

## **Chapter Five**

# **An Exploratory Synthesis: Towards a Model of Teachers' Work**

### **Introduction**

Chapters Three and Four documented and analysed the data relating to the influences on the work of the eight participating teachers in this study. Chapter Three also portrayed the school contexts. This was to provide the background to the personal accounts of the teachers towards their work and students in that chapter. Chapter Four took the perspective of teachers' work to demonstrate the diversity of this work and the differing reactions of the teachers. Its main purpose was to highlight the various complex interactions between work situations and teachers' personal and biographical points of view. Examples of structural constraints operating on teachers and the cultural valuation of school traditions of teacher privacy and isolation were contrasted with examples of individual teacher's abilities to overcome these difficulties through personal efforts, and the support of their colleagues.

This chapter restates the influences on teachers, in order to argue the thesis that inquiry into both situational constraints and personal factors are needed to come to an adequate understanding of the influences on teachers' work. A selection of common dilemmas affecting teachers' work are detailed to demonstrate the interactive nature of this work. A short descriptive review of some existing models of teachers will be provided to highlight the influences of personal and structural factors. The chapter concludes with a general summary of these points.

## The Structure-Agency Discussion

Various structural determinants on teachers have been documented in this study. Some of these influences are *direct*. Teachers work in conditions of isolation, in fairly private circumstances and deal with immediate situations and problems. These constraints have come to be culturally valued, and in some ways have come to define the task of teaching.

Teachers' work situations are influenced by many factors. For example, the size of the school, and its class sizes, the quantity and quality of resources, the school ethos, and the demographics of the student clientele are influential factors. Similarly, the support among staff members and the standard of the relationships between the teaching staff and the administration, all affect teachers' work situations.

Other factors that teachers experience in their work are less obvious and affect teachers more *indirectly*. These are, for example, the increasingly rapid rate of change taking place in the area of curriculum. Teachers are aware that they need to keep abreast with innovations and technological developments (see, for example, "Shaping the Future", Queensland Curriculum Review (Nov. 1994), Office of Minister for Education, Queensland). Also, teachers report themselves to be involved increasingly in administrative tasks, extensive assessment of students, or on committees and planning groups. These developments constitute time away from effort spent towards their generally accepted professional teaching role. Teachers may need to expand their conception of their role.

It has been argued that teachers respond to these influences differently. An example of the differential effect of one influence on teachers may help to confirm this point. At the Community School where one influence (of class size) had been overcome through an administrative policy decision, it was found that some teachers still maintained conservative teaching practices. They attempted to be child centred and focused on the interests of the individual student, yet Rob, for example, was observed to teach didactically, as one would to a class of 30 or 300. His views on knowledge

and his thinking on his role as a teacher dictated this method. He did not derive benefit from a small class, nor deliver any.

Don, from St Lukes, on the other hand, taught in larger classes, yet found interesting subject matter to reach individual students' interests. He made time to observe his students working. He tried to get to know them and was clearly aware of the progress of each student. The size of class may limit what is possible for teachers to practice in their work, but the personal view of the teacher also plays a part in the final outcome of a particular situation.

Ruth believed in the value of listening to students. She provided time for students to talk, and took care to follow up students' comments and worries with her colleagues. Nevertheless, she taught her small class group as she did when she had been in a more traditional school. She appeared very formal, and rarely digressed from her lesson plan. It is not easy for a teacher to change teaching practices. It is not easy for a school (i.e. the administration) to control or direct a teacher's classroom behaviours.

Continuing with this example, and connecting increased class size with increased work load as is a common view among teachers, it would be expected that those teachers involved in small classes would report a reduction in work requirements. Felicity, in comparing her situation with her partial knowledge of the state of affairs at the Community school took this view. She complained of the difficulties that she experienced getting around to all the students in her classes, due to increasing student numbers combined with the factor of more lower ability students staying on into senior levels. Her academic orientation to her work was slowly altering by this situational change in school policy. She found that she had to change her expectations of classes, and teach to the lower end of student abilities.

In comparison, Jim maintained that it was difficult, even in a class of 10 students, to fulfil individual students' needs, but he made the attempt. Here, organisational frameworks, and school policy decisions contribute to teachers' experience of work and its load, but these are mediated by the individual teacher's response to the

situation. Don treated the demands of a larger class like a challenge, whereas Felicity felt thwarted in her efforts. Jim believed it was his duty to do his best for all his students. This really taxed him, but he remarked that he was rewarded when he achieved his goal, if the lesson went well and individual students had responded to his efforts.

Basic to this issue of class size, is teacher work load, but importantly there are also questions of equity of opportunity for students, and achieving the objective of developing student independence in their own learning. One would imagine, that the smaller class size would permit these positive developments, and in observation, this outcome seemed assured. Yet some of the teachers reported the need to be observant against doing too much for the student, because the situation was very personal and close. Teachers' intentions to help individual students had unanticipated consequences.

In attempting to show care for the students, the teachers realised that at times they were in fact disadvantaging them. They were not providing sufficient challenges for fear of being regarded as unpopular by students, colleagues or parents, or for not upholding what was felt to be an unwritten tradition of the school; an ethos of care, combined with teacher responsibility for student outcomes. Again, this points to the importance of teachers being willing to openly reflect on their approaches and judge the results of their own practices. This involves a strength of character to be able to choose to be less influenced by surrounding pressures, in order to maintain the approach consistent with what is felt most suitable.

This section has attempted to restate the inter-relationship between school structures and personal autonomy. The two schools, at times, provided distinct structures. For example, small class sizes as against larger classes, bureaucratic and authoritarian administration compared with more open, personal and democratic organisation.

The teachers at St Lukes tended to implicitly assume that certain school structures, such as class size, were set in stone and unalterable. They had grown used to these

structures and accepted them. The Community School held small classes to be important to their philosophy, and this was implemented. St Lukes used the economic excuse as the basis of the decision about class size. Both decisions affected teachers' work. Set against these structures, teachers taught differently.

There were examples of good individualised teaching in both schools, although it was easier to get to know students and be more specific in focus, as a teacher at the Community school. Both schools provided examples of teachers putting a great deal of effort into their lessons. There were more frustrations at St Lukes due to the less flexible organisational structure, and the lack of procedures for teachers to communicate with the administration. Again personal characteristics helped to determine how teachers responded to these situations.

Jason took the view that it was hard being an administrator, so he could empathise with the Principal's difficulties. Felicity was constantly in opposition to administrative decisions, and felt frustrated and ineffectual. Don took the attitude of working with decisions. He accepted them and took as little notice of staffroom politics and controversial issues as far as possible.

## **Notes on the Place of the Personal in Teachers' Work**

What are the personal factors that make teachers do what they do? A simple division may be along the lines of biographical, philosophical and sociological influences. Other factors, such as political views held by teachers may be subsumed into the categories of philosophical or sociological, as they relate to particular aspects of their work. Similarly, psychological factors could be included within the sphere of biographical influences, in order to simplify this analysis.

*Biographical influences* are those related to experiences teachers may have had in their past, for example, as school students, and during pre-service and in-service times. *Sociological influences* relate to teachers' beliefs about equity of educational opportunity, and education as a valuable resource to society in general and groups in

society in particular. *Philosophical influences* refer to the effects of those deeply held beliefs or convictions about the value and purpose of education to the development of the individual. This may have moral or value based components.

