

# Chapter One

## Introduction and Critical Review of Literature

### Overview

*Whatever else might be said about teaching, few would disagree that the nature and demands of the job have changed profoundly over the years. For better or worse, teaching is not what it was (Hargreaves, 1994: 117).*

On one side, teachers are portrayed as under strain, as their work is becoming intensified. There are increased expectations on the role: to cope with the needs of special education students in ordinary classes; to prepare students for the demands of the technological society; the constantly changing curriculum programmes; the pressures for reform; demands for diverse assessment strategies; more consultation with parents; more communication with colleagues; and more in-service involvement seen as essential to career advancement. Opposing this view, is one that portrays teachers as professional, skilled, and able to bring their knowledge and discretionary judgement to practical classroom matters. This view represents teachers as autonomous makers of their own practice.

This situation appears to need clarification. It is important to research the factors that classroom teachers perceive to influence their work in order to come to a better understanding of the work of teaching. Clarifying the influences on teachers' work may well have consequences for pre-service teacher education, and for the provision of more relevant in-service courses for teachers.

In the educational literature, teachers' work is conceptualised as either determined by structural constraints, which shape and limit teachers' practice, or, that teachers have an amount of personal autonomy to direct and develop their own practice. The work of this thesis is to explore the middle ground, by examining teachers' perceptions and actions as they are influenced by their daily experiences in their workplace context.

## **Introduction**

Teachers are frequently represented in the educational literature, as conservative in their teaching practices (Little, 1990; Tisher, 1990; Hatton, 1988; Sirotnik, 1983), unprepared to implement educational innovation (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991), and being predisposed to accept unfavourable situations and conditions than to struggle to change them (Louden, 1991). Teacher educators are often portrayed as unable to influence these conservative teaching practices (Denscombe, 1982; Hatton, 1987b; Goodlad, 1984; Turney and Wright, 1990). Many reasons are offered in the literature. For the present I consider two contrasting reasons. First, teacher educators themselves are portrayed as exerting a very conservative influence on teaching (Hatton, 1988, 1989). Second, the constraints teachers encounter in the work situation are believed to be so powerful, that the more progressive<sup>1</sup> influence of teacher educators is overwhelmed when pre-service teachers enter the work situation (Gitlin, 1984; Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986). Constraints in the work situation, it is said, result in teachers, as a group, placing a high cultural valuation on privacy, isolation and individualism (D. Hargreaves, 1980; Denscombe, 1982; Little, 1990,1993; Rosenholtz, 1991). These values are reported to support conservative teaching.

Despite the hegemonic representation of teachers' work as determined by situational and other constraints, there is a growing body of research which portrays teachers as having personal autonomy, and being able to overcome situational constraints. This perspective's focus is on individual personal practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1986; Butt *et al.*, 1992), and it attempts to illustrate how teachers take an active, intentional role in the classroom, and are able to reflect on their personal pedagogical practice.

Perhaps the polarised positions can be best illustrated through a brief discussion of a debate on the determinants of teachers' work which took place between Grant and Sleeter (1985, 1987), and Hatton (1987a). Grant and Sleeter (1985, 210) in a study of teachers in an urban school context in the United States, argued that "the literature on teachers' work tends to portray teacher work as overly determined, and may remove, more than is warranted, responsibility from teachers for determining their own work". The data in the Grant and Sleeter study showed that teachers felt that situational problems associated with resources and students to be the main determinants on their work. It was argued by Grant and Sleeter (1985; 219), that the teachers maintained a "traditional definition of teaching, even when various determinants were not placing great pressure on them to do so". And so they concluded that teachers' work is determined as much by themselves, "that is, their [the teachers'] conceptions of society and education, as it is by factors in their workplace" (1985: 219). Teachers are implicitly represented as being autonomous agents once these situational constraints are lessened.

Hatton (1987a; 60), in response to this paper, argued that the significant situational constraints were "not lessened significantly". Moreover, she argued that "radical change will not occur unless the structural changes are made which are extensive enough to modify the cultural responses of teachers". She claimed there was a culturally mediated link between teachers as agents and situational constraints (1987a: 57). Teachers are not autonomous in this view. Structural and indirect situational constraints shape teachers' work, and these indirect situational constraints are often implicit and constitute a part of the society which go unseen and unquestioned. These constraints need to be researched and used to enlighten teacher education. On this view, teachers are represented as constrained in their teaching by social and institutional determinants. They do not have much personal autonomy to shape their teaching as they wish.

The notion of a "point of view" of the teacher needs to be considered also when analysing the cultural responses of teachers (Hatton, 1987a; 58). The example given earlier, by Grant and Sleeter (1985), suggested that despite teacher agreement on the

value of multicultural education, and the value of the in-service work they experienced, many teachers in the study, did not make changes in their teaching. Grant and Sleeter argued this was due to the personal limitations of the teachers. However, Hatton responded by saying that the constraint of time, could explain the lack of innovation. Given the difficulties imposed on teachers by limitations of time, and the “passive support for the business as usual maintenance of the culturally acceptable practices” by other staff members and the School Principal, it was not surprising that little innovation occurred (Hatton, 1987a: 59). The reference to the personal limitations of the teachers is not fully explored in the Grant and Sleeter study. It may be worth noting the use of the term “responsibility” in connection with valuing teachers’ work, by Grant and Sleeter. This brings in the normative question implicitly associated with studies of this type, that teachers ought to be doing better. The literature implies that there is some common understanding of what teaching should achieve, and that teachers, as central to the process, must be responsible, individually and personally for the limitations in outcome. The theme of teacher responsibility and the concomitant guilt which contributes to constraining teachers in their work is analysed by Hargreaves (1994: 141). This factor will be discussed later in Chapter Five in relation to the analysis of the research data.

A second example from the literature of the consequences of a structural change intervention may help emphasise the complexity of factors influencing teachers’ work. This example demonstrates that this polarised perspective on teachers’ work limits the understanding of the influences affecting teachers. Hargreaves (1994) reported on Canadian elementary teachers who had gained around 120 minutes per week of preparation time, from the outcome of collective bargaining. Hargreaves (1994: 123) notes how teachers’ work had become more intensified, and that lack of time was a very pervasive issue among teachers. This solution, through the provision of preparation time, was meant to alleviate some of the intensification of teachers’ work. Many of the teachers in this research responded by noting the outcome of this gain. “Preparation time helps reduce chronic work overload and leads to opportunities for the planning and preparation of more creative work” (Hargreaves, 1994: 131).

This structural reform in the form of a reduction in the number of hours of classroom contact was seen as beneficial, as one would have expected.

Hargreaves goes on to demonstrate some unanticipated and ironical consequences from this preparation time gain. Teachers showed that this gain in time did not necessarily result in gains in collegiality. Teachers used the time for individual work, as it was seen as “too precious to fritter”, for example, in sharing or conversing with colleagues (Hargreaves, 1994: 131). This may indicate the influence of teachers’ perceptions about the nature of their work. Further, a group of teachers noted a preference for no more time away from their classes as this would have had the consequence of reducing what they saw as the quality of commitment, care and good relationships they presently enjoyed with their classes. There seems to be a fine line between what an individual teacher feels was enough time to help prepare work and make gains in the quality of teaching, with that verging on the neglect of students or the loss of good educational outcomes.

Similarly, teachers preferred that the incoming relieving teacher take a specialist type of lesson rather than participate and contribute to the class teacher’s own lesson plan. This did not permit collaborative sharing between teachers for the benefit of students. Classroom control was not to be shared. Hargreaves argues that reforms such as these provide solutions, but each solution poses further situational problems generally in an unanticipated form. He says, “perhaps the real challenge of reform as a continuous process, is acknowledging that every solution has a problem” (Hargreaves, 1994: 138). This may be due to the complexity in the nature of teachers’ work.

Moving to the other extreme, there are studies in the literature, for example, by Loudon (1991), Elbaz (1983), Clandinin (1986), and Butt *et al* (1992) that attempt to describe an individual teacher’s view of teaching. These studies, typically, cover teachers’ biographical detail and personal philosophies as they come together to produce a teacher’s particular pedagogy. Usually, the teacher is observed over a lengthy period to discover his or her thinking and its outcome in practice. In these small scale case studies there is an attempt to value the particular knowledge each

teacher espouses, and to demonstrate where there are regularities in behaviour, by analysing these personalised “images” or “metaphors” implicit in the teaching. The focus of analysis is the teacher in the classroom. The teacher is assumed to have an amount of personal autonomy in his or her teaching. These personal studies in conjunction with the development, for example, of Schon’s work (1983, 1987, 1990), describing professional knowledge and reflection on practice have helped move educational discourse from the means-end rationalism with its predominant technical orientation (Louden, 1992: 178).

To develop worthwhile professional courses, it is important to consider the question of the extent to which these portrayals of teachers’ work are accurate. Importantly, the two contrasting perspectives (that teachers are situationally constrained in their work, or, that teachers have autonomy to practice) are extreme perspectives of what shapes or determines teachers’ work. Intuitively, it would seem that a middle ground position is overlooked and needs consideration. Qualitative research into what teachers feel influences their teaching may be valuable in generating insights necessary to develop more useful understandings of teachers’ work. In other words, the intuitive view that there is an overlooked middle ground can be treated as an hypothesis, requires exploration. Prior to further consideration of this point, I turn to the literature review.

There is an extensive literature relevant to this thesis. The point of the critical review which follows is to present the range of studies relating to teachers and their work in order to appreciate the influences on teachers and teaching that have been recognised and stressed in the literature. The literature to be reviewed is organised in the following way:

#### General Introduction

#### The Nature of Teachers’ Work

#### The Place of Teacher Socialisation

##### Prior Influences on Teachers’ Work

##### The Socialisation Role of Pre-Service Teacher Education

##### Socialisation in the Workplace

## The Role of the Personal in Teachers' Work

After this critical review of the literature, a short summary of influences on teachers' work will be outlined. The chapter will conclude with a review of the chapter and a restatement of the problem of this thesis.

## Teachers' Work; A Critical Review

### General Introduction

The literature provides examples of different constraints on teachers. The most obvious constraints are those experienced at the classroom level, but the literature considers influences that can emanate from other sources. These can be categorised as, first, those influences directly related to *social and cultural* phenomena from the society at large. Second, there are influences emanating from the *work context and institutions* of teaching, and third, those related to the *individual* classroom teacher. These studies all tend to view teachers' work as determined.

Examples of studies which focus at the larger, societal level and outline factors constraining teachers in general are, for example, Apple (1988, 1992); Giroux (1992); and Broadfoot *et al.* (1988). These studies tend to assume that teaching as a form of work is consistent over differing institutional contexts and is directly related to economic and political decisions. These decisions structure and constrain what teachers do. The second level of focus is that of influences at the institutional level (see, for example, Rutter *et al.*, 1978; McNeil, 1986, 1987; Dreeben, 1988; and Rosenholtz, 1991). Here, many influences such as the specific demographics of the school's clientele, its institutional ethos and the school's collegial supportiveness, influence and shape teachers' work. The third focus is of the teacher in the classroom situation, where considerations such as resources, student-teacher ratio, the constraints of time and the traditions of privacy, individualism and presentism influence and constrain what teachers can do (see, for example, Hargreaves, 1984, 1988, 1992a;

Denscombe, 1980a, 1982, 1985; Little, 1990; McLaughlin, 1993; Pollard, 1982; and Woods, 1980, 1990).

All these studies contribute to our knowledge of the influences on teachers in their work situation. It will be argued that they provide an inadequate understanding of the place of the teacher in interacting with these influences to shape and determine teachers' work.

### **The Nature of Teachers' Work**

The literature on teachers' work has ranged from large scale generalised studies such as Goodlad (1984) and Rutter *et al* (1978) which collected data on the teaching profession generally, to more specific case studies like Connell (1985) and Louden (1991). Similarly, the emphasis within this research has varied. Some took the perspective of the sociology of labour (Ozga, 1988; Lawn and Grace, 1990), or emphasised the political and economic structural constraints on teachers, and of labour process theory (Connell, 1985; Apple, 1988; Broadfoot and Osborn, 1988; Giroux, 1992). Others see value in observing teachers in their school contexts (Rosenholtz, 1991) outlining the structural constraints teachers face. Some studies emphasise the individual in their classrooms (Elbaz, 1983, 1991; Louden, 1991) to highlight the influences on these particular teachers and by describing their responses to their work situation, provide the opportunity for generalisation.

It is important to note as Connell (1985) does, that teaching is work. Attempts to conceptualise teachers' work must of necessity simplify the reality of teaching. Connell (1985: 71, 1993: 59), for example, attempted to list the many activities that teachers are typically involved in during a normal school day, and decided that it "would take pages" There is an enormous range of tasks teachers could be expected to be involved in. Green (1971) for example, categorised teachers' work into *logical acts*, *strategic acts* and *institutional acts*. From this analysis, *logical acts* referred to all the reasoning actions and behaviour in teacher practice such as describing, explaining, demonstrating and giving reasons. The second category of *strategic acts* included

disciplining, evaluating, motivating and planning. These activities had to do with the direction of students and the organisation of material. The category of *institutional acts* included keeping student records collecting milk money, and consulting with parents.

Buchmann (1982) noted, the value of these categories was that they roughly described what teachers did, while marking out those activities without which *teaching* could still occur. For example she noted that it was perfectly consistent to claim that teaching was occurring when certain institutional acts of teaching were not. She said, "Socrates did not collect milk money. That, however, did not make him less of a teacher" (Buchmann, 1982: 63). In other words, there will be activities involved in what teachers do that are particular to teaching and consistent with the concept of teaching, and others that have grown with the job. Teachers may perceive these activities to be a necessary and valid part of their work. Some may feel that these activities are an indication of an unfortunate shift in the concerns of teachers (Buchmann, 1982: 67).

The following three tiered classification of the influences on teachers' work may be a useful model to utilise in order to simplify and analyse these factors. Some influences, it will be shown, produce consequences at more than one level, and it is argued that influences cause reactions by teachers and further consequences to their work. The three levels of influences on teachers' work to be discussed are:

- A. The Cultural-Societal Level
- B. The Institutional Level
- C. Individual Level

#### ***A. The Cultural - Societal Level***

At the societal level of explanation of influences on teachers' work, two main types of analyses can be found.

