This, of course, affects her personal relationships. If unchecked, burnout can result in total emotional breakdown'.
(p.37)*

The second observation lasted one hour and twenty minutes, during which time the children were engaged in a variety of group activities supervised by three adults as well as **BT**. The session did not begin well as one of the groups was kept waiting for the welfare assistant to arrive, which annoyed **BT**, but it later became busy and productive. **BT** moved round the room for some of the time, giving useful feedback, but once she stood by her table she gathered the inevitable queue of nine children. In the follow-up discussion, **BT** explained that the whole afternoon had been set up as an assessment session and she was annoyed that one of her helpers had been called away, thereby delaying her plans.

In the third observation, which lasted fifty-minutes, the session began with a discussion on the carpet, after which the children moved into group activities. It was a busy afternoon during which the children worked with concentration, apart from the constant queue waiting by **BT**'s table as she tried to give feedback on their work one by one. On this occasion she seemed calm and kindly disposed towards the children. The fact that there was no other adult helper in the room did not seem to affect her demeanour, although she told me afterwards that she found it very difficult to assess when she was on her own.

The fourth observation lasted thirty-five minutes and there was a parent in the room hearing some readers. **BT** was unruffled in the beginning, but became very angry when one of the girls was seen to be crying because the boy next to her had been calling her names. **BT** strode across the room in a determined way, took hold of the boy by the hand and sat him down at an empty table. She shouted at him, which caused him to cry and the rest of the class to fall silent. Having left him there, **BT** was now flustered and, leaning over a girl, she reprimanded her for the '*horrid scribble*' she had done in her Easter card. The rest of her interactions were fairly equable once she had calmed down and she dealt with ten more children who approached her needing a response to their work.

BT was nervy and tense this term for reasons already explained. It was not so much a question of having to complete the assessment as the fact that she felt unsupported during this time. She was much more effective in the classroom and less negative towards the children when she had at least one other adult in the room. This was particularly important as there were some children in the class who needed a teacher's attention at all times.

The first observation in **AR**'s class lasted twenty-five minutes and was an example of her excellent motivational skills. She managed to use a robot made by four of the boys in order to encourage the children to hypothesise about the suitability of the techniques the boys had used, at the same time feeding in the correct terminology. Any attempt to answer was treated with respect and the children, therefore, were not afraid to offer suggestions even though they might be unsure.

The second observation was an example of carefully laid plans going wrong. The assessment session set up by **AR**, designed to last an hour, in which a part-time teacher would take the class so that **AR** could withdraw a group for assessment, petered out as assembly was cancelled and, as **AR** had sent the teacher to have a coffee break, she was left with the whole class and was unable to complete her assessment. At this point the computer printer jammed and she spent several minutes trying to rectify it. Her parting comment was *'It's a classic. The computer always chooses to go wrong when there are twenty-eight children milling around'*, but in the event she remained unflustered and the children were calmly given instructions to get ready for play whilst she dealt with the problem.

The third observation which lasted forty-five minutes, was an attempt by **AR** to complete the science assessment she had begun on the previous occasion. As before she was taking the children out of the classroom one by one as the rest were being taught by a part-time teacher. It was clear that **AR** was being very careful to keep some kind of continuity for the rest of the

class, and reinforcing her relationship with them, by commenting on their work in a positive way whenever she brought a child back into the room and lingering to look at what they were doing. She also led each child out of the room by the hand, chatting as they went.

The final observation being on the last day of the school term consisted simply of **AR** handing out models and paintings etc. which the children had done and were now allowed to take home. It was potentially a boring episode for the children and one where they could easily have become unsettled, but they were very quiet and attentive throughout the half-hour. They appear to have been transformed from the '*appalling class*' described by **AR** at the beginning of the year and much of this must be due to her undoubted ability to form a warm relationship with them, in which there is also a high expectation of good behaviour. She did not dominate the children or raise her voice, but provided a situation in which the children felt their contribution was valued. Nothing was hurried and each child was given time to develop at his/her own pace.

SAT observations: Summer term 1991

There were three observations in each of the Year 2 classes, keeping to a schedule similar to the one used for the TAs. I observed at two or three day intervals over a period of ten days. The settings for the observations have been described in detail in the previous section. The main purpose was to look closely at the administering of the SATs, but the demeanour of both teachers would also gain my attention.

In the first observation **BT** was clearly trying to put the children at their ease when they were being tested, as she smiled and actually told them at one point that they must not worry. One of the children, whose responses proved to be slower than the rest, was given much more time than the others in the group and **BT** rephrased the questions more than once, to the extent that she was almost prompting him. The children themselves were conveying boredom by yawning and being restless.

In the second observation the children were again bored, a situation which they tried to ameliorate by playing with the equipment. This proved to be a distraction for the child being questioned, who was squirming and blushing because she could not answer correctly. The distracting behaviour irritated **BT**, and she became cross with the rest of the group just for a moment, then immediately turned her attention back to the girl, giving her three tries at the problem.

In the final observation, the task was abandoned by **BT** because she believed it to be too difficult, as the children proved to be unable to collaborate enough with one another to complete it. Once they had realised that they were to be allowed to stop, they began to chatter happily.

There was an interesting difference in the way **BT** had interpreted the level of the children's involvement in the activities, (*'The children have really enjoyed doing the SATs'*) and the way in which the children's body language had been signalling their lack of involvement. Perhaps it was because they were not misbehaving or talking, or simply that **BT** was so engrossed with the individual child being tested that she was unaware of the others' detachment.

During the first observation in **AR**'s classroom, it is obvious that she had tried to keep the situation as normal as possible, in that the rest of the class was working in its usual groups and she was playing the 'game' with one of them. When the noise level rose in the room, **AR** asked the group if it was bothering them and when they assured her that it was not, she did not interject. She showed willingness to encourage the one child who was slower than the rest, but did not help her at all, waiting until she had finished and then congratulating her. The children showed no signs of being under pressure and were clearly interested in the activities. **AR** remained her usual benign self.

The second observation was more tense. This may have been partly because the setting, being 'natural' was becoming increasingly noisy and possibly distracting the group. It was due more to the nature of the task as it was prescribed, as **AR** was obliged to pass over any child who could be seen to be counting rather than making an immediate response. This would be in direct contrast with **AR**'s usual style of interaction with the children, as she confirmed later. It was obvious that both she and the children were becoming flustered as they were relating in a way which was strange to them.

The third observation was very different in that it was a whole class situation. **AR** showed firmness as she knew that the assessment had to be completed, reminding children to 'get on', but at the same time she was always kindly and encouraging in her manner, she frequently used the child's name and injected humour into the situation. There was one boy who was having difficulties and she paid him particular attention, kneeling down beside him and ruffling his hair affectionately as she smiled at something he had said. She smiled a great deal and at one point, she turned to the other adult in the room and said '*They are doing well, aren't they, Mrs.T..?*' The children were relaxed and busy in spite of the fact that the formality of the situation was of a kind they were not used to, and could have been intimidating.

AR, like **BT**, had adopted a style of interaction during these observations which was meant to relax the children, almost to protect them from the test situation. They would naturally want them to do well, partly because it would reflect on their own teaching possibly, but there was also a keenness to make the episode an enjoyable one and for the children to be given every opportunity to show themselves in the best light. If there was any tension in either of the teachers it could be traced to the same source, that is the need, as they saw it, to shield the children from anxiety, a phenomenon which is reflected in the teachers'

comments in the PACE project.

The teachers themselves believed at the beginning of the Spring term 1990, that their relationship with the children had not changed, nor would it. In general this could be said to be the case. Looking at each of them over the two-year period, which, of course, includes a change of class for all of them, **AT** managed to maintain an atmosphere in the class which was busy, yet pleasant and peaceful throughout, whilst she herself remained kindly and helpful, rarely having to raise her voice above a whisper. **AM**, in the first year, in spite of having an extremely difficult class who argued, were very noisy and kept up a constant stream of demands on her, most of the time remained patient and composed. It is hard to believe that the children were achieving their potential in such a situation. In the second year, with a different type of class, she was brisk and cheerful and the class was calm and happy. **AR** was consistently unflustered and both of her classes were motivated and self-controlled. She managed to sustain her calmness through all the observations including the SATs, with only a fleeting display of tension when she felt that the test was inhibiting the children from giving a good account of themselves.

BT began the first year by being friendly and encouraging to the class, where there was a calm, busy atmosphere. By the end of that year she was showing signs of strain, and although there was still a good working atmosphere, one group of boys was causing **BT** to lose her temper. The change of class the following year found her even more stressed, especially during teacher assessment, even though the class was well disposed to work. During the SATs observations, however, she reverted to her initial pleasant, helpful mode of interacting. **BM** started the first year by being pleasant and encouraging, in spite of having a difficult class. Later in the year she showed signs of stress as, although the work she set for the class was always challenging, there was a group of boys who stretched her patience to the limit. With a different class the following year, she was very positive in her relationships and the class was chatty and confident. **BR**, although it must be remembered that she

participated in fewer observations as she was 'floating' for a term, was consistently unruffled and kindly. It is interesting to note the differences in **AM** and **BM** in the second year. Once the setting had changed and they found themselves with a more amenable group of children, there was a marked difference in their levels of stress. Good relationships of an ongoing, constructive kind, continued throughout the two years of fieldwork and, if anything, the teachers tended to shield the children and absorb the pressure themselves. The temporary deterioration experienced by **BT** was not due simply to the national curriculum and its assessment, but more, perhaps, to the dynamics of change within the school, and the effects on her of psychological pressure.

There is no doubt that children learn more successfully in a positive atmosphere, where there is less emphasis on punishment and critical control. The Junior School Project (ILEA 1985) provided confirmation of this in a four-year study of 50 primary schools. It concluded furthermore, that....

'The teachers' attitudes to their pupils was also important. Good effects resulted where teachers obviously enjoyed teaching their pupils. Their interest in the children as individuals, not just as pupils, was also valuable'.

(p.18)

The project also showed that the working conditions of the teachers, particularly the attitude of the head, contributed to the creation of a positive school climate. If there is negative pressure from the top, it seems it will be passed down to the children indirectly.

BT, who felt undervalued and, possibly, undermined by her headteacher, began to perform less well in her classroom during the second year, even though she had an amenable class, whereas **BM**, who, on the surface, appeared to be a naturally tense and anxious person, coped very well, both in her delivery of the curriculum and maintaining a positive

working ethos, because she knew she was strongly approved of by the headteacher. **BR** had neither the pressure of the national curriculum nor anxiety about the lack of support from the headteacher to worry her and she could, therefore, continue to be calm and relaxed with the children.

In School A, where there were children as difficult as one could find in an infant school, all three teachers coped remarkably well. **AM** stood her ground where many a teacher could have resorted to very negative behaviour, **AT** remained a whispering presence in her classroom throughout all the observations and **AR**, the infant teacher *par excellence*, provided the model of near perfection from start to finish, teacher assessment and SATs notwithstanding. It is surely no coincidence that she had support in the form of organised supply and part-time teachers and an appreciative head who allowed her to be a professional.

Conclusion

There is a difficulty in identifying in any exact sense if there had been a change in teacher behaviour as a direct result of the national curriculum, as the composition of the class has an impact, as does the personality of the teacher. In relation to the teachers in question in this study, it is clear from the evidence revealed through interviews and observations that, whilst most of them continued to display caring, productive relationships with the children throughout the two years, one of them showed stress which was a result of the pressure brought to bear on her by the demands of the national curriculum and its assessment. This was, in its turn, mediated by the teacher's personal circumstances e.g. the make-up of the class and the teacher's personality, especially where there was clearly some erosion of confidence.

The status of subjects

Practice in primary schools this century has been beset by an ambivalent attitude towards specialist teaching and the breaking down of knowledge into rigid categories. Much of this may be traced back to the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau who made a significant contribution to educational theory, in particular that of a child-centred pedagogy. Rousseau and his successors regarded childhood as a period of life in its own right, to be lived at its own pace, without the interference of adults. Of special importance in this context is Robert Owen who founded the first infant school, basing its regimen on the belief that children could only be happy if, like Rousseau's Emile, they could be rescued from society at an early age. The successful establishment of this 'developmental' tradition meant that it later became legitimised as good practice in infant schools, where the nature and needs of children became the central thesis. The curriculum of the elementary school in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had hitherto been characterised by the rationalist view that knowledge is absolute, fixed and independent of human experience. The intellect was of supreme importance, the role of the teacher merely being the one who transmitted this 'God-given' knowledge to pupils. Blyth (1967) describes the teachers...

'Most of its teachers were themselves too limited in ability and in education and too insecure both financially and socially to be able to conceive of their task in terms other than those of meticulous and conscientious compliance with the routines that they knew. Nor were they encouraged to do anything else'.

(p.27)

Reading, writing, arithmetic and rote learning of Biblical texts formed the elementary school curriculum, which was intended to be complete in itself, being aimed at the section of the population who were deemed to be unsuitable for secondary education. The elementary tradition, therefore, encapsulates a particularly limited view of children's capacities, a view which slowly began to change, particularly once the 1944 Education Act replaced elementary schools with primary schools.

Rousseau's view of education differed greatly from this in that he believed knowledge was acquired through experience. The teacher was the guide in providing the experiences, but the child's nature, not a body of knowledge, which in any case was provisional, must be the starting point. Some of the major features of Rousseau's philosophy were later to become incorporated into what is known as 'progressive' education (see Chapter One for a fuller discussion of this), with experience as the central theme of the educative process, subjects as such being subordinate to the child's needs and interests, an approach which engendered the developmental tradition and later became the cornerstone of English infant education. Blenkin and Kelly (1981) point out that, although practice does not always match the 'progressive' rhetoric in many of our schools, it is reflected in the language of teachers of this age-range and its principles are now enshrined in the folklore of primary education.

