

**A LIFE IN TEACHING?  
THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON PRIMARY  
TEACHERS' WORKING LIVES**



**A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY THE NATIONAL UNION  
OF TEACHERS CONCERNING THE WORKLOADS IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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# **A LIFE IN TEACHING? THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON TEACHERS' WORKING LIVES**

## **Executive Summary**

1. This report presents the findings of a survey of the effects of policy changes on primary teachers' practice in the last decade and identifies the main factors that contribute to their concerns about a life in teaching at the present time.
2. A representative sample of 267 Key Stage 1 and 2 teachers completed a questionnaire in the 2001 Autumn term, followed by interviews with 20 teachers in participating schools. The questionnaire contained items drawn from previous surveys by other researchers that were carried out in 1969-70, 1990-1992 and 1997-98. These enabled teachers' working conditions to be compared over three decades.

## **Main Findings**

### **The impact on the Curriculum**

3. Despite two reviews of the National Curriculum since 1993, the amount of time available for teaching each day does not allow for a broad and balanced primary curriculum. Art, drama, music and ICT are being squeezed and are only partially covered by lunchtime and after-school clubs. The decline in the curriculum time available for these creative subjects is matched by a decline in teachers' own sense of creativity. In some schools, music typically is now allocated thirty minutes a week while elsewhere art is dropped altogether for Year 6 pupils until their tests have been completed. Time for science and technology has been cut back by an hour a week
4. Teachers are devoting 22.04 hours a week to curriculum subjects, 48.5% of this time being given over to literacy and numeracy. Since a similar survey was carried out in 1997-98, the allocation for science and technology has declined from 4.7 hours

per week to 3.03 hours while in other National Curriculum subjects the fall has been from 4.7 to 3.7 hours.

5. A major change since the introduction of the National Curriculum is that subjects are no longer combined, so that now only around 11% of the present sample of teachers regularly integrated two or more subjects within a topic. In the early nineteen nineties over one-third of the time was used in this way in an attempt to achieve a broad and balanced curriculum. This change in practice may in large part be explained by demands of OFSTED inspections, which require schools to demonstrate that they are meeting the national time expectations for the core and foundation subjects. This has squeezed the arts and music curriculum, in particular. Another reason arises from the pressures of external marking and assessment. On average teachers are spending a day per week, in total, on some form of assessment and some of this activity occupies class time.
6. The erosion of the Education Reform Act's ideal of a broad and balanced curriculum has taken place despite the fact that schools have managed to maximise the amount of the school day devoted to teaching. In the early nineteen nineties nearly 3.7 hours a week was spent on Assembly, registration and moving pupils around the school. This figure has been reduced to 2.2 hours for class teachers. Consequently there are fewer opportunities to free teachers from these administrative and supervisory tasks by the use of ancillary support.
7. When these 2.2 hours are added to the curriculum time (the time actually spent teaching the subjects) the teaching day now lasts for nearly five hours, on average. This is an increase of around 25 minutes each day compared to a previous survey four years ago. Schools are beginning the day earlier, shortening lunchtimes and cutting out the afternoon break. For young children in Key Stage 1 this can mean a two-hour session after lunch without interruption. It can also cause problems in classes where pupils are poorly motivated and have difficulty in concentrating

### **The impact of these changes on teachers' working lives**

8. These changes have had consequences for teachers. More time at home in the evening during the week and at the weekend is spent marking, planning and preparing work. Typically a classroom teacher will mark pupils' work for 4.6 hours per week, plan and prepare lessons for a further 11.8 hours and work for 5.4 hours during weekends.
  
9. There is now, on average, just ten minutes a day after school for meeting informally with parents to deal with academic or pastoral matters.
  
10. Since the 1970s there has been a reduction of approximately one hour and 30 minutes per day in the time that teachers could spend working informally but collaboratively with colleagues. These used to be times when information could be exchanged about particular pupils, advice might be sought about teaching certain topics and displays would be jointly mounted in shared, open plan base areas, corridors adjacent to the classroom or in the reception area near the entrance to the school. These collegial activities were greatly valued by teachers and consequently there is considerable resentment at having this time replaced by additional formal meetings and by the need for increased supervision of pupils before and after school.
  
11. Teachers also regret that pressure of time no longer allows them to engage in informal conversations with individual children during lessons or to allow pupils, at certain times, to pursue their own ideas and interests as part of topic and project work. Since the seventies this time has decreased by nearly 50%. Pressures from OFSTED and other agencies mean that 42% of teachers' time is now taken up with whole class teaching compared to 18% in 1976. Yet, teachers regard exchanges of this kind as highly rewarding and motivating because they greatly enhance the teacher-child relationship and provide what some classroom practitioners describe as '*magic moments*'. Among younger teachers, in particular, the failure of their experience of primary school to live up to these high expectations, coupled with the

need to work at home most evenings and at weekends, has caused some to consider leaving the profession in order “to get a life”.

12. There is some scope, therefore, to free up teachers’ time by employing more assistance to tackle administrative and routine chores. While primary teachers have always stayed on after school on most weekdays, the introduction of the National Curriculum and other recent reforms has increased the total hours worked each week from 45 hours to the current 54 hours and 45 minutes. In the nineteen seventies primary teachers spent three hours and 20 minutes at the weekend on planning compared to five hours and 25 minutes at present.
  
13. There is a danger, however, that an approach based on a model of efficient bureaucratic time management may miss the point of the current teacher resentment about what they feel to be excessive workloads. Teachers resent the use of this additional time because they feel that the personal costs involved do not produce corresponding benefits for their pupils. In particular, the present rigid structure of the National Curriculum, particularly the pressure to meet curriculum targets, the excessive levels of testing (over a third of KS2 teachers now test mathematics once a week) and the preparations required for OFSTED inspections were singled out. Not only do these activities generate considerable amounts of paperwork but also, more importantly, they call into question the teacher’s professional competence in managing their pupils learning. Not feeling in control of their work is a major cause of stress.

### **Use of Support Staff**

14. Less than 10% of teachers now receive no paid assistance in their classrooms, a figure comparable to Neill’s 2001 figure of 13.2%, which, however, also included secondary teachers. This compares with the figure of 43% in the early nineteen nineties. Of those who now receive support 23.5% receive over fifteen hours help each week and 30.2% between six and fifteen hours. In the previous survey, a decade ago, only 12.7% of teachers received more than five hours assistance. It is

clear that schools have already gone a considerable way in supporting hard-pressed staff. While further assistance might help to alleviate some problems it may risk depriving teachers of experiences, which they greatly value, such as dealing with displays. The 2.3 hours a week spent supervising pupils at break times and before and after school is an obvious source for redistribution of tasks, while other suggestions, such as preparing materials may actually consume more of the teacher's time in providing instruction and guidance. It is perhaps a question of examining the ways that existing support is used, rather than looking to increase the numbers of classroom assistants that should be a priority.

15. This view is borne out by the priorities that teachers placed on the use of additional support. First they wanted time out of the class to carry out joint planning with colleagues. Second they wanted to engage in more small group teaching so that they could maximise time with slower-learning and high-achieving children instead of pitching lessons at the middle of the class. Both activities require additional professional assistance, for example a SENCO or a subject specialist, because use of less well qualified support staff would require the teacher to devote considerable time to preparing materials and training the classroom assistant in their use.

### **Setting and Marking Homework**

16. A decade ago teachers spent 1.7 hours more on aspects of testing and marking but much of this time involved practising and administering National Curriculum Statutory Tests. Since that time the main change has been the setting of homework, which has then to be marked. To this must be added the fact that in the past tests completed during class time were often marked during the lesson so that a pupil would be given immediate feedback on the work. Now 28.4% of KS1 teachers and 32.2% of KS2 colleagues set homework either daily or up to 4 times in a week while the rest set work at least weekly.
17. Literacy and Numeracy account for most of this homework and whereas, in the past, it was customary to take a reading book home, this was less usual in the case of mathematics, apart from having to learn tables for a test the next day. Marking takes around 4.6 hours a week and only around 50% of teachers managed to mark some of

this work during class time. At Key Stage 2, nearly a quarter of teachers said that they were unable to offer pupils individual feedback on the work that they marked away from school. This way of working is very similar to that which, typically, operates at secondary level, as is the earlier finding that nearly all lessons consist of discrete subjects rather than a combination within a topic or theme. Such practices are not in accord with primary teachers' beliefs about the best ways to maximise pupils' learning. They help to explain other research, which has found that many teachers feel de-professionalised by many of the recent initiatives.

### **The Impact of Government Initiatives**

18. Generally the National Curriculum and the Literacy and Numeracy strategies were acknowledged to have had a positive effect on teachers' workloads and on the quality of pupils' educational opportunities. In contrast, teachers felt that inspection, National Curriculum testing and performance management had given rise to the main workload burdens while contributing little to the quality of their pupils' educational experiences.

## **Chapter 1: The Impact of Change on Primary Teachers' Practice**

### **1.1 Introduction**

What has been the effect of policy changes on primary teachers' practice under Labour since 1997 and of the legacy left by the previous administration? What impact have changes in the national curriculum, in key stage assessment, in the introduction of literacy and numeracy strategies had on the work of teachers?

Campbell and Neill's 1994 survey painted a picture of teachers generally approving the new National Curriculum but struggling to implement it so that by 1993 the *dream* had become an emerging *nightmare*. They estimated that the time required for the core and foundation subjects exceeded the time available by just over two hours per week. Those designing the curriculum had failed to take into account what Campbell and Neill termed *evaporated time*, that is time notionally available for teaching but taken up by transitions from one location to another or in supervising changing for PE or tidying up the classroom at the end of the day. Their estimate of this time came to 1.75 hours per week.