***Social Control.*** The first is demonstrated in the research of Apple (1986,1992); Anyon (1980); and Gitlin (1984,1992), for example. These studies show how policy

initiatives at the bureaucratic level affect the material resources available to teachers. Decisions on where resources are to be put, staffing ratios, career paths, all affect the status, the working conditions and motivation of teachers. Studies have documented the social trends towards deskilling of teachers, the bureaucratization of their work, and increased value given to educational technology as causes for effectively downgrading the status of teachers' work in the society (Apple, 1986). It is difficult to prove the direct linkage to the individual teacher's perspective, but there seems to be little doubt that teachers are experiencing the effect of such influences in their daily work (Hargreaves, 1994).

Hargreaves calls this trend the *intensification* of teachers' work (1994: 117). This concept is drawn from general theories of the labour process, that Hargreaves (1994: 118-119) notes were earlier outlined by Larson (1980). Intensification of work relates to the shortage of time teachers experience to complete tasks, due to the increase in load and demands made on them. It is said that teachers suffer chronic and persistent work overload as they respond to the growing expectations society, school administrators, and parent groups have of them. At the same time, their work remains open-ended, with unclear boundaries, and the general expectation that it should encompass social, moral and emotional issues as well as students' academic progress (Nias, 1989a). To this extent, teachers become dependent on externally, and generally commercially, produced materials, which, it is suggested, lead to a reduction in both the quality of teaching that students receive and also of the intrinsic rewards teachers expect to get in return for their efforts. Teachers lose regard for their own skills as they turn to resources and aids in order to cover externally specified curricula and cater for students' interests. This concept of intensification of teachers' work will be discussed further in Chapter Four as it relates to the research data.

***Ideological Control.*** The second type of analysis of societal influence in the literature tries to show the link between individual teacher's perspectives and dominant social theories that teachers may choose to adhere to. Giroux's (1992) notion of the development of a "technocratic rationality" or Popkewitz (1985) writing on the professionalisation of knowledge and the ideology of professionalism provide

hegemonic theories of social behaviour which it is suggested influence teachers' work. Again, these themes, though relevant, reasonable and interesting, are difficult to document as affecting teachers' perspectives and practice (Zeichner and Gore, 1990: 340). There is little doubt that any hegemonic philosophy espoused by a society must find its practical outcome in, for example, the design and objectives of curriculum materials, or the goals of teacher in-service courses, due to the structure of authority and control in the financing of these facilities. It may be worthwhile to trace, for example, the effect of the popular literature of the "de-schoolers" in the late 1960's on teachers' views and practices. Many teachers, (although not all), attempted to implement these ideas into their work, and the alternative schools movement set itself up to promote these ideals. It is clear that educational ideas such as the open classroom have changed teachers' orientations to their work to some extent (Westbury, 1973; Hatton, 1987b).

There are other areas of societal and cultural influences on teachers' work. The major influences emanate from the curriculum, the social expectations on teachers which demand an amount of care and commitment to their work, and the political factors involved in the Australian school system.

***Teacher Control Through Curriculum.*** Teachers are accountable to governing authorities for curriculum accreditation, and student assessment. Connell (1993: 61) shows how curriculum comes to define teachers' work. The competitive academic curriculum (CAC), he argues is hegemonic in schools, and constrains teachers' view of their own professionalism by advantaging one view of knowledge; the competitive academic view. The CAC is also a source of teachers' work difficulties as teachers have to deal with the consequences of implementing the guidelines and directions of outside bodies for credentialization with batches of students who are not necessarily academically oriented. Teachers are expected by society to provide an equitable education for all students. Success within the CAC is limited to a minority of students. Combined with the constraints of this curriculum, teachers can feel responsible to develop the individual child to his or her potential. Perpetuation of the CAC makes these divergent, and sometimes conflicting, objectives a source of difficulty. The

curriculum may frame teachers' work, or constrain teacher innovation, and perhaps contribute to teachers' frustrations of their work situation.

*The Care and Commitment Of Teaching.* The socially accepted ethos of teaching represents it as an occupation of service to others, and is intrinsically concerned with the moral welfare as well as the education of the young. This may influence teachers to take on values such as responsibility and even perfectionism while they are situated in a role which appears uncertain and open-ended (Hargreaves, 1994; Nias, 1989a). Educational bureaucracies can create policies and structures which may direct what teachers can do. These policies affect both the school administration and the teaching profession. Hargreaves (1977: 79) in his earlier research put forward an analysis of "coping strategies". This concept described teacher behaviour as a response to the constraints and dilemmas which had their origin in the society, and the organisation of teachers' work. He argued, these "societal demands" were "mediated through institutional goals and constraints" influencing teacher and student action (Hargreaves, 1977: 252). In this view teachers are influenced by top-down decision making.

Another documented social influence on teachers is the political and cultural limits of a particular school system. Broadfoot and Osborn (1988) demonstrated with clarity, the effects of the different national contexts of France and England on the classroom practice of teachers. The tighter, more role specific French educational system was said to allow teachers to be professional by focusing on a common curriculum, and the standardised testing of students. It was said that teachers reported higher levels of satisfaction with their work. Whereas, the English system was more open, and the role of teacher, less well defined. Their role included the social and moral welfare of their students. Teachers appeared less constrained and less directed, but expected more from themselves than just the academic progress of their students. For teacher satisfaction, their classes had to be interesting, and students motivated (by teachers' action). Classroom work between the two systems was clearly different, and this, it was argued, was determined by national context. It may perhaps be relevant to pursue the influence of Australian culture and social context on schools.

Hargreaves (1994: 147) takes this point of national context further. Where there is no agreed criteria for success in both the teachers' caring role, and academic role, and where there is the persistence of the tradition of teachers working in isolation, teachers may suffer from the emotions of guilt for example, and face frustration, cynicism and burn-out. He advocates as a solution, stronger forms of collegiality between teachers, to develop shared standards and acceptable limits to teachers' work. As can be seen, these national constraints evidently have consequences for the school and the teacher, especially when teachers maintain their work in isolation. It is perhaps important to note that these constraints exist but do not necessarily determine how school communities, and their individual teachers respond. It is argued in Chapter Four that schools and teachers are able to influence and reduce the effect of some of these contextual constraints.

### ***B. Institutional Level***

At the institutional level of the school, there are several influences on teachers. The workplace context, inter-relationships between colleagues and the organisation of administrative structures in the school all influence teachers' work.

***Situational Determinants of Teachers' Work.*** Looking at constraints at the classroom *and* institutional level, Denscombe (1980) argued for the existence of a culturally acceptable form of teacher competence, derived from the sociology of organisations. Denscombe's notion of "competent membership" suggests that teachers' work becomes a practical response to situational constraints, which are attributed to particular organisational arrangements. Denscombe (1980: 284) says, "competence as a teacher refers to an underlying and transcendent structure of activity distinct from pedagogical principles". A feature of this "hidden pedagogy" thesis is that teachers are concerned with control and privacy in their work, and that the assessment of the practical competence of teachers is based on the subscription to these implicit ideas, rather than on the basis of pedagogical knowledge (Denscombe, 1982: 58). In this view, teachers are represented as being heavily influenced by the need to conform with culturally determined practices, if they are to be seen as competent.

Teaching is conceived as being a similar activity across different contexts. Denscombe argues that routine teacher activity is a practical response to the perceived school and classroom situations which are attributed to particular organisational arrangements (Denscombe, 1980: 279).

*Teacher attitudes and behaviour can be understood as a practical response to an organisational situation where accountability and supervision are restricted by closed classrooms and the non-routine nature of pupil input (Denscombe, 1980: 288).*

The recognised formal organisation of schools constrain what teachers can do while being perceived as competent by their colleagues. In essence, teachers respond to these dilemmas in the same way. Their characteristic concerns with control, autonomy, privacy, immediacy and individuality are outcomes of the school organisational structure with its closed classrooms, time-tabling and staff-student ratios. This view is given as a way of explaining why teachers maintain conservative practices, as they are not considered to be able to overcome these entrenched constraints. These findings confirm those of Lortie (1975), that teacher culture is overly concerned with themes such as presentism, individualism and conservatism in work practice. Little (1990) demonstrates how persistent these cultural constraints are. There exists an exclusiveness of teachers' classroom warrant which sustains both conservatism in teachers' work and a preoccupation with problems of the present (Hargreaves, 1984).

Hatton (1987b) takes this "hidden pedagogy" thesis as contributing to what teachers view as appropriate to their work, supporting traditionally accepted practices. This leads to pedagogical conservatism which perpetuates practices that are seen, by experience, to work. It limits the ability of teachers to promote change as there is no need to confront issues or values in the work situation. Similarly, Woods' (1980), "survival strategies" can be interpreted as demonstrating the limited autonomy teachers perceive themselves as owning, and the relative unquestioning ease with which they implement these strategies to maintain their personal survival. This has the effect of reducing the educational value of their potential contribution to students'

learning as teachers are responding to social expectations rather than educational issues. All these views represent powerful situational determinants which shape teachers' work.

In contrast to Denscombe's view of teachers' work as being similar everywhere due to these generalised structural and organisational constraints, Arfwedson (1979) sees teachers' work as influenced more by the local social context. He claims that teachers are influenced in such a way that they maintain and reproduce that society. These influences vary depending on the local societal context. Arfwedson argues that teachers' work is different across different contexts. He states that the influence of some parents function like "ghosts in the classroom", (Arfwedson, 1979: 94), as the values of the active and influential middle and upper class parents determine teacher work. Where the powerful "steering group" (1979: 94) of parents have similar values to the teachers in a locality, parental pressure is seen as cultivating and corroborating teachers' views. Conversely, in low socio-economic areas, there is no such parental power. The influence of the local social context is represented by the pupils, through their language, the lower capacity of parents to contribute financially to the school and with the lack of parental assistance or interest towards their children's' school lessons. The economic, social and political understandings of any fairly homogeneous local society will have influence within the schools, and affect teachers' work.

***Context of the workplace.*** The context of teachers' work has more recently become the interest of research (Rosenholtz, 1991; Little and McLaughlin, 1993). Factors in the workplace must influence what teachers do. It is reasonable to suggest that particular school structures and rules, the ethos or school climate that exists (Fraser, 1989), the quality of the relationships between the personnel (administration with teachers and teacher to teacher), the profile of the student population and other issues such as material resources have all affected teachers' working situations (Rutter *et al.*, 1978; Pollard, 1982; Mortimore *et al.*, 1988). All these factors interact to produce a teaching situation which constrains, determines or aids teachers in their work.

Connell (1985) in characterising descriptively the work of individual teachers, showed differences in teachers' work between the public and private sector of education. There can be differences in the socio-economic status of the students, racial differences, gender differences, variations in staff-student ratio, subjects offered, and the general goals of the schools. Little (1993) investigated and compared the different work situations of teachers in two different school situations. She compared the academic subject teachers who had status and a reasonable proportion of school resources, with the vocational subject teachers who tended to teach the less able students. Vocational subjects were viewed with less prestige. This resulted in poorer status and fewer resources for the non-mainstream subjects; an inequitable working situation.

Rutter *et al.* (1978) provided examples of different school contexts, which resulted in different teacher expectations and student outcomes. Teachers experienced clear differences in teaching situations. Rosenholtz (1991) also showed the importance of context, and related the level of teacher collegiality as an indicator of expected student outcomes. It was found that students in schools where teachers collaborated achieved better results, and teachers were reported to be more satisfied in their work.

***Collegiality and Collaboration.*** Hargreaves (1994) discussed collegiality further by noting that as a concept it has implied intrinsic worth. It is assumed that increased collegiality will be a good thing. Hargreaves argued that teaching is an individual and isolated profession, and a low level of collegiality may indicate a sensible approach to teachers' work situations. Hargreaves posed the concept of "contrived collegiality", to describe the situation where teachers were encouraged by the school administration, for example, to co-operate with teacher colleagues in meetings and in projects. This type of collegial co-option involved the loss of time and caused resentment and added stress. This resulted in little long term benefit to students or teachers (Hargreaves, 1994: 229). Perhaps teachers need to come together of their own volition, and find projects that they can share and co-operate with, to gain the maximum benefit for the time expended and to gain the advantages of collegial support and understanding. Is it possible for teachers to find personal value in working together, or do they need a

cultural or institutional valuation placed on collaboration? It was shown in prior studies that teachers, given more time, did not automatically choose to work with others (Hargreaves, 1994).

*Administrative Structures.* Teachers are accountable to the administration in their schools. Rosenholtz (1991) argued that schools with tighter rules, and stronger leadership produced more effective teachers and better student outcomes. The effective schools literature identified five key factors that shaped teachers' practice, and it suggested, also improved student outcomes. These were strong leadership, a clear sense of school purpose, an emphasis on basic skills, monitoring of academic accomplishment, and an orderly school environment (McLaughlin, 1993: 79). In this literature, it was the administrators who were the focus of school improvements. It was the view of the administrators that counted, casting the teacher in the role of implementing administrators' policies. Teachers still remained accountable to the administration and to the community, for their actions. They were responsible for their students' progress, but were portrayed as having little direct autonomy in their work or in school decision making.

In analysing the work context of teachers, Denscombe (1980a, 1982) notes some specific and direct influences on teachers. These are, the pressures of limited resources, (which include the availability of material resources, time-tables, and staff-student ratios), and the effects of the clientele, whose ability and motivation are affected by the school's organisational procedures and the socio-economic dimensions of the locality. He also notes the factor of accountability, which, it is argued, teachers can control at an acceptable level in the closed classroom system (Denscombe, 1980: 287). All these factors, he maintains, contribute to conservative practices, a valuation of privacy, and a working ethos of teacher control. He directs little attention to the individual teacher's interaction with these situational constraints. These adjustments are implied rather than made explicit.

### ***C. Individual Level Influences***

Factors influencing teachers' work at the individual level are many. A selection of influences on classroom teachers will be presented. Areas also pertinent to the individual level, such as the influence of curriculum and collegial relations, have been discussed earlier, and so will be omitted.