The centrality of first-hand learning experiences through play and children's natural curiosity, reinforced by the Hadow and Plowden Reports, became almost an official orthodoxy through out the period between the end of the second World War up to the late 70's. The developmental view of education had its own distinctive methods, practices and emphases, no longer being seen as a preparation for a later phase of education, a view which flourished until the point when it became discredited by a series of Black papers and official statements, culminating in calls for a return to 'the basics'. Nevertheless, a liberal view of the curriculum (DES 1985) persisted in the recommendation by HMI that it could be broken down into nine 'areas of learning and experience', which were cross-curricular and contributed to the development of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes. However, the period immediately following saw the gradual shift towards a curriculum based on a national consensus, reflecting a growing concern that there was a need for a national curriculum. This resulted in the proposal in 1987 by the Secretary of State for Education to establish a nationally agreed curriculum. The ensuing framework, based as it was, on core and foundation subjects, has now become firmly established as a 'subject' curriculum, with the

statutory core being of central importance. In his memoirs (Graham and Tytler 1993) Duncan Graham, at one time chairman of the National Curriculum Council describes the arguments rising to a crescendo over the number of subjects which should be compulsory. Mrs. Thatcher, the Prime Minister at the time, was in favour of a three-subject curriculum of maths., English and science, whereas Kenneth Baker, who had replaced Keith Joseph as Secretary of State for Education,...

'was quite determined not to be saddled with anything that was so right-wing, so nihilistic and negative, and argued successfully for the more respectable broader ten-subject curriculum'.

(p.7)

The teaching of these subjects as a cross-curricular whole, i.e. integrated into a topic or theme is still the focus of debate. There are those who find even this an inadequate, narrow framework for a national curriculum and recommend one which is based on liberal democracy (O'Hear 1993, White 1993), while others (Hirst 1993) stand firmly behind the university disciplines. The evidence of the 'Three Wise Men' (Alexander, Rose and Woodhead 1992) makes a strong case for more subject teaching, recommending the introduction of specialist and semi-specialist teaching to strengthen the existing roles of classteacher and consultant.

4.1 'Every primary school should, in principle, have direct access to specialist expertise in all nine National Curriculum subjects and in religious education'.

(Alexander et al 1992)

This is an awesome task for most primary teachers who have traditionally been generalists, added to which there is not, as yet, a sufficiently large number of specialists emerging from initial teacher training to enable this philosophy to operate effectively.

Earlier reference has been made to the absence of 'pure' subjects in many primary

schools as there has always been a predominant tendency to have combinations of subjects co-existing, sometimes under the umbrella of 'topic' or often as a way of giving children choice in the order in which they complete tasks. Campbell and Neill (1992) became aware of this issue as being an unhelpful way of conceptualising teachers' time.

'Teaching subjects has been conceptualised in a uni-dimensional way, yet it is not uni-dimensional in practice. Our teachers taught a number of subjects simultaneously'.

(p.37)

Campbell and Neill (1992) identified this as the Curriculum Complexity Ratio, as a way of describing the complexity of infant teaching. The CCR encompasses multiple focus teaching (more than one subject being learned in the same teaching session) and integrated teaching (the choice of topic or theme which incorporates material from several subjects). It has its roots (Blyth 1965, Alexander 1988) in the traditions and ideologies which have predominated at different points in the history of primary education and continue to exert an influence on current practice. Topic work *'is generally understood to be a mode of curriculum organisation, often enquiry-based, which brings elements of different subjects together under a common theme'*(Alexander et al 1992 p 21). The terms 'topic', 'thematic work' and 'integration' are often used interchangeably (Webb 1994), providing further ammunition to those who claim that progressive teaching is an epistemological muddle. Webb refers to research by Kerry and Eggleston in 1988 who concluded that most teachers preferred to unify as much of the curriculum as possible through topics or themes, whilst retaining the distinct character of mathematics and language. Ashton (1993) sees the topic-based approach as being a successful way of covering the national curriculum, especially at Key Stage 1, although this need not mean that it would be used exclusively.

'What is clear is that there are many links between the foundation subjects, so that work in one subject contributes to work in others. This does not argue for a wholly integrated curriculum nor the core subjects being taught entirely separately.'

(p.71)

Ashton gives the example of the allocation of time in English, where it is taught both separately and through other curricular areas. This well-established practice has been criticised (NCC 1993) as being insufficiently focused and recommends a greater use of subject teaching. This is in spite of the fact that the same report acknowledges that the collective weight of content in the subject Orders was leading to curriculum overload.

The practice of the six teachers in the study could best be described as 'integrated' teaching in that, during my observations, the children were working in groups on activities which were often related under a topic, for example the weather, but might consist of practical investigations of a scientific nature as well as written work. This often co-existed with maths and additional unrelated language work.

Ross (1993), discussing definitions of the curriculum by national bodies over the last fifteen years, describes them as..

'...Subject headings, of a sort, to pinpoint the activities that they expect to see happening in primary schools, though often qualifying them, presenting them as ingredients, rather than as a menu of distinct courses'.

(p.137)

Ross laments the fact that social studies, as a result of fluctuating fashions in nomenclature and political pressure, has become the 'subject that dare not speak its name'. He is of the opinion that the five cross-curricular themes as defined by NCC (1990a) could be a unifying mechanism for drawing together disparate parts of the curriculum to form an articulate whole, but only a minority of primary teachers would have the energy, the analysis, or the courage to *'weld a social studies curriculum out of the jigsaw of the national curriculum's foundation subjects and the whole curriculum's themes'*. As it stands, it is yet another element which should form part of a broad and balanced curriculum and yet, in an already overloaded working day, this is not achievable.

In the current educational climate, where subject specialism is regarded as a strength, infant teachers, who have 'no subject', find compounded their already low status in being associated with young children and in a predominantly female occupation. As such, they are starting from a relatively weak position from which to develop and practice a changed curriculum.

Perhaps there may be a solution in introducing subject specialist teachers to work alongside or temporarily replace classteachers. Thomas (1993) is of the view that...

'The extremes of splitting the curriculum into separate subjects, even the foundation subjects, and making a different teacher responsible for each is not advantageous for primary school children, especially the younger children. Nor is that a practice available to primary schools as they are presently staffed'.

(p.13)

...and suggests a synthesis of the classteacher and subject teacher systems. MacGilchrist (1993) draws our attention to the fact that the issue of non-contact time in the infant school needs to be properly addressed if the demands of planning, developing and sharing of subject expertise are to be met.

One of the problems foreseen by teachers before the introduction of the national curriculum was coverage of the curriculum areas within the parameters of the infant school day. Mathematics and language work had been shown (Gammage op.cit., Blatchford et al op.cit.) to dominate the infant classroom through out the preceding decade, which would make it no small task for the individual teacher to adjust her organisation in order to accommodate the change in priorities to include science.

The issues of curriculum coverage and manageability have most recently been

preoccupying the education community, that is teachers, researchers and government-appointed agencies. The analogy of the quart and the pint-pot has become a well-used image whenever teachers have tried collectively to articulate their feelings of frustration at being unable to meet the demands of a statutory curriculum which was proving to be undeliverable. Recent reports (NCC op.cit.), Ofsted 1993) have shown some sympathy with the teachers' views whilst still not offering very much guidance in the way of indicating time allocations for each subject, particularly the basic subjects.

Campbell (1993) cites research by Meyer et al (1992) which argues that the 'basic instinct' (Campbell's term) in the primary school refers to English and mathematics as forming roughly half of the curriculum, a tradition which is still reinforced by the professional culture of the primary school. It is a phenomenon which has been a global constant across this century, i.e. the national language takes one third of the official curricula, maths. one sixth, and one tenth of time is allocated to science, physical education etc. It would seem that, even in the face of a hundred years of philosophising about the curriculum, including strong contra-evidence about the ways in which children learn, decision-makers in education, and probably primary teachers themselves, still cling to the elementary tradition prevalent in the nineteenth century.

In Campbell's view the Government has dodged the issue of time allocation by relying on the specification that each subject should have 'reasonable' amounts of time. He goes further to say that....

'...in the absence of a national policy on time allocations, the back-to-basics influence of the right-wing 'think-tanks' will be hard to counter. If this happens the principal educational gain of the Education Reform Act will have been lost.'

(p. 2)

Alexander (1993) also identifies a consensus view that the weight and complexity of the

statutory orders should be reduced, but stresses that the interim Dearing Report, NCC/SEAC (1993), whilst it was manifestly based on good sense, did not engage fundamentally with the problem of manageability. Instead it recommended that time be found by squeezing the non-core rather than the core, leaving Alexander to warn that, *'in an assessment-driven curriculum we know what, all too easily, that can lead to.'* It is his opinion that the best solution is to allow teachers a period of stability and give them the freedom to resolve the problem of manageability themselves. Gipps (1988), commenting on the disadvantages of a system which concentrates on assessing the core curriculum, points to the probability of a greater tendency for teachers to group children by ability, more competition between children as their test results become more visible and a change in the kind of relationship between teachers and children. One of the most important changes she anticipates, and one which is of relevance to the two research schools, is that the future of integrated topic work will be under question.

'Certainly, since English, maths., and science - the three core subjects - are to have separate assessments and programmes of work, they are clearly unlikely to be integrated aspects of the curriculum. We shall, therefore, see a return to a more formally-bounded subjects and subject-lessons'.

(p.74)

Although, in a debate about managing a balanced curriculum, there is something to be said in favour of being able to identify its components more clearly. For example, I had originally intended to periodically examine each teacher's timetable, in order to see how subjects might change over time, but this proved to be unhelpful as they continued to be only very broad indications of intent, such as 'topic', rather than indicators of specific content. For this reason I abandoned the initial practice of collecting written timetables and concentrated on the evidence arising from observations. As I was intending to use subject coding during these, it would become clear whether subjects were being taught separately or

as a topic.

The interviews

Preliminary interviews: Summer term 1989

There were two questions which dealt with the topic. (see questions 7 and 8 on the list in Appendix 1). The first one, concerning the proportion of time spent on the core subjects, elicited a similar response in all six teachers. They estimated that, not only did they spend equal amounts of time on maths. and language activities every day, but that those amounts were '*about right*' according to the national curriculum, although one of them felt that there would have to be more of the discussion-type activity in English. Two of the teachers stated that their children were not allowed to 'choose' from the rest of the curriculum until they had completed the requisite tasks in the two core subjects. The lack of science in all cases was a source of embarrassment, as there were comments such as '*I'm ashamed it doesn't figure*' and '*We'll really have to do something about that*'. Research during the last twenty years bears out that this response is typical. HMI (op.cit.) and Barker Lunn (op.cit.), for example, found that science was particularly disfavoured in the primary school, a situation which could be greatly improved by its rise in status to that of a core subject. It must, however, be borne in mind that, as all six teachers are women, and, as science has traditionally been thought of as a 'masculine' subject (Delamont op.cit.), their lack of confidence could be traced back to an inadequate grounding and low expectations of their performance in the subject during their own schooldays. The teachers in Schools A and B, apart from BT who had attended a single sex private school, confirmed that they had had few opportunities to develop any strength in this area, as they had been steered towards the traditional female domains of needlework and cooking.

It was generally felt that there would have to be changes in organisation in order to

accommodate the presence of science activities and the need to make it more structured and more easily identified. On the topic of other changes which could be foreseen, only one of the teachers believed that some areas of the curriculum might diminish as a result of the increase in science. She was of the opinion that the watching of television programmes would be curtailed and that P.E. might disappear altogether to make room for the practical work needed in maths. and science. She was also worried about the amount of unfinished work there was going to be if one kept strictly to the proportions of time allotted.

Interviews: Spring term 1990

A news-sheet issued by DES in April 1990 comments on the conclusions drawn from a survey begun by HMI the previous year that infant schools were coping very well with the national curriculum. The survey covered 500 schools early in 1989, revisiting 100 of them in the Autumn term of the same year and noting in particular the significant increase in science.

Asking question 7, (see Appendix 10 for list of questions), was an attempt to find out if any of the six teachers in the two research schools were conscious of any change in the status of curriculum areas, either deliberate or subliminal, since the beginning of the term. In School A, both **AR** and **AT** claimed that science was emerging as a more important area which the school in general had hitherto neglected. **AR** had departed from the norm in the school, due to the lack of space, of not having a home corner. The national curriculum had caused her to rethink her provision in English to the point where she had decided to have prams, dolls, etc in the classroom to encourage role-play. She also deliberately included more poetry because of the English attainment targets.

AM knew that she missed out P.E. 'every now and then' to make room for the necessity to hear every child read. This was a problem to her and she often had to use the playtime to catch up on this, which meant that neither she nor the children had a break. The pressure to complete certain activities in the national curriculum had, also, she believed,

forced her into curtailing the children's '*choosing time*' and free play.

AT, who enjoyed playing her guitar and singing with the children, was determined that music was not going to be marginalised in her class.

'I feel it could easily get squeezed out because of the emphasis on other things'

In School B, **BR** had not noticed any difference so far, nor had she intended that there should be any. Being conscious of the areas had sharpened up her planning, but with young children a more flexible approach was needed. In any case, her aim had always been to keep a balance in what she offered to the children.

BM also believed that she tried to balance out the areas at the planning stage, but allowed for some flexibility in implementing them.

'What I feel I haven't covered I shall fill in the gap next term'

BT firmly believed that science was '*much more to the forefront*' in her class. She claimed, moreover, that English, in particular grammar, had almost disappeared. This view seemed to be at odds with the evidence from later observations in her class, as English existed at least as a cross-curricular area on almost every occasion and science, in the experiential, practical sense, as advocated by the national curriculum, hardly figured at all.

To summarise, in both schools the majority of the teachers believed that science had become much more significant in their planning, although there was a distinct intention on the part of some of the teachers to redress the balance as they saw some of the more important areas of infant experience being squeezed out by over-attention to the national curriculum. The comments made by **AR** and **AM** in regard to play are interesting. **AR**'s class, being

mainly five-year olds, would quite commonly have been expected to have had opportunities for 'home'play, with a variety of dressing-up clothes, dolls, prams, pots and pans, etc. It is, therefore, surprising that the national curriculum has caused her to introduce this kind of experience in her class in order to fulfil one of its requirements i.e. role-play. **AM**, on the other hand, has had to dispense with play, in her view, in order to fulfil another of its demands - reading.

Interviews: Autumn 1990

As **BR** was without a class this term, the responses are from the other five teachers. The questions themselves were open-ended so that the teachers would not feel restricted in identifying changes in their own situation (see transcript in Appendix 6). Had I asked specific questions about the curriculum, there might have been a tendency not to take into account the teacher's feelings about her own change. As these aspects have been discussed in the preceding section, it only remains for me to examine the actual changes in organisation.