Chapters Three and Four illustrated a number of differences between individual teachers in this study on the grounds of philosophical, biographical and sociological beliefs and experiences. For example, all the teachers had experienced traditional, conservative teaching as school students. The effect of these experiences produced different outcomes. Don, Jason and Felicity in general, tried to perpetuate these experiences and practices to an extent, within their own teaching. They held the view that private schooling and the academic curriculum, to be worthwhile.

In contrast, Ruth, Larry and Jim went out of their way to personalise and democratise the relationships between themselves and their students, as if in reaction to their previous experiences (and perceived sufferings). Whereas, Rob attempted to subvert the school system to help students appreciate the oppressive nature of institutions.

Ruth mentioned that she had to keep focusing on her teaching goals for she noted the tendency to repeat her own past experiences in her teaching practice despite having been determined not to model this view of education. She felt that it was easy to slip into fairly unthinking routines. She demonstrated a level of awareness of these influences on her teaching. Contextual and situational factors help influence what a teacher may achieve, but teachers' thinking, personally held beliefs, visions and prejudices also affect the final outcome.

A further aspect to be considered is the strength or the extent of the personal qualities needed to maintain and follow through with these held beliefs. For example, all the teachers mentioned the importance they gave to the care and commitment of students. Felicity blamed the school's organisation for the lack of achieving high standards in student behaviour. This had the effect of preventing Felicity from accepting responsibility to do anything to improve the situation. Jim and Ruth, in comparison, blamed themselves. They accepted personal responsibility and so were consciously

practising the personal values, for example, of patience and consistency, in their relationships with students.

Paula appeared jaded in her situation. It was unclear whether her lack of initiative and general lack of motivation about her work was due to the situational constraints she now found herself in (e.g. loss of hours, changed responsibilities and little appreciation from the administration). Or, whether personal factors and beliefs, such as the unfulfilled expectation attached to her senior status, may have contributed to her unwillingness to be more flexible and to tackle these new challenges.

Nias (1989a) noted that caring was not a soft option for the teachers she studied. Caring is demanding of teachers. It is generally accepted to be more central to the ethic and organisation of primary teaching. It was extremely influential in the work of the teachers at the Community School. They valued caring alongside the academic aspects of their work. As Nias (1989a) noted, it may have had the effect of reducing these teachers' concern with academic standards, in comparison with teachers' at St Lukes. This may have produced subtle contradictions for teachers at the Community School. On the one hand they gave proportionally greater emphasis to relationships and care, yet on the other, to provide for excellence, they needed to convey the academic work also to a high standard. These goals need not be incompatible, but achieving them entails great effort and commitment on the part of the teachers. The teachers were conscious of this, as they were to the challenge of remaining objective in dealing with students who may have social problems that the teacher is aware of and attempting to address.

The emphasis on care and commitment in teachers' work produced a dichotomy in observed behaviour and attitudes reported by the teachers. In the effort of caring, there was an unintended outcome of guilt in the teacher in combination with a sense of weighty responsibility. At the same time, there was frequently a polarised response of teacher satisfaction and reward through the exertion and selflessness towards their students. They expected a great deal of themselves; to be nurturer and carer,

disciplinarian and academic mentor. Hargreaves (1994) called this the “persona of perfectionism”, and this trait existed observably in most of the teachers.

They attempted to rationalise these emotions, and individually were working towards finding ways of coping with the effects of guilt, while being willing to endure this for the sake of the final satisfaction in good outcomes. The guilt and responsibility taken on by the teachers tended to result in increased work loads; they worked themselves beyond reasonable expectations. On the other side, this work also produced warm relationships, and the rewards of student successes. (And the researcher believes, it produced a sense of personal worth).

The teachers at the Community School in becoming part of the school, had implicitly accepted a career directed towards the concept of *personal change*. Their duty as teachers involved an active interest in personal change and improvement. They were fortunate to the extent that they associated with like minded others, and gained an amount of collegial understanding and support.

Teachers at St Lukes were less like this. Their aim was solely to change students. They wanted to improve their knowledge of subject matter, for example, but were less conscious of the role that their personality contributed to their attitudes and behaviours. Don, in comparison to Paula, for example, understood the value of his personal qualities for his class’ stability and progress. He said, “you must always have a belief in yourself”. He was confident of coping with whatever his students did. His past experiences had confirmed this view of himself. Paula appeared jaded and lacked that early enthusiasm she once had for her teaching. She appeared lost in her situation, and could not take any personal initiative at this stage. Felicity, as was said, blamed others for her difficult situations.

There were difficulties associated with personal change. These difficulties were related to the interaction between constraints that were perceived as structural, and those believed to be more personal. Although the Community School context provided a more flexible structural situation for teachers (e.g. smaller class sizes, more

parental involvement, teachers caring and involved, fees that were not exclusive or limiting), teachers were, at times, also a little jaded, tired, and stressed by their own high expectations of themselves. In having a good working situation, they tried very hard to promote good teaching, and this personal involvement had its negative side. Perhaps, these teachers could have used their open structure more, when, in fact, at times they taught conservatively. It would appear that to change is difficult. There seemed to be an inertia to overcome, made up of past experiences, and influenced by the strength of the personal belief in themselves, that they could in practice change their behaviours, and interact successfully with the perceived constraints of their situation.

These teachers were, in a small way, attempting to break new ground (if not in education, certainly for themselves), yet they also wanted to be recognised as “normal”. The pressures to appear to be the perfect teacher existed also. It was important to them, in participating in this study, to try to discover and portray the many personal pressures on themselves as teachers, as well as the structural and situational constraints.

These pressures did not result in the same outcomes. For example, why did Larry (the teaching Principal at the Community School), mention his difficulties in getting tasks done by his staff, despite their obvious involvement and support? The teachers’ own personal agendas or priorities tended to dilute the effectiveness of his decisions. In report writing or the development of curriculum, they dragged these tasks out over time. The excuse was always the pressure of immediate work. There were teachers who managed to keep to his prescribed time frame, while others, he said, never did.

Ironically, teachers who espoused the value of good personal examples to their students, fell short themselves, in simple areas such as the requested contributions to the Principal. Their attitude was, there was always too much to do, and the Principal would understand. The open-ended nature of their work made it difficult for them to feel that they had completed an activity, in order to move to another. They insisted that they were there for their students, and that they contributed greatly in school

activities in many other ways. This study found that teachers could limit the effectiveness of a programme despite being able to appreciate its value. Leadership and authority was not a simple “one way and down” experience (Jason). In both schools, just because the Principal asked for something to be done, it did not always happen. There were changes and additions on the way. This led to frustrations for teachers and administrators.

St Lukes did not get its peer appraisal scheme off the ground due to the inertia of the staff. It became too difficult to keep coaxing people to follow the guidelines set down by the Principal. There had been no sanctions applied which may have had the effect of “encouraging” co-operation. It resulted in teachers finding excuses to do alternative things with their limited time. The priority of the moment was challenged and later superseded by the next innovation or reform. This continual change in what was deemed important was regularly experienced by all the teachers, and it influenced the teachers’ attitudes. Jason was willing to go along with most ideas, whereas, Felicity felt threatened and wanted to retreat into being a classroom teacher and non-involvement. Perhaps the greater age of the staff at St Lukes, contributed to the view that teaching was continually confronting them and expecting their response to new ideas.