***The Influence of Students.*** The major influence on teachers' work is generally agreed to be their students (Buchmann, 1980). Although Buchmann argued for the importance of a sound content knowledge base for teachers, the problems involved in handling students is regarded as the most important by both beginning teachers (Calderhead, 1987), and experienced teachers (Berliner, 1987). This student influence refers to the students' profiles, for example, their gender, socio-economic status, intellectual capacities and interests (Connell, 1985). These factors affect what teachers have to do in their work.

It also manifests itself in the *relationships* that are developed between teachers and students. Teachers are said to require discipline and control in order to convey a curriculum, and get through the day. There is also the shared joys and emotions in relating to other people and contributing a sense of service. There has to be a level of mutual respect to allow learning to go on (Connell, 1985: 127). What perhaps could be regarded as a dilemma exists. Teachers need to develop particular relationships with their students to foster both discipline and control, and yet the caring side of their work may demand a more personal involvement. (Berlak and Berlak, 1981; McLaughlin, 1993; Metz, 1993).

Teachers measure their sense of *professional efficacy* on a session to session basis. This is dependent on their relationship with students in their classes (McLaughlin, 1993: 81). Teachers' sense of efficacy is "constructed uniquely in terms of the differences in characteristics of the different classes taught" (McLaughlin, 1993: 81). It is thought that teachers' classroom work is determined by the constant small scale interactions between the teacher and students. This view maintains the finding that

teachers depend on their students for their sense of professional identity and rewards from their work (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1991).

Beyond the characteristics of the student population, is *the teacher-student ratio*. This is an issue determined at the institutional level and can be related to policy decisions at the societal level. Teachers at any school are affected by decisions about the subjects and grades they are to teach. Denscombe (1980) noted the influence of class sizes, time-table and resources decisions as it constrained what teachers' could do, and still be seen as competent members of the profession.

The intrinsic rewards of teaching are difficult to control according to Metz (1993) and are dependent on the co-operation of their students. "Because teachers' work consists of affecting their students, they are dependent on their students both for the actual success of their work and for evidence of that success" (Metz, 1993: 130). It is probable that teachers working in a situation where students are actively hostile to school, will fail to get students to learn, and may lose respect and confidence in their own abilities as teachers. Metz (1993: 131) found from her research data, cases of "endangered self-respect" in the forms of teacher cynicism, anger and self-doubt. Yet, Nias (1989a) records the boost to teachers' sense of achievement when they make breakthroughs with students.

*Individual differences* between students poses a problem to teachers. On the one hand teachers teach a group of students in a class, yet they are aware of differences in individual capacities within the class. Teachers' need to make decisions on how to cope with this aspect of their work. McNeill (1987) showed from interview data, that although teachers were very aware of student differences, and keen to help individual students make progress, they taught to the whole group, and showed little of the creativity that they talked about, in their practice. The implicit argument is that teachers are conservative, and it is more practicable and efficient to work in well worn ways and conserve energy than to be different and creative. There are more influences in many teachers' work to preserve the *status quo*, than to push for innovation. The

culture of teaching is private, individualised, and teacher autonomy is conserved, and conceived as personal prerogative (Little, 1990: 520).

***The Cultures of Teaching.*** One major involvement in the literature has been to understand if there is one entity that could be called a common teaching culture to characterise the occupation as a whole, or whether there is a multitude of separate, and even conflicting cultures co-existing in schools. This point is important as it may relate to teachers' values and beliefs regarding teaching and the world. D. Hargreaves (1980) for example, pointed to the existence of a pervasive culture of individualism, which he felt characterised the whole occupation. He saw teachers preserving their space and autonomy. Similarly, he argued that the characteristic physical organisation of classrooms encouraged this individualism, by isolating teachers at their work. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) argued against this conception of a cultural uniformity in teaching. Teachers quite evidently differed in age, social background, experience, and subject expertise.

A. Hargreaves (1992: 218) takes the matter further. While accepting the presence of a variety of cultures and subcultures he defends the existence of individualism and other generic features in teaching. Hargreaves usefully separates the concept of teacher culture into *form* and *content* to help clarify this issue. The *content* of a culture covers the substantive attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and habits, for example, shared by groups of teachers. The *form* of the culture relates to the patterns of association and relationships existing between members of the culture. Here Hargreaves delineates four cultural forms of teaching as, individualism, balkanisation, collaborative cultures and contrived collegiality. This individualistic culture of teachers, argues Hargreaves, is pervasive and "isolates teachers from their colleagues and ties them to the pressing immediacy of classroom life. In most respects, it is a seedbed of pedagogical conservatism" (Hargreaves, 1992: 232).

Balkanised cultures are situations where teachers get their identity from working in separate groups competing for resources and status. For example, subject teacher groups are seen to vie for scarce resources. Collaborative cultures exist where teachers

find themselves able to co-operate, and work together, building curriculum, and working in trust and openness. Teachers in this situation, according to Hargreaves are developing their own pedagogy, and practising discretionary choice. Contrived collegiality describes the situation where teachers are bound to work together through the direction of others, for example, administrators. The agendas usually belong to others, and there is frequently some bureaucratic control through a form of feedback or assessment. Hargreaves (1992: 234) says

*contrived collegiality reconstitutes teacher relations in the administrators' own image, regulating and reconstructing teachers' lives so that they support the predictable implementation of administrative plans and purposes, rather than creating the unpredictable development of teachers' own.*

This literature on the culture of teaching documents the isolated, private and individual nature of teachers' work, where teachers find themselves dealing with the most immediate situational problems. They are portrayed as coping and reacting rather than creating and reflecting.

***Career and Life Cycle Influences.*** Studies by Acker (1992) and Connell (1985) for example, record the different career paths of male and female teachers, especially obvious in the primary system. Women are generally viewed as the classroom teachers and care givers, men tend to dominate at the administrative levels (Nias, 1989a). Women are more likely to have broken career paths, due to breaks for child rearing, and spouse work moves (Acker, 1992), and are more likely to have a need to balance home and work tasks. This may limit their perspectives on their work as a career. It has been noted that women are seen to be satisfied with this balance, whereas men need to strive to make their work a career (Acker, 1992).

Associated with this, is the factor of stage in teaching career. Particular stages of life are related to specific goal seeking behaviours (Oja, 1989; Sprinthall *et al*, 1983). Life events tend to prompt certain career concerns. Riseborough (1984) gave an account of a group of teachers, who due to age and qualifications, lost their opportunities for

promotion at the time schools were merging and moving towards comprehensivisation in the UK. The teachers became increasingly disaffected. A rhetoric exists that teachers as workers are dedicated to high ideals and for whom work has a high moral purpose (Poppleton and Riseborough, 1990: 107). The centrality of work in teachers' lives is generally regarded as high in the profession of teaching. Yet, there are instances when alienation and disaffection are evident. This disaffection poses problems for the individual concerned as well as colleagues, administrators and the student population. It cannot be viewed as a simple cause and effect relationship between teacher enthusiasm and the working situation.

It has been argued within this research literature that teachers' work is determined by societal, institutional and individual factors. Teachers behave conservatively for well documented reasons. They practice in isolated work situations, where work is routine and individual autonomy is limited, curriculum is specified and teachers find themselves responding to administrative and bureaucratic decisions and policies, for which they are accountable in a controlled way. Teachers react to the immediateness of the problems in their work situation. This generalised perspective concludes that it is difficult for teachers to change within this constraining work culture.

It now becomes important to consider the less obvious influences on teachers in order to help clarify their effect on teachers and the work situation. One major factor, discussed in the literature, which contributes to the development of teacher perspectives, is the influence of *occupational socialisation*. The study of occupational socialisation is concerned with the way teachers' perspectives develop and become an accepted and entrenched part of the teacher culture. If it is possible to identify attributes of teachers and teaching that are continually reinforced through a process of socialisation, then these processes would constrain and determine what teachers are able to do. This would have the effect of limiting individual teacher autonomy, and constrain the effectiveness of programmes for change that may be introduced by teacher educators, or by teachers themselves.

## **The Place of Teacher Socialisation**

Arguments about teacher socialisation have continued for many years in the literature, to try to provide explanations for teachers' conservatism in the work situation, and their seeming lack of interest and success in implementing innovation and school reform (see, for example, Waller, 1961; Lortie, 1975; Lacey, 1977; Zeichner and Gore, 1990). This literature is organised into sections related to decisive points in a teacher's career, or life cycle. The divisions used in this analysis are:

- A. Prior Influences - which relate to the formative experiences individuals undergo until the time they complete their own schooling.
- B. The Role of Pre-Service Education - this refers to the contribution made by teacher education programmes.
- C. Socialisation in the Workplace - this refers to the affects of teachers' experiences once teaching has commenced.

Zeichner and Gore (1990) examine competing explanations, and outline the intellectual traditions underpinning teacher socialisation research. The value of identifying this theoretical framework, helps to clarify the orientations and the limitations of the studies undertaken in the literature. Zeichner and Gore (1990: 329) cite the three main intellectual traditions as *functionalist*, *interpretive* and *critical* approaches to socialisation. This affects the type of questions asked in the empirical studies, and so directs the type of outcomes reached. The term "socialisation" comes from the functionalist tradition of positivistic research, which de-emphasises human agency, focuses on central tendencies, and provides explanations that are directly causal.

The early studies that investigated the role of the formative experiences in the socialisation of teachers stressed a functionalist viewpoint and were deterministic in focus. This seemed to prove that little could be done to overcome these early influences. The teacher was seen as passive. More recent studies which have taken an interpretive, and more interactive view of the socialisation process indicate that prior

experiences influence but do not totally determine socialisation outcomes (Zeichner *et al.*, 1987; Zeichner and Gore, 1990). This form of argument comes some way towards reconciling the polarity in the literature, previously mentioned.

#### ***A. Prior Influences on Teachers.***

Zeichner and Gore (1990: 332) noted that Lortie (1975), in his influential work on the sociology of teaching, argued that student teachers' predispositions were central to becoming a teacher, as they exerted a more powerful socialising influence than pre-service training or workplace socialisation. The apparent persistence of particular forms of pedagogy over time (noted for example, in Sirotnik, 1983; Bolster, 1983; Goodlad, 1984) is generally explained with reference to the failure of teacher development or pre-service education to change the earlier formed predispositions of teachers. Student teachers do not enter training free from preconceptions of their occupation. The critical issue seems to be whether they are generally commonly held preconceptions and whether they can be easily changed.

Feiman-Nemser (1983) summarised the various arguments relating to prior influences on teachers. The first was an *evolutionary theory* presented by Stephens (1967) suggesting that much of teachers' behaviour was due to "primitive spontaneous tendencies". "These tendencies have been acquired over the centuries and are lived out in families and classrooms. Thus children not only learn what they are told by parents and teachers, they also learn to be teachers" (Feiman-Nemser, 1983: 152). It is implied that it is somehow human to wish to teach and improve on past evolutionary knowledge. It also assumes that knowledge is outside the person, and needs to be handed on. It further confirms the conservative orientation to these learned behaviours.

A second explanation outlined by Feiman-Nemser and quoted also in Zeichner and Gore (1990), was the *psychoanalytic view* that teacher socialisation is greatly influenced by the depth and quality of relationships that children have held with significant others in their life experiences, such that "the kinds of teachers that

education students become are governed by the effects of this early childhood heritage on their personalities”, (Zeichner and Gore, 1990: 333). Connell (1985) also provides evidence of teachers reproducing these early experiences in later classroom interactions. Here, personal biographical experiences are seen to influence perceptions and dispositions. That biographical experience influences teachers’ perspectives has been accepted on logical, rational grounds, but little has been extended to show if these influences are able to overcome the cultural socialisation process.

The third position, is that typified by Lortie (1975: 64), noting the very many hours students spend in classrooms no doubt observing teachers, and referred to as an “*apprenticeship of observation*”. It is here that the student internalises these teacher models. “According to Lortie, the activation of this *latent culture* during formal training and later school experience is a major influence in shaping teachers’ conceptions of the teaching role” (Zeichner and Gore, 1990: 333). These again, indicate a deterministic viewpoint, constraining teachers to duplicate traditional, conservative teaching practices.

Qualitative methodologies, such as biography, narrative and life history methods have helped to extend the inquiry into these pre-training influences, and the development of teachers’ knowledge. They have abandoned the functionalist paradigm for more interpretive and critical studies. For example, from Canada, Butt, Raymond and Yamagishi, (1992), have used collaborative autobiography. In England, Goodson, (1992a); Woods, (1987); and Sikes, (1985), advocate teachers’ life histories. Examples of narrative inquiry are provided by Connelly and Clandinin, (1988), and the combination of ethnographic and biographical methods by Raymond and Surprenant (1988). These interpretive studies have provided a rich source of information on the influence of teachers’ personal, cultural and political experiential backgrounds affecting their perspectives in teaching. They tend to indicate an amount of personal autonomy influencing teachers’ work, and show the relationship between biographical factors and teacher practice.

By studying individuals, these empirical studies have highlighted the uniqueness of teachers' experiences, and the diversity of individual narratives. Their contribution to knowledge is that they refocus research interest on teachers in their lived contexts, and so reduce the tendency to generalise central tendencies. This literature emphasises the complexity of teachers' work, but it is important that in detailing the personal factors affecting how teachers think and act that these studies do not come to trivialise this work. It is important to go beyond the first level description of these experiences to analyse the factors at work and to attempt to develop more integrating theories from these studies.

As has been indicated, earlier studies investigating the role of the formative experiences in the socialisation of teachers stressed a functionalist and deterministic viewpoint. This seemed to indicate that little could be done to overcome these conservative pre-training influences. The teacher was represented as passive. More recent studies which have taken an interpretive, and interactive view of the socialisation process indicate that prior experiences influence but do not totally determine socialisation outcomes. It is here that teacher educators may find value in helping students reflect on their prior experiences in order to come to terms with them; and move on to interpret alternative points of view.