School A had made great efforts to secure extra ancillary help for all three classes in the form of Welfare assistants, Language Support Teachers, part-time teachers and parents to enable them to meet the practical demands of the national curriculum. One of the results of this was an increase in the amount of shared reading. Role-play in the hall was also an important addition to the school's repertoire of activities as the size of the classrooms had always inhibited its inclusion. Technology, which was at that time officially being given a high profile, had become a priority subject in the school, which in turn was leading to the formulation of whole-school recording of children's attainment in the subject. Another whole-school thrust was the uniformity of children's access to resources, which was causing **AR** some anxiety as she was not happy about children mixing their own paints, having always prepared the paints herself before the children came into the room.

The two teachers in School B expressed similar views to their counterparts in School A in that technology had come to figure more in the daily curriculum. **BM**, for instance, was able to have a computer in her class all the time, which pleased her, although she felt so inexperienced in the type of technology which involved the children in making things that she was worried that she may not be thorough. They also had an increase in their ancillary support and were able to use some of it for more shared reading and language activities in general. They, too, had timetabled the school hall so that each child had an hour of role-play every two weeks. **BM** had also been given one hour each week to devote to her role as maths. co-ordinator, which was essential as the staff under her guidance were devising a whole-school policy on assessment in the subject.

Interviews: Spring term 1991

These interviews were only specifically concerned with teacher assessment of the core subjects in the two Year 2 classes (see schedule in Appendix) and, as they focussed closely on the teachers' own approaches to assessment they were, therefore, not relevant to a discussion of the status of curriculum subjects.

SATs Interviews: Summer 1991

These interviews were intended solely as a *post mortem* of the two Year 2 teachers' own impressions of their implementation of the SATs and, as such, their responses did not illuminate the question of the changing status of curriculum subjects, and have, therefore, not been included.

The observations

Preliminary unstructured observations: Summer term 1989

Single observations taking place once in a term cannot possibly be indicative of how much time teachers spend, as a general rule, on the different curriculum subjects. Furthermore, it is problematic in a primary school curriculum, which is often integrated across subjects, to define the amount of time spent by children on any one of them. Nevertheless, repeated observations over six terms, in conjunction with the interviews, can begin to give a picture of the prevalence of particular subjects.

This first term, as a way of familiarising myself with the classroom context, I carried out one observation in each of the classes. The teachers and I had agreed at the outset that I would not only vary the day of the week on which I visited each one, but that I would also visit at different times of the day in order to see a cross-section of the curriculum in each class. Their timetables generally followed a very similar pattern each week, with the only fixed sessions being hall times for P.E., but I usually took the teachers' advice on a weekly basis so that I would avoid incidental problems such as medicals or the school photographer.

The observation in **AR**'s classroom lasted 44 minutes and could be said to be typical of a reception class at that time, inasmuch as, in a group of 21 children there are five distinct activities taking place. In this instance they are broadly covering, in national curriculum terms, technology, English and maths.

In **AM**'s room the activities were even more diverse, as, not only were there 18 children, but, during a period of one hour, there were also five curriculum areas represented; technology, maths, English, science and art.

AT, on the other hand, had 27 children, two thirds of whom, throughout an observation

lasting 56 minutes, were working on the same task (English), and one group who were doing something different (geography).

In School B, where the observation of the youngest children was a fairly short one of 20 minutes, **BR** is working with 16 children, covering five different activities within a framework of English, technology and art.

In **BM**'s class, where there were 29 children, who were working on four separate tasks, the curriculum areas being covered were technology, English, maths. and art throughout a 55 minute period.

BT had 30 children in her classroom during the 55 minute observation. They were engaged in completing four tasks, but as the lesson was 'topic', the areas covered were English, technology, science, maths. and art.

One would expect that, as here, the older children, whose concentration span is longer, would be working in a more intense way on a similar task and that the youngest would need a fluid, more varied choice. Nevertheless, **BT**, with the largest class of all, was still providing variety and covering five curriculum areas. Both schools showed similarity in their approach, and as a general rule, there was a prevalence of subjects being taught simultaneously - the 'seamless cloak' of the integrated day.

The predominating subjects were, not surprisingly, English, maths and, to a lesser extent, science, although technology in the form of computer use was very close to science in the amount of time. This pattern of time corresponds with research by Tizard (1988) and Bennett (1980) in pre-national curriculum days.

Observations: Spring term 1990

This term the observations intensified as I was able to complete 46 in all, i.e. 7 with **AT**, 9 with **AM**, 8 with **AR**, 8 with **BT**, 8 with **BM** and 6 with **BR**. In the period of nine months between my initial observations and those this term, it was clear that in both schools science had become a 'foreground' subject and all six teachers, with varying degrees of reluctance and confidence, had accorded it core status. However, although it was claimed by the teachers in School A that science was the one area which had dramatically changed its status, out of the 25 observations encompassing the three teachers, only four were readily identifiable as science. If its rise in status was dramatic, it must have been, hitherto, completely absent from the curriculum. It may be, however, due to the timing of my visits, in that, even in a well-planned series of observations, there were going to be occasions when it was necessary to be in one particular class, whilst there was science taking place in another. It was also clear from the children's work on the classroom walls in School A that there had been some recent science activities.

English, in the four forms of speaking, listening, reading and writing, was still by far the dominant area in both schools. For example, out of 46 observations, all but 8 of them had English as a major activity in all six classrooms. This is a phenomenon encountered by Campbell and Neill (1990). They found that the teachers in their research spent almost twice as much time on English in one day as they did on maths., a point which echoes DES (1989) where the comment is made that teachers spend 'considerable' time on the core subjects, especially English.

In School A all three teachers were continuing to mix their activities in that, with the exception of **AM**, several subjects were combined. These were usually science, maths English, technology and art. In **AM**'s classroom, throughout 9 observations, there was no maths. work taking place and only two sessions were combined, in these instances with science, art and technology. The remaining seven were purely English and almost solely

writing. This is interesting, as **AM** had six-year old children and it might be expected that there would still be active learning which incorporated a great deal of practical maths., construction toys and art work. As her class was such a difficult one to control she may have been consciously limiting the children's choice in order to keep them calm. It is true that they did not appear to be mature enough at the time to engage in a range of activities without close individual supervision. **AR** and **AT**, as they had said in the interviews, had made a deliberate effort to include music and P.E. in order to ensure that neither would be squeezed out. They showed a determination to protect what they saw as good primary practice. Webb (1993) identifies this as a strength in Key Stage 1 teachers which is absent in their Key Stage 2 colleagues. In her research covering over 50 schools, she found that infant teachers benefited from a strong early years network and philosophy, whereas...

'KS2 teachers were viewed as heterogeneous, isolated and without national representation, all of which constrained the development of a corporate view of what constituted 'good' practice for juniors'.

(p.14)

School B also favoured an integrated approach although this was more prevalent in that 14 out of 22 of the observations were combined. Once more the combination was the core areas with the addition of technology and art. All three of the classes had a preponderance of English, with lesser but roughly equal amounts of maths. and science, apart from **BM** who had equal amounts of science and English and a smaller amount of Maths. She had taken seriously the directive to include more science, as was evident from one particular observation in her class where she had no less than seven activities taking place, five of which were scientific in nature. Technology was present in the form of computer use and construction apparatus and each class had one session of P.E.

Observations: Autumn term 1990

As **BR** was without a class this term there was no observation of her teaching. I returned to

observations of the remaining five teachers, using a number of foci, one of which was the status of subjects.(see Chapter Three for detail of method of recording)

AT, observed for an hour, had a variety of activities co-existing as the children began by completing a piece of English work (writing a story and, in turn, reading to a classroom assistant), technology (the computer) and moving on to some art (painting).

AM was also observed for an hour, during which time the activities were predominantly English (writing, tracing, discussion and role-play with some new dolls).

AR was observed for forty minutes. The first part of the lesson was concentrated on English (whole class discussion) and practical maths. (about relative sizes of people) and science work (on the theme of harvest).

BR was also observed for forty minutes. The first part of the lesson was concentrated on English (whole class discussion) and practical maths. (about relative sizes of people) and science work (on the theme of harvest).

BT, observed for an unbroken hour, no longer having a home corner, was using the space for English work (each child reading in turn to a welfare assistant); further English was taking place in the form of writing and the majority of the class was working on maths. (sums from the blackboard).

BM, who had the same age-group as the previous year, was observed for one continuous hour with her new class, during which time the class was engaged in technology (computer, designing a warning sign and construction kits), English (practising handwriting), maths. (a problem involving cubes) and art (making tissue patterns).

AR and **BT**, who would be carrying out their own assessment the following term and implementing the SATs the term after that, differed in their approach in that **AR** was including some art as an activity, whereas **BT** had the whole class working on sums from the blackboard whilst her ancillary helper heard each child read in turn. This was in direct contrast to the range of activities she had on offer two terms earlier. She was possibly already showing signs of the perceived pressure on her to narrow the curriculum which may have been one of the factors which ultimately led to her extreme distress a few months later. The other five teachers did not appear to have changed their methods, in that they were still combining subjects in a broad and balanced way.

Looking at all six teachers individually over the two-year period, it is clear that each one was trying to create some kind of *rapprochement* between the requirements of the national curriculum and the children's interests. It must be remembered that, at this time, they were only required to implement the core areas and some technology, so that breadth was still in the hands of the individual teacher.

AT, from the first observation, functioned in a well organised classroom which reflected her philosophy that there must continue to be breadth, especially in regard to the more expressive subjects. She continued to include music and painting as a deliberate attempt to provide balance, and was, in fact, the only one to include geography.

AM, working with an extremely difficult class in the first year, also provided creative experiences for the children, but, in spite of a range of science, English, art and technology activities in the early observations, there was not a significant amount of maths, during these and the later ones.

AR, with both her classes, managed to combine a calm, well organised classroom with

a very varied diet of activities covering several curriculum areas. Her children worked independently with a high degree of self-confidence.

BT at the outset was very keen to include art as often as she could, a situation which continued well beyond the halfway point in the observations. She was also one of the few to continue with regular P.E. It was in the later stages of the observations that she became less confident and seemed to be concentrating on the core, even to the point of removing her painting table altogether.

BM, during early observations, began by having mainly English and maths. with some art and technology, but soon developed the capacity to organise several complex science activities simultaneously. At the same time she also kept up regular P.E. and technology, and showing that, in the final observation, she was still providing a range of art activities.

BR, although unable to be part of the Autumn 1990 observations, was also in the habit of combining many activities, sometimes predominantly English-based, as one would expect with children who are in the early stages of reading and writing. In addition, she provided art, technology, science, maths and regular P.E.

The findings of the PACE project in 1990 concur with the perceived shift towards the core and away from art and music. Pollard et al (1993), found that, in interviewing 88 infant teachers, 84 per cent of the teachers they interviewed said that they were doing more science and 60 per cent were doing more technology. Furthermore, art and music were not only suffering in the move to embrace science, but the curriculum was becoming less creative in a subtle way, in that, although the overall time spent on English was the same, there was less creative writing and there was very little 'art for art's sake'. In the light of this, **BR** and **AT** are to be commended for the way in which they had made every effort to give the children a

wide range of creative and expressive experiences and, in **AM**'s case in particular, to continue to have live music in the classroom on a regular basis.

The situation experienced by **AM** on two occasions, (Observations A15 Appendix 13 and A16 Appendix 12) emphasises a further constraint on the optimum use of curriculum time. It is a phenomenon which Campbell and Neill (op.cit.) refer to as 'evaporated' time, in that it is time which disappears, being used up by low level activities such as lining-up, changing for P.E., or in **AM**'s case, resolving quarrels which have started in the playground and continued into school, or simply recovering her composure after a particularly fraught playground duty. To a good infant teacher, however, no moment is wasted. Even evaporated time may be used, as Thomas (op.cit.) argues, for cognitive goals such as counting, 'I-Spy', singing games etc., so that there is potential here for change. It is obvious that these activities are of a different order from those which beset **AM**, and that the problem in her case is more of an administrative one which relates to the more effective use of ancillary staff and the role of the head in playground disputes.

To summarise, all six teachers at the outset were accustomed to organising the curriculum in a way which integrated several subject areas. This usually meant mainly English and maths. with the addition of up to three other subjects. As time went on, the increasing dominance of the core areas and the necessity of including science did not lead to a narrowing of the curriculum as all of the teachers were making a deliberate effort to maintain breadth, particularly in respect of art and music. In the second year, however, it had become evident that one of the Year 2 teachers had begun to bow to the pressure of the imminent tests and had not only reduced the range of subjects on offer, but was also teaching them more formally.

Five of the six teachers could be said to be demonstrating their idea of the wholeness of the curriculum as they strove to keep those aspects which they believed to be essential. The

task of presenting a balanced, wide-ranging curriculum which will challenge and appeal to children of all abilities presupposes a view of wholeness on the part of the curriculum designer, but at the point of delivery it is the teacher's view of wholeness which determines a child's actual experiences.

The 'whole curriculum' means different things to different people. Ross (op.cit.) sees the cross-curricular elements (NCC 1990a) as a means of unifying the curriculum, but, as Weston (1992) points out, it has never been made explicit how the horizontal overlay of these themes was to be related to the rest. She refers to research (NFER 1993) which indicated that most primary staff understood very well the need to plan and design the curriculum as a whole, but...

'It seems to be extraordinarily difficult to reproduce this coherence at national level, or indeed within many secondary schools, where planning tends to go with the grain of subjects'.

(p. 5)

She insists, moreover, that, when we talk about covering the curriculum, there must be a vision of "wholeness" which gains commitment from all those involved, including governors, which may mean that they will participate in shaping its strategies. It should be scheduled in that it contains short, medium and longer term targets and it should be coherent to external agencies. As to the meaning of wholeness in this context, there should firstly be wholeness in a coherent view of coverage across the curriculum, that is subjects and cross-curricular themes as well as collaborative approaches to teaching, and secondly, coherence over time for the individual learner, in that there is continuity and progression across Key Stages and phases. Neither School A nor B had a committed, participative whole school strategy on coherence, but, in the circumstances it would have been unlikely that they could have had, as the future was uncertain and changes were hurriedly being implemented. It would be interesting to revisit both of them now to see how they were dealing with the issue.