## **Recurring Themes**

There were several overarching themes that could be described as influences on the teachers and their work. The following sections attempt to analyse these recurring themes in relation to both agency and structure. The major difficulty with this form of analysis was the constant interplay of these forces, making clarity of analysis problematic. In order to explain the influences, these themes have been extracted, and where appropriate some interactions have been described.

Time was regarded by all the teachers as an over-riding thematic issue in their work. Teachers also suffered from the emotions of guilt and feelings of responsibility. There were problems related to isolation, individuality and lack of collegial support.

Teachers reported the ongoing increase in their work loads, as their work appeared to become more bureaucratic, technical and intensified. There were recorded statements about the difficulties teachers experienced with coping and making personal and professional changes that had lasting effect. All these themes highlight the complexity of teachers' life in schools and the variety of influences affecting the success or failure of leadership. These themes also demonstrate the different approaches teachers took to solving problems in their work situations.

### **The Problem of Time in Teachers' Work**

The major stated influence for teachers in their work was the lack of time. There was never enough time to plan lessons to the extent that teachers would have liked. There was never enough time to follow through with tasks such as, speaking to students and parents, or to inform colleagues, encourage them, and share ideas. They were pressed for time, and seemed to have always more to do. Teachers believed that their work was intensifying. At St Lukes, they had larger classes, more difficult students, difficulty in keeping up with new knowledge and resources, and rapid curriculum changes which made demands on their time.

Even at the Community School, teachers noted they were pressed for time. Many teachers' tasks were postponed due to the immediacy of the demands of their work. There were always interruptions, with the consequence of frustrations as plans were side-tracked. Free periods quickly dissolved in trying to get a few phone calls out of the way, for example. The structural limitations on teachers' time were constant reminders of tiredness and stress. Frustration and distractedness vied to take over teachers' personal resolve to be concentrated and focused on their work priorities.

Nevertheless, Jim was able to find a partial solution to his problem of insufficient hours in his day. He could see that his experience of lack of time was due to several personal factors. For example, he had the tendency to take on tasks without thinking about the consequences involved in completing them, partly because he liked to contribute and be helpful, but he also believed in the worthwhile nature of his work.

He liked to complete each task to a satisfactory outcome, and this necessitated perseverance and time. Ultimately, he realised that he had to come to a decision and make some changes in his attitude to work. He said that he chose to worry less about time, accept that it was always going to be limited, and attend to each task as well as he could while he was involved in it. He became more conscious and realistic about the work he was taking on, and at times was willing to say that he could not contribute, without this resulting in any loss of self regard.

Here again, there is a variety of responses to the problem of press for time. The problem exists, it is a reality for teachers and it is said to be intensifying. Some teachers are able to ignore it better than others. Teachers find ways of coping.

### **Individuality and Collegiality**

Hargreaves (1994) said that the typical individuality expressed by teachers was a realistic and reasonable response to school organisational conditions. All the teachers in the study were more comfortable with private closed classrooms and the autonomous view of themselves with “no one looking over my shoulders” (Jason).

When they expressed frustrations that the school may not be achieving its objectives, or the work load of curriculum development was too great a responsibility for an individual teacher, the valuation of the idea of collegiality or peer support for teachers appeared to provide a possible solution. Teachers expressed that they wanted more time with other teachers, but this was generally at the level of sharing of information and good ideas. Where teachers were encouraged by the Principal to collaborate, the value of these outcomes was unpredictable, and usually not long lasting. Teachers enjoyed the friendship but the work was usually only marginally relevant to their interests.

Teachers liked to choose the people they worked with. On one side, the teachers were proud of their individual efforts, and the successes and rewards of their work were individually and privately enjoyed. These rewards were important to them. Yet on the other side, the teachers were conscious of the limits caused by the lack of support and friendship between colleagues. Their isolation constrained them also.

The teachers at the Community School actively worked at their collegial relationships, as they saw this benefiting themselves and student outcomes. This was not always easy for them. They had to be aware, and overcome the effects, of past experiences and expectations held about the roles of teachers. In comparison, the culture at St Lukes made teacher association more difficult. It was as if professionals should not need the reassurance of others. The major association was in staff rooms, and in a weekly attempt in the form of a social club. The latter attracted only the junior staff members, and these were generally male teachers able to stay back on a Friday. The staff room was depicted as a place to congregate and criticise students and policy decisions. Don avoided it, as he found it negative and unhelpful. He did like his colleagues. They were all nice people, but he did not want to extend friendships beyond the workplace. One school gained from its small staff size, as the workplace was perceived as comfortable. The second school was disadvantaged as a workplace, as there was no easily recognisable method for example, to resolve conflicts between teachers; as Jason said, "its too close, no-one likes to confront anyone".

The culture of teaching portrays teachers as individuals. They are expected to cope on their own, and are rewarded for individual effort in their relationship with students. The growing interest in collegiality as an innovation may provide benefits to the isolated teacher, if these can be appreciated, and the isolation difficulties overcome. New ways of teacher association need to be practised in a voluntary and unthreatening manner, just as there is a perception of value for students to be encouraged to work together in groups.

### **Care and Commitment or Bureaucracy and Efficiency**

It would be too simple to assess the two schools according to the terms of care and commitment, and bureaucracy and efficiency, although these divisions do go some way to expressing some of the differences between the schools. St Lukes was more bureaucratic in organisation. This stifled the teachers' voices to some extent and encouraged a more impersonal and instrumental view of their work. Efficiency was important. They had sound strategies and taught well and effectively, getting good student outcomes.

In contrast, the Community School sincerely worked on the concepts of care and commitment towards their students, families and colleagues. They were less bureaucratic and so seemed at times less organised if one were to use an organisational perspective. Yet the school had a soul. The people in it were still important. They achieved sound student outcomes and so were also effective. They wanted to measure student outcomes in other ways than academic results. It was fair to say that St Lukes also showed caring attitudes to its student body, but this was a lesser priority.

Despite this, the Community School reported occasions when some teachers spent too much time trying to work out guidelines and programmes in a very restricted and bureaucratic manner. There were occasions when no feedback was provided to staff about decisions, and teachers felt undervalued. The personal aspect of any organisation seemed to need constant care and attention. All the teachers mentioned that they functioned better on the occasions when they felt appreciated. They all received feedback and rewards from students. It is likely that more continuous support from colleagues and collaboration with administration would have helped both groups of teachers. The dynamics of these interactions appear to need constant monitoring.

### **Professionalism or Intensification**

This thesis started out with the quotation from Hargreaves (1994: 117) in relation to teachers in Canada. "For better or worse, teaching is not what it was". The analysis of this data tended to highlight this same finding about these Australian teachers. The Community School was blazing its own trail, which had causal effects on its teachers. The experienced teachers at St Lukes had all been there long enough to make comparisons of their work over time. Some of the reasons given for these real or imagined changes were:

- the needs of special education students in ordinary classes;
- the constantly changing curriculum programmes;
- technical innovations and the pressures for reform;
- more diverse assessment strategies;

- more consultation with parents, and expectations of communication with colleagues;
- more in-service attendance seen as essential to career advancement;
- changes in structures of promotion;
- the open-ended nature of teachers' work.