### ***B. The Socialisation Role of Pre-service Education***

Many researchers have concluded that teacher education has little impact on the beliefs, attitudes and values that students bring with them, (see, for example, Mardle and Walker, 1980; Britzman, 1986; Connell, 1985; Hatton, 1991). This is a representative comment; "Teachers fail to transcend the conventional wisdom of their own profession and continue to teach as they were taught" (Goodlad, 1982: 20). The explanations offered in the literature for this low impact by teacher education courses are varied.

Atkinson and Delamont (1985) note the segmented nature of many courses and the mixed messages students receive. This permits students to reinforce pre-formed

notions rather than struggle with new ideas. Although there have been studies on the low impact of teacher education courses on teacher development, they have provided little information about the substance of these courses (Zeichner, 1981, 1986).

Hatton (1988, 1991) argues that teacher educators themselves show conservative approaches, limited creativity and their work is characterised by *ad hoc* responses, to the extent that they are defined as *bricoleurs* and take on and maintain a conservative role (Hatton, 1990: 127). A further explanation of the failure of pre-service courses to affect change in student teachers' attitudes and practices, is that although University and College courses seem to be liberalising, this effect is soon neutralised as the student enters the workplace (Hoy and Rees, 1977). This "discontinuity thesis" suggests that as student teachers face the reality of the need for discipline, control and survival as classroom teachers, they quickly forget the liberalising theories of their professional training, and reach for the security of earlier learned and observed behaviours. So, once again, the students are viewed as constrained by the ongoing conservative structure of the school. Here, of course, we have the problem of understanding the relationship between what teachers think and what they do (and say). Notions such as "impression management" (Petty and Hogben, 1980) suggest that student teachers' liberalisation in training is only a superimposed practice to permit them to pass the requirements of the course, and they then resume their more conservative beliefs about pedagogical practice.

Similarly, there are arguments like those of Denscombe (1982: 251-253) who maintained that teacher education in the long run is ineffective against the classroom socialisation of students, and the demands and concerns of the workplace for teacher control and privacy. Classroom experience is considered a structural limitation to the influence of ideas for change (Hargreaves, 1994). Lortie, (1975: 80) would also argue for the ineffectiveness of teacher education as a socialising experience as he considered teachers were largely "self-made". The conservatism experienced by students in schools is carried over into their teaching life. This argument claims that,

*teachers do not become re-socialised during their course of training, nor in the reality of the classroom, since in essence this is a reality which they never actually left* (Mardle and Walker, 1980: 103).

It is difficult to appreciate whether the students' perspective of their experiences of schooling can be said to contribute to an occupational socialisation. They are the receivers of knowledge, and observers of teacher behaviour. This observation is from the students' perspective. Transference to the teacher's viewpoint may be problematic. Possibly those accepted into teacher education courses have experienced schooling in a particular way. This would include factors such as social class, cognitive skills and attitudinal dispositions. Teaching may well attract certain types of personalities from the mass of potential members to the profession. The literature generalises the low impact of change. Mardle and Walker (1980: 121) say, "practice experienced becomes practice reproduced in conditions experienced and so on".

Part of this poor reflection on teacher education courses is that they have been traditionally held in low esteem as they are generally regarded as an easy option after a more onerous academic university course. Entry into primary training courses is similarly regarded. Further, teachers and researchers have indicated there is a lack of a body of knowledge for student teachers to assimilate, unlike that presented by other professions. This contributes to an attitude of low expectation and low valuation of these studies.

Despite this, it is important to note, however, that teacher education courses vary immensely between different countries and within countries. There are examples of courses trying to effect critical attitudes with success, and where students are able to attribute worth and influence directly to the curriculum (Zeichner, 1987; Calderhead, 1988; Smyth, 1992). There may be a need to distinguish between the campus-based elements and the field-based in these courses. They may represent different aspects of the process of learning to teach, and students generally report the field experiences to be more value. Perhaps, as student teachers, they are more focused and interested in the actual behaviour of classroom teachers, and what it means to be a teacher, feeling that they know already, enough subject matter content. The traditional separation of

knowledge into areas designated theory and practice also undervalues these activities and lessens their value to the student in questioning and making choices (Carr, 1989).

It is argued in the literature that the hidden curriculum of pre-service courses is more successful in sending messages to the students about the important aspects of teachers' work (Connell, 1985; Apple, 1988). Zeichner (1986: 143) argues that there is insufficient empirical research existing to show this effect, although it is a rational view in theory. Writers and commentators like Giroux (1992) and Popkewitz (1987) suggest that the real impact of teacher education programmes lie in the images of teacher, learner, knowledge, curriculum and society that are subtly conveyed through the hidden curriculum to socialise the beginning teacher. These are cultural influences again portraying the dominant hegemony without debate or critical analysis. The individual teacher is again out of focus.

It is generally agreed that pre-service teacher education has a fairly low impact on teacher socialisation. The hidden curriculum may have more subtle influence, but there is as yet insufficient empirical evidence, only that this would seem a rational view. The effect of field based programmes is being studied to try to determine the influences of these experiences on teachers (Calderhead, 1988). Zeichner and Gore (1990: 339) argue that there is an urgent need to undertake empirical studies on the impact of professional and academic courses on prospective teachers. It is concluded that there is an amount of doubt over the value of teacher education impacting on teachers' perspectives, and so influencing how they think about their work. It is generally believed that teachers duplicate their prior experiences, and that teacher education is unable to change this situation effectively. Teacher educators themselves are resistant to change. This literature still maintains the view that teachers are passive and constrained by social influences. Even biographical influences are seen to limit their autonomy. The final stage of influence on teachers' perspectives is the socialisation experienced in the workplace.

### ***C. Socialisation in the Workplace***

The empirical literature on novice or beginning teacher attitudes shows that they are concerned with discipline and control and with conveying curriculum and subject matter (Zeichner, 1986; Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1985; Calderhead, 1983, 1988). Similarly, there are well documented differences distinguishing the novice teacher from the expert teacher (Berliner, 1986, 1987; Borko *et al.*, 1988; Carter *et al.*, 1987b; Livingston and Borko, 1989; Westerman, 1990). These studies have shown that over time, the more experienced teacher develops strategies for coping, for example, with discipline, to the extent that they consider it much less of a problem. Similarly, it has been found that experienced teachers need to do less lesson preparation as they are said to rely on both subject knowledge and knowledge of their students to cope well. Their self esteem is less threatened.

Most of the empirical work contrasting novice and experienced teachers tends to be from the point of view of perceptual psychology. Implicit in this is the acknowledgement that once these successful experienced teachers' behaviours can be documented, this developmental knowledge can be used to encourage more rapid progress among beginning teachers. It is difficult to know whether such behaviour is of value by being transferable, without further understanding of the contexts and personal experiences the experienced teacher has gone through.

Pollard (1982) argues that teachers' actions represent active and creative responses to the constraints and opportunities within the teachers' immediate context of classroom and school. The influence of the society or wider community is mediated through the institution and classroom to the teacher.

At the classroom level, for example, the position of the pupils needs to be considered as an influence on teachers. According to Pollard, (1982: 22) there is "some degree of accommodation of the interests of each to the other". Mostly, there is a working consensus between teacher and pupils, and as such it is a negotiated product. It is unrealistic to analyse teacher and pupil strategies in isolation, as they are mutually interrelated. Larsson (1986) would argue that the socialising influence of pupils

becomes greater as the teacher becomes more experienced and so more aware of, and concerned with, the pupils. Zeichner and Gore (1990: 339) state that “classroom influences are reciprocal in nature and that teachers’ perceptions of pupils’ characteristics, expectations, and behaviours influence the nature of teacher development”. Despite this, they go on to say that there is very little understanding of how the specific characteristics of pupils and teachers influence the processes involved in teacher socialisation (1990: 339).

Doyle (1986a) for example, would argue that pupil effects are only one of the many classroom influences on teachers. By looking at classrooms with an ecological metaphor, Doyle notes six ecological features of classrooms influencing the teacher’s work. These are, multidimensionality, simultaneity, immediacy, unpredictability, publicness and history (1986a: 394-395). One would expect major similarities and some differences between classroom ecologies. Other researchers, such as Westbury (1973); Connell (1985); Sharp and Green (1975); Dreeben (1973) and Denscombe (1982) discuss factors related to the social and material organisation of the classroom as they affect teachers’ work. Limited material resources, lack of time, and poor teacher-pupil ratios are cited most often as classroom constraints. Accordingly, teachers are seen to engage in coping strategies as a response to these organisational and structural limitations. The actions of teachers can be construed as influenced by environmental circumstances which provide a context of opportunity and constraint (Hargreaves, 1988). Hargreaves states (1988: 219),

*teachers do not just decide to deploy particular skills because of their recognised professional worth and value, or because of their own confidence and competence in operating them. Rather, they make judgements about the fit between particular skills and constraints, demands and opportunities of the material environment of the classroom; about the appropriateness of particular styles or techniques for present circumstances. Although, in historical and biographical terms, these judgements rapidly become ingrained and routinized as normal practice, their roots are in environmental circumstances, and therefore the importance of the character of those circumstances, should not be forgotten.*

As noted previously, Denscombe (1980) and Nigris (1988) demonstrate the importance of an ethos of privacy and individualism among teachers. These factors prevent the development of a supportive collegial spirit among teachers. Collegiality, as an influence on teachers' work seems to be indirect, informal and a little contradictory (Hargreaves, 1992b: 1994). Here again, the particular context would seem an appropriate area to focus on (Little and McLaughlin, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1991). Arfwedson (1979), as has been mentioned, notes the effect of the local social context, and Hatton (1985) shows the powerful effect on teachers' work of parental influence in a particular school context.

Within the functionalist paradigm, teachers have been depicted as either "prisoners of their past" through the effects of anticipatory socialisation, or "prisoners of the present" through pressures at the workplace (Zeichner and Gore, 1990: 341).

With the increasing influence of the interpretist paradigm, studies are showing occupational socialisation to be less influential, more partial, and more of an interaction between choice and constraint. Further, as the interpretive studies begin to focus on individual teacher's socialisation, attention has been given to the diversity of experiences, and the valuing of these. It has been thought to be a valuable spin-off from this research that teachers' thoughts and actions are now seen as more worthy of study in themselves (Clandinin, 1985, 1986). However, it is necessary to maintain a balance. The reciprocal nature of the agency-structure debate needs to be clarified, for as teachers are influenced, they also influence the structures and constraints they are experiencing. It is important to look at the literature relating to the personal in this discussion.

### **The Role of the Personal in Teachers' Work**

If we regard those studies in the literature, based on large scale positivistic research at one end of the spectrum of educational research, it might be useful to place individual, narrative studies of personal knowledge towards the other extreme. This interpretive and hermeneutic case study research provides data on individual teachers and their

work practices at the classroom level by trying to reconstruct or recreate the individual teacher's theories about action. These studies aim to show the dialectics within these situations, and value the teacher's personal biographical experiences. With this type of research there is acknowledgement of the personal and idiosyncratic, rather than just an awareness that the individual is acting within a structured social situation which must have consequences for action. These studies have tended to focus on the practical classroom action in relation to each teacher's personal narratives of their experience. There is little evidence of social critique. Studies such as Elbaz (1983), Clandinin (1986), Butt *et al.* (1992), Louden (1991), Raymond *et al.* (1992) use life history, teacher narratives, biography and case study methods to probe the question of the development of particular individual teachers' perspectives and experiences.

Although, these studies show diversity and uniqueness, they may shed light on processes that affect the general body of teachers. As each case study has to be assessed within its own limitations, and findings are not generalisable, these methods allow the display of the particular to enhance our understanding of the general. It is important to avoid the trap of assuming that in what ever way a case study participant is seen to act, this must be judged as correct and as representing some standard. Hargreaves notes this tendency in the literature for "uncritical celebration and endorsement" (Hargreaves, 1994: 147).

These studies highlight a small sample of teachers' behaviours and beliefs, and cannot be regarded as either representative of the profession or judged in any way the ideal and creative responses to be taken as a standard for good teaching. They are particular to that teacher, in that context at that time, as reported and analysed by that particular researcher assuming the researcher's biases and modes of operating. They do provide thick description and at times insight into classroom interactions and teachers' thought processes. They highlight the influences and describe the contexts that individual teachers may find themselves.

According to Clandinin (1985) this methodology helps increase the status of teachers' knowledge, and so helps contradict the commonly held belief (for example, Lortie,

1975) that the profession of teaching does not possess a body of knowledge. It has also helped to correct the earlier trend towards a preoccupation with technical efficiency and rationality in schools. This methodology may in time help to illuminate some of the reasons for the widespread disenchantment with the implementation of bureaucratic and imposed innovation and reform in schools. There is a need to recognise and conceptualise teachers' practical knowledge, and to be conscious of this when schools attempt to implement innovation and change.

These biographical studies indicate the uniqueness and diversity of teachers' thinking, and their particular images and beliefs. It is implicit that descriptions of teacher biography relate to teachers' later observed behaviour, in a causal way, but it is difficult, without detailed probing of the participating teacher, why one response was made rather than another. There is often no one correct response to a situation, so it is important for the researcher to probe the reasoning behind teachers' decision making. Participants may well be able to think of causally related answers to interview questions, in hindsight. It is difficult to prove whether they intended them at the time of action, or again, whether they are consistent actors in their work, and would behave so again. It is important to come to some understanding of how intentional individual teachers' actions are, or how idiosyncratic and temperamental.

Nevertheless, there seems to be value in exposing these teachers' experiences, especially those they feel are "watersheds", "turning points", or "critical incidents" in their biography (Sikes, 1985; Measor and Sikes, 1992; Goodson, 1992a; Woods, 1987, 1993). They have value as descriptors to help other teachers reflect on their own experiences and related beliefs, and value to the owners if it helps them understand and be more conscious of their own actions and reactions in their situations. But, we need to discover if these understandings are to remain at the personal descriptive level, or can be used to enhance self understanding in order to progress and improve on achieving teachers' intentions in their practice.

This personal view assumes that teachers' present situation is optimal, because this is where they are presently. If further elements of consciousness and reflection are

introduced into this model, then the teachers may have more personal ability and skills to cope with their professional situation, and be themselves agents of social reform, in the direction they envisage. It is important to introduce a critical perspective to this type of study.