The final version of the Dearing Report urgently needed to address the question of wholeness. Alexander (op.cit.) proposes that this would be helped by escaping from the *'skewed and restricted concept of a core curriculum'* as being synonymous with English, maths., and science and instead conceive of the core in more comprehensive terms. Richards (1993) comments in a similar vein by pointing out that reconstructing the national curriculum is not a straightforward administrative matter. 'Basic skills', for example, need to be debated before they are redefined and it must not be assumed that we already know what they are. The challenge to SCAA was to reconstitute the curriculum in a principled as well as a pragmatic way, although it is debatable as to whether this is possible.

In the event, the final Dearing Report (op.cit.) has continued with the concept of a core curriculum as represented by maths., English and science although there has been some 'slimming down' of the mandatory components, particularly outside the core. Theoretically, this should leave teachers an average of 20% of curriculum time which may be used in a way that will meet the esoteric needs of the school. There has also been some reform of the ten-level scale to significantly reduce the number of criteria used to define the levels of attainment for pupils. At the seven year old level, testing will focus on basic literacy and numeracy, and there will be no science SATs. The task of revision has already begun as SCAA, assisted by advisory groups, including teachers, attend to the detail of the new requirements.

Those who wished for a reconstructed curriculum must, therefore, be disappointed, as the range of subjects as formerly prescribed remains the same, as does the configuration of the core. The 'slimming down' has affected the foundation subjects more than any other, although it may be the case that schools will use their 20% to provide interesting, cross-curricular activities which will redress the balance and, perhaps, result in a whole curriculum. Whatever they do, it is clear that the basic blueprint from which they must work remains firmly rooted in the elementary school tradition.

Conclusion

In keeping with a major tradition in primary schools, (Gammage op.cit., Blatchford et al (op.cit.) all six teachers had from the start placed great emphasis on the basic subjects of English and mathematics. This was almost always taught in a cross-curricular fashion involving varied activities. The dominance of the core areas continued into the following term, although mathematics had receded a little, but it is surprising that, in common with earlier research (DES op.cit., Barker Lunn op.cit.) there was very little evidence of science in any of these early observations. Thornton (1990) found that, at this time, teachers were already associating science with the 'basics', and, even teachers who generally used a topic-based approach to the curriculum were now separating the science out from that work. By the end of the first year of my observations, however, all six teachers had made the transition to include science, albeit in a cross-curricular setting, as could be seen from the children's books and the classroom display, but it did not happen to be taking place during those specific observations.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

In the Introduction, evidence was cited (Macdonald and Rudduck op.cit., Fullan op.cit., Galton and Willcocks op.cit.) to support the view that teachers may work hard to resist externally imposed innovation and that the lack of ownership of the change can result in a failure to influence their practice (Macdonald and Walker op.cit.). In the event, I found that the initial anxieties of the six teachers in 1989 eventually faded as they gained command over the teaching requirements of the core areas and they did, in fact, do their best to make the national curriculum a success.

This could be due, in part, to the 'ethic of care' described by Campbell and Neill (1994). This prompts teachers of younger children, in particular, to take on the social and emotional responsibility for them as well as dealing with their cognitive development. Earlier discussion in Chapter Four highlighted the priority Key Stage 1 teachers generally give to establishing and maintaining a warm, caring environment and the six teachers in my research showed a similar emphasis. Campbell and Neill argue that, *'the ethic of care as a central value in primary teachers' occupational culture contributes to teacher overload'*(p.220). They also identified the pervasive factor of 'conscientiousness' which tended to reflect the teachers' sense of obligation to do their best for their pupils, and one of the reasons given by the teachers in their research for working long hours. This intensified during the time that the teachers were under pressure to implement the government's policy on assessment and testing.

There are two further points arising from Campbell and Neill's research which seemed to reinforce my contention that the concept of conscientiousness probably relates more to women teachers than men. Firstly, teachers of very young children tend to be

women, which means that the likelihood is that they have home and family commitments, especially where there were children, in addition to their professional ones. Campbell and Neill refer to the study of women in primary teaching by Evetts(1990) who drew attention to the increasing number of dependent elderly relatives for whom women are often the main carers. Secondly, Campbell and Neill found that there was a strong correlation between conscientiousness and age and years of experience, especially at Key Stage 1 level. It is acknowledged that more research into this issue is needed, but I would argue that it could be explained by looking back at the historical role of early years teachers. Women who joined the profession thirty years ago (and all six women in my study were in the older age group) would still have been expected to conform to the image of the maternal, nurturing woman 'suitable' for teaching the youngest children; a woman whose work spilled over into her domestic life and one who would expect, for example, to spend much of her own time making soft toys for the Christmas bazaar or attending the Summer Fayre on Saturday. Younger women teachers would be entering the profession at a time when, although they may have just as strong a sense of vocation, they will have been surrounded by more public debate about the curriculum, aware of the role that teachers' professional associations have played in boycotting tests, they will have seen the emergence of research and literature on the use of teachers' time and, not least, they will have grown up in a society where they would expect equal opportunities with men.

The national curriculum did influence the practice of the six teachers in my research, and, in the main they had adopted a positive approach toward making the necessary changes. Five of them had managed to sustain their personal style whilst accommodating the unavoidable aspects of reorganisation. **BT** was the only one of the teachers to be disturbed by the pressure of change and, indeed, in the latter stages she appeared to be developing coping strategies which were automatic rather than reflective (Schon op.cit.) by teaching in a more formal way and restricting the curriculum to the core areas. All of

them coped extremely well with the shift in emphasis towards science and were visibly developing a working knowledge of the attainment targets for each subject. Individual responses to change were generally positive, although there was a high pressure point for one of the teachers at the time of the implementation of the SATs, which was little to do with the tests themselves, but with the level of practical and psychological support she believed she was receiving during this period.

This did not mean, however, that the changing emphasis towards the core subjects had become the sole preoccupation of the teachers inasmuch as most of them were consciously continuing to provide a broad, integrated curriculum which included P.E. and music. The tendency identified by Gammage (op.cit.) and Blatchford et al (op.cit.) to emphasise mathematics and language was still evident in all six classrooms, mainly present in cross-curricular teaching. More recently, Wragg et al (1992) found that primary teachers described themselves as most competent teaching the national curriculum in English, with maths. in second place. The greater emphasis on science, clearly not a high profile subject at first, as was found by DES (op.cit.) and Barker Lunn (op.cit.) and slow to gain ground in the two schools, had become established as the third core area by the end of the two years. Moreover, much of the curriculum, both core and foundation, continued to be taught in an integrated way and most of the teachers, with the exception of **BT**, were deliberately keeping as much breadth as possible.

By the second year, of the two teachers contemplating SATs, one had continued with her practice of trying to provide a full range of experiences in spite of the pressure to dwell on the core areas, whilst the other, **BT**, had departed from her initial practice of operating an integrated curriculum. Although in the interview preceding the observation **BT** was convinced that science had begun to play a greater role in her classroom, the evidence indicated that she had apparently reduced the range of subjects being taught

together, as well as teaching them in a more formal way. One might conclude that the psychological pressure being exerted on her at the time was causing her to behave uncharacteristically in concentrating on the areas which she knew were to be examined and that she was ensuring that there was uniform coverage of the work.

The theoretical framework in the Introduction referred to the notion of the teacher as victim in change (Connell op.cit., Meighan op.cit.) and that low self-esteem could result from the idea that one's role has been reduced to that of a functionary. In spite of the fact that, in the initial interviews, **BT** had shown no more trepidation than the others in regard to the anticipated changes, she ultimately succumbed to extreme distress. In her case it was not the change itself which undermined her but the lack of psychological and emotional support which led to feelings of poor self-worth. As she felt inadequate, she became less and less effective in her ability to cope and, perhaps saw herself as a victim. It is difficult, of course, to make a direct connection between this and the national curriculum exclusively, as there are variables such as the composition of the class and the teacher's personality, but from the evidence the national curriculum and assessment programme was most certainly a factor.

The good relationships which had existed between the six teachers and their children were largely unaffected by the pressures of the national curriculum. All six teachers were, in fact, good classroom managers. Bennett and Kell (op.cit.) had described instances of infant classroom practice as 'crisis management' with little personal interaction in evidence and poor diagnosis of the children's needs. This was not borne out by my observations, as four of them had excellent organisational skills and productive, warm relationships with the children. **BM** and **AM**, in the first year had classes which were large considering the number of children with special needs, wherein the strain imposed on both teachers was extreme. They did, even still, manage to maintain a purposeful atmosphere in the classroom and remain calm and controlled themselves. The following

year, with different groups of children the classroom ethos was transformed as both teachers responded even more positively to a much more amenable situation. Stress, whatever the cause, seems to be the common factor in influencing teacher/child relationships.

Pollard (op.cit.) and Aronowitz and Giroux (op.cit.) made the point that infant teachers, who might see themselves as child-centred could react anxiously if they believed that their good practice based on this philosophy was under threat. I found very little evidence of any serious reaction to a perceived threat to their good practice. All six of the teachers could be described as child-centred in their approach to the children as individuals, as they were concerned for their well-being, shared jokes and noticed if a child was having difficulty with work. Indeed, the anxieties expressed by the teachers in the beginning were on the children's behalf, in that they were keen that the children's needs should not suffer as a result of there being less time for the teacher to devote to them. Galton et al (op.cit.) called into question the existence to any significant degree of child-centredness which could be described as progressivism, and here I must define my own use of the term. The child-centredness identified in my observations refers to a teaching approach rather than to organisational strategies. For the most part, the classrooms, whilst being child-centred in one sense, were also productive learning environments where the work was thoughtfully planned and the children knew the teacher's expectations and wanted to fulfil them. This mode of interaction was, throughout the observations, being used to protect the children from the negative aspects of change. Didactic teaching methods identified by Bassey (op.cit.) and DES (op.cit.) as the most prevalent mode in the primary school were not in evidence in the six classrooms and, furthermore, grouping was used as an organisational strategy which encouraged collaboration and not merely the physical juxtaposition of children as seen by Tizard (op.cit.) and Bennett and Kell (op.cit.).

As one of the major anxieties expressed by both Year 2 teachers in the early days of the national curriculum was that there would be a mismatch between the results of the SATs and their own judgements about children, infant teachers in general will, no doubt, find it reassuring to discover that Sir Ron Dearing (SCAA 1993) is proposing to award equal status to SAT results and teachers' own assessments. It is also ironic that the science SATs which caused **BT** so much stress at the time of organising them, especially concerning the problem of keeping the rest of the class quietly occupied, are now no longer a statutory requirement. In fact, were she to be currently assessing a year 2 class, she would find the whole process very much simpler.

It is pertinent to note that there was, from both my observations and interviews, an individual diversity of response to the universal requirements of the national curriculum. No two teachers had approached the task of implementation in the same way, even within one school and there was a contrast between the two schools, even with two classes of comparable age. Fears of a core curriculum producing dull uniformity could be far from being realised.

The impact of the national curriculum and assessment

To understand and explain the ways in which **BT** displayed her inability to cope fully with the demands made on her, and, indeed, why the other five were comparatively successful, it is necessary to examine some of the literature pertaining to change. Earlier reference has been made to studies which illustrated teachers' resistance to institutional change. It has even been likened to the process of bereavement (Marris 1975) wherein part of the substance of one's familiar and reassuring world has been removed, leaving a feeling of emptiness and insecurity. Within the global process of change, teachers will have specific and individual concerns about their involvement in it. Hord (1987) refers to a model presented by Hall (1979) delineating seven stages of concern, whereby teachers,

in the early stages of a change, display *self-concerns*, both personal and informational, i.e. they will want to know more about the innovation and, in particular, how it is going to affect them. Later concerns are of the type relating to *management* of the change i.e. how they are actually going to organise it. The final stages are the most intense in that the innovation has reached *impact* level and teachers are most concerned about the effect of the change on the pupils. The crucial point made here is that change is both developmental and interactive and any assistance directed towards the agents involved must correspond with their particular needs at the time. It could be that BT was being offered management help when she was still at the stage of personal struggle, which meant that the help was largely ineffective.

Apple (1983) makes a comparison between teachers and manual workers in their reactions to the period of intensification of labour which is part of the process of change. He describes how machines suddenly developed 'problems', coffee breaks became longer and pressure was exerted on co-workers who were working too fast. Teachers, on the other hand, have very few strategies for slowing down the process or protecting themselves. Apple's explanation for this includes the point that, having traditionally worked within a system of patriarchal control, where their career prospects depended on the support of the (usually male) head and the traditional sexual division of labour in schools leaves women particularly vulnerable to disapproval, it is, therefore, difficult for them to subvert the process of change. Another very important point to remember is that the 'clients', the children themselves, are also vulnerable members of society and teachers have always been reluctant to damage their future prospects. Any withdrawal of labour, or slowing-down tactics, on the part of teachers would have an immediate effect on the children and ground thus lost may never be recouped. The good relationships so valued by the teachers in Schools A and B would leave one in little doubt that the children would be shielded from the effects of the change rather than used as part of a process of subversion.

Acker (1990) has drawn attention to the critical role of the headteacher as any change proceeds, especially in regard to the necessity of reassuring her staff, (an element not forthcoming in School B where there was a strained relationship between BT and her headteacher) and she uses examples from her ethnographic data collected in an inner city primary school, such as *..This is a good school; you are good teachers. I wouldn't be worried if there were tests now*', (p 269) making the point that headteachers are finding it necessary to stress continuity rather than rejecting past practices. She also highlights the significance of the school culture, emphasising the fact that the implementation of change is not merely a technical operation, but one that depends on the complex relationships of the actors in a specific scenario, and advising that, in future attempts to chart the response to 'reform' we must take into account more than the characteristics of the innovation and the reactions of individual teachers, as both are shaped and mediated not only by the teacher culture but also by the micro-politics of the school. Teachers can significantly affect the success or failure of any change by their response. Sikes et al (1985) believe that it is a consequence of their past, present and expected perceptions as to whether they 'internally adjust', 'strategically comply' or 'strategically redefine' (Lacey 1977). Another strong influence is the traditional *rites de passage* which schools develop as an instrument of control and which are invented and maintained by the staff through the management structure. This is, perhaps, more prevalent in the secondary school, but nevertheless very much in evidence in the primary school, especially in relation to individual children's life events and cultural festivals.