This study was one of the factors which led to the Dearing (1993) review of the National Curriculum and the introduction of '*discretionary*' and *non-discretionary*' teaching time. Dearing's key recommendation was that 'the orders should be slimmed down' in order 'to free some 20% of the teaching time for use at the discretion of the school'. However, Galton and Fogelman's study in 1998 found that most primary teachers described the idea of discretionary time as 'a phantom 20%'. One reason for this was because OFSTED inspectors tended to view the primary curriculum as an extension of the secondary model and, in particular, tended to look unfavourably at any attempt to integrate aspects of literacy and numeracy into wider topic work. Inspectors preferred instead to be presented with a planned scheme of work in which core and foundation subjects were allocated distinct time slots.

Another reason was the pressure for schools to score well in the school performance tables of National Curriculum Key Stage tests which meant that most of the discretionary time was devoted to additional English and mathematics. The time allocated to these two subjects was, typically, between five and six hours per week against the notional time available of 4.7 hours. Teachers reported that they 'felt pressurised all the time' and that they were particularly anxious about the slower learning children who because of the pressure to get through the curriculum were 'rushed all the time' and found that it was 'extremely difficult to finish off pieces of work' (Galton and Fogelman 1998).

Another study by Woods in 1997 noted that while teachers had come to welcome the need to work in teams when planning the curriculum which mainly involved an escalation in the number of meetings, it had resulted in 'killing off' much of the genuine collaboration that had formerly existed in the school. Teachers had accommodated the various imposed changes in a way that allowed them to survive rather than to develop professionally. Numerous studies have come to the same conclusions and point to statistics on increasing early retirement on the grounds of ill health as evidence of teachers' lack of professional satisfaction. Teachers under stress were most likely to be those with strong feelings of vocation, with experiences of increasing role conflict between their personal and professional lives and above all with a sense that the personal values that they brought to their teaching were being undermined by the new orthodoxy.

More and more time is needed after school to compensate for subjects, which have become squeezed out of the normal timetable. Added to this is the increase in formal meetings to plan and administer the curriculum so that many of the tasks previously carried out at the end of the school day now have to be completed at evenings or at weekends. The Literacy and Numeracy strategies have added further to the demands on teachers' time. This study therefore examines the impact of reforms in curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and national targets on the work of primary school teachers.

## **1.2 Workload**

Central to the discussion of teachers' professional practice and job satisfaction is the issue of workload. This touches both the amount and the nature of what teachers do. It highlights the delicate interplay of those two factors. A commitment to good teaching and a concern for pupils' learning may involve teachers in many hours over and above statutory classroom instruction, often without complaint or stress because it is what conscientious teachers have always done. It is when the nature of their work becomes further and further distanced from teaching and learning that problems arise. Related to this qualitative and quantitative balance are two other key concepts – 'intensification' and 'control'.

Intensification refers to increasing pressure to do more in less time, to be responsive to a greater range of demands from external sources, to meet a greater range of targets, to be driven by deadlines. The more intensive the demand and external pressure the less is teachers' sense of control over their own planning, decision making, classroom management and relationships.

All of these issues are encompassed within the term 'workload', which, while an element of this study, emerged as a central preoccupying concern of teachers. Numerous studies over the last half-decade have probed into causes and explored solutions. In 2001 Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC 2001) were asked to identify the main factors determining teachers' and head teachers' workload, and to develop a programme of practical action to eliminate excessive workload. Their finding was that teachers and headteachers work more intensive weeks than other comparable managers and professionals. Teachers without management responsibilities work around 52 hours each week during term time compared with around 45 hours for managers and professionals in other occupations across the UK. The 45 hour week is, in fact, what teachers estimate as a reasonable commitment. When hours are compared on an annual basis levels of work are fairly similar, but it is the intensity of the working week, however, that emerges as the most significant issue.

The unique and unusual nature of teaching as a profession makes comparison of hours with other professions of lesser importance than the particular pressures of the teacher's role:

- At the core of the job is the need to put on a “performance” for many hours each day. This may be exhilarating but also exhausting.
- There is relatively little contact with other adults and some teachers may have virtually no time for a conversation with another adult during a whole day.
- The working environment is often a pressure in itself with lack of suitable space, with often inadequate resources and support.
- Lack of availability of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources was identified as a particularly significant issue given the increasing amount of teacher work that takes place outside the teaching day and often at home. This was linked to a lack of support, to skill gaps, deriving in part from the availability of ICT, but also from the questionable quality of the training.
- There was a lack of sharing of experiences, expertise and software among schools often compounded by a lack of compatibility between different data management software packages. Teachers complained of a lack of accessibility and usability of many of the existing web-based resources. They identified a lack of technical support, both in terms of technicians on site, but also in terms of web-based and telephone based support. In some cases there was a lack of central direction in schools about what ICT could achieve (and what its limits were).
- The issue of control and ownership was a predominant theme. Not being in control of their work was a salient cause of stress. This was brought about by the pace and manner of change with insufficient support to meet those changes and a resentment about having to engage in tasks which did not support learning.

In their evaluation of the National and Literacy Strategies the team of Canadian researchers (Earl et. al, 2001) identified workload pressures of the twin Strategies, which they concluded “have added to teacher workload – particularly through time needed for planning, assessment, and documentation” (p83). These have, however, to be seen not in isolation but in the context of testing, targets and time priorities

- A preoccupation with single achievement scores can have negative side effects, such as narrowing the curriculum that is taught or wearing people out as they focus on the targets. (p.83)
- We heard over and over in LEAs and schools that considerable time and energy are focused on test preparation. (p.83)

These themes are reiterated in a study from the Institute of Public Policy Research (Edwards, 2002):

‘The teachers involved in the research, while on the whole enthusiastic about their work, felt downtrodden, stressed, overworked and undervalued. Linked to all of the negative factors of the job that have already been mentioned was a concern from both teachers and non-teachers that autonomy in the classroom is being undermined.’

This had led, Edwards argued, to a phenomenon of increased clock watching in the classroom, teachers trying to cover everything required in insufficient time not only for the prescribed content but for teachers themselves “to make their mark’.

The Price Waterhouse study found that headteachers’ workloads were higher than average by some 300-400 hours a year in comparison to other professions (even after holiday hours). They too experienced intense pressure of high expectations and levels of accountability (in particular through OfSTED inspection reports and school performance tables). This had a direct impact on teachers’ workload, as reported by a further IPPR study (Hallgarten and Johnson, 2002). Heads, themselves under pressure, transmitted this to their staff. As their own role expanded to encompass budgeting, resourcing, monitoring, evaluation, recruiting, urgency moved like a wave through the school. “Headteachers have not learnt to prioritise, that is not to manage the workload of their staff,” concluded the Hallgarten and Johnson study.

Incidence of heads requiring teachers to write detailed lesson plans in case OFSTED arrive were but one of a range of forms that accountability could take, providing evidence that management had managed.

“The demands of multiple accountabilities have increased radically the recording of teacher activity. This includes the setting of targets for individual pupils, recording their performance, detailed plans of lessons, and detailed evaluations of lessons. Much of the workload is contained not in the activity itself, but in the requirement for standardised and detailed written accounts of it. Whilst this has facilitated more systematic monitoring of teacher performance, much of the pile of paper generated is never read by anyone. It provides evidence for management that it has managed” (Hallgarten and Johnson 2002 p. 30)

The ability of heads to prioritise and the knock-on effects on teacher workload take on particular significance in a context of teacher shortage. A Warwick University study (Smithers and Robinson, 2000) documents the ‘enormous amounts of time and energy in finding suitable staff’. While this, of itself, put extra burdens on the rest of the school staff there was a deeper-lying and less obvious impact – the real effects of a hidden teacher shortage.

While Government figures claimed a healthy staffing situation Smithers and Robinson identified a disturbing paradox. In common with a number of other studies (The School Teachers Review Body, 1999, 2000, Hallgarten and Johnson, 2002) they were able to confirm the accuracy of Government figures, but they also found a hidden set of factors, which contributed to the over-optimistic picture.

Nearly half of primary schools (48.8%) in the Smithers and Robinson study reported difficulties in recruiting teachers, but heads rarely admitted to staffing difficulties because they did not want to put parents off in a competitive market-driven climate. So they used a range of short term coping measures including:

- Short term temporary staff sometimes as an unofficial probationary period
- Modifying the curriculum to fit available staff
- Increasing class size
- Reducing teachers’ non-contact time
- Increasing amount of teaching outside one’s subject
- Using technicians or others staff to fill in
- Using short term contracts for overseas staff
- Retraining of current staff

All of these had knock on effects on teacher workload and morale. A further compounding factor was, as described by one headteacher ‘the quality of the small pool we are fishing in’. The inability to recruit good staff led not only to lowered expectations on the part of heads but again had a direct impact on colleagues, obliged to support and compensate for their weaker colleagues. The growing incidence of temporary appointments brought with it a lack of stability and continuity with the consequence that schools described themselves as ‘thinly stretched’ (p.30). This, in a context where teachers and schools are judged on pupil attainment and assumed trajectories of improvement.

A survey in the summer of 2001 (Smithers and Robinson, 2001) reported an accelerating trend of resignations from teaching: nearly 50,000 in that school year set alongside a growing post-training wastage. Of every 100 final year students 40 do not make it to the classroom with a further 18% leaving during their first three years of teaching. The most common reason for leaving was workload (57.8%).

Comparison with the independent sector revealed these issues to be specific to maintained schools in which teacher supply has never recovered from the deep cuts in teacher recruitment under the Thatcher Government, a legacy now being felt acutely in the 2000s.

In summary, although teachers, headteachers and senior teachers in general welcomed the spirit of many government initiatives, (PWC, 2001) the ensuing workload was a burden too far. Nor, as Neil’s most recent study reported (2001), did they see the solution as simply more classroom assistants whose quality was highly variable and who could add to teacher workload by one to three extra hours per week. The issue, as PWC put it, was one of trust and professional respect. Teachers felt that they had not been accorded the professional trust they merited to carry out Government mandates. There needed to be a better balance between accountability and trust – in turn related to the issue of professional confidence.

The subsequent work on the Government’s School Workforce Remodelling Group and discussions of the Secretary of States proposals draws on the findings of PwC and the studies referred to above. It is essential, therefore, that the experiences of

primary school teachers are bought into the discussions, particularly since few receive significant timetabled non-teaching time during the school day, in contrast to their colleagues in secondary schools.