A major contribution of studies of the personal is to help illuminate the degree to which teachers' own purposes and intentions can influence their work, rather than assume that they acquiesce totally to the situational influences imposed on them. Larger studies lost this particularistic detail due to the tendency to analyse statistically and so central tendencies obscured the range of data collected, and the conclusions that could have been reached. One area of research that is not widely recognised is the view of teacher development as an instance of adult development.

Studies of adult development such as those by Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall (1983), and Oja (1989) show how the purposes and characteristics of individuals are able to mediate institutional influences in determining teacher actions. There is no doubt that biographical research needs to take account of the stages of development of an individual, as the ideas and perspectives will change through the process of ageing, maturation and experience in life, generally. What a student teacher wishes to attend to in professional courses in early life may be different to that of a more mature student. These orientations could perhaps be studied and made more explicit.

The early studies of the personal (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1985, 1986) helped to alter the dominant focus on behavioural studies situated in the classroom, and began to show a value in representing the individual teacher as a worthwhile actor in the education process. Detailed accounts of individual teacher's situated practical knowledge claimed value for that knowledge. Clandinin's notion of "narrative unity" (noted as borrowed from McIntyre), is more than a description of an individual's history. It is an interpretation of that history. The individual's subjective experience contributes to their personal practical knowledge. The concept of "image" (Clandinin, 1985) is a valuable one in coming to understand teachers' actions and motivations. It embodies moral, emotional and personal overtones, reflecting the quality of the

biographical experiences. Some examples given of teachers' classroom images which affected the individual's practice were, "language is the key", and the "classroom as home". These were powerful images that the teachers tended to orient many of their actions towards fulfilling. They are specific and idiosyncratic. Other concepts involved in describing teachers working philosophies like those of "metaphor" provide keys to understanding these more emotional influences on teachers' practice (Munby, 1986).

Similarly, teacher portraits like those of Nias, (1985, 1988, 1989a) show detail which is grounded in personal experience. The thick descriptions give colour to the interrelationships between the teacher's self, and the contexts of the school and classroom. They describe the teacher's difficulties, rewards and dilemmas in lived experience. Nias, (1988a) for example, in "What it feels like to be a teacher", demonstrates the blurring of boundaries between teachers' professional and personal lives. There is a search for "being yourself", and creating a "wholeness", which is seen in teachers' attempts to soften the barriers of role, age and status, and a desire to establish positive relationships with individuals in order to promote teacher satisfaction and good student outcomes. Nias' examples are of committed and dedicated primary teachers (we have no way of knowing if these teachers are the norm). For example, teachers want to feel "whole" and in control, yet to achieve this level of satisfaction, teachers tend to become stressed and exhausted in order to follow through with this commitment. They are aware of how flimsy their control can be, at times, in dealing with children at the classroom level. This may further contribute to teacher stress. Personal autonomy must be seen as constrained by the association of context and personal factors.

Louden (1991) followed the daily working life of one teacher for several months as a participant observer. He provided an in depth look at an individual; how she made decisions, what she enjoyed, why she did certain things and the areas she found difficult. Loudon concludes that teachers' practices are deeply connected to their personal biography and hopes; that teachers have a repertoire of safe and familiar practices; that they make use of common-sense understanding; stories are

contextualised by history and preconceptions, and that we need to pay more attention to these forces making for continuity in teachers' work. In other words, teachers are trying to maintain a level of continuity in their work in the face of changing situations.

It is difficult for teachers to make changes of the kind that they can maintain. Hargreaves (1994) tries to make sense of the changing world facing teachers. He argues that in the post-modern world teachers' work has become less skilled, more bureaucratically controlled and intensified. Teachers are feeling stressed and pressured. They appear to carry a sense of guilt as society is demanding improvements in outcomes for students which they cannot deliver. On one hand they are the experts failing to foster learning, while on the other hand, they seem to be losing control over curriculum, losing autonomy and authority in the classroom, and losing status in society.

The limitation of this work is one of difficulty in developing a theoretical model to represent these interactions. The evidence presented is rarely tied to the larger social context, as the teacher usually appears to have little interest or awareness in these areas perceived to be outside the immediate classroom context. It is unclear whether the research design limits the participating teachers from demonstrating their understanding of beyond the world beyond the classroom, or whether teachers are so accommodating of the structures within schools that they can accept them without comment or complaint. These issues need to be clarified.

Studies of the "personal" have advanced educational research by focusing at the micro-level of the individual and the classroom, in detail, to understand those aspects of teachers' thinking that contribute to practice. It has sought to improve teachers' professional status by creating a discourse on this form of knowledge, and representing these teachers with positive attributes. They are active teachers, making choices about their practice, based on historical, emotional and moral influences on their personalised biographical experiences. These studies have value for the teacher educator as exemplars of real teachers' beliefs, and how the theory and practice of educational problems interact in individual personalities in specific situations.

Despite the length of this literature review, and the wide variety of research sources and methodologies, there are several factors that reappear in the various discussions about teachers and their work which may contribute to this study. These influences are complex and difficult to untangle clearly, as they are not simply uni-directional in focus or effect.

1. It is obvious that teachers' work is influenced from factors emanating from the social, institutional and personal levels.

2. There are many structural and situational constraints framing teachers' work. These vary to some extent within school and workplace contexts.

3. Some of these constraints are culturally valued, such as the traditions of teacher isolation, privacy and individualism. These contribute to poor support among teachers, teacher slowness to innovate, and a heavy sense of personal responsibility. Nevertheless, this situation is one where teachers reportedly receive most of their satisfaction from the occupation of teaching.

4. Teachers' work has become intensified, with teachers exercising less direct control over their work. Workloads have extended and teachers face increasing accountability to central authorities. At the same time there exists widespread interest in developing teacher professionalism, in-service courses, teacher reflection about their practice and increasing school based decision making.

5. These agency-structure debates need clarification, to allow teachers to accept, create or to change those influences that they feel would help to contribute to better teaching outcomes for their students and themselves.

6. That there may exist a "middle ground", where teachers are able to effectively influence their workplaces without being wholly constrained by them.

## **Synthesis**

The literature on teachers' work offers a spectrum of studies with differing methodologies and focuses. There are those that focus on the deterministic situational constraints of teaching, and at the other extreme, those attending to the personal attributes of teachers as if social and cultural constraints were unimportant influences

on teachers. There is no doubt that the interaction of these views would contribute to a clearer analysis of teachers' work.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The literature on teachers' work offers two opposing views of how to understand the determinants of teachers' work; namely, that teachers are viewed as constrained by the social, institutional and situational determinants of their workplace, and, alternatively, that the individual teachers have personal autonomy to practice their preferred pedagogy. It has been argued in the literature review that this polarisation of positions is probably unfortunate since it is likely that both the situational constraint model and the personal determinant model tell important parts of the whole story of what shapes teachers' work. Therefore the two models need to be synthesised. The problem of this thesis therefore becomes, to assess the extent to which the assertion that both situational and personal constraints are needed to come to an adequate understanding of the determinants of teachers' work. To address the problem of this thesis, I consider two groups of teachers in two different school contexts. This will provide various situations from which to view the effect of context as an influence on teachers' work, and by comparing the different personal responses of these teachers, and the complexities of their working lives in these contexts, demonstrate the value for an integration of these two models.

## **Synopsis of This Thesis**

Chapter One has presented the hypothesis that a middle ground between teachers being conceptualised as situationally constrained, or personally autonomous practitioners, is necessary to more fully understand the complexity of teaching, and the influences on teachers. A critical review of the literature on teachers' work was presented. Chapter Two explains and examines the methodology used to collect the data for this research. Chapter Three provides a first level analysis of this data by viewing selected details from the eight participating teachers and their teaching contexts, using information collected from classroom observations, ethnographic

interviews, and documentary evidence. These individual case studies help to demonstrate the interaction of teachers' personal and biographical details with the teaching contexts they are involved in. Chapter Four demonstrates the influences on teachers from the perspective of teachers' work. Here, the situational and structural determinants of teachers' work interact with the personal narratives of the individual teachers. Chapter Five synthesises this data to argue for the hypothesis that teachers' work is complex, and teachers cannot be seen as either autonomous makers of their own practice or situationally determined workers. Several themes and issues that have been raised are defined and discussed in relation to the research literature. Chapter Six attempts to draw some conclusions reached from this analysis, and suggests possible areas for further study.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Terms such as "progressive" and "traditional" are used as descriptors of teachers' and schools' orientations to students ways of learning, see, for example, Bennett, (1976) *Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress*. London: Open Books.

"Progressive" describes teaching methods that are child centred, innovative and where account may be taken of individual student differences. Alternatively, "traditional" methods are those where the teacher directs and controls the classroom activity, and is seen as the source of knowledge.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This thesis is concerned with assessing the extent to which both situational constraints and personal factors are needed to come to an adequate understanding of the determinants of teachers' work. To investigate this problem, data was collected from teachers in two different school situations. This research particularly focused on what each teacher perceived influenced their work.

This chapter examines the methodology used to investigate this problem. First, there is a general discussion on the value of using qualitative research methods in social science research. Second, the research methods and approaches used in this investigation to pursue the problem will be described and justified. Following this, procedures will be described and justified for the selection of the participants and how the data was collected, recorded, and analysed. Issues of validity, generalisability and researcher bias are discussed as well as some ethical matters arising from this type of research. Limitations of the study are detailed, concluding with a summary of these points.

#### **Qualitative Research In Education**

There has been much written, within education and social science research recently about the comparative values of quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Smith, 1980; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Baker (1986) notes that quantitative methods have had ascendancy in educational research as the "hard data" collected appears to have the value of being replicatable and so verifiable and, by using statistical analysis, the margin of error of this data can be calculated or estimated.

There are many uses for quantitative methods in educational research. For instance, the value of collecting data by the quantitative method is linked to its potential for theory construction and the evaluation of theoretical models. It is also associated with the underlying positivist view that reality exists objectively. It assumes that reality can be observed and measured. Positivist theory suggests that all behaviour is governed by laws, and that these laws can be discovered in a manner similar to the experimentation and manipulation of research design developed within the natural sciences, such as observation and experimentation (see for example, Cuff *et al.*, 1990; Baker, 1986).

A common thread running through this positivist, quantitative or experimental educational writing is the belief that pursuing single solutions to any problem is reasonable and rational, if the correct theory or hypothesis is applied. The position has been described as “objectivist”, as the researcher tries to stand outside the domain of the phenomena being studied in order to collect data. These data provide the evidence for the testing of hypotheses, and in this way, the researcher can control or eliminate the possibility of subjectivity in this process of inquiry. This view of social science research logically utilises quantitative methods in which a series of laws or propositions can be abstracted, to form a theory, from which specific predictions can be derived for further testing. However, the positivist view of research has come under increasing criticism.

An alternative approach to the study of social phenomena is based on a different view of reality. The problem is that educational issues arise within the social sphere, and simple cause and effect relationships are difficult to pinpoint or be proven convincingly, due to the multiplicity of social, cultural and political factors affecting any situation. This view is based on the appreciation that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), and to understand these social realities, it is necessary to observe the world as its members see it, and to get access to the meanings that they attach to events and objects and relationships. This approach is based on a recognition that individuals have aims, consciousness and language, and take on an interpretive role in the world. Qualitative methods are preferred for capturing this subjective meaning (Baker, 1986). It could be argued that polarising

research into qualitative and quantitative distinctions is artificial and inexact (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984: 6). The purpose of the research should determine the types of methods most suited to these goals.

To investigate the problem of this thesis, it is important to observe, describe and analyse the views and experiences that the individual teachers report, and to aim to record the meaning or interpretation that each teacher feels is nearest to the truth of that subjective experience. Attempting to tap and record these subjective meanings will aid understanding of the particular to help inform the general case. Information from these teachers could be gained by quantitative questionnaire or survey methods, but this would have required a different form of conceptualisation. To implement this the researcher would have to pre-determine the types and variety of question to be asked, and put limits to the type of responses permitted, in order to allow for a certain manipulation of the resulting data. And, to be statistically significant, a large sample of teachers would need to be involved. There were minor aspects of this study that utilised this approach.

The problem of this study requires attention to more subjective aspects of teacher understanding, which quantitative methods do not adequately probe. Using a more interpretive theoretical conception, the researcher wanted to find those questions that were real and that interested the individual teachers in their particular circumstances, and attempted to describe them in great detail within the natural context. Baker (1986) argues that the use of naturally occurring settings, and the preservation of detail aids the integrity of the material and helps situate particular comments or events into a coherent account of the whole. This makes it important that the data be collected within the teachers' working contexts, as the school environments became important variables to the research.

Naturalism was an accepted construct in data gathering. Ethnography is a method employed to achieve the descriptive goals of qualitative research. Goetz and LeCompte (1984: 2) describe ethnographies as "analytical descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes and groups". Although this approach has had

its origins in social anthropological research (Woods, 1984: 4), it is acknowledged and frequently used as a method to allow a focus on the many factors contributing to an individual or a group situation. Woods (1986: 4) suggests that the ethnographer aims “to represent the reality studied in all its various layers of social meaning in its full richness”. It is seen as a holistic approach, detailing situations and relationships which help ground these detailed factors and expose the participant’s subjective meaning within that context.

Illustrative and substantiated detail provide rich descriptions of situations and relationships, but it is also important to attempt to tie these together to compose a higher level of analysis. As Webb and Ashton (1987: 25) note,

*the goal of ethnographic research is not simply to report the utterances and actions of teachers, but to find order in them and to place them in a wider social context. It is our goal to render the social world of teachers intelligible.*

Although, at one level it is important to gain access to teachers in their work situations, and describe their interactions in full, it is also worthwhile to try to find ways of viewing and making sense of these descriptions.