There are two contending explanations of the significance of these changes. The first is that teaching is becoming more *professionalised*. This may be perceived as a structural explanation despite the personal involvement of teachers. Teachers are realising this professionalism through extensions of the teachers' role. They are portrayed as having gained more experience of curriculum development, and are expected to be committed to continuous improvement (technical and personal), and with their colleagues, engage professionally with school wide changes. In these accounts, teaching is becoming more complex and more skilled (Hargreaves, 1994). The teacher is an extended professional.

The second explanation of these changes stems from Marxist theories of labour, and pinpoints major trends towards the deterioration and *deprofessionalisation and intensification* of teachers' work (Apple, 1983, 1992). In this view of the American situation, teachers have been increasingly experiencing their work as more routinised and deskilled, and less like trusted autonomous professionals exercising power and the expertise of discretionary judgement. Their duties are increasingly controlled by prescribed programmes and any personal control is only minor and circumscribed. These courses are in fact designed to be "teacher proof". Teachers are becoming increasingly alienated from their work. They appear in the eyes of the society as responsible for poor student outcomes and are blamed for the problems of dysfunctional youth brought about by rapid and alienating social change.

These two differing views of the reasons for teachers' working realities highlight some of the dilemmas teachers work with. The teachers in this study attempted to follow departmental guidelines, to be professional and extend their teaching roles, but if they became too involved in processed packaged materials or focused only on

content knowledge, they soon lost their personal hold on their work, and the student-teacher relationship was diminished to that extent. This comes some way to substantiating Apple's criticism of American teachers for their slavish adherence to the textbook and learning packages.

Professionalism is a believable rhetoric to these teachers. Teachers tried to take long term views and gain new skills. They took on responsibilities, and yet they received no time relief to complete these additional tasks. The nature of their work appeared to continue to extend, without recognition from the administration, or involvement in decision making. They were expected to perform professionally with less social status, little professional respect and less remuneration than is generally attached to other professionals.

### **Unanticipated Outcomes**

There are several findings in the data that demonstrate the dilemmas that teachers face, on occasion, and some consequences that they did not intend. Does the teacher hurry on regardless to complete the lesson plan in order to get through the work load, or decide to stop and repeat and review the work to ensure students' understanding? The teacher must make this choice. It can be based on the teacher's reasoned beliefs, or directed by the views of others. It could conceivably be an area that the teacher has not come to realise an issue exists. Larry deliberately cut down his content to allow time for students to develop and practice research skills for themselves. Don, in comparison, covered more content believing that a broader knowledge would lead to better understanding in his students. Both wanted the best for their students. The best was interpreted differently. These solutions may be represented as personal decisions based within a particular perception of structural constraints.

Rob in trying to liberate his students from the oppression of the schooling system, maintained very traditional and conservative practices. His lessons could quite easily have been very dry and boring to students, through this method, but his personal gift

of conversation, and ability to tell a good story lifted his history lessons. The students experienced a wonderful insight into the use of language.

There were examples of teachers attempting to provide a caring atmosphere for their students, but unintentionally provided too much assistance to them. This undermined students' confidence and initiative. Similarly, in spending time listening to students' worries, in the hope of solving a problem, teachers may well have promoted the unintended repetition of the behaviour. Difficult students preferred to get some attention than none at all. Teachers needed to reflect further and continually on the outcomes of their teaching to refine their skills and judgement and better achieve their goals. Felicity taught to the steering group of boys in her class despite her intention to equalise her attention between boys and girls. The boys misbehaved and seemed to demand her attention. The same boys did not behave in this manner towards Don, for example. The researcher was interested to follow these students between classes. Their behaviour was not consistent between classes and teachers. Felicity's caring attitude seemed to encourage abuse by some students, instead of friendliness and support.

### **Stability and Change**

The concept of education is tied up with the concept of change. Students are being encouraged to move onwards, to change in some way for the perceived better. The teachers at the Community School certainly believed in the importance of personal change. They required it of themselves, in order to do the best for their students. This tended to imply that the teacher had some sort of deficit requiring change and improvement towards an ideal. While they held this view of themselves, they accepted the inherent goodness of the child. This caused difficulties for Jim at times, and he said that he had to consciously remind himself of his own intrinsic worth in order to keep going.

Teachers are generally portrayed as conservative and traditional. Throughout the analysis of this data, there was the recognition by the teachers of the need for

flexibility due to the ever changing nature of their work. And yet, it appeared that the teachers preferred stability and control in their work situation in order to perform their teaching tasks and minimise the influences for disorder, distraction and stress. Some structures gave teachers a sense of stability and routine.

Organisationally, teachers had strategies to maintain discipline and control of students. They had lesson plans to organise content and structures to ensure a framework for the day with dependable routines. Pressure for change came from in-service courses, or as a response to student difficulties, and from imposed curriculum directives, for example. Change also came through administrative decision making and petty interruptions. Teachers had to find ways of coping personally. "Teaching confronts your personality" (Larry).

## **A Selection of Views of Teachers at Work**

In the literature teachers are portrayed in different ways. From an analysis of the data in this study, these conceptualisations are valid, descriptive and valuable as a means of understanding the various influences on teachers. A selection of descriptors follows.

Teachers are conceptualised as *bricoleurs* (Hatton, 1988; 1989) as their work is "characterised by *ad hoc* responses". In this way, teachers are viewed as conservative and show "limited repertoires of means and limited approaches to repertoire enlargement" (Hatton, 1991: 127). Hatton attributes these limitations mainly to the conservative role of teacher educators. This model does not permit the valuation of individual teacher's autonomy to direct action, and could be viewed as a structural explanation.

Huberman (1993) described the teacher as "*an independent artisan*". In this view, teachers respond to the difficulties and requirements of their work situation, individually and privately. This is seen as a realistic response to the immediacy of the work. Huberman argues that collegiality is more valued by administrators aiming for

efficiency than as a solution to situations in the classroom. Again, teachers, although seen as independent, are structurally constrained in their work.

Schon (1983; 1987; 1990) described the teacher as a “*reflective practitioner*”. This descriptor brings into focus the teacher’s professional practical judgement, demonstrating an ability to reflect on intentions and outcomes. Here, the teacher is accorded a larger measure of rationality, problem solving acumen and the attribute of self reflection.

With reference to the American situation, Apple (1983) portrayed teachers as “*agents of socialisation*”, whose major task was to reproduce the society without change. More recently (1987; 1992) the teaching role has become increasingly technical. In attempting to adapt to the challenge of the rapidly evolving technological society teachers have become *deskilled* and their work increasingly routinised. Teachers are in this view regarded as technicians who follow some one else’s designs. They no longer control their work and personal discretionary judgement has been relegated, and replaced with implementing commercially, packaged resources.

Berliner (1988) for example, viewed the experienced teacher as *an expert*, honing skills, personal judgement and content knowledge. This expertise could be studied and transferred to the beginning teacher. There was little allowance or understanding of the contextual factors in the development of teacher expertise.

In comparison, Smyth (1987b), and Carr and Kemmis (1986) depicted teachers as “*critically reflective practitioners*”. In this view the objective for teachers was to understand how knowledge was controlled, who it advantaged, and to attempt to find critical questions to reveal the social control of schooling. This view portrays teachers as active, and able to use their critical faculties to solve problems. This has value as a way to enlighten teachers to the constraints of their situation and provides a method of empowering the individual to pursue change.

These models are limited to the extent that no one model fully represents the many influential factors involved in teachers' work, while still maintaining utility as a tool for explanation. The middle ground needs clarification.