Change, of course, is not politically neutral. The politics of change, as Ball (1987) indicates, is an appropriate starting point for looking at the micro-politics of a school, *as it brings to the surface those subterranean conflicts and differences which are otherwise glossed over or obscured in the daily routines of school life*'.(p 28). It also provides important clues as to why some institutions change while others stay the same. The

headteachers of Schools A and B differed from each other in management style: the headteacher of School A, was a confident person with a degree in psychology, who was tolerant in the extent to which she allowed her staff to express a personal style in their classroom practice. The headteacher of School B, on the other hand, who had had very few privileges in her early life, tended to appreciate those members of staff who most resembled her own style of interaction. In these circumstances it is easy to see how **BT**, who came from a more privileged background, could have irritated the headteacher and caused the 'subterranean conflicts' to rise to the surface.

It is clear that **BT** felt isolated from the rest of the staff team. One of the strongest themes across teacher life stories that has a bearing on professional development and change is the support of a collaborative group (Butt et al 1990). The positive effect of the social context of a group working on a common project is that it challenges the individual teacher whilst providing a sheltered environment for taking risks (Hannay and Seller 1990). Fullan (1991) refers to this as '*the primacy of personal contact*' (p 132). He sees teachers as needing to participate in one-to-one as well as group opportunities not only to receive and give help, but also simply to converse about the meaning of change. The traditional arrangement of primary school classrooms tend to isolate teachers. In the nineteenth century the system was designed as a way of disciplining and controlling the masses (Fullan and Hargreaves 1992) and has, unfortunately come to be regarded as 'normal', leaving little opportunity for teachers to learn from one another and operate as a community.

Campbell and Southworth (1992) express reservations about the concept of collegiality, for two main reasons. Firstly, there is a lack of empirical work on the topic in this country, which means that those who advocate it are doing so on the basis of prescription rather than description. Secondly, available definitions of the term are weak

and used as if the meanings of the word were commonly understood. Moreover, those who support collegiality, and they are generally external to the school rather than the teachers themselves, tend to stress its presumed advantages rather than the likely obstacles to its success. Teaching, however, is often an isolated and conservative occupation and it may be that a belief that staff can meet and unite in facilitating change is misguided. One might even go as far as to say that many teachers choose to stay in the comparative isolation of their classrooms in order to defend their sense of self, as venturing forth can render them vulnerable to criticism and lack of agreement (Lieberman and Miller 1981).

Southworth (1988) describes a project aimed at investigating relationships within six primary schools reputed to offer positive models. One of the contributory factors was a willingness in the headteacher to encourage staff to lead and contribute to the running of the school, even to the appointment and deployment of new staff and supply teachers. One of the headteachers interviewed expressed the opinion that, not only did he/she trust the staff, but that this element of showing trust was very important.

Butt et al (op.cit.) have posited that the core of the problem of educational reform is the nature of the relationship between reformers and teachers and amongst themselves.

'In the end, it seems, most issues related to educational reform, curriculum implementation and change, school improvement, staff development and professional development, boil down to providing contexts for individual and collective human development and healthy human relationships'.

(p 266)

Teaching is widely recognised as a stressful occupation. Kyriacou (1990) draws distinctions between two ways in which the term 'teacher stress' is used. On the one hand it may describe the overwhelming demands facing teachers in aspects of their work.

and on the other it could refer to the unpleasant emotional state which results from the pressures. Tuettemann and Punch (1992) report that empirical evidence shows that there are two factors which have an ameliorating effect on the level of psychological distress shown by teachers in their study. One is the degree to which teachers feel they have some influence over what happens in school in terms of open consultation and recognition of teachers' specific talents and interests. The other is the belief that they are being effective in reaching teaching goals which were valued by the community outside the school as well as inside. Collegial support, praise and recognition all helped towards a strong sense of belonging and satisfies the need for self-esteem. BT admitted to feeling that she was being compared with a more successful colleague during the pre-SAT period and was being offered very little psychological support. She referred to a staff planning meeting where she had burst into tears, but there was little interest, either then or later, in her reasons for doing so. She confided to me at the time that a helpful word from just one colleague would have made all the difference. It is interesting that Tuettemann and Punch's study also noted a difference in the level of vulnerability to stress between males and females, which suggested to Tuettemann and Punch that women probably invested more of themselves in their teaching than do men. A point made by Campbell et al (1992) takes this issue further. They express the view that the model of 'workplace' used in schools is a business model of male orientation in which work, rather than the family has prior claim on workers' time. Whereas,

'The mismatch of this model with the reality of most women teachers' lives, where powerful claims on their time are exerted simultaneously from work and home, might help explain the high stress levels experienced by these teachers'.

(p 155)

I had very little knowledge of the six teachers' private lives, other than the fact that five of them had children, which, undoubtedly, did not make their professional lives any easier.

Smithers et al (1990) identified teaching as an unhappy and unsettled profession in the period immediately following the introduction of the national curriculum and there were issues of teacher loss, wastage and resignation which needed to be addressed. Interviews with teachers who were entering or leaving the profession indicated a remarkable consistency in their comments on the current state of teaching. Their main concerns centred on the workload, salary, status and conditions of employment.

Many of these issues are echoed by a project commissioned by the NUT in 1990 to explore the causes of stress in teachers. The research team found that teachers no longer felt that they were in control of their classroom situations as the decision-making process had been taken from them by externally imposed reform. Alongside this was the removal of their negotiating rights and job security, leading to a falling standard of living and a perceived lack of status in the community. The NUT emphasised the need for all authorities to formally recognise the size of the problem and draw up plans to combat it before many more teachers leave the profession. Research (Dunham 1984, Cox and Brockley 1984) is now offering us a good understanding of the nature and major sources of stress facing teachers, which could provide a basis for developing strategies for reducing its levels. Cole (1990) goes as far as saying that stress has its origins in political conflict, in that circumstances in Britain today lead one to believe that there is a dissolution of the consensus between government and teachers about their fundamental approach to a political dilemma, i.e. *'the dilemma about the rights of the state, to collectively impose itself on the individual, as opposed to the individual's rights of freedom of thought, word and deed-that divides capitalism and socialism, totalitarianism and democracy'*. (p 169) In other words, where teachers feel that they are the unwilling protagonists in a situation which they did not devise nor do they support, they will manifest signs of stress, as did BT.

Goodson (1991) expresses a firm belief that it is essential *'to see the individual in relation to the history of his or her time, allowing us to view the intersection of the life*

history with the history of society thus illuminating the choices, contingencies, and options open to the individual'.(p 43) In his view issues such as teacher stress, burn-out, effective teaching and the question of the take-up of innovations would all be best studied through life history perspectives, as this approach would extend our understanding, a theme which he develops elsewhere (Goodson and Walker (1991)). Extensive work on this theme has been carried out by Nias (1989) on what she calls '*the elusive and often disorderly identities of individual men and women*'. As primary teaching as an occupation makes heavy demands upon the 'self' i.e. the well-defended, substantial, relatively inflexible part of our personalities, Nias was concerned to discover how teachers' personal values and belief systems played a part in the way they conceptualised and carried out their work. One of the important factors was the existence of others on the staff, 'referential networks', who shared one's aspirations and goals. If this were not the case, a teacher could feel isolated, and, in some instances, desire to leave the profession. What this points to is the power of the self-image and the strength of the individual's need to protect it from the influences of a particular situation. Campbell et al (op.cit.), however, question the immediate value of ethnographies based on life history as they have an '*uncertain representativeness*' and that, furthermore, most of them predate the intrusion on teachers' work of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 and the Education Reform Act 1988, the effects of which have been so pervasive as to render their frames of analysis the '*beached whales of educational theory*'.(p 150) I am unable to share Campbell's reservations in relation to my study, as I have not been searching for 'representativeness'. In illuminating the thoughts, talk and actions of six teachers, my approach has been what Middleton (1993) has called 'standpoint epistemology', that which emphasises the personal and conditional nature of knowledge as it emerges from specific material in historical contexts. She puts forward the assertion that individuals must develop a theory grounded in their own experience and language, an opinion which is close to my own views.

Teachers' reaction to change

A possible source of discontent within infant teachers may be located in the ideology which underpins their practice. Ashton (1975) in a study the purpose of which was to discover the view of primary school teachers as to the aims of education, found that there was a marked preference of women for a progressive teaching role. Overall, there were strong indications that women were generally less traditional than men in their approaches to teaching. In a staffroom where there are both men and women this would possibly tend to factionalise teachers, but in the infant school this should mean that, theoretically, there is more of a consensus. However, it is clear that not all infant teachers share the same ideology (Bennett 1980). Much will depend on their length of service, the time at which they were trained initially, their professional experiences and, possibly their life histories. Apple (1990) has written extensively on the relationship between ideology and the curriculum. Just as Cole (op.cit.) takes the view that teachers' roles should not be examined without including their societal context, Apple, although using the term 'ideology' in the larger, sociological sense, concurs with this. Ideology on a personal level is also a powerful motivating force. For the purpose of examining relationships in both the research schools it is a useful concept, in that BT was unhappy from the start with the impending changes and remained unwilling to relinquish her hold on what she considered to be good practice. In spite of the fact that this alienated her from the rest of the staff, in particular the head, and made to feel inadequate, she clung doggedly to her position until she was swept along by the juggernaut of imposed change. The other five teachers, who also expressed initial doubts, very soon appeared to achieve practical mastery over the changes, and quickly absorbed new terminology. It is precisely these qualities possessed by primary teachers, and I would suggest by women in particular, that the government has come to rely upon when imposing yet another innovation on schools. Apple makes the point that we cannot afford not to understand the way in which

school experience (I would take this to mean for teachers as well as pupils) merely reproduces the existing social order. We can then begin to see how society..

'...perpetuates its conditions of existence through the selection and transmission of certain kinds of cultural capital on which a complex yet unequal industrial society depends...'

(p 60)

In this analysis, the teacher in the classroom does indeed seem to be a pawn in the political system.

The metaphor of the teacher as victim is a powerful one. There is a sense in which teachers have little control over constraints such as the nature of the building, class sizes, and the timetable, not to mention an imposed curriculum. Teachers' work is also divided in ways reflecting experience, sex, administrative involvement and the histories of particular schools. As Connell (1985) says...*'All these divisions get blurred in practice, though together they influence the work of any given teacher'*. Meighan (op.cit.) uses the analogy to analyse the teacher's situation. He acknowledges the pragmatic constraints such as buildings, timetables, headteachers with particular ideologies, assessment systems, resources, and the expectations of various clients, which, may seem trivial if taken alone, but become significant in their cumulative effect. He adds a cautionary note, however, on the use of analogies, as, in his opinion, they can clarify but can also distort. Aspinwall (1985) also sees teachers as having little control over their own destinies, standing, as they do, under the domination of two powerful hierarchies, the hierarchy of their status and the hierarchy of knowledge production, over which they have little choice. (p 67) The 'teacher-as-researcher' movement of the 80's with its biographical focus began to lend a sense of power to the individual teacher, but with the advent of a national curriculum much of this has been eroded.

Apple(1986) has described the process whereby teachers become victims of a system

which erodes their work privileges and leads to a chronic sense of work overload as *intensification*, that is, the pressure on teachers to do more work in the same amount of time in order to improve productivity. This often results in work being taken home or completed in official breaks so that everything 'gets done'. In his view one of the most important effects of intensification is to reduce the quality of service provided, as in 'getting the work done' the teacher does not have time to be creative or imaginative and his/her work becomes proletarianised, effectively 'de-skilling' teachers. Pollard et al (1994) found that in the early stages of national curriculum implementation (by 1992) teachers' responses tended to support the intensification thesis, as there was '*evidence of a move from an expressive commitment to work to more instrumentalism, and even alienation*'(p.99), although he notes that there was a significant minority of teachers who believed that a 'new professionalism' was possible, particularly in assessment of individual children, '*provided they had the confidence to shape the imposed changes to more professionally acceptable ends*'. By 1993, however, workloads, stress levels and demoralisation had escalated under the increasing constraints of imposed change.

As my research did not continue beyond 1991 it is difficult to say whether the six teachers would have come to a similar conclusion. All six intensified their work and were showing signs of pressure, but BT was the only one to consciously resist the growing tendency to take work home, remarking that she needed to have a social life in order to offset the demands of school. Eventually, however, her resistance crumbled and she began to mark books in the lunch break and became more instrumental in the classroom.

Campbell and Neill(1992) concluded that Apple's intensification thesis, being difficult to test empirically, must be viewed cautiously as a way of explaining what has happened to British primary teachers as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act. Their

quantitative data, furthermore, led them to believe that propositions about teachers becoming 'de-skilled' were not borne out. As Pollard et al (1994) found, many teachers were convinced that their professional skills had been enhanced by having had to implement the national curriculum. Moreover, the notion that intensification leads to reduced interaction with colleagues was not upheld by either research, in that both sets of data showed unprecedented levels of co-operation and collegiality. This was further reinforced by the CICADA project which sought to track pedagogic change between 1986-1992 (Alexander 1994). The image of the teacher as a victim would appear not to be relevant here but instead to be one of resilience in the face of external pressure.

I would once again argue that the fact that almost all infant teachers are women has an important bearing on the issue. They are more vulnerable to exploitation because of their sense of obligation to meet the children's needs in the widest sense, and, therefore, prone to over-conscientiousness. The ever-increasing demands of an unmanageable workload meant that they were having to sacrifice their own educational priorities to governmental ones, with the result that they were trapped by their own conscientiousness. Their response, judging from research, seems to have been a positive move to make use of the new skills they were acquiring and to minimise the disturbing effects of change on their pupils.