### **1.3 What happens in other countries?**

Finally it is important to bear in mind the global backdrop to national policy. Governments around the world are subject to a continuous stream of data from the OECD, from Eurostat, The European Commission, from TIMSS (The Third International Mathematics and Science Study) on comparative pupil performance. Politicians and policy makers take these data extremely seriously because they are linked (allegedly) to economic performance, with schools held accountable for national competitiveness. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the United States where the Federal and State governments are taking major Government initiatives such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983). Such initiatives have brought increased pressures on schools by introducing high stakes testing with more concentrated focus on those measurable subjects such as mathematics, which can produce measurable outcomes, despite a continuing lack of evidence (IPPR, 99, Berliner, 1998, 2001, Bracey 1998) to support this shift.

## **Chapter 2: Aims and Project Procedure**

### **2.1 Project Aims**

The intention of this present study was to explore how the implementation of the curriculum and assessment has impacted on the practice of primary teachers. We start from the position that teachers have always stayed on after school and worked at home in the evenings and weekends. What appears to have changed is the nature of this work and the value that teachers, themselves, place on these activities.

Three decades ago, for example, a considerable amount of after school activity was devoted to putting up display or preparing materials for future lessons (Hilsum and Cane 1971). The Government and Price Waterhouse Cooper's recommendations now propose (PwC 2001 p.50) that such tasks should be transferred to administrative staff. A subsequent survey analysed for the NUT by Warwick University identifies teacher attitudes to support staff. Our data identifies, however, the importance of collaborative activity between teachers. This might bring together teachers from one year group to mount a joint display in the corridors or hall. During this time they might also engage in conversations about pupils or seek each other's advice about different teaching approaches. These kinds of 'collegial' exchanges are greatly valued by primary teachers and appear, from our data, to be all too rare in schools today. It may appear reasonable to identify tasks which because of their apparently mechanical nature may be delegated to less qualified personnel, but teachers find it difficult to disaggregate the professional from the administrative routine components of such tasks.

The main form of data collection in this study consisted of a survey sent to a representative sample of primary teachers in English schools. This was then followed up by a number of school visits where teachers were interviewed and asked to expand on their responses to the survey questions.

The survey was carried out in the late autumn and early spring school terms of the 20001-2002 academic school year and the interviews mainly conducted during March/April 2002.

## **2.2 The Sampling Procedure**

A form of stratified random sampling was used to choose the schools. In order to be able to draw conclusions with confidence it was important to have as representative a sample as could be achieved. While there exists a range of factors with regard to school, class and pupils that might be used in the sampling frame there are obvious limits to the number of factors that could be specified given that the aim was to acquire between 250 and 300 responses from teachers. Assuming an overall return rate of around 50% (not easily achieved under current workload conditions) and looking, on average, to sample 4 to 5 teachers per school, we therefore aimed to select some 150 establishments across England.

Among school factors school size, location and geographical distribution are critical determinants of working conditions. Size and location, because there is abundant evidence (Galton 1993) that teaching in a rural three-teacher school creates a very different set of problems, compared with those faced by teachers in large, inner city, multicultural schools. Geographical distribution may also play a part since, for example, retention rates are lowest in the South East region and this may in part represent dissatisfaction with working conditions.

The sampling procedure consisted of dividing England into four regions (North, South, East (including East Midlands) and West (including West Midlands)). One rural county and one metropolitan Local Education Authority were randomly selected from each area. The total number of schools in each set of two authorities was then grouped by size using the categories from the most recently available DfES statistics. The actual number of schools required in order to represent the national distribution of schools by size were then calculated. Head teachers were written to and invited to submit a list of staff, who would be willing to participate in the survey. If a school declined then the next school on the list in that size category was approached.

Table 1 gives the percentage of schools of each size and compares these figures with national data from the latest available DfES<sup>1</sup> statistics. It can be seen that the sample slightly under-represents small schools and over-represents establishments with more than 300 pupils. There are slight differences in the way that the categories are calculated in that the range, 100-199 for the sample corresponds to 101-200 in the DfES national profiles.

**Table 1: Distribution of sample schools by size**

| School size     |   | <49  | 50-99 | 100-199 | 200-299 | 300-399 | >400 | Total |
|-----------------|---|------|-------|---------|---------|---------|------|-------|
| <b>Sample</b>   | % | 2.3  | 6.9   | 25.3    | 36.0    | 18.0    | 11.5 | 100   |
|                 | N | 6    | 18    | 66      | 94      | 47      | 30   | 261   |
| <b>National</b> |   | 15.0 |       | 29.5    | 31.5    | 14.8    | 9.5  | 100   |

### **2.3 The characteristics of the sample**

267 interpretable responses were received from teachers as a result of sending out 600 questionnaires, a response rate of 44.5%. Of these respondents 36 (13.5%) were male, compared with the national figure of 16.2%, so that women were slightly over represented in our sample. Table 2 shows the distribution by age and experience of this teacher sample.

Taking account of slight differences in the distribution ranges used by the DfES to record data on age and experience the sample is reasonably compatible with the national profiles given the slight differences in the categories used. On this evidence it appears that the sample of teachers were slightly more experienced when compared to the national profile but such differences are not of a magnitude to suggest that the findings are not representative of national trends.

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<sup>1</sup> In the wake of the May 2001 election the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) became the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). For consistency we have used the latter title in all

**Table 2: Distribution of the sample by age and experience (%) compared to national profiles**

| Age (years) | Sample | National | Experience    | Sample | National |
|-------------|--------|----------|---------------|--------|----------|
| 21-30       | 23.6   | 21.4     | Up to 3 years | 14.0   | 27.3     |
| 31-40       | 18.7   | 20.1     | 4-10          | 26.6   | 16.6     |
| 41-50       | 32.6   | 36.3     | 11-15         | 15.8   | 12.4     |
| 51-60       | 23.6   | 21.4     | 16-20         | 11.7   | 14.3     |
| 60+         | 0.7    | 0.8      | 21+           | 31.7   | 29.4     |

DfES Statistics 2001

What can be said, however is the numbers of headteachers in the sample were smaller than the national figures; 4.5% compared to 11% in the national profile. This is because we focussed on 'teaching heads' who were usually from small rural schools. For the most part these were 'teaching heads' from small rural schools. Deputy heads made up 9% of the sample (corresponding national figure 8.8%) leaving 86.5% as class teachers. Of this latter group 6.4% (17 out of 267) had some kind of leadership role as, for example a subject co-ordinator or a SENCO, while a further 35.3% had been awarded responsibility points of one kind or another.

We also looked at the effects of class sizes since more children usually mean more marking and record keeping. Table 3 compares the figures in the sample to classes taught by a single teacher in the latest (January 2001) DfES statistics.

**Table 3: Distribution of class size (%) within the sample compared to the national profile**

| Class size | <17  | 17-20 | 21-30 | 31-34 | >34 |
|------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Sample     | 2.9  | 7.4   | 67.0  | 16.9  | 5.8 |
| National   | 11.1 |       | 71.8  | 15.5  | 1.7 |

references, although some of the materials mentioned in the text were produced before the change in name occurred.

## **2.4 The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of 34 items (see Appendix I), which were divided up into six sections. Section One (nine questions) collected background information such as the teacher's age, experience, responsibilities and class size etc. The next 11 questions (Section Two) concentrated on the use of the teacher's time. Teachers were asked how much time they spent on different activities such as preparation, marking, display and also the extent to which this work took place in after school hours. Section Three, consisting of five questions, mainly concerned the amount of teaching undertaken in different subjects, including recent additions to the curriculum such as Citizenship. The next part of the questionnaire (Section Four) asked five questions about aspects of assessment and marking. Section Five, consisted of one item, concerned the amount of time devoted to different styles of teaching. The Final Section (three questions) asked teachers to give their reaction to recent educational reforms and asked them to identify the factors that had the greatest impact on their working conditions. The last page of the questionnaire was kept blank for teachers to add further comments if they wanted. A complete version of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix I.

The framework for the questionnaire was informed by earlier studies such as that conducted by the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) at the beginning of the 1970s (Hilsum and Cane 1971) and a survey conducted by Campbell and Neill (1994) for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL).

Hilsum and Cane's (1971) results were published in a volume entitled, *The Teacher's Day*. The researchers carried out direct observation rather than using survey methods as in the present study. Teachers were also asked to keep diaries that recorded evening, weekend and vacation activities. The categories under which these observations and teacher records were classified proved a useful starting point for constructing a number of the questions used for the survey and were also the basis of Campbell and Neill's (1994) approach. So, for example Hilsum and Cane's (1971 p.94) categorisation of activity during school time included such things as supervision, lesson planning, administration (messages, register etc) and

marking. It was hoped that by asking similar questions comparisons of workloads over three decades could be examined.

Questions were also drawn from other sources to facilitate comparisons over several decades where possible including from Neville Bennett's (1976) questionnaire study of teaching styles and from Galton and Fogelman's (1998) survey of the uses of discretionary time in the primary school. Other sources of items were derived from Campbell and Neill's (1994) study of the use of primary teachers' time.

## **2.5 Interview Process**

The aim of the interviews was to gather more in-depth information concerning the workload of primary school teachers. Issues touched upon in the questionnaire were revisited as well as other areas the teachers thought important. Twenty teachers were interviewed across the UK, 7 in rural settings and 13 in urban settings. Of the teachers interviewed, ten had more than 20 years' experience, four had between 10 and 20 years' experience with six having less than 10 years. Twelve teachers interviewed came from schools with over 300 pupils, four from schools with 200 to 300 pupils and four from schools with less than 200 pupils.

Having made initial contact with schools it was decided to keep the interview format flexible so to fit into the teachers' day. Fifteen teachers were interviewed one to one, while six teachers were interviewed as part of a group. There was a loose interview format drawn up to aid questioning. However, the flow of discussion was mainly generated from the points the teachers were bringing up. All interviews were taped and later transcribed. Throughout the text pseudonyms have been used so that teachers and their schools can remain anonymous.