## **Towards a Tentative Model of Teachers' Work**

As has been noted, at one extreme of the continuum of influences on teachers' work, are the structural constraints. At the other extreme are the personal factors influencing teachers in their work. It has been argued that these come together to interact in any individual's school working situation. Further, it has been argued that structural constraints can be defined as those producing influences at the classroom, the institutional and the societal levels. Similarly, the personal influences on teachers have been described, as biographical, social and philosophically based. These personal factors contribute to teachers' perceptions of their work.

The researcher attempted to develop a tentative model of the influences on teachers. As would be expected, this proved difficult. Several attempts were made to clarify these factors, but the resulting efforts all appeared to over-simplify the matter. It would appear that the model would need to be an interactive, dynamic model, attempting to demonstrate the variety of constituent influences affecting teachers in their work. These influences are often observed to be reciprocal, in that, for example, teachers may influence their classroom environment through the beliefs they bring to the situation. It is likely that these beliefs ultimately are correspondingly influenced by the work situation experienced. For example, Jason has altered his views about how he teaches the girls in his classes, having had no real experience of them prior to his time at St Lukes. As time goes on, he may develop better strategies through the experience of interacting with the students and colleagues.

The three levels of influence on teachers were noted. Similarly, influences from the other players in the school context were included (parents, administrators, bureaucrats and students). Leadership style, school organisational structures and material

constraints were all need to be subsumed within categories of institutional influence and bias.

The factor of the “self” needs further development and has to be accounted for. Why do some teachers feel motivated, autonomous and effective teachers, whereas others are jaded, burnt-out and uninspiring towards their students and colleagues? Is it reasonable to blame the influence of school structures for limiting individual initiative? Anecdotally, good and indifferent teachers could be found teaching in the same institutions, within the same school culture. We may need to look to personal characteristics, (which may reasonably, have been affected to some extent by past experiences of structural conditions), to try to understand the reactions of teachers to these changing situations. The developing model would need to take account of these differences.

The teachers continually reported that they were rewarded by student outcomes. Teachers cared for students. Findings also indicated that teachers with a reasonable amount of self confidence reported more positive outcomes, and more energy to keep going. The work was seen to be worth the effort. Others, like Paula, with less confidence, found it much harder to keep an even balanced view of work. It got her down, and she felt tired and unappreciated. This factor may have worked both ways in that she may have lost more confidence as she was treated in a manner that showed little appreciation of her efforts and skills. Development of this model may clarify the importance to teachers of having a sound level of self-confidence, and a clarity in their personal vision for their work. These issues may then be tackled in teacher education programmes.

For this model to be successful, it would need to demonstrate the many influences on teachers. At the individual level of teacher coping and working in the classroom, the personal biographical and belief systems would be taken into account. These factors come some way to framing what teachers do. It is important for beginning teachers to come to terms with these views of themselves and their roles, in order to assess the effect of situational and structural constraints on their work. Similarly, becoming

more aware of the situational constraints may assist the beginning teacher to come to terms with those things he or she can alter and improve through the action of personal qualities and characteristics.

## **Summary**

Teachers are influenced by many factors. Some are structural, emanating from the design and organisation of classrooms, schools, and the general expectations of society at large. This does not result in teachers experiencing the same situations, or in practising in the same manner. Teachers are also influenced by factors related to their personal and biographical experiences. These personal influences alone do not fully determine how a teacher will teach or react to a situation. Furthermore, individuals may be inconsistent in practising their own personal beliefs, or they may feel constrained to exercise an amount of personal autonomy, through the effect of an earlier experience. Teachers respond to situations relative to the influence of personal experience.

There are several metaphors and models of teachers in the literature of teachers' work; the teacher as bricoleur, as independent artisan, as reflective practitioner, as socialising agent, as expert, as technician and as a critical pedagogue. It has been argued that none of these models adequately explains the complexity of teachers work, and that a middle ground exists and needs development.

This chapter attempted to put forward a simple model to emphasise the dynamic interrelationships between teachers' personal viewpoints and the situational and structural constraints and opportunities existing in their school context. It could not be a predictive or prescriptive model, but may indicate the type of factors that may influence a teacher at work.

Teachers' attitudes to, and abilities to cope with, changes in work influences the outcomes of their work. Constant developments or changes in curriculum, technology and social attitudes require teachers to continue to reassess their responses to their

work situation. The shortage of time is a constant problem to teachers as work becomes more intensified and bureaucratic. Teachers may respond with feelings of guilt and frustration, or be motivated to find ways to conquer these challenges and to gain satisfaction.

There has been a call to teachers to become more professional, responsible and to reflect on their behaviour and its effects on student outcome. This has influenced some teachers to realise the limitations of the closed classroom and to try to develop, or be involved in collegial support systems and collaborative decision making.

The following chapter restates the problem of this thesis, and summarises the approach taken and the methods used to collect and analyse the research findings. Some critical evaluation is attempted of this work, and a summary of several conclusions is provided. Areas of potential interest to further research in teacher education are also presented.



## **Chapter Six.**

### **Review, Conclusions and Prospective Intentions**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with reviewing the procedures and findings of this thesis. An overview of the research is provided, restating the research question and the methods used to obtain the results. This is followed by a critical evaluation of this work, which specifies the areas of difficulty, including some of the more problematical aspects of this type of research. The chapter concludes with a brief look forward to some issues raised in the study and provides suggestions for further work. A post-script is appended to allow the reader a continued insight into the more recent developments surrounding these teachers and their workplaces.

#### **A Restatement of the Work of this Thesis**

This research has attempted to demonstrate that it is inappropriate to view teachers' work as either wholly constrained by situational factors, or conversely, that individual teachers exercise personal autonomy in their work. The existence of a middle ground has been argued. In pursuing this issue, eight experienced teachers from two contrasting school contexts provided the data.

An ethnographic approach was taken to inquire into the various subjective influences that these teachers experienced in their work. To achieve this, several research methods were implemented. First, the teachers were observed during classroom lessons. Pre-and post-lesson conferences contributed to improved teacher- researcher understanding of the meanings of the observed practices and situations. Second, school documents were analysed to contribute further background information of the school contexts, and the social situation influencing teachers. And third, several

extended personal interviews were conducted with each teacher to collect biographical data and to research into teacher views and thinking about their work. These discussions with the teachers, and observations made within the schools contributed to the argument of the thesis, in combination with the process of ongoing reflection with the findings from the educational research literature.

The various structures and structural constraints on teachers were documented. Many of these, such as class sizes, the implementing of school regulations, or the press for time, had come to be accepted as normal workplace conditions by the teachers. Some teachers were unaware of the influences of these on their work, believing themselves to be fairly autonomous. Others felt constrained at times, but were unable or unwilling to alter their common practices.

Some teachers at the Community School, who worked under reduced structural constraints, continued to practice as if in the more common situation. Others, at times, were able to bring a creative attitude to their work and develop individual approaches to their situational problems. All these teachers, irrespective of the school they taught in, believed in the value of their work, and spent a great deal of time and effort to do what each felt was expected of them. What was expected, was more clearly understood at St Lukes.