Of relevance here is the earlier theme of the feminisation of teaching. Delamont (op.cit.) has argued that women have historically been denied access to the professions, especially law, medicine and science, and, even when they are eventually inside the citadel, they are subjected to models of male-female relations which are non-egalitarian and non-collegial. Weiler (1994) refers to this response as the 'narrative of nurturing women and rational men' (p.30) which leads to the characterisation of women teachers as maternal caretakers. She recommends that we should consider the idea that our present identity as 'women' is itself a construct, which possibly prevents us from relating to the

world in a wide variety of ways.

Grant (1987) in a study of three hundred primary school teachers, found that women overwhelmingly perceived themselves as being disadvantaged in career terms. This appeared to be due to three factors. Firstly, that because of home circumstances, women sought promotion later than men, and by that time were considered too old. Secondly, that qualities of leadership were attributed by promoters (mainly male) to men rather than women, and, thirdly, that sponsorship from advisers was awarded more readily to men. Furthermore, 16% of the women claimed to have been asked discriminatory questions at interview which generally centred on how they combined home and school responsibilities.

'Such questions suggest that the interviewers' construct of gender roles is defined in narrow, traditional terms which accentuates women's roles as wives and mothers and diminishes their roles as teachers'.

(p 237)

Al-Khalifa (1992) recommends *'a significant reorientation in training and management practice which affects men's attitudes and behaviour as well'* (p 105) if we are to acknowledge and act upon the development needs of the women teachers who make up 60% of the teacher population. Otherwise we are failing to make the best use of their skills, experience and knowledge and allowing the management of our schools to become less effective.

Grumet (1988) offers a fascinating sociological and psychoanalytical examination of the process by which teaching has become feminised and how this very process has both promoted and sabotaged the interests of women in our culture. Grumet argues that their presence in schools was born out of sentimentalism. For example...

'Many are the statesmen they have raised by their secret magic into fame; and whenever they are tempted to repine at their appearance of weakness and inferiority it becomes them to remember that their greatest strength lies in their 'weakness', their commands in their 'tears'.

(Bennett (1795) cited Grumet)

She calls for a true feminisation of the curriculum, schools, classrooms, and understandings between parents and teachers where women primary teachers and mothers can be allies. She exhorts them to acknowledge the ways in which schools perpetuate the assymetry in class, privilege and gender that is present both in homes and workplaces. Instead, she argues, teachers have betrayed mothers by delivering children over into the language, rules and relations of patriarchy.

Ball (op.cit.) sees the social identity of gender as a source of factional conflict within a school. In his view there is always *'an emotional and sexual subtext'* which has probably become even more sharply defined with the development of women's groups in school and the articulation of the woman's 'voice', which does not sit comfortably within an institution shaped by patriarchy. Stanworth (1983) puts forward the view that the belief that, in our society, we operate from the basis of a meritocracy, is one of the most cherished myths of our time. Women, along with other groups, still have to work within institutions which reflect inequality. Schools have a particular responsibility in that they are not only politically dominated by male interests, but, as Stanworth's empirical work shows, they also reinforce stereotypes of inequality within the pupils. Hunt (1991) reminds us that this has been the case since the early part of the century, in that girls' education was compromised by attitudes which, in their turn, were reflections of class and cultural tensions in society at that time.

In primary education, and in particular in the infant school, where the power often rests in the hands of a female headteacher and all the members of staff, both teaching and

ancillary, are women, there exists a much more complex model of relationships. This, in theory, should offer support and a common understanding of the private and professional plight of its individual members and the meanings lodged in the concept of authority probably include a softening in the delivery of its rules. For example, although BT suffered because of the pressure exerted on her and the lack of trust in her, demonstrated both explicitly and subtly, by her headteacher, we might speculate that she may have found her situation different had the person in power been a man.

The future

The call for 'back to basics' has currently become a political slogan, presumably to reassure voters that life under a Tory government means a return to 'traditional' family values and higher standard in schools, the suggestion being that 'the old days' were better than the present. The reality is that most of these claims, especially those relating to education, are either untrue or at the very least, exaggerated. It is not intended here to examine the wider political implications of the concept of returning to basics, but to explore its relationship with education.

A discussion paper on the state of primary education in 1992, (Alexander et al (op.cit.)) caused strong reactions both in the media and amongst teachers. The report itself, criticised for being published after a period of only seven weeks from the time of appointing the inquiry, was understood by many to be saying that the teaching principles recommended by the Plowden Report in the 60's -*'the highly questionable dogmas of recent decades'*- were no longer tenable and there was to be a 'back to basics' move to counteract falling standards. As one newspaper put it...

*'the report lends great weight to the principle of a 'knowledge base'
and firmly dismisses trendy methods'.*

(Daily Express 23.1.92)

The popular press made claims that 'the child-centred technique' had swept through classrooms during the 60's and still prevailed in most of them. Furthermore, it confirmed that Alexander, Rose and Woodhead were denouncing these methods in favour of single subject teaching by a specialist or semi-specialist teacher. In the wake of the report Alexander, in particular took the opportunity to state that he was not only angry at the speed at which the report had been published before schools and teachers could see it, but also at the way in which it had been misinterpreted. He went on to make counter claims that there was no intention of suggesting a return to teaching the three 'R's as there was no evidence to suggest that schools had ever neglected them. What he offered for the future was a '*mix of good subject teaching and topic teaching*'. (Independent 2.2.92.) although Campbell (1993) is of the opinion that the tasks currently demanded of classteachers are '*realizable only by Renaissance men and women*'.(p.25) The discussion of research evidence in the preceding chapter bears out Alexander's assertion that neglect of the basic curriculum elements of maths. and English has never been the case, even before the national curriculum.

It is now more than twenty years since the Black Papers and the William Tyndale affair set in motion the now outdated rhetoric which is still polarising the so-called 'progressive' and 'traditional' factions in British primary schools. The introduction of a national curriculum was a unique opportunity to discard old prejudices and move towards what Alexander calls '*an inclusive, eclectic and research-based approach to primary teaching*'. (T.E.S.1.2.93.), but somehow what has occurred is an endless recycling of the same tired accusations.

It had been suggested (Lawton 1989) that most teachers, being conscientious professionals, would face up to the challenge of the national curriculum, despite the difficulties involved and the inadequate provision for training. Later research indicates that teachers are, indeed, facing up to the challenge, but there is a personal price being

paid. Cox et al (1991) and the follow-up study Cox (1992), showed that infant teachers' cautious views about the introduction of the national curriculum were even more negative a year later, a point made by Campbell (op.cit.) in describing the impact of the changed nature of infant teaching on teachers' personal, social and domestic lives. Cox and Sanders(1994) in the analysis of their two studies, give examples of the pressure on teachers as a result of the national curriculum to allow their professional responsibilities to extend into their domestic lives. A typical comment was *'The National Curriculum seems to be continually on one's mind. I never switch off from school'*.(p.81)

Some of the issues, such as manageability, optimum class size, subject expertise and curriculum wholeness, are being addressed by research and those who have the power to enforce changes in education would do well to look forward to acting upon its recommendations. 'Looking back' to anything is bound to be less than fruitful.

One might speculate on the effects if a greater number of male teachers were to be recruited into reception and Year 1 classes in the future. An examination of the skills involved in teaching very young children would seem to suggest that they are not specifically female, for example, the ability to maximise the practical environment of the classroom, using stimulating resources. Davis (1986) nominates *'the ingenuity and thought given to the materials to be made available on a continuous or periodic basis and how these and the classroom furniture are to be arranged or re-arranged'*.(p 68)

The teacher's planning abilities are also a strong resource. Included in this would be achieving a suitable match between the children's developmental level and the learning environment. David et al (1992) believe it to be essential that teachers know about the characteristics of young children and the developmental principles governing their growth, particularly in the ways in which they learn. Included in this would be the ability

to articulate clearly how one might increase the intellectual demands made on the child to ensure that learning is progressive.

Finally, there is a phenomenon well known to early years teachers, that is the ongoing dialogue and partnership with parents. Drummond (1991) describes a project (Athey 1990) in which teachers, researchers and parents worked closely together, having regular, challenging discussions about the cognitive content of their children's learning, drawing on observations made at home by the parents. As a result, the children themselves and their younger siblings made unpredicted intellectual gains. There is no reason to expect that men are not as capable as women of having this kind of dialogue with parents.

Stuart Cuno is the protagonist in Iris Murdoch's novel (Murdoch 1985) about a young man who decides to embark on a moral apprenticeship in order to become good. He eventually decides, after several catastrophes, and much to the surprise of his family and friends, that the obvious way to achieve his aims is to teach little children, because 'things must be got right at the start'. His idea of 'right' is to show them how to use words in order to *think*, to give them an idea of what goodness is and how to love it. Praiseworthy aims, but again, not only masculine ones.

If all the skills discussed are the prerequisites necessary to becoming an effective infant teacher, none of them could be said to be exclusively female and yet it is rare to find a man in an infant school staffroom. Personal experience has shown this to be changing to a miniscule degree, as in the last two years, two of the students in a cohort of 150, were not only male but, from the start of the teacher training course, they were firm in their intention to teach infants, a sphere regarded by some of their contemporaries as 'women's work'. After some initial reservations, schools were increasingly impressed by their performance on teaching practice and, ultimately, both of them secured posts in

reception classes. One can only admire their determination not to be browbeaten by sex discrimination. Their presence in the infant school classroom is also important because of the extent to which single parent families are generally headed by women.

It is an issue which must be taken seriously by those responsible for teacher education courses and, as we appear to be moving towards more school-based teacher training, by the schools themselves. One of the Plowden ideals was a more fluid understanding on the part of infant and junior teachers of each others' roles. One way of achieving this was to exchange classes for a day or a week. In the climate of choice which existed at that time, response to the suggestion could not be described as large-scale, although those who tried it claimed to have gained something from the experience. If the notion of exchange were an accepted part of a teacher's training so that students could not only develop skills which were appropriate for their chosen age-group, but were also required to spend time and complete assignments related to another, barriers formed by prejudice along the lines of gender might begin to break down.

Grumet (op.cit.) dismisses the 'cult of maternal nurturance' as sheer sentimentality, and argues that, prevalent though it has been as a myth, it has done little to introduce the atmosphere of the home or the integrity of the mother/child relationship into contemporary schools. This is largely because school systems have become increasingly mechanised and impersonal so that *'most of our classrooms cannot sustain human relationships of sufficient intimacy to support the risks, the trust, and the expression that learning requires'*.(p 56). What is more, Grumet is of the opinion that fundamental differences in society's expectations of males and females have led women to see the education of the young as a gradual growth in independence, whereas men seek to extend their claims on children through strategies of control. In addition to this, Grumet points to the heavily-disguised misogyny which still flourishes whenever school failure is attributed by society to divorce rates, working mothers and single-parent families. If this

is a sincere belief on the part of society, it is surprising that there are not more men in the early years of education, themselves laying down the groundwork which they acknowledge to be so fundamentally important.

The insight I was privileged enough to be allowed to have into the situation of six teachers at a sensitive time in their professional lives, demonstrated to me not only their professional strength and personal vulnerability but also their powerlessness through their belonging to an underprivileged social group. As the literature has suggested, women have been eagerly encouraged into the teaching profession at times when an alternative to men was needed for one reason or another, relegated to working with the youngest children on the grounds that it was 'in their nature' to be surrogate mothers, the low status of which led to their not being accepted as professionals. Ground gained in the last thirty years which eventually resulted in equal pay and conditions has a backlash in that professional working women, especially those with children, are often blamed for all the ills of society.

The national curriculum has been made to work through the diligence and commitment of infant teachers such as the six I observed and interviewed. They demonstrated a wide range of personal qualities and professional skills whilst acting as a buffer between the pressures of testing and the children themselves. It is my belief that it was precisely these qualities on which the government was relying, to make the national curriculum a success, and the fact that infant teachers are almost always women is not without significance. It will be interesting to see the effects of Key Stage 2 SATs on upper primary school teachers, as many more of them will be men, although it must be said that they will probably have inherited by that time a much lighter version of the tests than their Key Stage 1 colleagues had.

It is clear that any insights offered by research into change at Key Stage 1 need to be pursued and tested further, but there are themes which recur strongly enough from it to be worth noting. Alexander (1994) points out that the CICADA project showed little curriculum change and '*demonstrates familiar historical truths about surface change and deeper continuity*'.(p.2) Campbell and Neill (1994) found that, from the point of view of the teachers, '*the overwhelming impression held by them was of continuity with the past*'(p.96), a view which was echoed by Cox and Sanders (1994). On the surface this may seem at odds with the theme of work overload and curriculum unmanageability which is also prevalent in the research, but it is my contention that one of the reasons why Key Stage 1 teachers, being mainly women, battled with overwork and the resultant stress was in order to prevent dramatic change in their pupils' experience, because their 'occupational culture' has always emphasised the primacy of children's emotional needs.

In Chapter 1 reference was made to the concept of professionalism in relation to women teachers, and the question was raised as to whether the six teachers in my study would respond to change by adopting a self-determinist stance or by dutifully accommodating the pressures brought about by change, at whatever cost to their personal well-being. Their response, supported by wider-reaching national research, indicates that, not only is the latter the case, but that they have also tried to find positive elements in the national curriculum. I would argue that Key Stage 2 teachers, where there would be a significant proportion of male teachers, and, therefore, a different tradition, would have seen the demands of the national curriculum as a threat to their view of themselves as professionals and responded more strongly to its unmanageability. Indeed, the Dearing review and boycotting of tests, led by Key Stage 3 teachers, has resulted in a simplified curriculum format and the additional support of external marking of tests.

Women teachers are no less articulate or capable than men, but I would contend that they have been hampered by being members of an unequal society, which has presented them from an early age with an image of themselves which is one of passive acceptance

of their inferior role within it. The ways in which these six infant teachers construed their role and responsibilities supports both this view and arguments which portray the continued feminisation of teaching.

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Questions for interviews-Summer term 1989

1. What was your reaction when you first became aware of the probable introduction of a national curriculum?
2. What is your attitude now?
3. Did you take part in any local authority INSET days?
4. Do you feel adequately prepared to teach the national curriculum?
5. How do you group your children at the moment?
6. How do you use ancillary help?
7. What proportion of time do you currently spend on the 'core' subjects?
8. What changes do you think you will have to make?
9. What do you feel about the testing of 7 year olds?
10. How important to you is your relationship with your class?
11. Do you think this will change?