## **Chapter 3: The School Day**

### **3.1 Time available for teaching**

Where is the time for teaching in the school day? How much of it can be ‘squeezed’ into classroom time?

In considering time we can examine several perspectives: The first concerns the actual time available for teaching the subject (Teaching Time). To this should be added those parts of a teaching session, which are used for taking the register, clearing up and moving from one site to another. We have called this evaporated time. When this is added to the time available for teaching, we arrive at the Allocated Time, the working timetable for the School Day. In addition, there are non-teaching times such as breaks and lunchtimes. When this time is added to the Allocated Time, we arrive at the Official School Day.

In Galton and Fogelman’s 1998 study the amount of time for teaching ranged between 23.4 and 22.2 hours per week. This was slightly higher than the estimate of 22 hours found by Campbell and Neill four years earlier. In our interviews with teachers it became clear that the trend to squeeze additional teaching hours out of the school day has continued. Several strategies have been adopted mainly to do with adjusting the start time and dinner break and eliminating the afternoon breaktime. Consider, for example, the timetables of two schools.

**Table 4: The school day**

| Activity                        | School A    |                  | School B    |                  |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
|                                 | Timetable   | Time (min)       | Timetable   | Time (min)       |
| Assembly or/and<br>Registration | 08.45-09.00 | 15               | 08.55-09.30 | 35               |
| First Teaching session          | 09.00-10.30 | 90               | 09.30-10.30 | 60               |
| Morning Break                   | 10.30-10.45 | 15               | 10.30-10.45 | 15               |
| Second Teaching session         | 10.45-12.15 | 90               | 10.45-12.25 | 100              |
| Lunch time                      | 12.15-13.15 | 60               | 12.25-13.30 | 65               |
| Third Teaching session          | 13.15-15.15 | 120              | 13.30-15.20 | 110              |
| Totals                          |             | 6 hours<br>30min |             | 6 hours<br>25min |

Overall there is five minutes difference between the lengths of the school day in the two establishments. However, in school A, five hours or 77% of the school day is, in principle, available for teaching (allocated time). In school B the corresponding figure is four hours and thirty minutes, which represents 70% of the day. In the course of a week, therefore, the amount of time available for teaching in school A comes to 25 hours while in school B it comes to 22 hours and thirty minutes. The figures for school B may be slightly depressed in that registration took place prior to the pupils going to the hall for assembly. Even so, it is clear that following the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours schools have sought to increase the number of available teaching hours in an attempt to maintain as broad and as balanced a curriculum as possible. While policy makers might argue that this represents a sensible response, others might question the wisdom of having Key Stage 1 pupils work for two hours each afternoon without a break. In some schools where teachers struggle to maintain pupil motivation the lengthy sessions in school A might also be counter-productive and result in higher levels of time off task.

Of course, not all allocated teaching time is used productively. Time will be lost, not only for registration but also in transitions between one session and another while books are collected, apparatus put away or worksheets distributed. Where a

school is fortunate to have specialist areas, such as a computer suite or a music room, then time is also used up in moving from and back to the base area. We referred to this earlier as *evaporated time* (Campbell and Neill 1994, p. 106)

### 3.2 Evaporated time

*Evaporated time* is the time taken in tidying up between lessons and moving to and from the hall for assembly, PE etc. Campbell and Neill (1994, p. 106) estimated this time as 1.74 hours per week. Teachers in the present survey were asked about the time they spent in contact with children when not actually teaching. This included registration and moving pupils, attending assemblies and general supervision outside lunch and tea breaks. Table 5 looks at teacher involvement in these activities.

**Table 5: Teacher involvement with pupils when not actually teaching (minutes per week)**

|                        | Registration & moving pupils | Supervising pupils at start and end of day | Assembly | N   |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------|-----|
| Class Teacher          | 76.8                         | 64.1                                       | 55.1     | 105 |
| Responsibility Point   | 74.0                         | 64.4                                       | 59.0     | 89  |
| Leadership/coordinator | 106.4                        | 61.1                                       | 66.9     | 16  |
| Head/deputy            | 78.1                         | 136.4                                      | 64.1     | 33  |
| Average                | 77.8                         | 71.8                                       | 58.5     | 243 |

It can be seen from the Table 5 that 208 minutes a week (3 hours and 28 minutes) is occupied by these activities. Head teachers and their deputies take most responsibility for supervising pupils at the beginning and end of the school day. There is very little difference in the time allocations for assembly possibly because most schools operate a mixture of whole school and class or year group events. It is less easy to explain why co-ordinators should spend nearly half an hour a week more in moving pupils around the school unless this reflects, in part, the

contribution of ICT, music and PE leaders who bring children out of class to specialist rooms.

Campbell and Neill (1994, p. 191) identify a total of 162 minutes a week for registration and transition of which they estimated 105 minutes was taken up in moving pupils around the school and in the starting and ending of lessons. Less than half this time (77.8 minutes) is now taken up with both these activities. Their estimate for supervision was 65 minutes per week but this included all supervision while the figure in Table 5 only refers to the period before and after school. If we add the average of 76 minutes for supervision at breaktimes in Table 6 to the average of 71.8 minutes in Table 5 then the total of 147.8 minutes of supervision time is a considerable increase on Campbell and Neill's estimate nearly a decade ago. Their figure for assemblies, 54 minutes per week, is very close to 58.5 minutes in Table 5. It would seem, therefore, that although schools have managed to reduce transition times considerably over the last decade, these savings have not benefited the teacher since there has been a corresponding increase in the amount of time spent supervising pupils when they are not in class.

### **3.3 Non Teaching Time**

The survey investigated teachers' work patterns outside of their normal contact hours in the classroom. In Table 6 the hours worked on certain administrative tasks and other activities during breaks, after school and at weekends have been calculated according to the various levels of responsibility undertaken by the teacher. Teachers were also asked to allocate the proportion of time given to various activities so that some comparison could be made with earlier studies such as Hilsum and Cane (1971) Campbell and Neill (1994) and the more recent survey carried out by PwC for the DfES (PwC 2001).

Direct comparisons between the various studies are not always possible because of the different ways the data were collated. Campbell and Neill's (1994: 133) figures for putting up display (2.0 hours), dealing with parents (1.7 hours), informal working at break times (2.8 hours) and supervision (1.6 hours), totals 8.1 hours per week. This compares with a corresponding figure of 6.7 mainly due to a decrease

in the time spent on display and with meeting parents. These latter activities, which usually take place in the evenings after school are now replaced by clubs which attempt to compensate for the lack of complete coverage of the curriculum during teaching time.

**Table 6: Average hours worked during non- teaching time by level of responsibility**

| <b>Activity involving</b>      | <b>Class teacher</b> | <b>Responsibility point</b> | <b>Leadership role</b> | <b>Deputy Head</b> | <b>Head</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| <b>Display</b>                 | 1.3                  | 1.4                         | 1.5                    | 1.2                | 1.1         |
| <b>Parents</b>                 | 0.9                  | 1.0                         | 1.1                    | 0.8                | 2.0         |
| <b>Meetings</b>                | 2.0                  | 2.4                         | 2.4                    | 2.6                | 3.0         |
| <b>Clubs etc</b>               | 1.2                  | 1.2                         | 1.2                    | 1.5                | 1.2         |
| <b>Informal break/lunch</b>    | 3.3                  | 3.2                         | 2.6                    | 4.3                | 3.4         |
| <b>Supervision break/lunch</b> | 1.2                  | 1.0                         | 1.1                    | 1.6                | 3.3         |
| <b>Total week</b>              | 9.5                  | 9.6                         | 9.4                    | 11.6               | 12.9        |
| <b>Weekends</b>                | 5.4                  | 5.5                         | 4.9                    | 6.1                | 5.6         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | 14.9                 | 15.1                        | 13.5                   | 15.1               | 16.6        |
| <b>N</b>                       | 118                  | 94                          | 17                     | 24                 | 12          |

Three decades ago the average non teaching time spent on school work during each day came to just over two hours and ten minutes (Hilsum and Cane 1971, p. 81). This amounts to ten hours and fifty minutes per week. In the 1970s weekend work took up three hours and fifteen minutes. Today's class teacher typically spends 5.4 hours on school work at weekends. As with the findings of Hilsum and Cane there were wide variations in the time spent by individual teachers on out of class activities. Among class teachers the maximum hours spent on the above activities during the week came to twenty-three or 4 hours and 45 minutes per day. Campbell and Neill's (1994, p. 143) account of three teachers also show widespread

variations of between 10.9 to 16.7 hours per week on routine tasks (excluding preparation and marking).

The Price Waterhouse Coopers' study (PwC 2001) only asked teachers to estimate the total working week and the amount of this time spent teaching. Primary teachers reported that they worked, on average, 54.8 hours per week, just over one hour a week more than Campbell and Neill's (1994, p. 58) figure of 53.6 hours. The PwC (2001) study estimated that 22 hours of this working week were spent teaching and headteachers estimated that staff worked around 5.1 hours at weekends. This is close to the figure in Table 6 for a typical class teacher in a primary school.

Typically, our teachers arrived at 8 a.m. and left school at 5 p.m. If we add to this working week of 45 hours the headteachers' estimates of an additional 5.1 hours at weekends then the difference from the PwC overall figure of 54.8 leaves 4.7 hours for evening working. These findings must be treated with caution, however, since some of the above PcW (2001) figures refer to the total sample of both primary and secondary teachers.

Campbell and Neill reported that teachers worked 12.6 hours away from school each week of which 5.8 hours, on average, were worked at weekends. This left 6.8 hours of evening work per week. The difference between the present sample of teachers and their 1970s or early 1990s colleagues, is not so much in the hours worked although there has been an increase in weekend working since Hilsum and Cane's (1971) study. They estimated a working week of 44.5 hours of which 24 hours were taken up with teaching and 6.2 hours of professional work during breaks and lunchtimes. This allowed 14.3 hours for work after school, in the evenings and at weekends. For the most part much of this time then was spent on informal discussions with colleagues about pupils. Formal meetings were rarely recorded. After school teachers carried out administrative tasks such as ordering equipment, preparing resources for future lessons or running clubs and other extra curricular activities including coaching the school's various sports teams. Marking and recording were generally completed before leaving school each evening. Out

of school clubs and meeting parents occupied 54 minutes a week on average in the seventies.