It was less well defined at the Community School. Teachers knew they were attempting to develop a more caring and satisfying work situation for students and themselves, but there was less clarity on how this was to be achieved. With fewer obvious structures, for example, no bells, less direct administrative involvement, and more open classes, the teachers had fewer commonly accepted rules and structures to frame their work. They were expected to develop their own ways of working and coping. They also believed that their informal observations of colleagues provided a guideline or standard that had to be maintained in the school. The observation and subsequent reproduction of their view of others' behaviour limited their own freedom of expression. The teachers were realising a growing culture within the school of certain ways of teacher behaviour. They did not always agree with the value of these

behaviours yet they had to make choices about following these or creating their own methods of approach.

The personal attributes of all the teachers contributed to how they viewed their work, and how they developed their practices. Their private views on the role of teachers, students and the place of knowledge acquisition and formalisation of student behaviour all influenced what the teachers did, and what they felt constrained and frustrated about. Their personal life histories contributed to the formation and the understanding of these views.

St Lukes was a comfortable school for the teachers to work in. It did not provide an environment in which they experienced a need to confront their own personal views on knowledge or power. The major problem areas that were experienced were the lack of teacher involvement in decision making, little sense of consultation and respect towards the teaching staff as professionals, and a low level of teacher support between colleagues. These factors did not concern all the teachers at St Lukes equally. They all saw themselves as professionals with goodwill towards the school and its students. They could be called on to work to implement school policy, despite the personal difficulties they experienced at times.

The teachers at the Community School had similar personal histories and experiences, but they had chosen to teach at a school which was promoting more flexibility in teaching. The school was exploring alternative means to educate children. This impinged on their understanding of themselves as teachers. It was expected that they would take time and be responsible to reflect on their work. These teachers were also comfortable in their workplace to the extent that they experienced the goodwill of colleagues and parents. These factors contributed to support for developing their own ways of teaching.

Some routines were generated at the Community School that appeared to be acceptable to the school. There were a few less well defined grey areas, where individual teachers had to choose to develop new methods or fall back on previously

experienced routines. For example, teachers required students to stand when a member of staff entered the room. This was to encourage a demonstration of respect for the teachers by the students, and yet the students called their teachers by friendly and informal abridged names, at times. This type of inconsistency may well have been a compromise as a coping response to the pressures of work and the supposed high expectations of themselves and of others.

The tasks involved in the work of teaching are many and complex. Individual teachers emphasised the importance of particular tasks and put more effort into these. Personal beliefs influenced by past experiences seemed to dictate these work agendas, rather than school based decisions and directions. To this extent, teachers' philosophies and approaches to their tasks could work with or against administrative decision making.

The more open structure at the Community School provided an opportunity for better understanding and potential problem resolution between the different parties. Personal characteristics of individual teachers or administrators helped to determine the effectiveness of this openness. All these examples demonstrated the interaction between teachers' personal views and their structural situations. Variations in response or outcome were mentioned. These variations were sometimes accounted for by explicit teacher views. Others were less easy to understand.

The argument for a middle ground highlights the importance for teachers (and administrators) to accept some of the limitations imposed by school culture and structural decision making, while being conscious of the influence of particular individual personal factors contributing to the outcome in teachers' practice of their work. It could be regarded as a two-way process.

These teachers were part of the private sector of Australian education. St Lukes was a church school, and as such it may have constrained teachers to accommodate certain beliefs, attend services and be seen to encourage students in the same path. The teachers believed that their involvement was minimal and ineffective. The

Community school was less formally structured, but had to encompass the regular Australian cultural associations in its scheme of things.

This study has emphasised the need to help teachers be more flexible in their approach to work, and to search for specific influences in explaining teachers' work and their particular experiences. Teachers are neither totally constrained nor fully autonomous workers. Each of the factors purported to influence teachers can be made more explicit and the underlying causes identified. A selection of these factors were mentioned in Chapters Three and Four. For example, class sizes can vary. They need not be tied to economic excuses if an alternative position is proved sufficiently plausible. But, whatever the decision on class size, teachers need to be aware and willing to alter their traditional practices to enhance student learning and optimise the benefits from the situation. There has to be room for negotiation and collaboration between teachers, administrators and interested others, if teachers are to be viewed as having some authority and discretionary judgement within the constraints of their work.

## **A Critical Evaluation of this Research**

The following section critically reviews several aspects of this work and indicates difficulties and problems associated with this type of research.

### **The Research Question**

The researcher came to the research question as a consequence of trying to inquire into why practising teachers did what they did, and experienced difficulties implementing change in their work despite consistently facing problem situations.

Some teachers (for example, Felicity), blamed situational factors seemingly beyond their control, for the majority of their workplace difficulties. Others, focused their blame on individual difficulties at a personal level between colleagues or administrators. Further, teachers such as Jim, were conscientiously attending to

workplace matters yet becoming jaded or stressed despite their willingness and motivation to become better teachers.

This background of knowing teachers experiencing situational and personal constraints directed the researcher to focus or orient this study in a particular manner; to inquire into these constraining factors. To the extent that this search directed the inquiry, this work is limited. The researcher trusted that the methods and approaches used to pursue the question were as rigorous and objective as was consistent with the researcher's level of experience.

In attempting to argue that both personal characteristics and structural and situational constraints influence the work of teachers, many interesting and relevant educational issues were raised and only superficially touched on. The inquiry covered a wide range of educational literature and educational problems. It highlighted to the researcher the multi-dimensional nature of educational issues, and the difficulties in practical problem solving. It showed that both contextual and personal factors were relevant and needed to be taken into account to understand a teacher's situation.

There was added confusion, in pursuing the research question for example, due to other factors, such as, trends in education. New ideas and technology, and curriculum directives impacted on teachers and their work, both in the way that they were presented to schools, and as they were perceived as possible solutions to an individual's problems. Educators seemed to be continually looking for a panacea. They perceived their problems to be solvable by either their own personal efforts, or by the application of structural controls. These experienced teachers demonstrated strategies that controlled the amount of instability in their work, and these strategies tended to maintain conservative teaching practices and the *status quo*. Individual teachers reported differences in their abilities to cope with the changing situations that they continually experienced.

To the extent that this study was personalised and focused on a small scale, it is inappropriate to generalise the findings and assume direct causation of factors. The

provision of vignettes of these teachers and their situations was an attempt to demonstrate personal difficulties and differences, set in workplace context. Examples of the interaction of the personal and situational influences showed that grey area of middle ground in which teachers experienced in their work. This middle ground, where teachers have an amount of autonomy and yet are partly directed by responsibilities and controls, is the area that needs further clarification within teacher education.

### **The Research Method**

The methodological literature helped direct the researcher from making many early mistakes in data collection. There is no doubt that over time, improvements were made in data collection, as the researcher became more focused on the research question, and built up relationships with the participating teachers.

Additional time to pursue interviews and classroom observations may have enhanced the data. Certainly the acquisition of a larger number of participants, and other school contexts would also have provided more convincing examples. The limiting factors were time and the ability of the researcher to manage the large amount of detailed data that quickly built up.

The researcher was able to spend several months between the two schools, and was permitted a deal of freedom to observe meetings and other social situations in the schools. This contributed to the quality of the data. The researcher was aware of the importance of maintaining an unbiased point of view. Having time to step out of the situation was helpful to this end.

One criticism of the research method was the lack of data from student sources. Again, this choice was made due to the restraints of time and the researcher's inexperience in the field. Details of the influences of students and further probing into the inter-relationships between teachers and students would have contributed to the

thoroughness and balance of this work, given the obvious reciprocal nature of the dynamics in classroom contexts.