1. What was your reaction when you first became aware of the probable introduction of a national curriculum?

Dismay. The publications looked like a lot of experts had sat down and dreamed up the ideal without thinking about the poor teachers who had to do it. But once I began to look through I felt quite reassured because it's mainly what we're doing already. I still feel unsure how we're going to cover it all in the time allowed, though.

2. What is your attitude now?

I feel quite confident, but the history they're talking about now bothers me. The aspects they're discussing are too much too soon for young children. And that's something else, of course. We're going to have to cover topics whether the children are interested or not.

3. Did you take part in any local authority INSET training days?

Yes. I went to the Middle Infants day at Hatfield. You know, they had the whole room set up around Goldilocks and the Three bears. It was good but they should have had real children to show how they would use the equipment. As the maths co-ordinator I'm also going to a three-day course in the Autumn term.

4. How successful do you think they were?

Very good. And of course, you can talk to other teachers at these courses who are in the same boat as you. Yes, they were successful.

5. Do you feel adequately prepared to teach the national curriculum?

Yes, I feel well prepared.

6. How do you group your children at the moment? App. 2(ii)

By ability at the moment and I intend to continue with that. It's the only way I can keep tabs on what they're up to. That's only for their work, you understand. Once they're finished their work in the morning, they can 'choose' the rest of the day then they sit in friendship groups. Mind you, there may not be time for 'choosing' in the future.

7. How do you use any auxiliary help?

I have a welfare one morning a week and for one hour one afternoon. Three parents come in to hear readers during the week and I have had the occasional dad come in to mend things for us. The welfare supervises craft work usually.

8. What proportion of time do you currently spend on the 'core' subjects?

I should think half the day roughly is spent on maths and language in fairly equal proportions. I'm ashamed to say that science doesn't figure largely on my timetable but I intend to re-think that. Well, I'll have to, won't I?

9. What changes do you think you will have to make?

We're trying to sort out the record-keeping as a school. We've divided ourselves into three working groups to look at each core area and reporting back to the rest of the staff once a week. I think we're going to have to communicate with parents more and also spend more time after school preparing and evaluating. Maureen and I in the parallel class are going to work as a team in the future, following the same theme.

10. What do you feel about the testing of 7 year olds?

It depends what the tests are. In the holidays I'm going to look at the three core areas and try to devise some kind of assessment grid for myself. I'm also going on an

Assessment day come in November, so the whole area of assessment should become clearer. When we get the time to do it is another matter. But - testing on one day - pencil and paper tests - no, Cat (2)

11. How important to you is your relationship with the children in your class?

It's important, but at the end of the day you're there to teach them. You can't right the wrongs of the world. Sometimes I do feel sorry for some of them but it's for their own good that they get on with it.

12. Do you think this will change?

It might. I mean when you're coming up to assessment what happens if a child is over or upset. You can't say "sorry, he didn't do this bit". If the pressure is on us it'll be transferred to the children. It must be.

Preparatory notes for observations

- 1.** Check beforehand with the teacher (or timetable) as to the curriculum focus of the lesson.
- 2.** On the reverse side of the first page of the observation schedule, note down the subject area(s), using the accepted national curriculum code.
- 3.** Fill in the date, the time and the teacher's code.
- 4.** Spend a few minutes writing in note form a description of the scene, also on the back of the first page.
- 5.** Check the time on my watch and switch on the tape-recorder.
- 6.** At intervals of one minute, write down what the teacher does in the activity column.
- 7.** At the same time, try to write down what the teacher says in the language column.
- 8.** Note the type of interaction between the teacher and any child, using N or P in the coding column, including the origin of the action e.g. from teacher to child (T->C).
- 9.** After twenty minutes switch off the tape-recorder and leave the classroom.

Date : 24.1.90

Time : 11.06

School B MT

Teacher / ~~amittay~~, Appendix 4(i) B6

Sheet No: /

MINUTE	ACTIVITY RECORD	LANGUAGE RECORD	CODE (P - N)	INITIATOR
1	Bends over girl who is writing about weather. Talks to her quietly. Goes to next child.	Inaudible.		
	Walks over to table where children are weighing. Talks to them about what they are doing.	So if you have seven conkers here, how many have you left at home? Yes, well, sorry.		
	Turns to computer behind her where boy is working. Watches and comments.	Inaudible.		
	Goes to table where children are practising letter formation.	That's much better. You see you can do it when you try. (smiling)	P	T →
	Girl approaches her. She brightens up and discusses her own looking at girl's work.	Inaudible.		
	Picks up pencils from floor. Turns to boy at table behind her.	(sharply) Gary, get on, please.	N	T →
	Crosses room to table where boy is looking bemused. Another boy approaches her with his book.	(impatiently) Gary, you know what you're supposed to be doing.	N	T →
	Stands and discusses boy's work, talking quietly. Bends down by boy who comes to her.	Inaudible. Michelle! Ross! (sharply)	N	T →
	Crosses room to table where children are copy-writing. Boy appears behind her.	"Finished already?" Gary! (sharply)	N	T →
	Helps boy to form letter by holding his pencil with her. Looks at work of boy next table.	Inaudible. Gary! Daniel! (sharply)	N	T →
	Goes to next table. Bends over child. Looks up sharply. Returns to boy's table.	Ross! Why are you off your chair? (crossly)	N	T →
	Moves to another table looks at 3 children for a while.	Yeees... Good, but then what do you need, Right? (sharply)	P	T →
	Crosses to another table. Crosses down by boy.	Ross, you're being very silly about you! (crossly)	N	T →

Date: 24.1.90

Time:

Teacher /amittang.

App. 4. (ii)

Sheet No: 2

MINUTE	ACTIVITY RECORD	LANGUAGE RECORD	CODE (P-N)	INITIATOR
4	Plays with boy talking quietly about his work. Another boy appears at his side and attracts	I'm busy at the moment, Ryan (curtly)	N	T →
5	her attention. He goes off. T goes to another table, watches the magnetising paper-clips	Now you really ought to do it again so that it's a fair test. Remember?		
6	Moves to next table. 2 chr. stand behind her with their books. Bends over boy whilst taking	Gary! James! (sharply) Inaudible.	N	T →
7	their books from them. Holds them in her hand. Boy waits. I goes off.	Let's have a look. Right. And another.		
8	T leans across table and points to page in boy's book. Questions him	Inaudible. Scott! (sharply)	N	T →
9	Turns to boy whose book she is holding. Gives it to him after she has looked through it	Now you have your maths to do and then you may use the computer		
10	Moves down to another table. Taps girl on head as she passes.	Tracey, get on (sharply) Kho. Mink! (sharply)	N N	T → T →
		(12) keys.		
		(2) pos		

Background to observation B6

Teacher: **BM**

Curriculum area: Sc, En, Ma, Te.

Setting: The whole class is working in groups on a variety of activities. One group is weighing, one group is completing weighing worksheets, one group is using magnets to pick up paperclips, two groups are doing writing and language activities and 4 children are using clay with a welfare assistant.

BM seemed very tense throughout this observation, mainly because she had to repeatedly reprimand 3 boys who were not doing as she had asked. She was moving from table to table giving help, but her concentration was broken by the behaviour of the boys who were out of their seats and causing a fuss. She speaks sharply and is visibly very cross. Her interaction with the rest of the class is calm and patient. In the 20 minutes of the observation they attract 12 negative codings from her.

School B Autumn term interview 1990 Teacher BR

BR is 'floating' this term and is, therefore, unavailable for observations but agreed to be interviewed.

Reasons for change ?

It was purely practical in that we didn't have a big enough intake of children this term to justify having two reception teachers so I agreed to work elsewhere in the school.

Responsibilities?

I relieve the head one afternoon a week so that she can attend a management course.

I relieve the curriculum co-ordinators.

I work in the Early Years unit.

I relieve the Deputy of her class.

I assist the Top and Middle infants.

Problems?

It is difficult to switch age-ranges so suddenly.

School innovations?

I'm still part of the team which is writing the Early Years policy for the school.

We're working on our assessment and recording systems for the youngest children.

We're trying to put into practice what we learned on the Arts and History INSET course last term.

Teacher BM.

26 children

Changes in organisation?

The layout of the room is the same, but I have the computer all the time now.

Any changes to the timetable?

No, but I do have different ancillary help. I have 4 hours Welfare help, 2 hours Language Support, and 10 hours of parental help altogether.

First impressions of the class?

Since R--- left I've noticed a great difference in myself and the class generally. They've settled very well considering they've come from a large unit, and there doesn't seem to be a vast difference in ability across the class as a whole. I must say I'm struck by how co-operative and kindly they are.

Any problems so far?

Technology!

Even with the number of adults in the room it's difficult to know if you're being thorough.

And of course there's the debate about reading which makes you wonder if you're doing the right thing.

School innovations?

I now have one hour a week to devote to my role as the Maths co-ordinator.

This is particularly important as we are trying to develop our policy for assessment in Maths.

We have more shared reading per week than before.

We've set up resources for role-play in the hall, so that each child has an hour in there every two weeks.

The two parallel age-groups get together for story twice a week.

We are using a new radio programme which has back-up resources linked to the attainment targets.

INSET?

I still go to the Maths co-ordinators' group meetings.

I go to meetings to follow up the assessment course I attended last term.

Teacher AR

29 children

Appendix 6
(ii)

Changes in organisation?

Not yet but I intend to try to work on the principle of an integrated day

First impressions?

I find that they're not well trained but maybe my expectations are too high. The girls are O.K., but I spend all my time teaching the boys basic skills.

Timetable?

I have 8 hours of special needs help.

" " 4 " " Welfare help.

" " 2 " " Language Support.

A part-time teacher comes in for one hour a week.

Problems?

Technology.

Record-keeping.

Not enough time.

Allowing the children to mix their own paints.

Keeping track.

Innovations?

Integrating Science and Technology.

INSET?

I had my share last term! That assessment course was quite intense. I've made a deliberate decision to cut down.

Teacher BT

30 children

Changes in organisation?

The only difference is that I have separated the paint table into two which gives us much more room.

Changes to the timetable?

I now have 5 hours of Language Support each week. 3 hours of Welfare help, one parent for one morning and another for two afternoons.

First impressions of the class?

R--- is a bit of a problem; he's come from another school (*actually from School A*). The older ones aren't bad -quite amenable in fact, but the younger ones are very definitely immature and lacking in the basic skills.

Problems?

I saw the History documents briefly. They looked a bit worrying, but I shall look at them this weekend.

School innovations?

We exchange classes when there is supply, so that we can observe.

The staff brochure is almost ready.

I'm still involved in the group writing the school Maths policy.

I've had to part with my Home corner now that all the children have role-play in the hall.

INSET?

History in November.

Art, Movement, Drama and Poetry in the Spring.

Textiles in the Summer

School A
18 children

Autumn term interview

Teacher AT

Changes in organisation?

I have much more space in this room so I can have more activities.

I now have room for sand, painting etc.

I find I have to do the more academic work in the morning as they get very tired in the afternoon.

First impressions?

One or two boys are potentially difficult, but they're generally good.

They're certainly of mixed ability.

Timetable changes?

I have 2 hours of Welfare help, 2 hours Language Support, 3 hours of parental help and one hour when a part-time teacher comes in so that I can observe.

Problems?

I've had tops for 7 years so it feels very different to me. Their concentration span is so much shorter. I do worry about fitting the national into the time.

Innovation?

We're introducing role-play this term

We're including Technology, of course.

The whole school is working on the uniformity of children's access to resources.

I'm now the Geography co-ordinator

INSET?

I'm going on a topic work course for a year and a term, that's with Advisers at the C-----Institute, then as I've said I'm the Geography co-ordinator.

Teacher AM

23 children

Changes in organisation?

None.

First impressions?

There is more space because the children are smaller and there are fewer of them.

Time-table changes?

I have 3 hours of Welfare help, one morning of Language Support, 3 hours of special Welfare every day and the part-time teacher comes in for an hour each week so that I can observe.

Problems?

Not so far.

Innovation?

Well, there's L.M.S. of course.

Technology records.

More active learning rather than sitting.

Uniformity of practice in regard to retrieval of resources by the children.

Introduction of role-play.

INSET?

I went to a multicultural session one day after school.

Interviews Spring term 1991

1. How are you assessing your children this term?

BT- I started off with the work completed in their books from last term. I checked it against all the ATs covered and wrote them inside the covers of the books. I then transferred that into a large mark book, only when there was evidence to support it, of course. One piece of writing was a class activity (En 3 4+5).

AR- I have 2 sessions with part-time help. She has the whole class releasing me to assess. My 'special needs' help also makes a difference, although it's often eroded by one thing or another. I've tried to concentrate on measuring and data-handling, but it's been more incidental than systematic. I have checklists and aide-memoires corresponding with ATs.

2. How are you recording your assessments?

BT. I have a folder for each of the children. This term I am trying to cover maths ATs with specific activities - probability and so on.

AR. I certainly use parents and Welfare help to illuminate and reinforce my own judgments. I use a checklist which I give to them, when they hear readers for instance, then I know that we are all looking at the same things.

3. Do you use any ancillary help in the process of assessment? (e.g. welfare help, parents, supply teacher)

BT. Not so far. I haven't had any help at all. There is talk of my having supply next week but I'll believe it when it happens.

AR. I think we covered that in the previous question, didn't we?

4. Has the current debate about the teaching of reading caused any extra pressure on you?

BT. No, I've been keeping both going. We do have a very broad approach in the school as we're always looking at other schemes to 'slot in' wherever we feel the child needs it, but they always take their books home so that parents can hear them read and they're encouraged to choose what they want.

AR. Well, as you know we've recently had an inspection in the school and were told that we should have more of a 'real books' approach which seems to contradict the debate. I like to think that we have a mixture of whatever's appropriate for the child.

5. How are you avoiding stress in your job e.g. using deliberate strategies such as careful planning and hard work, or are there incidental factors such as supportive colleagues, an effective headteacher or your own personality?

BT. I don't think I am avoiding it. I've always found record-keeping and planning difficult. Although I must say that the parallel teacher has been very helpful. It's the middle infant teacher I find difficult to cope with as she's always being held up as being the perfect model and I find it very demoralising. I do find it very necessary to keep a social life going to keep my mind off all this.