These 'other' activities in our study are shown in Table 6. It reveals that clubs now take up over 70 minutes per week, an increase that is accounted for because schools are attempting to compensate in areas such as music and drama as a consequence of their being squeezed out of normal teaching time. If more time is being used for these extra curricular activities then there is less time for marking and record keeping or lesson preparation and these things now have to be done at home in the evenings and, more usually, at weekends.

Hilsum and Cane (1971, p. 81) also reported that less than two minutes per day was spent on patrolling buildings or escorting pupils on outside visits. This figure, according to the findings in Table 6 has increased by twelve minutes so that teachers devote, on average 1.2 hours per week on such duties. Formal staff meetings were so rare they were included in the 'other' category and took around 6.5 minutes per week when averaged out over the whole year. In Table 6 the figure for meetings, including those with the whole staff and subject teams take up two hours per week. Meetings with parents typically take up 54 minutes each week, much the same as three decades ago. This is even though schools are now much more concerned with community relations and the value of parental involvement has been recognised. However, the curriculum pressures appear to exclude time for parents, so that on average it is only possible to devote 10 minutes a day to such meetings.

In summary therefore, teachers have always worked a full day generally arriving one hour before school begins and staying on for up to two hours after school finishes. The time before school has generally been used to organise for the day's lessons by checking equipment, setting out materials, books and other resources. This seems to have continued across the three decades since Hilsum and Cane's study. Time after school afforded opportunities for completing marking and updating records. During lunch-time and at breaks various routine organisational tasks might be undertaken. These could include perusing catalogues and ordering

books, equipment or other resources or compiling rosters and writing notes to parents for pupils to take home after school.

In today's primary schools the matters attended to in these breaks during the day now have to be dealt with after school, when the teachers are not running extra-curricular activities, seeing parents or putting up display. This is because non-teaching time during school hours is largely taken up by formal meetings or by supervision duty. Hence other activities, which do not require the teacher to be in the school building are more often taken home and dealt with during the evening or increasingly at weekends. These include those organisational routine activities, previously carried out in the lunchtimes, such as studying the latest catalogues, as well as activities relating to one's teaching duties such as reading official documents, lesson planning, marking, updating records and report writing.

### **3.4 Interview Analysis of non-teaching time**

#### **3.4.1 Increased Paperwork**

The paperwork load is an issue that is burdening many teachers. Teachers use non-teaching time to do paperwork and administrative tasks although with meetings and running clubs the paperwork is often pushed to the extremities of the day. Most teachers interviewed took marking home and paperwork concerned with assessment and planning. All teachers interviewed worked for part of the weekend, mainly on administrative tasks. During interviews many teachers felt overwhelmed by how much was expected and related it to an increase in stress and exhaustion. This load was seen as having a knock on effects on classroom practice and home life.

“ If we have to have that much paper work then we need time in our working day to do it rather than taking it home and doing it at weekends because I just feel I cannot be a mother and a teacher at the moment. It's so hard to balance everything.” (Female teacher, 26 years teaching)

Greater frustrations arise when teachers perceive the paperwork as being unnecessary, seeing it as undermining and unnecessary to have to write everything down. They feel pressure to justify all that they do and a loss of control. Many teachers reflected that it was not what they came into teaching for.

“When you’re an experienced teacher you don’t need to write down tonnes, you know. You need to know where you’re going and what you’re trying to do and remind us. It’s as if we have to justify everything we do with the child.” (Female teacher, 10 years’ experience)

“I’m sure some of the paperwork we have to do could be done by, if we had a large enough admin. team in school. Lots of the stuff we type up and put onto computers should be being done by secretaries. It’s secretarial work. It’s not teaching skills, it’s not what we’re trained to do. I think that would really help.” (Female Deputy Head, 11 years’ experience)

### **3.4.2 Less informal time**

The more structured and formal use of non-teaching time was a theme raised by many teachers during interview. The time around teaching is increasingly being spent on formal meetings, including staff meetings, key stage meetings and senior management meetings. There are fewer times when spontaneous activities between colleagues can be initiated such as supporting one another and making a display.

“We used to talk, we used to talk as a staff. I can remember, you know, as the children go home, you know, you come out of your classrooms and you have a bit of a chat about things that have happened. And in some ways it’s good to share, if you’ve had a difficult afternoon or whatever, you know, it’s nice to come out and just talk to other members. And that seems to be lacking now as well. You don’t tend to talk to your colleagues much after, everybody’s just too busy. It’s heads down, as soon as the children have gone because you know you’ve got jobs to do. Erm but there was, you know, a bit more relaxed and you did used to have a bit of a chat about things.” (Female teacher, 20 years’ experience)

Many teachers talked about the loss of time in school in which to be creative with the classroom space. An interactive learning environment is therefore being compromised in some cases because of the time pressures on teachers.

“ Definitely the bureaucracy of the job has changed an awful lot. I think a lot more time was dedicated to making sure our classrooms were looking beautiful with wonderful displays and you know, we could spend time, really spend some quality time on things like that. And I think generally things in the class, for the class to use, resources for the class.

A lot of that's been elbowed out by the extra planning that we do." (Female teacher, 9 years' experience)

"A child will remember things that have been exciting, stimulating and I think that all comes from what is actually happening in the classrooms, just some things they're able to do themselves in the classroom, plus what they can see in the classroom. A lot of the time we're not able to put that same amount of effort into displaying and putting value on things that they've done." (Male teacher, 11 years' experience)

Breaktimes and lunchtimes have always been opportunities for teachers to tackle some administrative or organisational task. Lunchtimes are also increasingly becoming a time to run clubs. There is therefore very little time in the teaching day to 'switch off' and recharge energy levels.

"During lunchtimes I'm preparing for the afternoon lesson and I also run a Recorder Group. Generally I think for all of us, we feel we're just bolting down our dinner. Each time it just doesn't seem enough time." (Female teacher, 20 years' experience)

It is this inability to switch off, an unrelieved high level of input without spaces for informality that makes for the intensity of teaching and fuels stress and exhaustion. The fact that this 'intensity' begins early and continues until the end of the day means that even home and leisure are infected by the performance agenda. One deputy head wrote:

"I have very little opportunity to observe colleagues or indeed be observed myself. I spend hours at weekends on school work, yet still lack satisfaction of having the work well done because the task is IMPOSSIBLE. I would like more time to reflect on teaching/learning and consider that I would benefit, as would my class."

## Chapter 4: The Overloaded Curriculum

### 4.1 Teaching Time

What amount of time is devoted to various subjects in the course of a typical teaching week? Table 7 provides a summary of teachers' responses to this questionnaire item.

**Table 7 Distribution of curriculum time (in hours) during a typical week.**

| <b>Subject</b>   | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Max</b> | <b>Min</b> | <b>N</b> |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------|
| <b>English</b>   | 5.76        | 5.0           | 14.0       | 1.0        | 236      |
| <b>Maths</b>     | 4.91        | 5.0           | 6.0        | 1.0        | 235      |
| <b>Science</b>   | 1.98        | 2.0           | 3.0        | 0.25       | 222      |
| <b>D &amp; T</b> | 1.05        | 1.0           | 3.0        | 0.25       | 201      |
| <b>Art</b>       | 1.08        | 1.0           | 3.0        | 0.25       | 212      |
| <b>History</b>   | 0.99        | 1.0           | 3.0        | 0.25       | 208      |
| <b>Geography</b> | 0.95        | 1.0           | 2.5        | 0.25       | 200      |
| <b>Music</b>     | 0.72        | 0.5           | 2.25       | 0.20       | 218      |
| <b>P.E.</b>      | 1.46        | 1.5           | 4.0        | 0.25       | 225      |
| <b>ICT</b>       | 0.99        | 1.0           | 3.5        | 0.25       | 205      |
| <b>R.E.</b>      | 0.90        | 1.0           | 3.0        | 0.16       | 216      |
| <b>Other</b>     | 1.25        | 0.88          | 8.0        | 0.25       | 34       |

As well as the numeric average (or mean) the median is also given for each subject. This represents the midpoint person in our sample, with 50% below and 50% above him or her. We have included this as a measure, because it provides a better estimate of the hours typically devoted to each subject. In keeping with the statutory requirements for English and mathematics, these subjects receive almost half the allocated daily curriculum time while music receives the least. Physical Education receives the most time after the three core subjects. Because it will include swimming, some of this time allocation, typically lasting one and a half hours, is likely to be used non-productively in travelling to and from the pool. The

overall pattern is very similar to that reported by Galton and Fogelman (1998) in their study of primary teachers' use of discretionary time.

A decade into the implementation of the National Curriculum subjects outside the statutory requirements were already being squeezed as a result of the increased emphasis given to literacy and numeracy.

What is more striking, however, is the comparison with the figures obtained by Campbell and Neill (1994, p.188). Whereas the total in the first column of Table 4 comes to approximately 22 hours teaching, Campbell and Neill's figure (excluding time on statutory testing and other kinds of assessment) came to 33.3 hours at Key Stage 1 and 27 hours at Key Stage 2. This was because teachers often taught two or more subjects simultaneously, more so at Key Stage 1. This change was confirmed by the responses to a specific question about teaching combinations of subjects. Now, only 12.4% of respondents at Key Stage 1 and 11% at Key Stage 2 said that they *often* integrated two or more subjects within a topic. What has changed is that now more teachers at Key Stage 2 (49%) *sometimes* work in this way compared to (39%) at Key Stage 1. This presumably reflects a greater squeeze on the time available for covering the curriculum with the older primary pupils.