## **Qualitative Methods and Theory Construction**

There has been recent discussion about how possible it is to construct theory using qualitative methods, and the ethnographic approach, in particular (Hammersley, 1987, 1992; Woods, 1985b). Woods (1986, 1985a) argues for the value of ethnographic research methods in educational research, as it can provide a means to gain useful and relevant insight into the teacher’s world. For example, Woods says, “the scenarios ethnographers sketch out are easily identifiable” (Woods, 1985a: 53). Woods argues for relevance of approaches for teachers. It is demonstrably an approach accessible to practising teachers. This aids their involvement in creating useful knowledge, which

was previously seen as the domain of the educational researchers, and so was seen to alienate the practising teacher (Hatton, 1989a).

According to Woods, ethnography “offers considerable purchase on improved professionalism” (Woods, 1985a: 55), as ethnography can focus on substantive issues, and it attaches great importance to teachers’ views and perspectives. Ethnographic studies deal in the language and concepts of teachers which contribute to their self reflection and understanding, and so may give teachers a sense of control over their practice. To this end, as a method, ethnography facilitates the creation of new knowledge. Woods (1985b), feels that it is only a matter of time, as more teachers attempt these studies, that cumulative theoretical development will occur. He (1985b: 55) defends the “bridge-building properties” of ethnographic studies between description of practice and educational theory. By augmenting studies, propositions and evidence will accumulate, and theories will be developed.

Hammersley (1987) in contrast, argues that this cumulative approach will not create the theory development as promised in this argument, as ethnographic studies are still too descriptive and exploratory in focus, and are not yet systematic enough for cumulative development of theory. Hammersley (1987: 283) calls for more rigour, with the need to pursue new concepts and provide for the ongoing clarification and testing of them. Given the contemporary problem of the debunking of some well established scientific theorems within the domain of the natural sciences, it may be valuable to continue to pursue this form of ethnographic inquiry, while maintaining clarity in the development of concepts and arguments, and to encourage ongoing critical evaluation of these studies by its practitioners.

Yaxley (1991: 85) notes the movement away from scientific objectivity to one termed “disciplined objectivity”, as he maintains that the problems faced in educational and social research are genuine dilemmas, and appear to have no optimal solutions. (Yaxley, 1991: 85). Further discussion of the issues of theoretical development and the problem of relating concepts to data in ethnographic research will be covered in the sections on data analysis and validity.

## **Description And Justification Of Research Approach**

In order to attain as full an account of teachers' perspectives of their work, it was felt useful to adopt a qualitative, interpretive approach to data gathering. This permitted in depth, thick description of the individual teacher's views, and as such the quantity and range of participants had to be sacrificed for the quality of description, and analyses. A larger sample of teachers may have provided a higher level of generalisability of the findings, but this was traded-off for the depth of coverage and detail of representation of the individual case.

From the point of view of knowledge being a social construct, each teacher's experience is unique to a certain extent, and realised to be subjective. The argument that underpins the thinking behind the research, is that we can only relate (and teach) to the extent that we are able to understand and interpret our own and others' positions. This is consistent with the view that reality is socially constructed.

Ethnographic methods underlie this research, in so far as they provide a method of accessing important and reliable information from the participants, in as disciplined a manner as possible. The problem is not only one of collecting useful descriptive data, but of also finding ways of making sense and drawing inferences and insights from these, to help in theory building, or hypothesis formation.

One difficulty with educational observation is that after a time in the field the perspective can be lost and events may be taken as ordinary and normal (Woods, 1986). Delamont (1992) calls this phenomenon "going native" and argues strongly for avoidance by constantly assuming a distancing stance, reviewing field reports critically, and frequently focusing on the initial questions and aims of the research. Similarly, the researcher has always to be conscious of the possibility of being misled or misinformed by respondents, whether for particular reasons or accidentally.

There are three approaches taken in this research to help give a balanced and representative account of the teachers' views and practices. Each method will be described and justified in the following section.

### **1. The Ethnographic Interview**

The first method is the technique of individually interviewing all participants on several different occasions. The ethnographic interview is usually unstructured and is dependent on the quality of the developing relationship between the researcher and respondent (Denscombe, 1984; Measor, 1985; Woods, 1986). Hosie (1986) and Woods (1986) outline the qualities of an interviewer, and detail the pitfalls. For example, there are descriptions of cases where respondents are wanting to appear other than they are, and so express themselves untruthfully. They also warn against the danger of accepting only one person's view of a situation. Getting to the truth of the matter is problematic to all research, but ethnographical methods can be particularly vulnerable. The researcher needs to be aware of this by constantly cross checking all evidence and data before accepting it.

Similarly, the power relations between the researcher and interviewee, must be noted. It is expected that teachers may feel themselves to be in an inferior position, open to criticism, and without much individual power to determine the process of the research while they are the subjects of the research (Woods, 1985a; Apple, 1988). In fact Woods notes the widespread opinion that educational research generally does not benefit teachers, nor is it useful to solving teachers' problems within their practical situations, and results in teachers feeling that it is artificial and irrelevant (Woods, 1985a: 52; Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 8).

With every participating teacher, the researcher took time at the outset, to attempt to address this issue, endeavouring to extend the interests of the research to the teachers' personal situation as an opportunity for some development and progress. This was aided by the large amount of time spent in the schools with these teachers, and the value that the researcher placed on developing good communication skills. Further,

options to view all the collected data, and the progress of the research generally were given to each participating teacher. Prior to commencing an interview, the researcher reiterated to the teacher details from the previous information collected, and the themes that were emerging, and asked for the teacher's views while demonstrating a willingness to make alterations in matters of fact.

Despite the criticism of irrelevance to teachers of the research going on in schools, Woods goes on to argue that ethnographic research is admirably suited to the teachers' situation, especially when conducted in partnership with teachers. As a method, ethnography can be relevant, practical and newsworthy (1985a: 53). The unstructured nature of the ethnographic interview process does not limit the interviewer covering certain topics or lines of questioning (Mearor, 1984). It does not lack discipline. It is a method of allowing issues to arise that are most meaningful to the respondent. The interviewer follows these issues and finds ways of extending them as an aid to fuller understanding. On re-reading interview transcripts, the interviewer is able to note areas needing further explication, and then plans strategies to introduce topics that can be more directive and pertinent to the problem. The respondent has the choice to take up these points and contribute further if this seems relevant to their understanding of the situation.

Spradley (1979) discusses the range that ethnographic questions may take. The process needs to be disciplined and thorough, and there is an urgency about transcribing, so data is followed up and cross referenced. In practice, after ensuring that the participating teacher was briefed about the research plans and procedure, the interviewer usually started with general questions relating to experience and background of the individual teachers. For example, questions such as, "How long have you taught at the school?" or "Could you tell me a little about your own school experiences as a student?" Mearor (1985: 69) uses the insightful term "topography" in reference to the progress of an interview. There can be areas of difficulty, and "danger zones" to be avoided. The "grand tour" type general question (Delamont, 1992) was used to get the dialogue focused on to educational questions that would not threaten the respondent.

In reality, all but one of the participants felt free to discuss quite openly most of their views, opinions and practices, and in fact the hour set aside for each discussion was regularly exceeded. The one participant who appeared less forthcoming, continued to need drawing out, carefully, in these interview sessions. She said on several occasions that she was unsure what she wanted to say, and was very aware of not wanting to be misrepresented in any way. She appeared anxious. This called for a great deal of reassurance on the part of the interviewer and the promise of the provision of the option to read all her statements prior to the next scheduled interview. This reticence was her way of covering up a feeling of inadequacy about her teaching. Even as an experienced teacher, she felt threatened by talking about her teaching, and in fact showed that she spent very little time thinking about her teaching. This led the researcher to consider the question of the range of abilities demonstrated by the pool of participants.

This issue is one that does not seem to be covered by the research methodology. It seems to be assumed that all respondents are equally contributive and capable. This is a principle especially apparent in the studies of such areas as teachers practical knowledge, and teachers' voices, (see for example, Butt *et al.*, 1989, 1992; Elbaz, 1991). Nevertheless, in this research, it has been found that responding teachers vary in their abilities and willingness to contribute to the research. All attempts at participation are not equal, although they need to be valued and appreciated by the researcher for their contribution. The researcher can only aim to improve his or her skills of communication to ensure the best result possible from each contributor, noting the areas of interest and difficulty that each respondent presents. This finding, is in itself part of the research involvement, as it contributes to the thesis that teachers (and student teachers) are different, with varying capacities, interests and capabilities of self-reflection.

Lather (1991: 57) suggests that the unstructured interview situation can be seen as reciprocal dialogue, in which there is a mutual negotiation of meaning and power. This allows the researcher to move from the status of stranger to friend, and so be able

to gather personal knowledge from subjects more easily. Again, the importance of developing trust is highlighted.

## **2. Non Participant Observation**

The second major method of data collection that was conducted was classroom observation, with pre-and post-observational conferences with the classroom teacher associated with these sessions. The most common method of observation for data collection in ethnography, has been participant observation (see for example, Spradley, 1980; Cuff *et al.*, 1990). Participant observation allows researchers to take on the role of the researched to the extent that they become involved with that activity, alongside the teacher, in order to better record and understand all the situations affecting that role. The researcher experiences this role and its surrounding culture, attempts to describe it and gain insights. The difficulties with this method revolve around the large amount of time that it takes to become familiar with another teacher's task situation and show competency; the difficulties of recording it; and of maintaining objectivity. It is awkward to make notes in these situations, and the effect of one's presence in the classroom must also affect the resulting data, to some extent.

The researcher's decision to make observations from a non-participant viewpoint was done for several reasons. First, it was a preferred method for the teachers. The participating teachers all taught in upper secondary classes and so the form of their work made it difficult for an outsider to regularly participate without the work situation being altered. Second, since the object of the research was to observe the teacher going on with normal work tasks, a "fly on the wall" type of perspective seemed to be least interventionist.

On every occasion when the researcher was present in these classrooms (usually seated as inconspicuously as possible at the back or far side of the room), the teacher introduced the researcher to the students as someone working with the teacher, and not involved in inspecting or assessing them. In post-observation discussions, teachers

were always asked for their opinion of whether the researcher's presence made any difference to the way the lesson went, and comments were noted at the time.

Generally, it was felt, the senior students seemed unaffected by the presence of the researcher to any significant extent. The first school was used to having student teachers involved at the school while undergoing their supervised practice, and possibly this contributed to the registered low key effect of the researcher's presence. It is basic to the research results that the presence of the researcher has as little effect as possible on the teacher's and students' behaviour during the observed sessions (Mearns, 1985; Hosie, 1986; Woods, 1986). Awareness of this factor meant that the researcher tried to be as unobtrusive as possible. The cassette recorder was discretely placed on the teacher's desk, and note taking by the researcher was done quietly, and generally in a position beyond the students' vision. Care was also taken not to record data conspicuously which could affect the teacher's corresponding behaviour.

A third reason for this non-participating approach was the easier access to making and recording observations. At each pre-observation interview, the practising teacher outlined the plans, purposes and approaches to the lesson, and sometimes, described the particular areas of interest or difficulties each class held. These details were noted, and a plan of seating and the room details of each occasion were also recorded once the students arrived. At first stage observations, the researcher recorded in a disciplined way, the type of questioning and the focus and distribution of talk as it occurred (see for example, Acheson, 1987). In later observations more specific notes were made in order to match the stated aims and intentions of the teacher with the proceedings in the classroom. Determinations were attempted, for example, as to how closely the teacher followed the intended plan, or how teacher behaviour responded to student behaviour. There were occasions when teachers' espoused philosophy could be seen played out in the dynamics of a discussion, and other times when teachers missed particular situations by being involved elsewhere.

A final reason for choosing this method was the importance of helping the teacher feel at ease as far as possible by appearing to be as little threat to the normal teaching

situation. The researcher took time to explain the purpose of the observation to the overall research. During post-observation discussion, comments made by the researcher were always of the nature of questions that were looking for further explanation or general clarification from the teacher rather than providing criticism or suggestions for improvement. All the points from field notes were relayed back to the teacher, and teacher comments accepted and noted. It must be acknowledged that despite the researcher's best intentions, it was unlikely that the researcher's presence was completely unobtrusive. The intention was to minimise the intrusive effect, and reduce teachers' fears while gaining as accurate a picture of the events as they were observed and interpreted.

Contrary to Denscombe (1984), the researcher decided to establish relations with the participating teachers through the initial interview session, rather than at the commencement of classroom observation. This was again for the reason of putting the teacher at ease as far as possible, as the relationship with the researcher was already being established, and it ensured that the teacher was fully informed about the aims and processes of the research, prior to practical observation. It also provided an opportunity to organise the specific plans for observation schedules with each teacher. Later interview discussions took on the benefit of the information gained by the observation sessions. This mutually shared experience helped to extend the teacher's explanations of the situation and context that they were in.

Another methodological decision taken was to attempt to run the interview and observation sessions at the two schools turn and turn about. This was to serve the purpose of maintaining a fairness of researcher expertise between the two situations. If the researcher had pursued and completed data collection at one school, it could be argued that researcher expertise could have been raised while working at the second school, thus reducing the reliability of the data. There is no doubt that as time goes on and self-reflection of researcher practice proceeds, improvements in researcher skills are made. The researcher becomes more aware of errors or inappropriate responses that may have over directed teachers' answers or contributed to particular ways of responding.

This form of research tends to be directed by the issues that are raised by the respondents. These are the issues that are posed as affecting their working situation at this stage in time. Similarly, they need to be validated by other respondents, and cross-checked between the two school situations. This coming and going between the two school situations provided the benefit to the researcher of constant comparison, and the stimulus to maintain the focus of the research.

### **3. Document Analysis**

Copies of each official school prospectus, information to parents and other documentation were gathered from both schools. The purpose of compiling documentation on the schools was to attempt to analyse how the schools wanted themselves portrayed to the community, and to discover the type of activities and terminology they used to describe themselves and their objectives. The early documentation collected tended to be the more official, fairly widely accessible policy and informative documents. These were coded and simple comparisons between the school situations were detailed. In time, after gaining the trust of the teachers, the researcher was permitted to peruse a few working documents that were made available only to teaching staff. These documents together contributed to a greater understanding of the teachers' work situation as officially detailed, and also highlighted the three levels of constraint affecting the teachers.