### **The Researcher's Role**

One major role of the researcher was to facilitate the participating teachers to talk and to reflect on their work. It was important not to guide the teachers or to “put words, (or ideas) in their mouths”. As has been said in Chapter Two, the researcher aimed to create a relaxed, non-judgmental relationship to enhance data gathering. Nevertheless, the researcher was aware of the influence of being present in teachers' classrooms, or while teachers were discussing with others or directly with the researcher. These were noted in field notes, and considered when compiling questions for later occasions.

There was always the problem associated with equality in a relationship. It was possible that the participants may have felt influenced to answer in specific ways. The researcher attempted to be conscious of this aspect, and made efforts to triangulate data gathering wherever practicable. The researcher attempted to resist the temptation of taking sides and view points, or associating in an extreme way with the situational problems faced by teachers. Close contact made this difficult at times. Some of the teachers were looking for guidance, but it was not the role of the researcher to interfere in their work situation during this time. At the culmination of data collection, some teachers asked to be introduced to others at the second school, and associations were formed. Perhaps these contacts will be ongoing.

### **The Workplaces and the Participating Teachers**

Handling a large body of data, there could be the tendency for the researcher to characterise individuals and simplify the contexts. This may have happened, as teachers situated themselves and were positioned in particular ways through dialogue and action. In order to simplify the story telling for the reader, generalisations may have appeared. These were unintended. The researcher tried to express each situation within the limits of subjective understanding, and consciously used different methods

to view the data. This was achieved mainly through descriptions of biographical information, teaching observations and interview responses.

Also, portraying the teachers from the point of view of their work helped to get a second perspective on the teachers. Again, these views were presented to participants for their comments and approval, trusting to gain a representation that was just and fair. Teachers always had the right to make alterations to past statements and had opportunities to explain their view point.

The factor of maintaining anonymity of workplace and teachers restrained some descriptions in this data. A few illuminating issues were omitted for the reason that people and situations would become clearly identifiable. Further inquiring into, for example, the difficulties of teachers at the Community School coping with their desire to do their best while being affected by both inconsistent practices and high expectations of their work, had to remain outside the focus of this work.

The researcher was aware that this representation of schools and teachers was specific to a certain time in the life of these schools and teachers. This view was accurate between the particular months of data collection.

### **The Findings: The Problem of Analysis**

One major problem of this thesis was to find creative ways to represent the data without bias or exaggeration. Further work and more time would have benefited this outcome. Balanced with this was the issue of the quality of the data. This raised the question of how far the data could be taken in analysis, with integrity.

Simple situational and personal themes such as the press of time, increasing work expectations, and lack of collegial and administrative support, suffused the data. Teachers felt very responsible; guilty at times; rewarded by relationships; and frustrated by petty routines and school inconsistencies. The two school contexts provided different teaching milieus, and it was important to avoid a strict

deterministic approach by making generalised associations. The data could not be applied simplistically, as there were many qualifications that appeared to influence any situation.

On the one hand, there was the need to expose and classify the influences affecting teachers, while on the other, it was important to provide an outline to the reader of the descriptive circumstances affecting teachers in order to understand their position or point of view. This study has attempted to balance these two factors; contextualising the data, yet emphasising the influences, similarities and differences.

No teacher wanted to be represented as having the solutions to their problems. All the participating teachers would be generally regarded as successful, well motivated and well intentioned. Their workplaces would also be regarded as comparatively good. To that extent they suffered few of the problems associated with many large urban schools, or with children in low socio-economic situations. The issues raised by the teachers were probably common to the profession but were particular to these contexts. And although they were very likely, minor in comparison to some other school situations, they were nevertheless, perceived quite sincerely, as their workplace reality. The researcher trusts that these issues were treated seriously and with respect.

### **Some Issues and Dilemmas Raised by this Work**

In pursuing this study, there were many interesting educational themes raised or alluded to due to the open ethnographic approach taken with the data collection. The researcher read into the critical areas of educational theory and practice, teacher thinking research, curriculum development and into the different philosophical forms of approach to thinking and practice.

The main themes and teacher dilemmas raised in the study frequently appeared to be dialectical in nature. These were; how teachers coped with change; the problem of the teacher as an individual in a social situation; and the need for good leadership which provided opportunities for teachers to contribute to decision making in schools. Again

the dynamics between the desire for stability and the need to cope with change, or the usefulness of individuality causing conflict with the popular move towards collegiality, contributed to the anxiety and confusion in teachers' working lives.

### **Stability and Change**

By the culmination of this work, the researcher became more aware of the difficulty that teachers had in making successful and long lasting changes in their orientation to work. Structural and situational changes were often imposed on their workloads by Departmental or administrative directives. The older teachers had experienced many short term changes to their work and roles over time. It did not leave them confident about the value of the direction or substance of these innovations. They tended to express this apprehension as inertia or sometimes cynicism.

The teachers at the Community School also expressed their attitudes to these difficulties. They believed in, and responded to, the need for making changes at the personal level, and were struggling with accepting their present personal situation while pursuing improvements. They had a particular vision of teaching which influenced their efforts. The teachers at St Lukes were less conscious of the need for personal development, but were observed to be coping with the changes imposed on them, situationally and structurally. Some railed against these innovations and felt frustrated. Don went with the changes as far as he could. The teachers were looking for stability and certainty in a situation which presented itself as continually in flux. The students provided constant issues to be resolved, as did parents, the administration, curriculum, changing societal views, interruptions, excursions, the weather ...

The challenge seemed to be to find ways for teachers to cope with a busy changing work situation when they valued continuity and stability both within themselves and in general. Whether this situation was due to the intensification of work, or interpreted as teachers extending their views of their professional role, the teachers were still left with how to cope personally with the effects of these changes.

These experienced teachers implemented various strategies to limit the need to attend to many simple daily situational problems. Their understanding of the subject, their repertoire of skills and abilities to control groups, and their general level of personal confidence in approaching issues all contributed to their personal stability. It was important for teachers to distinguish between those strategies they used for coping situationally, and those situations that permitted them to demonstrate an amount of flexibility for improved student outcomes. An overly simple example may help clarify this point.

Teachers may value the fact that students need peace and quiet to work, and teachers may need it themselves for peace of mind and the ability to convey their lessons, but there may be times when this regime inhibits the free exchange of ideas between students and teacher, and between students. So, it should be possible for classrooms to be noisy at times, without neighbouring colleagues imagining lack of control, and teacher incompetence. For this to happen, teachers need a sufficient level of self confidence combined with a supportive, collegial atmosphere to teach in the manner that in their judgement best suits the needs of their students.

### **Individuality, Responsibility and Collegiality**

Some literature depicts teachers as individual, isolated, private and conservative. Hargreaves (1994) distinguishes between individualism and individuality. He characterises individualism as poor teaching, personally limiting and isolating. Whereas, teacher individuality, he notes, could be a reasonable response to the circumstances of teaching. Much of the immediacy of the work of teachers requires immediate responses which relies on the resourcefulness of the individual on the spot.

Recent work in education has hailed the value of good collegial relations between staff members (e.g. Rosenholtz, 1991). Intuitively, good supportive relationships between colleagues must benefit the school and students, but in practice these relationships are often forced and ineffectual (for example, Hargreaves' [1994] category of "contrived collegiality").