Also included in Table 7 are the maximum and minimum times recorded for each subject. These are probably arrived at either because the response came from a teacher who had special responsibility for a curriculum area or, as in the case of physical education, it was the particular year group's turn for swimming. In some rural areas it can take half an hour to travel to the nearest public pool, twenty minutes to change and thirty minutes to swim so that nearly the whole morning is devoted to the activity.

In the case of the 14 hours recorded for English this might come about because the teacher had been freed from class responsibilities in order to provide extra language tuition for pupils with special learning needs. Similar examples were observed in the case of mathematics and ICT during the ORACLE replication study (Galton et

al 1999) where a specialist teacher had a half time table with one year group and spent the rest of the week providing *enrichment* classes elsewhere in the school.

#### **4.2 Teaching Time in KS1 and KS2**

In Table 8 the allocation of time to different subjects is examined separately for Key Stages 1 and 2 respectively. Looking at the median scores English at Key Stage 2 typically gets an extra hour per week and science an extra half hour. This time is bought at the expense of music and other activities grouped together in the ‘other’ category. In addition to circle time for PSHE and citizenship activities this could involve additional reading, practising handwriting, watching a TV programme or an informal discussion about a story or a subject of interest to a particular child. In Galton and Fogelman (1998) teachers described these latter spontaneous exchanges as ‘magic moments’ during the course of the day.

In the present study we asked teachers to indicate how often during the course of a week did they talk individually with children about their own ideas or interests. At Key Stage 1 around one third (31.7%) of teachers managed to talk daily to nearly every individual pupil in the class about his or her own ideas or interests. However, by Key Stage 2 the proportion had fallen to a mere 10.4%. About a quarter of teachers at each Key Stage (25.7% and 24.4% respectively) managed an exchange of this kind three times a week, while 42.6% of teachers at Key Stage 1 and 65.2% at Key Stage 2 could only find a single occasion within a week to converse with children in this way. This is a key finding since it would appear that many teachers, particularly at Key Stage 2, are being deprived of engaging in one of the activities that they value most. It must be a continuing source of frustration, therefore, that these new initiatives do not seem to give importance to exchange of this kind. It also helps to explain why so many practitioners resent the time they spend on administration, assessment and supervision, since such tasks deprives them of valuable time in which to engage in these informal exchanges.

**Table 8 Subject time allocation at Key Stages 1 and 2**

| <b>Subject</b>   | <b>Mean KS1</b> | <b>Mean KS2</b> | <b>Median KS1</b> | <b>Median KS2</b> |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>English</b>   | 5.60            | 5.87            | 5.0               | 6.0               |
| <b>Maths</b>     | 4.76            | 5.03            | 5.0               | 5.0               |
| <b>Science</b>   | 1.89            | 2.08            | 1.5               | 2.0               |
| <b>D &amp; T</b> | 1.05            | 1.06            | 1.0               | 1.0               |
| <b>Art</b>       | 1.09            | 1.06            | 1.0               | 1.0               |
| <b>History</b>   | 0.88            | 1.06            | 1.0               | 1.0               |
| <b>Geography</b> | 0.86            | 1.02            | 1.0               | 1.0               |
| <b>Music</b>     | 0.77            | 0.68            | 0.75              | 0.50              |
| <b>P.E.</b>      | 1.43            | 1.50            | 1.5               | 1.5               |
| <b>ICT</b>       | 0.93            | 1.01            | 1.0               | 1.0               |
| <b>R.E.</b>      | 0.88            | 0.92            | 1.0               | 1.0               |
| <b>Other</b>     | 1.88            | 1.04            | 1.0               | 0.58              |

### **4.3 Interview Analysis about teaching time**

#### **4.3.1 Curriculum Squeeze**

In terms of the curriculum as a whole, teachers interviewed talked a great deal about the amount that they are expected to teach, the overemphasis on a few subjects, mainly literacy and numeracy, at the expense of others and the pressure they feel to get through the curriculum at the expense of children's learning.

“ The expectation of the amount that has to be covered, that needs to be really slimmed down doesn't it? It feels all the time as if you're rushing to cover this huge curriculum that you've been told to deliver and it doesn't end up being balanced because of the pressure on literacy and numeracy, which comes from the pressure for results so they're not getting sufficient time on the other subjects. And there's so much within the other subjects, so many hours you are supposed to do with the other subjects that you never end up covering it all.” (Female Deputy Head, 11 years' experience)

There is an increased pressure to keep to a set timetable and teachers talked about how impractical this is for some subjects. Some talked about the stress in keeping the pace up.

“You feel obliged to fit into that timetable structure and it isn’t always possible with practical subjects, like Art and Design Technology. You’re Cookery for instance, Food Technology. You can’t do that and part of you feels guilty that you’re not teaching how you used to teach. You feel quite stressed about it because in the past you’d say, right, I’ll have an afternoon and you’d talk about the cookery and the various things and you’ve got your cleaning and your tidying up and everything, you know. And now it’s very much timetabled.” (Female teacher, 20 years’ experience)

Many teachers said that the creative subjects were being squeezed out, with the consequence that there were fewer opportunities for children to be good at something, to succeed or to excel. The emphasis on the core subjects, with increased focus on content, means there is less space in the school day for less structured activities.

“Too often the subjects like art, and history and geography and the subjects that children really enjoy, and P.E. are squeezed out and those children that are not academic are not getting a chance to shine. We are actually turning them off education rather than actually encouraging them to want to improve the things that they are good at because we’re not actually finding out what they’re good at any more.” (Female teacher, 23 years’ experience)

“ Everything else has suffered hasn’t it? From my point of view I think probably the saddest thing is the arts being elbowed out. I just find that to be a subject that lots of children who don’t achieve particularly academically achieve wonderfully well at the arty crafty sorts of activities. And they’re not always able to express it, because we don’t have the time to dedicate....” (Female teacher, 9 years’ experience)

A number of teachers spoke about the deteriorating quality of children’s Art work, once an exemplary feature of English primary schools and proudly displayed in halls and classrooms. It was only after Key stage 2 SATs that children had time for Art and revealed a level of skill well below their chronological age.

“ Art and DT tend to be the ones that we do less of. We notice that children coming up from the younger years don’t have the same skills for cutting or something like colouring. The quality of their art work is poorer.” (Female Deputy Head, 20 years’ experience)

### 4.3.2 Pace, Pace, Pace

The pressure on teachers to fulfil planned learning objectives within the teaching time is great and some teachers expressed frustration that there were far fewer informal times within the day for less structured activities and listening to children. Spontaneity is seen as a thing of the past although this is something that teachers have always valued and been good at exploiting. Teachers feel they cannot be sidetracked by children's questions, they can not veer off what has been planned. Although teachers do see the rewards of clear learning objectives, the majority of those interviewed expressed sadness that the informal times with the children in the classroom had all but disappeared and expressed concern that there was no time in the teaching day to nurture and develop children's self esteem.

“There is less discussion. It's very hard when the children actually start to say something and you feel, I can't go in that direction, I can't be pulled down that track because I'm moving away from what I've actually come in to talk about. You've planned this work, you've put it down in your objectives and you feel that you've got to stay on that particular kind of channel. I do feel sad about that because I would have gone off at a tangent in the past and we would have talked about other things and they would have drawn in their own experiences, you know.” (Female Teacher, 20 years' experience)

Many teachers were also aware of the negative effect the tightly structured day had on children.

“ I do think it has an impact on behaviour because I think a very structured day for some children is just not an appropriate way for them to be taught all the time. I think they need a much more unstructured approach to quite a lot of the day really for them to be able to take part in it, see success, to know they are actually gaining something from school and I don't think that's there.” (Female teacher, 9 years' experience)

Changes in content and methodology, the focus on literacy and numeracy, the narrowing of the curriculum and the increased structure of the teaching day all were seen as inimical to maintaining a strong ethos in child-centred learning. All were seen as working against a tradition of creative learning and teaching. Many schools work hard to forge their own agenda but find that a price is paid for this in terms of extra teacher time and effort. They have to cope with meeting the external demands

of others' targets and agendas without compromising their vision. Many Heads and Deputy Heads spoke of this conflict.

“ The things that we've still managed to keep in the curriculum are the residential trips for every year group. We still do the Christmas plays. It's a lot of extra work but it's about developing the child. It would be a sad day if that ever went. It's getting squeezed and it's harder and harder but I think at the end of the day they don't remember the extra SATs preparation, they don't remember the extra maths, they remember the day we all dressed up as Victorians and the day we all went down to [...] and had a manic day and put on a big performance in the evening.” (Female teacher, 23 years' experience)

“ We try to [keep the curriculum as balanced as possible]. When are our children at their quietest and most on task? Art lessons. What do they love more than anything else? PE. and Games, they love it. So we do keep those things going.” (Female Deputy Head, 23 years' experience)

### **4.3.3 The Literacy and Numeracy Hours**

Teachers' response to the Numeracy and Literacy Strategies reflected a complex pattern. Teachers said that these strategies gave a consistency and progression, yet they also spoke about the long hours spent preparing for them and were critical of the over reliance on a tight structure. Teachers referred particularly to the literacy strategy as a document which a lot had to be done with in order to make it successful.

“The literacy hour in some ways is a bit restrictive in that it curbs creativity that used to go on during writing times, reading times and in other ways it's a harder strategy to follow than the numeracy strategy. You have to take what's there and then you have to rethink it and kind of make it your own and there's all that work in the planning stage isn't there.” (Female Deputy Head, 11 years' experience)

“ I think it puts more pressure on me now to try and make it interesting. The good thing about it is that you have this range of things, different kinds of literature that you're not going to forget about. So that's good but on the other hand you really have to be creative to make it all work together, hang together, make sense and be interesting. I don't feel the same about the numeracy hour though. I feel as though that works better.” (Female Teacher, 10 years' experience)

Some teachers enjoyed the highly structured nature of the strategies because they thought it made their life much easier and provided them support.