For example at the societal level, the information and requirements of external bodies, such as the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies affected procedures within the school and made specific demands on the teacher. At the institutional level, statements such as the school prospectus or newsletter, which informed parents and other interested parties on school practices and rules again affected teacher work. And at the individual level, the provision of information regarding the specific running of classes, and interest groups, for example, influenced what teachers felt they could do. As far as was possible, it was attempted to balance the amount of documentation that was collected, between the schools, and to find equivalent types, for purposes of comparison.

One particular value of obtaining these documents was the effect of the researcher's possession of these on the teachers. On several occasions, the policy documents provided an initial basis for dialogue, a concrete focus, and an opportunity to evaluate how the teachers perceived these documents, and their practical usefulness. The major value of these documents was as a focus to discussion, helping the researcher get to know the context a little better, and to draw out the stated aims of the schools. This allowed reflection and discussion on the part of the teachers, where on occasion, they were able to determine those values and stated objectives that they agreed with and tried to implement. Similarly, it highlighted those objectives they felt were specious, false or impractical.

The textual analysis conducted also helped to provide an understanding of the officially stated aims and objectives of these schools, and as such, helped to clarify some of the "hidden pedagogy" of the school working situations (Denscombe, 1982; Hatton, 1987b). Details of the form of the analysis of these documents will be provided in the later section on data analysis.

## **Selection Of Contexts And Subjects**

It was thought to be worthwhile to collect data from two different school contexts given that there were conflicting indications from the literature on the influence of situational contexts on teachers' work. Only two schools were chosen due to the availability of resources, and the need to apply in depth qualitative methods within each situation.

From local knowledge, the two schools selected were sufficiently different to appear to provide contrasting contexts and philosophies within which to investigate the teachers' perceptions of their work. The first, St Lukes (a fictitious name), was commonly viewed as an old and fairly traditional co-educational day and boarding school. It was founded in 1919. The second, the Community School, was generally viewed as more of an alternative school with a definite philosophical basis and

espoused purpose. It was smaller, also co-educational, and more recently established (1981).

In order to gauge teachers' perspectives and to make comparisons, only experienced teachers were selected for this research. These were to be teachers who had taught in these schools for a considerable period continuously, and where possible, were senior enough to have had prior teaching experience elsewhere.

Experienced teachers were chosen for a number of reasons. It was felt that they were more likely to hold definite views on their work, and that they would have had an opportunity through time to refine their teaching ideas. Another reason was to collect data from a group of people from similar stages in their teaching career, in order to reduce the effect of career stage as a complicating variable in the analyses, (see for example, the importance of this variable in recording teacher attitudes, Lortie, 1975; Ball and Goodson, 1985; Goodson, 1992; Measor and Sikes, 1992; and Poppleton and Riseborough, 1990).

Most importantly, experienced teachers were selected because there seems to have been a dearth of research studies about experienced teachers in the literature. A great deal has been written about beginning and pre-service teachers in educational studies. It is to be expected that most research focuses on student teachers as they are generally more accessible to educational researchers in institutions. Similarly, it is the problems of student teachers that teacher educators face and must address. Where studies of experienced teachers have been undertaken, they are often dealt with as a contrast to the novice and beginning teacher ( Carter *et al*, 1987; Berliner, 1987; Ropo, 1987; Westerman, 1990; and Zeichner *et al*, 1985), rather than pursuing issues pertinent to experienced teachers.

One aim of this research was to try to ascertain how clearly experienced teachers were able to think about their work and situation, and to determine to what extent, and in what areas they may have felt constrained by structures and circumstance. Similarly, listening to and observing experienced teachers in their practice would provide an

opportunity to gather insights into how they coped with their specific situations. It was hoped these data might prove useful in the area of teacher development research and practice.

The schools were approached, initially by telephone contact, to seek approval of their Principals to negotiate this research. Being church and independent schools, this turned out to be a fairly straightforward matter. After initial interviews between the Principal and researcher, who outlined in detail the proposed involvement of the teachers in their schools, permission to enter the schools was given, and a list of suitable teachers' names was provided soon afterwards. The researcher contacted four teachers from each school to determine their willingness to participate in the study.

The teachers were chosen on the basis of length of experience in teaching, and the teaching subject area. At the Community School, the researcher was provided with the names of all the teaching staff, and given a free choice. The first four teachers asked, gave their permission. In comparison, at St Lukes, it was the Principal who provided a short list of suitable names. The researcher was not involved in this selection. The Principal may have had reasons for his choice. The first four teachers contacted also gave their permission. In reality, problems associated with access to schools may limit the free choice of the researcher.

Given the intensive nature of this type of research which requires in-depth investigation for data collection, and also, for methodological integrity, the importance of developing rapport with the participating teachers, it was felt that eight teachers in total (from a possible 40) would provide sufficient numbers. This would generate a satisfactory level of validity, and the consequent data would not be too unwieldy or time consuming to analyse. It was hoped to have an equal breakdown of male and female teachers. This aim was achieved in the larger school, but unfortunately in the second smaller school, the resulting participants were three men and one woman. This breakdown genuinely reflected the disproportionate numbers of male teachers in the staff profile in full time employment. The majority of women teachers on the staff were part-time, managing home and school commitments. These

teachers also had a less continuous teaching career profile. Most taught one special subject.

There are problems associated with part-time involvement for both schools. These teachers feel frustrated that they have no real input in decisions, and they feel over used and not fully efficient at their work. These teachers' stories would have proved interesting and contributive to this research, but ultimately, it was felt better to maintain a balance of participants between the two schools. It was decided that only those teachers in full time employment were to be selected. It is further noted (from information gathered at private interviews, conducted more casually within this school, at *ad hoc* times) that the women teachers in part-time employment in the second school chose this work situation for their own convenience. They did not choose to have longer hours, and conveyed their preference of combining the roles of home and school despite its obvious difficulties. The school administration attempted to support these teachers by allowing flexibility in timetables and showing tolerance in accepting the problems associated with working parents. The Principal also corroborated this finding.

The participating teachers were given assurances of anonymity, and so names and contexts have been disguised to that end. The question of ethics arising in this research will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. An attempt has been made to balance the representation of these teachers between the two contexts to allow comparative analysis of the findings. The teachers participating were:

*St Lukes*

Don: Teacher in Senior Economics, Accounting and Legal Studies.

Felicity: Teacher in Senior English and History

Paula: Teacher in Science and Mathematics

Jason: Teacher in Senior Geography and House Master

### *Community School*

Larry: (Teaching) Principal and Teacher of Legal Studies, and Study of Society

Ruth: Teacher in Senior English and LOTE

Rob: Teacher in Senior History and French

Jim: Teacher in Senior Music and Mathematics.

Negotiating access, according to Woods is not just about getting into the institution in the sense of “crossing the threshold, but proceeding across several thresholds that mark the way to the heart of a culture” (1986: 24). It is important to recognise the different layers of relationship and activity that the entering researcher is allowed to observe and be a part. The importance of being aware of this factor enhanced researcher understanding of the teachers’ views. It is hoped that the extended length of time of researcher involvement (over two terms) in these schools aided the development of trust and an acceptance of researcher presence at many school meetings and situations.

## **Data Collection And Recording**

In summary, this study used three main methods of collecting data to investigate the problem of how experienced teachers perceived their work situation. These were

- (1) a series of unstructured personal interviews
- (2) observations and discussions on each teacher’s classroom practice, and
- (3) a document analysis of both school’s prospectus, and other written reports.

Details of each have been discussed earlier in the section on the description and justification of the research approach. In order to maintain the reliability of the data and to ensure that data was only given the significance or weight that it deserved, it was important to collect information from different sources and to utilise different methods. This helped to cross check the information and prevent the issue of being misled by any informants, consciously or unconsciously (Denscombe, 1984). It also tended to generate further lines of inquiry. This technique to enhance data validity and reliability is called triangulation.

Woods (1986: 88) specifically notes the value of triangulation in data collection, and recommends using a few different reference points to enhance respondent reliability. Triangulation ensures that the researcher is prevented from, “accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions; it enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of investigation” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, cited in Goetz and LeCompte, 1984: 11). Collecting data from several “vantage points” helps to saturate the developing theme until no new information can be gained. With conviction, Woods writes, “undoubtedly, the strongest bond is where interviews are accompanied by observation” (Woods, 1986: 88) Throughout this research, the importance of the interpersonal relationship between participant and researcher has been highlighted to enable the most direct dialogue and unfettered observation possible.

The literature is valuable in outlining the experiences of other researchers pursuing ethnographic methods. For example, Measor and Sikes (1992), and Delamont (1992) demonstrate the importance of dress and presentation as an influential factor on the response of participants. From these comments, the researcher dressed more formally when visiting the School Principal, and also for conducting classroom observations, after gauging the standard of dress of the teachers at each school. A further example may indicate the subtle nature of the influence of dress and presentation of self.

The respondent was allowed to choose the location of the unstructured interviews. The aim of this strategy was to provide the teachers with a level of control. For example, Felicity chose to be interviewed at the researcher’s home. On her first visit, she dressed very formally, the researcher less so, but on her subsequent visits, she felt able to dress more casually for comfort and relaxation. This may be an issue related more specifically to women, since the citations in the literature are generally of women researchers. Nevertheless, the important aspect of personal presentation is that of creating credibility, and not appearing off putting in any way, which would not be conducive to a useful discourse.

Other aspects of interview technique discussed in the literature were also followed by the researcher. For example, starting the interview with simple general questions, showing interest by listening well, and being able to give similar examples from one's own experience (Measor, 1985; Woods, 1985c; Acker, 1992; Hosie, 1986). Data was collected over several weeks, crossing between the two schools and the four teachers in each. After the initial interview with each teacher, suitable times were arranged for classroom observations. At the end of each observation, a time for another interview or observation was determined. This was dependent on what the teacher preferred and could cope with at this stage, given the school schedules and priorities. The researcher generally attempted to guide these decisions towards the needs of the research.

The researcher found it more suitable to work with one teacher at each school at any one time. This helped focus the researcher on the particular situation of that teacher, and prevent the confusion of minor details. While one teacher was coming to the end of the series of observations, the next teacher at the school was commencing interviews. This was happening concurrently between the two schools.

The method of data collection of classroom observations took the form of field notes, charts and flow diagrams. These classroom sequences were also recorded on audio cassette tape. These data represented the physical environment of each class, the form and type of questioning and lesson sequence, and included the note-taking of anecdotal and incidental thoughts and occurrences. Information extracted from these field notes was used to further question the teacher at post lesson conferences, and also at later interviews. Extracts and examples were used to ground the developing themes, and as a basis for making comparisons between the school contexts.

The method of data collection of documents was to ask the Principals for copies of official documentation that the school would make accessible to parents, and members of the community. Further, each teacher was asked whether any documents existed that would be useful to this research, as researcher and participating teacher became more used to each other. Similarly, inquiries were made when documents produced by one school became available, in the hope of accessing something similar from the

second school. At all times the researcher made it clear to teachers which documents had been provided, and attempted to utilise information from these to further develop interview questioning.

### **A Note on the Use of Tape-Recorders**

As has been mentioned, the unstructured interviews were fully recorded, by micro-cassette recorder, as was the talk during classroom observations and the pre-and post-observation conferences with the teacher. The value of these recordings was in their provision of a concrete copy of these discussions and interactions, allowing the researcher freedom from detailed note taking to plan questions and attend fully to events as they were happening, and to gaining the teacher's meaning within the discourse.

The researcher was aware of some limiting factors in the use of tape recorders (noted in Woods 1986; Delamont 1992). For example, teachers may feel inhibited in talking freely, as their comments are seen to be made permanent, and so attributable to them for ever after, and potentially capable of being taken out of context. Steps were taken to get to know the participants a little before the question of recording of the discussion was raised. Had any teacher noted discomfort, tape recording would not have proceeded. More detailed notes would have been made instead, and annotated field notes written up immediately after the interview. None of the participants ultimately registered any unease about the use of audio tape recording.

It is noted though that some teacher comments were requested to be "off the record", as they felt they were treading into areas they did not want attributed to themselves, or that may prove sensitive to others. The tape recorder was then turned off, and the ensuing details noted as confidential and not for research publication. This becomes an issue of ethics and validity, but in reality, these few occasions either produced data of little relevance to the main thesis, or was corroborated by other respondents as part of their experiences within that particular school context.

Although tape recordings and their subsequent transcriptions prove a great asset to data collection and analysis, two major problems were experienced. The first problem was related to the quick build up of data. For each hour of interview, a great many more were to be spent in transcribing the tapes. This had to be completed as soon as was practicable after each day in the field in order to appreciate what the data was beginning to look like, and to help direct further research questions and approaches.

The second and more annoying problem was that involved in the mechanics of tape recording. On occasion, the machine would not click off when it had come to the end of one side of cassette tape, and so researcher and participant would be moving on in conversation assuming all was being recorded. Twice, field notes and researcher memory had to be used to fill in these gaps as far as was possible. Similarly, the quality of the recording was variable. Preparation was necessary to eliminate disappointment of interview recordings, and so it was common practice for the researcher to test the tape recorder prior to commencing any interviewing and to check for example, battery power.

Nevertheless, difficulties were apt to arise. On one occasion, when a participating teacher requested that the interview be conducted outside, on the verandah of the local Deli, what was assumed to be a fairly quiet road in normal circumstances became a roaring motorway, with noise from police cars, road working diggers and even overhead air traffic causing interference to the recorded dialogue. When the interview was transferred inside, the clinks of coffee spoons and human traffic also assumed distorting proportions in deciphering the taped voice. Transcribing those tapes, took patience, memory, field notes and again, more time. The researcher hoped that the relaxation gained by the interviewee through the convivial surroundings would make up for the difficulties in transcription and data collection.

Given that the aim of this form of data collection is to acquire representative data as close to the meanings of the participants as far as possible, it is important to minimise the influence of technology, and maximise the benefits of improved interpersonal relationships.

## **Data Processing And Analysis**

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982: 145), data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the collected data, in order to make sense of it, and present the findings to others. Unlike most quantitative research, where data processing and analysis commences once all the experimental data has been collected, the form of research used in this study involves data processing at all stages of data collection.