AR. I deliberately plan very carefully but I find I'm still worrying more than usual. The parallel teacher is very helpful in that she is better organised than I am. My haphazard way was much more comfortable. I'm putting a lot of hours in but I feel I'm getting nowhere. Of course, it's the first time I've had 'tops' and they are an appalling class anyway. I do rely on support from the Head but there's pressure on her too so she's not always able to give it.

Interviews—Summer Term 1991

BH Could you tell me of any problems or disadvantages of the SATs.

BT Yes. Sometimes it was difficult to interpret the criteria and to be sure of what was actually being asked, of how strictly to apply the criteria. Some of the things I found in the SATs, it was suggested were applied less strictly than I had in the teacher assessment. So that was a difficulty. Organisation was another. Without a considerable amount of support I don't know we would have got through them.

BH Did they take longer than you had anticipated?

BT No. We stuck fairly rigidly to the timetable allotted. But that was with someone else doing the reading.

BH I see. You didn't do the reading.

BT No. Julia (Year 1 teacher) did all the reading with both classes because she had a student. So at least there was a certain amount of consistency.

BH Yes, that was helpful then, wasn't it?

BT Very useful, yes. There were certainly some problems with the English SATs. There seemed to be an awful lot of extraneous bits and pieces. Some of the children achieved the reading for Level 2 but couldn't complete the rest. There was dictionary work and other things. The dictionary work, for example, was in the writing as well as the reading and seemed to give a false picture. Therefore, some of my children were classed as Level 1 because they couldn't actually use the dictionary, which seemed a shame. The writing part I had assessed much more strictly in my teacher assessment. There were several I felt were alright with Level 1 but not quite Level 2. We asked the moderator and she said they were Level 2. I didn't they were at Level 2 if you stick to the criteria laid down by the national curriculum.

So that was a problem of interpretation. Also one of the maths- the use of addition and subtraction. In the national curriculum document it isn't stated clearly that it has to be recall although in the SAT it was. If you could see the children working it out they couldn't achieve it, which I didn't think was fair. Some could it, but very, very few.

I found bits of the SATs very tedious. Where you had to take another group on to the next level. I'm thinking of the science in particular. By the time you are doing something for the eighth time the children may be enjoying it but 'Miss' was very

bored. As activities the children enjoyed them. They were in a small group, they had the teacher to themselves, lots of attention- it was great.

The (I'm going off the point a bit here) -the first group were given occupational activities whilst the others were being SATted so there was no teaching for three weeks and I think that's bad, especially this term when you should be taking them as far as possible. We used vast quantities of photocopied sheets. We had two extra adults in the room for most of the time and the children were obliged to sit still a great deal. By the middle of the second week, the noise level outside that classroom door was horrendous. It was as if they had exploded. The behaviour had certainly worsened and aggression increased.

BH That's interesting.

BT Yes. Some parents told me this was also happening at home. Now she may have been influenced by a television programme which, I believe, said something similar. I don't know, but it was noticeable. I felt it was such a waste of three weeks which those children will never regain. I think, quite frankly, this group has suffered as the basic work has not been covered all the way through. Well, it's been covered but there hasn't been time for it to be properly understood- they've been blighted. I hope it's not severe. Whether I've been particularly unfortunate and it's this group which has just not 'gelled'. I don't know. As individuals they are nice kids but they can be quite nasty to each other. As a group they just don't work together. It is not a group. So how much is that and how much they've been affected by the SATs I don't know. There are quite a lot of not very able children in the class- some also who are just not working to their full potential, but a lot who are struggling and need lots of individual work.

BH Did you find any anomalies between your own assessment and the SATs?

BT Some. Sometimes it was down to the type of child. D--- for example. She scored far higher on the SAT than I had assessed her, simply because in class she never finishes anything. She came out at Level 3 in the science because, working in a small group she couldn't get away with anything. I knew deep down she could do it but now I actually have evidence.

BH Did you have to appeal on anyone's behalf?

BT No. Quite frankly, the way the information was coming through and the changes that were being made. I began to wonder just how much value to put on the final results. It just proved, somehow, that the whole thing was a waste of time.

BH What other positive things came out of the SATs?

BT The activities themselves, on the whole, were interesting and useful. Some went on too long, for example, in the maths. But most of them, I thought, were good.

BH Did you think you were still able to keep a reasonable relationship with the children?

BT I think so. I wasn't aware of any change.

BH Did parents make any comments during the assessment?

BT N. We deliberately kept it low key. The only change which really affected them was that we had to abandon our usual practice of inviting them in every Friday morning to do shared reading, but they seemed to accept this. The mums who always come in to help were the ones who were the most aware but they have always said that they think the whole thing is ridiculous. I suggested that they wrote to their M.P. if they felt strongly but I don't suppose they did.

BH Well, _____. In spite of your anxiety in the beginning, you seem to have come through it all alright.

BT Yes, but ever since Christmas I don't feel I've done my job properly and now I'll have to catch up on all the things I should have done.

11 June 1991

Interviews- Summer Term 1991

BH Can you tell me first of all what you think were the problems, practical and otherwise, of the SATS?

AR Organisation primarily. You know we had the whole school re-organised to cope with the assessment. You know I had a support teacher, so of course when I was outside the classroom she was in, so there was no problem at all. It was really quite straightforward. When I was in the classroom the problem was that I had to work for a long time with a small group of children in a concentrated way, such that often I would have to ask the class to not interrupt, not directly, so they would be left to their own devices for a greater length of time than they normally would. Only we organised it so that I did the activities that needed the most concentration, the maths one and the science one, where you had to be more careful to listen to what they said or you might miss something. It's so vast really. On paper when you started it, it didn't look too bad because you had this group there, then that group later on, but in practice it didn't work out because first of all the length of time it took was far more than was suggested in the book. It would take longer more often than not. Worst of all was then the re-grouping, which was much more difficult. Your starting-off plan looked quite good- a group doing this there and another group doing that over there- but as you moved on, if they succeeded they had to go on and attempt the next level. If they failed they had to attempt the level below, so you were forever re-grouping and re-organising. What did look like quite a neat plan and quite easy to organise to begin with, became very complicated because of almost every child having to do two. Because they were doing two levels of every task, if you see what I mean, so I found that was the most difficult. And also because some of the lengthy ones were ones that combined two levels, like the science and the maths ones. You would try to work out what level they were at so that you knew whether you needed to do more and that was also very complicated to do as you went along. You were in the end having to do it and finding out afterwards what level they were at. Do you know what I mean?

BH I do, yes. Did you have to abandon any of your plans, either because the support teacher was ill or?

AR Well, I was very lucky actually. And in fact all the help I was promised arrived and I was never without it. That wasn't true for the other teacher. My colleague needed a lot of help with language support because she has two bilingual children, but it so happened that the Language Support Teacher was on jury service so she was without help for quite a long time. When the jury service was finished she managed to squash in quite a lot of the assessment, but couldn't do it at the time she planned because the help wasn't available. I was lucky. And she was ill as well in the middle, whereas I had no illness- the attendance was good. Occasionally the organisation went because a child wasn't there

who I wanted to assess, but I was lucky on the whole. The attendance in my class is quite good. There were very few absences. I've just got a few children who I can almost predict what day they're not going to be in and I've just got to work round it. There are a few of those but on the whole the sickness, absences, support, that went fairly well. The main problem was the tests themselves, really, and the time taken.

BH Did you find overall that it took longer than you had thought?

AR Oh, absolutely. We'd timetabled three weeks and a bit extra. Well, we started in the third week of term. As well as the Bank Holiday we had an extra day closed so one week only had three days in it. So starting in the third week, including the short week, it took me right up to the end of the half term virtually; I was still doing them in the last week before half term. So that's over five weeks. The first week I timetabled it and only did it during those times, then realising how slowly it was going I virtually abandoned that idea and really did it all the time that I was working in groups, as opposed to reading a story or doing anything as a class. So it not only took more weeks but it took a greater part of each week than I expected and we abandoned a lot of regular activities. We hardly did P.E. We didn't do any silent reading or country dancing. There were a lot of things that were dropped out in order to get through.

BH Were there any surprises in the results of the SATS compared with your own assessments?

The only things that I felt didn't match my own assessment were not great surprises. There were one or two factors where it didn't match. One instance where a lot of children didn't seem to match was Maths 3. I think in fact you were watching me do that one- it starts with recall then goes on to problem-solving with money. Well, there the two things and they have to achieve them both to score the level. Well, in the curriculum there actually three things; it's those two and 'difference'. Most of mine scored Level 2 because they could do 'difference' and one of the others so I scored them as two, but when it came to SATs a lot of them dropped down on one, as I knew they would, so only scored 1. So a lot of mine were scoring 1 when I had said they were 2. On top of that when I had scored them I hadn't used the basis of recall. I hadn't understood that it meant recall. I understood 'know and use addition facts to 20' to mean working it out with cubes, anything, mentally even, they can do mental arithmetic, but they haven't got the recall. So a lot of them had lower scores, although I feel they are at that Level 2, but not in the terms of the SAT.

So there was that one. There was another one where I felt I wasn't too sure of the result. One or two of my Level 1 children (like R---) who I felt I wasn't sure I hadn't actually helped too much. I wasn't sure just how much independence was required, for example, in filling in the chart for the science. Therefore, perhaps, I'd helped him to score. I mean, he'd barely scored Level 1 and yet on that he'd actually scored Level 2. I'm not sure.....

The thing I found about the tests that was very strange. Some tests were very subjective in the scoring. It was very difficult for the teacher to know just how to score and where to draw the line. Others were very rigid-three out of four and that's it. The exact opposite. Very strange. With the subjective ones I know they are open to interpretation and I know I might not always have been doing it right. I did find I was making mistakes. I actually made a huge bloomer on the science ones to begin with. There is so much to read and take in. I thought I knew what I was doing but I didn't. For example, when they're doing Levels 3 and 4 for Science 1 (floating and sinking) they have four objects that they work on and if they go on to Level 3 they have four more. Well, I'm ashamed to say I thought they had to make a new chart for the new four but, in fact, they had to make a chart for all eight. So for the first couple of groups of children I was actually doing it wrongly. I had to re-do that, and there were a number of times when I would start an activity, having read it, thinking I knew what I was doing and then look at it again and realise I'd misread it or I'd think "What does this really mean?" I would suddenly realise that there might be two ways of interpreting it. On the maths we did ring and ask the moderator about Maths 5 Level 3- counting in twos, threes, backwards etc. because it didn't say whether they could use anything. So we asked and she said that they could use a 100 square but, you see, that makes a huge difference. Other teachers may not have enquired and their children would have achieved less. So that's another problem.

BH The ambiguity.

AR Yes. The ambiguity. I'm talking in a great muddle here, I'm sure.

BH No, that's fine.

AR I blame myself in a way, but when you're doing something for the first time and there was an awful lot to read and take in. You try to read and understand it. I'd be working with the children and I'd always have the book there for every move. Things like the science and maths I continually had to refer to the book to remind me what I was looking for. The English one - I didn't do the reading. You know that, don't you? Heather (the Head) did that. It must affect the organisation if you don't. You must have to have the rest of the class very well occupied. I didn't have to do that. But the rest of the English I did do and I found it relatively easy.

BH Yes, it's more natural, isn't it?

AR Yes, it fitted in quite well so it was no problem to organise. We did more whole class work than we would normally do, but it worked well. We called it 'special' work, never testing and I don't think they felt it was testing. Sometimes the maths recall made them a bit nervous. They knew this was a bit different but I'm not sure they felt it was

any sort of test. And some said they liked doing 'special ' work. Some of the activities they enjoyed. When they were struggling and you couldn't tell them if they were right or wrong, they looked a bit stressed. You could feel the strain there.

BH Were there any of the tests you felt were educationally suspect. That you didn't agree with or wouldn't have included?

AR You mean by content or approach. Oh, I'd have to get the book out and look again. Well, the science one was good but far too long. Do you mean those kind of factors?

BH Things that you felt, with your knowledge of the age group were not appropriate.

AR No, I felt the levels were pitched quite right. I didn't always agree with them, for example, the writing. English 3 included punctuation in story-writing. Well, a lot of mine can write perfectly independently but they don't always punctuate so they didn't score as well as they should. And I didn't like the recall, quite honestly, but maybe it's me that's wrong. I was quite happy with mental arithmetic but recall wasn't something I'd done.

BH Tell me whether you found any advantages in the SATs, you know really good ideas.

AR One advantage was that I've learned a lot about assessment from it. I've learned new skills. It also made me understand what the attainment targets meant. It shows that the national curriculum needs to be explained better. By giving detail on the SATs it showed what the AT was getting at. It told me more about the national curriculum. As for the children I don't think there were any advantages at all.

BH Were there any children whose results made you feel you wanted to appeal?

AR No. There were none that were so far out that an appeal was necessary. I wasn't prepared to quibble partly because I wasn't sure I was interpreting the tests properly.

BH Has there been any feedback from parents?

AR We sent a letter out beforehand telling them about it but none came in. One comment I had was "We don't really like it but we won't stand in your way."

10 June 1991

Questions for interviews-Spring term 1990

- 1.** How much are you aware of having the national curriculum in mind when you are teaching?
- 2.** What kind of INSET have you been involved in this term?
- 3.** Has there been any more national curriculum training in school?
- 4.** Do you think your relationship with the children has changed this term?
- 5.** Have you changed your organisation in the classroom?
- 6.** What have you found difficult about implementing the n.c. this term?
- 7.** Have some curriculum areas changed status?
- 8.** Do you think the n.c.has improved your practice?
- 9.** How do you assess your children at the moment?
- 10.** How do you feel about assessment in the future?

Notes for observing teacher assessment-Spring term 1991

1. Describe setting:

personnel
activities
curriculum area
grouping of children
classroom environment (incl. display)

2. Assessment pointers

Any overt assessment
Mode of assessment-pupil participation/teacher observation
Mode of recording (if any) tape, checklist etc
Any indication by teacher to children that they are being assessed
Any recognition by children that they being assessed
What is happening to children who are not being assessed?
Teacher's awareness of individual needs
Feedback given to children during/after assessment
What happens to the results?