“My numeracy and literacy teaching has got better because there’s less for me to think about in a way. There’s more of a programme in place and that’s a positive thing.” (Male teacher, 11 years’ experience)

“I like all the structures that we’ve been given about what to do and what to teach and how to set it out. I like the format of how the lesson begins with your warm-ups and, and how we’ve just been given a lot more information about what to do and what to teach and how to do it. You know, there has been support as well by going on courses and things.” (Female teacher, 20 years’ experience)

## **Chapter 5 The Tyranny of Testing and Marking**

### **5.1 Time spent on Assessment**

One of the most contentious issues governing the implementation of the National Curriculum has been the use that has been made of the National Curriculum Statutory Tests. According to Wiliam (2001) the tests were high-jacked by the then National Curriculum Council's (NCC) subject committees and used in ways never intended by TGAT (Task Group on Assessment and Testing). In particular, it was never the original intention that levels at one Key Stage should bear any correspondence with those at the next so that their use to measure progression was based on a false premise.

A University of Bath study in 1995 (Thompson, p.26) reported that preparing children for the tests occupied four to five lessons in each of the core subjects. The study found that while 70% of tests results were equivalent with teachers' assessments parents tended to give more credence to test results. This was a source of contention for teachers who found that the negative effects of testing, in terms of time, preparation and usefulness, outweighed any positive benefits.

A study for the N.U.T in 1995 (Clarke and Gipps) on the impact of tests at Key Stages 1 and 2 reported at both key stages that the advent of testing had, in the view of a majority of teachers, 'interrupted learning'. It had, at both key stages 1 and 2, had a narrowing effect on the curriculum and led to a greater compartmentalisation of what was taught. As one teacher put it 'Geography died in February and History died in March (p.55).

The decision to publish the results in the form of school performance tables has meant that whatever the views of teachers about their value, schools have been forced to give preparation for these tests high priority. In addition, because secondary schools have little faith in the recorded levels of performance there has been an increase in the use of standardised measures to provide information at transfer (Hargreaves and Galton 2002).

The increase time spent on various forms of assessment might therefore be a major factor in explaining the increase in overall workload from around 44 hours a week, prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum, and the present estimate of around 55 hours. Accordingly teachers in the survey were asked about the amounts of time they spent assessing pupils' work.

To the question, 'How much of the pupils' work is marked in the core subjects?' 78% of respondents replied, "nearly all". The responses were then broken down, by subject and by Key Stage and the result is shown in Table 9.

In reading nearly 50% of the KS1 teachers tested their children once a week. If we assume that this is mainly carried out on a one-to-one basis and lasts between 30 seconds and a minute then for a class of thirty pupils it would take up to a quarter and half an hour per week. Written language testing is more evenly distributed: nearly a third of teachers at each key stage test their children either on a weekly, monthly or termly basis. Spoken language is more often tested termly, mathematics weekly at KS2 (37.8%) and monthly at Key Stage 1 (35.6%). At both Key Stages, over 50% of respondents test science termly. Not included in Table 9 are the remaining subjects where in all cases pupils are most often tested termly.

**Table 9: Frequency of testing in the core subjects (% of respondents)**

| Subject          | Once a week |      | Once a month |      | Once a term |      |
|------------------|-------------|------|--------------|------|-------------|------|
|                  | KS1         | KS2  | KS1          | KS2  | KS1         | KS2  |
| Reading          | 46.2        | 28.0 | 22.1         | 18.2 | 22.1        | 42.7 |
| Written Language | 27.9        | 28.0 | 29.8         | 24.5 | 28.8        | 39.2 |
| Spoken Language  | 21.2        | 10.5 | 19.2         | 16.8 | 34.6        | 39.2 |
| Mathematics      | 26.9        | 37.8 | 35.6         | 29.4 | 30.8        | 26.6 |
| Science          | 2.9         | 2.8  | 21.2         | 28.7 | 53.8        | 55.2 |

Teachers were also asked to estimate the total amount of time spent per term on testing. As some responses were given in minutes and some in hours it was not

possible to interpret the data unambiguously. In Campbell and Neill's (1994, p. 129) study assessment typically occupied about 36 minutes a day or three hours per week (the equivalent of 40 hours in a 13 week term). In the present study the modal value for 16.7% of respondents was 60 hours and the median value 58.9 hours. Campbell and Neill's research would suggest that this figure represents a termly amount of testing. If this assumption is valid then 4.6 hours per week is given over to assessment of one kind or another.

What we do know from recent classroom observational studies is that most of the marking of these assessment activities does not take place during teaching sessions. In the nineteen seventies it was customary for teachers to sit alongside pupils in the class to carry out informal assessments of reading and written language (Galton et al 1980). By the end of the nineteen nineties, however, it became rare for a teacher to hear a child read outside of English lessons or mark and assess work by either calling pupils out to the front of the class or sitting alongside them in the base area (Galton et al 1999). It is therefore legitimate to add these 4.6 hours to the totals in Tables 5 and 6.

## **5.2 Interview comments about assessment**

During interviews and on the comments sheet on the back of the questionnaire, teachers referred to the impact of National Curriculum tests on their practice and children's learning. Some teachers thought that the pressure of tests prevented the children enjoying appropriate and relevant opportunities to learn.

“I really just wish I could spend more time actually being involved in teaching and learning rather than preparing my Year 6 class for SATs so that our results (when published) can meet targets set by inspectors etc. who are merely being accountable to others.”(Female teacher, 21+ years' experience)

“ I would like less pressure to achieve results and more freedom to develop each child's full potential/stimulate their curiosity/harness their energy/develop them as individuals and members of a community.” (Female teacher, 11-15 years' experience)

Others referred to the strain the tests put on teachers and children alike. The constant pressure to meet the targets for tests and the fact that the results are then published has increased stress levels, particularly for Year 6 teachers.

“ In my experience I have never met a teacher who has not wanted the best for the children in their class and will do anything humanly possible to improve them. Publishing results is an unnecessary pressure which stresses headteachers who then pass on their stress to their own staff who then through no fault of their own pass on stress to the children.”(Female 4-10 years’ experience)

“As Deputy Head, working with the head-teacher and teachers, we have raised KS2 SATs results from 20% or less to 70% plus. But every year the LEA sets new targets, e.g. 89% Level 4, 35% Level 5, which are impossible in such a deprived area to meet. I feel like a failure because of this. It causes me and other teachers very high levels of stress.” (Female Deputy Head, 16 –20 years’ experience)

Teachers also spoke of their worries that the overemphasis on assessment and meeting targets has a negative impact on some children, particularly the less able.

“I feel that some children are being damaged by the constant round of targets and assessments and that the primary curriculum is now far too academic in content and is actively turning some children off education altogether.” (Female teacher, 11-15 years’ experience)

“I think the less able children are very much aware now of the fact that there is a gap between themselves and their peers. It does undoubtedly affect self- esteem, undoubtedly. That’s something we’re trying to address in school because we’re trying to set up a Nurture Group system where we can actually take children away from this very structured element of the day and give them something that’s perhaps a little more play orientated in many ways.” (Female teacher, 9 years’ experience)

The fact that teachers are now spending the majority of time in the classroom ‘delivering’ to the whole class means that very little one to one immediate feedback can take place. There are fewer opportunities for the teacher to talk with a child on their own, either to go through a piece of work together or to hear them read. Marking is mostly carried out away from the children.

“I’ve lost the opportunity to give feedback to the children on assessments. You’ve got to try and build it in but then you’re supposed to be teaching to the structure.” (Female teacher, 20 years’ experience)

“ I do tend to try and work closely in my class with the children that have got problems so that I can say immediately, ‘That is excellent, you’ve tried really hard with that and that’s a good piece of work,’ or ‘let’s just try this bit of handwriting again’ or, ‘just have a look at how you’re holding the pencil,’ Just something simple like that and it’s on the spot. But I think generally speaking work is marked at home and the children look into their books the next day.” (Female teacher, 9 years’ experience)

### **5.3 Homework**

In addition to setting and marking tests teachers give children homework, which also has to be marked. In neither Hilsum and Cane’s (1971) or Campbell and Neill’s (1994) studies is homework specifically mentioned. This is because it is only in recent years that the issue of whether primary aged pupils, like their peers in the private preparatory sector, should take work home has come to the fore. The Labour government in its first administration was very much in favour of the practice while research findings suggested a more cautious approach should be adopted (Tymms and Henderson 1999). Primary teachers have always encouraged children to take home their reading books. Shared reading schemes involving parents are now a feature of most primary schools. Teachers in the survey were asked two questions. The first requested information on the frequency of setting homework and the second looked at the content area. Table 10 explores the first of these issues.

**Table 10 Frequency of setting homework (as a %)**

| <b>Key Stage</b> | <b>Never</b> | <b>1-2<br/>times/week</b> | <b>3-4<br/>times/week</b> | <b>Every<br/>day</b> | <b>N</b> |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| 1                | 7.8          | 63.7                      | 7.8                       | 20.6                 | 102      |
| 2                |              | 67.9                      | 19.3                      | 12.9                 | 140      |

At both Key Stages the majority of teachers, around two-thirds, set homework once or twice each week. Of the remainder, no teacher at Key Stage 2 fails to set weekly

homework. There are slight differences in the overall patterns in that more KS1 teachers set work every day (20.6% compared to 12.9% at KS2) while more KS2 teachers expect work to be done at home on 3 or 4 days of each week (19.3% compared to 7.8% at KS1). This, presumably, reflects the greater emphasis placed upon reading at Key Stage 1. One would expect, therefore that most homework will involve aspects of literacy.

This is indeed the case, as can be seen from Table 11, but perhaps, surprisingly, differences between literacy and numeracy are not as marked as might be expected at KS1. Respondents were asked to rank the frequency with which they set homework in five content areas with a '5' indicating the most frequent. Table 11 shows the average rankings for each Key Stage.