More importantly, from the methodological point of view, it was essential to continually review what the data was looking like in order to pursue the form of questioning and the observation schedule between the two schools. Lines of investigation followed naturally from the contributions of the teachers.

Similarly, data collected from documents and from classroom episodes were used to develop questions, and to clarify the researcher's understanding of the school contexts. This interplay between data collecting techniques, and analysis and reflection of the data is not unlike Lacey's "spirals of understanding", where insights are gained through "moving backwards and forwards between observation and analysis and understanding" (Lacey, 1976: 61). This is a first level of analysis, where meanings are made clear and developed and initial categories are formulated, and themes pursued. Patterns are searched for.

The availability of "key informants", who are unusually perceptive and articulate participants may help with the provision of some details and help redirect questions (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982: 151; Woods, 1986: 85). One teacher at St Lukes very quickly assumed this role and with her knowledge, background and easy relationship, she was able to provide her point of view while being aware of others. She provided local knowledge that helped explain situations.

Similarly, Woods (1986: 121) notes the value of "speculative analysis", which is tentative and reflective, but may reveal insights to tie to the main discussion and the

development of themes. This can be done while the data is being recorded and reworked. It assumes that the researcher is maintaining an open mind and is attempting to reflect and make sense of the data as it is occurring. To some extent “speculative analysis” suggests some testing of simple theories or relationships that may be forming in the researcher’s mind. These can be followed through as part of future interviews and dialogue.

For example, in this research, to illustrate the lines of questioning that arose naturally, it became obvious at an early stage that the majority of the participating teachers felt constantly pressed for time, and unable to keep up with what they felt a good teacher should be doing for all their students. This led to checking out how pervasive was this attitude of time constraint, and if teachers could shed any light on the reasons. This led on to developing the theme of intensification of work (A. Hargreaves, 1992, 1994), but it pinpointed other more emotional factors affecting teachers’ work, such as guilt and moral responsibility towards their students, and the personal pressures they took on themselves. In this way, categories were noted in detail, gathered together and concepts emerged, or at least the themes were classified.

Woods discusses what he terms “leaps of imagination” (Woods, 1986: 147), which describes the researcher creatively conceptualising from these early levels of data analysis. He seems to be arguing that scientific models of research also stem from such “leaps” of the mind, and if this is encouraged within ethnography, the same type of conceptual and theoretical development could progress. As such, the researcher has to be creative, and take the attitude of openness to the data, rather than having a definite preconceived result in mind. This is consistent with the open-endedness of the questioning technique.

Woods argues that theoretical limitations exist within the present practice of ethnography. Its nature, by definition, is descriptive; “the ethnographer, like the artist, works with great care at capturing both the general and essential characteristics and the myriad finer points which underpin them” (Woods, 1986: 148). Faithfulness in describing a situation is a guiding principle in ethnography but it could block theory

construction unless the researcher takes the attitude of intellectually stepping out of the data to maintain a position of detachment. This prevents any displacement of goals, where the collection and description of data may become an end in itself, rather than the development of new knowledge and theoretical constructs at a second order level.

The trend to focus on the construction of subjective meaning has also had a consequence for ethnography by seeming to imply a devaluing of theory. Woods argues the case for rigor in order to get beyond description to “sensitising categories” (Woods, 1986: 156). These he thinks are stepping stones to developing new theory, and are the concepts behind the categories. These can be taken and examined in further studies. The main attributes of such a researcher he declares are openness and creativity (Woods, 1986: 161, 166).

Hammersley (1987, 1990), would add intellectual rigour and the involvement in a critical discourse between practising educational researchers for the clarification of terms and concepts. It is important for the researcher to attempt to maintain the tension between the more subjective skills in data collection with the less involved and more objective processes in data analysis and conceptualisation. Once all the data embodied in field notes, interview transcriptions and documents analysis is finally collated, more systematic categorising and classifying is attempted, to provide for logical ordering and cross-checking, and the development of themes and concepts.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982: 153), suggest that in analysis it is wise to keep focused on the research questions and the data, but to play with metaphors, concepts and analogies as “near sightedness plagues most research”. This helps keep the ideas that may be generated grounded in the data. Letting an amount of time pass with analysing (of say one to two weeks), also helps clarify themes as it gives a little distance from the mass of data.

The typed transcripts were grouped and coded in more detail, (aided by the use of computer technology). Categories were drawn out and tested again with the data from

the transcripts in order to gauge how valid and representative they were. The voices of the teachers' grounded the data. These themes were grouped into those held in common by the teachers, and those particular to specific contexts or individuals. Patterns emerged from this sorting, and a preliminary list of categories were established. These continued to be modified. As the incoming data increased, there was an increase in themes and categories. With analysis, these underwent selection and simplification. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982: 166), state, "analysis is a process of data reduction". It is important to keep focused and make decisions to that end to ensure this reduction is clearly related to the research questions, and balanced in its representation of the data.

## **Some Related Methodological Issues**

In pursuing this research, there were a few methodological issues to take into account, in order to maintain the reliability of the data, the quality of the research and a useful outcome to all participants.

### **Ethical Issues**

There were several procedural matters to attend to in pursuing this research in order to maintain an ethical stance. It was important to communicate as fully as possible to all concerned and to keep doing so, throughout the research procedure. For example, in gaining access to schools and permission to work with teachers, full detail of the research proposal needed to be shared with the individuals concerned. This is especially so for research based on the work of individuals. Similarly, the proposed time commitment involved, and the type of classroom intervention that may occur needs to be fully detailed to allow teachers to make considered judgements about their association with the research.

At the outset, assurances of anonymity of participants' names and specific details needs to be given, and carried out. This confidentiality may at times seem to hinder the researcher's autonomy, and the pursuit of truth, but it is important to put the

participating teacher at ease, as far as possible in the hope that a complete discussion can be forthcoming.

All participants were assured of the freedom to read transcripts of their taped interviews and comments that the researcher was attempting to use in the writing of this work. Most did not take up this offer, but were appreciative of an ongoing dialogue about the progress of the work, and remained confident that their personal details would not be divulged in print.

The literature tends to focus on the issue of power relationships between researcher and informant within this form of research (Apple, 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Ethically, the relationship between these positions needs to be as equal as possible. The position of the researcher tends to be the one in which the researcher holds the power as questions and research focus are usually determined by the researcher, and there is consequently a degree of the unknown about this situation as far as the teacher is concerned. Teachers can be defensive about their work and its context, and so at a disadvantage within the situation.

Further, there needs to be more equality of usefulness from the research. Both researcher and respondent should receive some benefit of outcome from the process (Maxwell, 1990). It need not be as Woods (1986) suggests typically researchers and academics analysing teacher experience for their own use, creating knowledge of value only to academics and their personal aggrandisement. The respondent teacher needs to feel a benefit from the involvement with this research, even if it is only on the level of satisfaction with the process. Their particular problems need highlighting. Collaboration between researchers and teachers aids the research focus and helps teacher practice (Butt *et al*, 1992). It helps keep the research practical and related to real teaching problems.

The researcher needs to be able to bring a level of specialist skills and knowledge to the task, and respect the abilities and qualities of the respondent teacher (Maxwell, 1990). This research was collaborative to the extent that willing teachers gave their

time and co-operation to discuss this research question, and in so doing gained an insight into another individual's struggle to gain knowledge, and by association were provided with another person's view of their situation, and someone to sound off to and to listen to their ideas without criticism. Although at times this seemed one sided, the teachers all mentioned how much they appreciated being able to talk out their work situation with an interested, but dispassionate colleague.

This therapeutic value is noted in the literature (Denscombe, 1984: 111). The teachers collaborated to the extent that they brought forth original contributions of their situations and feelings. It was essential that these were honestly reported. Further, the researcher spent time in both schools reporting to the principals about the research findings. Several issues have been targeted for internal in-service review.

Related to ethics and bias is the problem of ascertaining the truth from peoples' discourse. Consciously or unconsciously there can be deception. Contradictory statements may be made (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 10). With transcription, the researcher may gently pursue these points, aware that differing responses may well be due to different focuses in different circumstances. If otherwise, the data needs to be discarded and notes made to the effect that the interviewee wanted to be seen in a certain light. This fact may ultimately prove useful.

## **Bias**

The problem of researcher bias exists in all research, both quantitative and qualitative. Ethnographic research is prone to the problem of the researcher having pre-formed ideas and attitudes which may interfere with the honesty of the work, quite possibly unbeknown to the researcher. It is important to try to identify these areas of personal bias and to attempt to avoid these pitfalls, by declaring them and making decisions to justify the approaches taken.

Measor (1985) notes the value of the researcher writing an educational biography to try to come to terms with personal views and where they may have originated. This

declaration aids the personal awareness of the researcher, as this may contaminate the data unintentionally. It is also a means of maintaining one's intellectual position at a distance. It can be referred to, but need not underpin the action and discourse. This declaration of researcher's standpoint helps to minimise the effect of the researcher's presence and as such aids the validity of the research.

The researcher attempted to minimise researcher bias in two ways. The first was to write a detailed statement reflecting on personally held views surrounding the subject of this thesis. This was completed prior to the commencement of data collection. Preconceptions inconsistencies and prejudices were exposed in this way to alert the researcher. The second method involved keeping a journal of daily thoughts during data collection. The researcher sketched impressions and raised questions in this journal after reflecting on the events of the day in the field, and particular teachers' comments.

## **Validity**

Triangulation is the method of enhancing the validity of the data (Woods, 1986; Delamont, 1992; Cuff, 1990; Denscombe, 1984). Using at least three different sources to help corroborate data, to substantiate findings and points of view, the data becomes manifestly more defensible. The researcher is then able to draw out credible themes and cross validate using a variety of techniques and perspectives (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 171). Delamont writes that "between method triangulation means getting data on something with more than one method" (1992: 159). For example, teachers in interview worried over their difficulties in teaching to different ability students. The value of this was stressed in documents as an attribute of the schools' purpose, and the teachers' attempts to implement this were observed in the classroom. Similarly, the data was also triangulated by source, as there was more than one participant contributing.

Within the issue of research validity, there are several aspects to consider. The accuracy of the findings needs to be checked. Have the methods used been the most

effective in pursuing the problem? Again it is essential that a variety of compatible methods have been applied in a disciplined and thorough way. Are the constructs used authentic, and do they represent the reality as stated (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984: 224)? Here, consistently cross checking both what teachers say in response to questions and the method of questioning, needs scrutiny. This merges into the question of reliability of data.

## **Reliability**

Again, multiple data sources make for a more powerful study (Walker 1985: 79). Reliability can be external, in the sense that issues such as the choice of informants have been fairly dealt with and not influenced by unacknowledged factors. In this study the main criteria for selection was that they should be experienced full-time teachers, and teach in areas of researcher competence.

The sample was limited, and the matter of selection could have been problematic if any teacher had refused the researcher's request to participate. The first four teachers in each school that were invited to participate were willing to co-operate. Similarly, the question of the status of the researcher in the eyes of the participants needs to be incorporated into data analysis. Although, the researcher was aware of the need to appear unthreatening to the teachers in their work, there would be times when individual teachers responded unconsciously by trying to impress, or go out of their way to demonstrate talents and interests that may not be representative of their normal work.

Internal reliability is determined by the extent that the various data sources produce agreement within the study. In social research, events and experiences are individual and idiosyncratic, and so appear difficult to reproduce or replicate. It was noted earlier, in the section on qualitative methods, that underpinning this work is the view that the representation of teachers' lives is to an extent a social construction. With discipline in representing the data as realistically and objectively as possible, and

maintaining the authenticity of the constructs used, the data will be reliable and more suitable to generalise.

### **Generalisability**

There are two approaches to ethnography. One that deems it exclusively idiographic and descriptive. It maintains that there are no truths, just an improved understanding and description of particular events. The opposing view is that ethnography is nomothetic, and generalisations and comparisons can validly be made from it. Woods (1986: 49-50) argues that these two views are not mutually exclusive. The quality of the research can be improved if care is taken to use, for example, a representative sample of participants, and to cross check findings, and declare the special peculiarities of the context. Generalisability will be enhanced as this sound quality, based on grounded data allows the reader to make sense of the case study to his or her own situation.

Maxwell (1989: 75) notes that in naturalistic research using case study methods, it is the reader who makes the generalisation. The researcher must give assurances that the cases are fully described, enabling readers to recognise similarities from their own experience and make generalisations. In this study, the two school contexts are particular, and affect the individual teachers in specific ways. There is no doubt that other schools and teachers would display differences. Nevertheless, attention to the particular in case studies, permits the reader to make comparisons appropriately, while appreciating the differences.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

One limit to generalisability is the choice of the size of study. A large participating pool would have provided a better level of representativeness. The time factor and the need for thick description determined the size of the sample. The issue of “reflexivity” appears in many sources in the methodological literature (for example, Denscombe, 1984: 121; Delamont, 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Reflexivity highlights

the fact that social research is conducted by a researcher who is part of the world being studied. It is therefore necessary to be continually aware of the interpretations being attached to research findings, and once again declare any interest, bias or pre-existing ideas as far as is possible. Hosie (1986: 203) states it effectively; “don’t bring cultural baggage to the interview”.

This challenge of personal involvement in the data can be limited in its effect if the researcher attempts to be aware of it. The factor of the researcher’s skill level also influences the quality and extent of the data collected. Within this methodology, the researcher must aim to be a sensitive research instrument (Wilson, 1977: 261).

## **Summary**

This chapter has examined the methods used to investigate the problem of this thesis: the extent to which both situational and personal constraints are needed to come to an adequate understanding of the determinants of teachers’ work.

To collect and represent substantiated data at the individual personal level of teachers’ experience, which purports to show meaning and understanding of that experience, qualitative methods have been used. In order to minimise the effects of subjectivity and to increase the validity of this research, eight teachers underwent extended personal interviews at various stages in the research. They were also observed in their teaching with opportunities for pre-and post-observation conferences. A textual analysis of school documents and publications was completed to provide background for these teachers.

Chapter Three will present the data that has emerged from these research methods, and go on to examine the underlying results.