The Community School provided an example to this study of teachers trying to work together and relate well for the benefit of themselves and students. They accepted responsibility for their actions, and tried to co-operate towards commonly held goals. It was both the influence of the developing school culture (that co-operation was valued), and the willingness to overcome interpersonal difficulties, which helped make this collegiality work in practice in the school.

Little (1990) showed the persistence of privacy and autonomy in the American classroom. Hargreaves (1994) noted this also in his Canadian work. The theoretical value of collegiality might only be made real when teachers experience the value to themselves in their work, and are then willing and able to make it happen, as at the Community school. Perhaps they need to be sufficiently empowered to be personally responsible to take the initiative themselves to develop good relationships within the school body.

Perceiving the value of collegiality is the challenge. In itself, collegiality is no panacea. Past experience highlights the persistence of privacy, and the expectation of autonomy by beginning teachers. It is also easier to ignore colleagues than to try to find ways of relating and working together on common ground.

### **Leadership and Involvement**

One major difference between the two school situations was the position of the principal. At St Lukes, the principal was depicted as fairly remote from his staff, and tended to direct without consultation or negotiation. The principal at the Community School was portrayed as a more democratic leader who encouraged discussion and involvement of his staff on most issues. The staff at St Lukes were frustrated by their lack of involvement in decisions at the school and interpreted this situation as showing little respect or regard for the teachers' skills. This contrasted clearly with the attitude of teachers at the Community School, who felt valued and part of the team.

It would be simplistic to make a direct association between leadership style and teacher work satisfaction, nevertheless, there was an obvious relationship. Larry behaved as he did partly due to his own beliefs and personal qualities, but also due to working out the philosophy of this new school. The Principal at St Lukes may have had other personal views that influenced his behaviour, or in taking over a traditionally conservative school, he may have felt constrained to perpetuate the same practices. Both leaders had a vision for their work. Larry was just more able to share it with his staff, and believed in participation.

## **Possible Areas of Further Research**

The substance of this study relates to teacher education both at pre-service and in-service levels. It has shown that teachers bring with them differing expectations to their work despite the fact that some have experienced similar sorts of schooling in their biographical backgrounds. The important place of the influence of different school contexts and of teachers' personal views needs to be recognised as affecting teachers' work.

As has been noted in the section above, the researcher came across many interesting questions in the search for this data which could well be probed further. Some of these were:

1. The effects on teachers' practice of the relationship with students. These dynamics need to be explained more clearly, and the interactions detailed.
2. To find ways to empower individual teachers in schools. How the concept of the "self" can aid reflection in teacher's work.
3. Looking into the stages of teachers' careers as it affects their attitudes to their work.
4. To study ways that well intentioned teachers might teach with care and commitment while avoiding the traps of guilt, over commitment and stress.

Student teachers generally gain practice in different schools prior to qualifying. These experiences may be left to chance and the implications of the experiences to particular

individuals, left undeveloped. Similarly, in pre-service courses, there seems to be little acknowledgement of how personal factors may inhibit for example, student teachers' ability to cope and work with others in an institution.

The literature suggests that student teachers want to know which strategies work in order to achieve an amount of student control and discipline, in their beginning years. There seems to be little extension of this knowledge beyond the pragmatic level of coping. At the level of in-service education, there is a place for teachers to find ways to understand the dynamics in their particular situations, and to gain insight into other methods of approaching their teaching. Attitudes of over responsibility and guilt and the physical symptoms of stress are inappropriate responses in the long term, to personal and structural problems.

Finding ways towards making improvements in collegiality, team work involvement and school support may take the focus off teachers' personal limitations for a time, as these innovative ideas take hold within the educational community. These innovations certainly take the focus off critically evaluating the constraints teachers work under. It is important to appreciate teachers' personal strengths and harness them for the benefit of student outcomes and teacher satisfaction. It is important to consider the influences of the work environment which may limit these developments.

## **Post Script**

Having drawn particular pictures of the two schools and the eight teachers; one a traditional and rigidly structured school, while the other more flexible, child centred and democratic, it may be interesting to note a few developments in the ensuing months since data collection was completed.

St Lukes is to get a new and younger principal, and the teachers are hoping for improvements. Don said, "he's a good listener. I think he'll be good for us". So, after ten years with one principal, there is to be change.

Felicity, taught at the school for 15 years (with her husband). She is moving north and also making a career change.

Paula has lost her teaching position altogether due to staff cutbacks. She is looking for other teaching situations in the local area, but she is not hopeful.

Jason has completed his professional study, and says that he is relieved to be able to spend more time in lesson preparation and at home. He believes he has tamed his drive for career advancement, for the time being. He wants to focus on being a good classroom teacher.

Don is continuing as before. St Lukes prided itself on having a stable and long serving teaching staff. These few changes in staffing are due to the combined effects of a long drought and an economic recession on the school (and boarding facilities). Other changes are due to personal family reasons.

The Community School decided to instigate a total quality systems approach through out the school, as a means of determining what was actually being done and how to get planned changes to happen. Seemingly out of character, this is a decision by the Principal (Larry). The general impression is that the teachers are not happy about these developments. Some do not fully understand the process of quality management, and are concerned that the school review will come up with rules and procedures that stifle or constrain them. They dislike the managerial approach.

The teachers at the Community School have been encouraged to attend more in-service courses and apply for further study to improve their teacher skills and develop individual interests. This is an attempt to service a declared need in some staff members. It is hoped to encourage more flexibility in teachers' outlooks, and to find ways to help teachers develop special interests. They are no longer focusing quite so inwardly. This has been received positively, despite the time commitment involved.

Other innovations have been put in place. The school has encouraged the teachers to pursue health and fitness advice, and regular visits from a social psychologist and family therapist have provided confidential specialist advice to teachers, on personal and student issues. The position of Deputy Principal has been created to share Larry's load. He is applying for study, and plans to travel abroad to visit other schools and make contacts with like minded educationists. Again, the school seems to be looking more outward, and valuing a wider range of methods.

Ruth is developing LOTE (Languages Other Than English) in the school (P1-12), and is looking forward to this challenge. A decision to put more teachers and resources into LOTE has been made. This is a response to trends within the Education Department indicating an improved status for LOTE in the curriculum.

Rob has decided to retire, as he realised ultimately that there were too many differences between his views and the school's in handling students and curriculum. He has several interesting plans for this time.

Jim has commenced professional study, and taken on greater responsibility within the school. (There have been at least three major family situations for some of these teachers to cope with during this time also).

Change is with us, and there seems no satisfactory way of predicting these changes and consequent outcomes. St Lukes has a new Principal. Maybe he can influence the School Governing Council, and relate to the older staff members better. Possibly his people handling skills will prove to be valuable, and collegial support will increase and teachers feel more appreciated. It seems a simple step for improving the workplace.

It was unexpected that the Community School chose the technical way out of some of its dilemmas. Larry viewed the systems approach as one way that he could become a more effective school manager. He hopes this will provide a mechanism for the

various roles within the school to become more efficient and accountable, and the tasks to be achieved will be more clearly defined and streamlined.

This has already had the effect of increasing some individuals' work loads as they take on these extra tasks of designing processes and procedures along total quality management lines. At least Larry has some willing and supportive staff to follow his lead, even if it is on trust. His future overseas associations may provide other suggestions and guidelines to improve this work.

St Lukes have not been able to implement the peer appraisal policy. This may change with the new Principal. The staff in both schools are certainly looking for good leadership.

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