**Table 11 Content of homework set (average ranking from 1-5)**

| <b>Key Stage</b> | <b>Literacy</b> | <b>Numeracy</b> | <b>Science</b> | <b>Foundation</b> | <b>Other</b> |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b>         | 4.36            | 4.02            | 1.95           | 1.06              | 1.30         |
| <b>2</b>         | 4.35            | 3.97            | 2.76           | 2.22              | 1.67         |

It can be seen from Table 11 that although literacy homework is set most often numeracy is not far behind and this applies at both Key Stages. As might be predicted the main differences concern science and the foundation subjects where pupils at Key Stage 2 are set work to do at home more often. In the earlier sections of this report it has been argued that there is now less frequent use of marking children's work during class time, while much of the time after school is used for clubs, putting up display or preparing resources. Much of this marking has therefore to be carried out in the evenings at home or at weekends.

When respondents were asked about their marking practices there were differences between the two Key Stages. Whereas nearly half the KS1 teachers (48.6%) were able to mark *all or most* work in the presence of the pupil and 45.7% were able to mark *some*, the situation at Key Stage 2 was very different and supported the

findings of Galton et al. (1999). In KS2 classes only 6.8 % of teachers managed to mark *all or most* of the work in the pupil's presence while 28.1% managed *little or none*. Of the work marked elsewhere only 14.4% of KS2 teachers found time to discuss all or most of the work later individually with pupils while 21.9% reported that they marked most of the work without providing individual feedback. This latter approach suggests that, say in mathematics; corrected books would be handed back and the questions worked through on the blackboard as part of a class activity.

## Chapter 6: Changing Styles of Teaching

### 6.1 Shifting Classroom Strategies

According to Doyle and Ponder (1977) one of the key factors which influences teacher decision-making when faced with new initiatives is the impact of the initiatives on their teaching methods since these methods are often underpinned by deeply held values. One of the key values expressed by primary teachers is a belief, supported by research on situated cognition (Lave 1992; Putnam and Borko 1997) that pupils develop deeper understanding when involved in activities, which have relevance and meaning within their daily lives. This implies, for example, that in the pursuit of an investigation within a topic or project there will be times when pupils are allowed to make choices about what lines of enquiry they might pursue. We therefore asked teachers how much time was allocated for pupils to work on activities of their own choice. These data are shown in Table 12. Although individual estimates of the use made of different teaching approaches added to 100%, the variation across the arithmetic means for the sample do not. In Table 12 therefore we have adjusted the figures to sum to 100% to enable comparison with Bennett's figures.

**Table 12 Teachers' use of different approaches (modal values of % time allocated)**

| <b>Teaching Approach</b>                     | <b>This survey</b> | <b>Bennett (1976)</b> |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Whole class work (teacher talking)           | 42.1               | 19                    |
| Cooperative working (teacher choice of work) | 21.0               | 21                    |
| Individual work (teacher choice of work)     | 21.0               | 37                    |
| Cooperative working (pupil choice of work)   | 10.5               | 10                    |
| Individual working (pupil choice of work)    | 5.4                | 13                    |

The figures show that, following recent reforms and pressure from OFSTED the proportion of whole class work has more than doubled, mostly at the expense of children working on individual assignments. These findings are in line with

classroom observation data over the same period (Galton et al. 1980; Galton et al 1999). The extent of cooperative working (teacher and pupil choice combined), either in pairs or groups, appears to have remained unchanged although the most recent observational studies such as that cited above generally return figures of around 15%. What does appear to have changed, however, is the extent to which teachers are able to provide opportunities for pupils to work on activities where they can exercise a degree of choice either over the topic or the method employed. In Bennett's (1976) study nearly a quarter of all work offered children this opportunity to exercise a degree of choice whereas in today's primary classroom only around 22% of a typical week at Key Stage 1 is devoted to such activity. For Key Stage 2 the figure is now 16.3%.

## **6.2 Interview Comments about changes in teaching style**

In interviews, many teachers referred to the negative impact of new initiatives on classroom practice. Many teachers think that these initiatives have created a highly structured, inflexible day causing a loss of 'informal' time within the classroom where children can work on their own projects, developing their initiative and interests. The loss of spontaneity and the loss of time to discuss with children are again a prevalent theme.

"I think the chopping and changing from one thing to another isn't helpful. It's the crowded curriculum, there's no time. I mean this came out in OFSTED, this time-slippage. In some ways, does it really matter for an eight year old child? It seems that the rigidity of time is not quite right for children." (Female teacher, 9 years' experience)

"Children share their opinions less, there are fewer discussions." (Female teacher, 20 years' experience)

"The spontaneity, a lot of spontaneity's gone. A while ago, if something had happened at home I could have shared it with the class, 'This happened, let's have a talk about it.' But now it's straight in all the time." (Female teacher, 9 years' experience)

More whole class teaching, more pressure to move on, less time for discussion, left less time to explore, to make meaning, to use illustration and

anecdote to develop understanding. ‘Delivering’ the curriculum appeared to imply a great acceptance of the teacher’s authority .

“They [the children] sit more, accepting what you’re saying because they know that you as a teacher, you’re delivering things now.” (Female teacher, 20 years’ experience)

### **6.3 Support in the Classroom**

#### **6.3.1 Team teaching and working in collaboration**

The use of classroom assistants has been seen by Government and by commissioned reports (for example, Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2001) as key to alleviating teacher workload. A study by Neill (2001) found that 32.9% of teachers had one teaching assistant (TA), 26.0% had two while 27.5% had support from three or more TAs (p.8). In primary schools TAs were mainly deployed to support core subjects and to work with individuals or groups in the class. Their work with individuals or groups was, in about half the cases, with statemented children. Teacher attitudes were most positive about the use of teaching assistants to provide pastoral support to pupils (52.3%), to invigilate tests (33.8%), to supervise lunchtime activities (28.0%), and for supervision of pupil work set by teachers without teachers being present (25.1%). Apart from this latter instance, using teaching assistants in the absence of the teacher was favoured only 12.7%. (p. 26).

Teaching assistants also take up some of the low-level administrative tasks most resented by teachers – photocopying, filing, maintaining pupil records, processing teaching materials, entering attendance data and following up absences, inputting pupil performance data, booking rooms and appointments and minuting meetings. All of these activities, viewed however positively, also entail extra workload for teachers in planning, supervising and directing teaching assistants: an hour per week for 63.8% of teachers, one to two hours for 23.5% and 4.9% invested more than three hours a week. 58.1% of teachers in Neill’s study (p. 24) said that TAs increased their workload while 41.6% said it had helped to reduce workload. This is, in part, explained by the finding that the large majority of teachers (85.5%) did not allow TAs to work on their own, implying some elements of supervision and support. There was the added frustration of TAs’ working hours – typically 9 to 3

hrs, which meant that teachers were unable to plan future lessons at the beginning or end of the school day. The most significant factors, however, were the variable quality of teaching assistants and the confusion over roles and responsibilities.

In some cases TAs were judged as good enough to be teachers while at the other extreme could actually be a hindrance and undermine the quality of classroom work. This may be put down, in part, to the lack of clarity over what they could and couldn't, should and shouldn't do. Neill found a whole spectrum of practice and a general lack of training either for the TAs themselves or for teachers on how to work most productively with a classroom assistant.

Table 13 examines the support that teachers in our sample received,

**Table 13 The availability of paid and unpaid assistance (% of sample)**

| <b>Number of hours</b> | <b>Paid assistance</b> | <b>Unpaid assistance</b> |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| None                   | 9.4 (43)               | 40.1                     |
| 1-5                    | 36.9 (36)              | 47.2                     |
| 6-10                   | 19.6 (11)              | 7.9                      |
| 11-15                  | 10.6 (4)               | 1.2                      |
| 16-21                  | 8.2 (2)                | 1.6                      |
| Over 21                | 15.3 (4)               | 2.0                      |

Over half the teachers (56.6%) received between one and ten hours help from a paid assistant and just under half the sample (47.2%) up to five hours of unpaid assistance, presumably from parents. This represents a considerable improvement from the situation reported by Campbell and Neill (1994: 29) where the figures for paid assistance are given in brackets in Table 13. In the early nineties only 21% of teachers received more than 5 hours help compared with 53.7% in the present sample. In addition to this help about one fifth of the sample (19.4%) had the opportunity to work with another qualified teacher. Over one third of these teachers (36.6%) did over two hours collaborative teaching per week.

How would teachers use further help from a teacher colleague if this were forthcoming? Table 14 presents the results from our sample of teachers. The biggest changes compared to the 1990s are in help with assessment, small group teaching and preparation time. A decade or so ago, when Campbell and Neill's fieldwork was being completed one of the main pressures on teachers, particularly at Key stage 1 was the administration of the statutory National Curriculum tests. Now it would seem there is less need for help with the actual testing procedure since only 12.1% of the present sample require help compared to 29% in Campbell and Neill's study. In contrast, the majority (61.2%) would use the extra teacher to help with small group teaching, an increase of 7% compared to a decade earlier.

The other area of support would require the extra teacher to take over the class, thereby allowing space during the school day for planning and preparation. In the 1990s only 6% of teachers saw this as a priority but now this has risen by 9.3%. It is to additional teaching staff rather than classroom assistants that these practitioners look for relief from what they regard as an excessive workload. Their priorities either require a replacement teacher to take over the class or someone trained to teach and not just supervise part of the class. Significantly, there has been and still is little call for team-teaching (which could make use of a classroom assistant) either now or then.

**Table 14 Use of additional teacher time**

| <b>Purpose</b>                  | <b>This sample</b> | <b>Campbell &amp; Neill (1994)</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Help with assessment/recording  | 12.1               | 29.0                               |
| Teach smaller groups            | 61.2               | 54.0                               |
| Non-contact time in preparation | 15.3               | 6.0                                |
| Team teaching                   | 5.1                | 4.0                                |
| Other/missing                   | 6.4                | 7.0                                |

### 6.3.2 Interview comments about support

All teachers interviewed received some LSA support time which they used for a variety of tasks ranging from photocopying, putting up displays, working with small groups, developing individual action plans, working with less able children on targets and taking half the class for an activity. Teachers were incredibly appreciative of all the LSA's did but most also mentioned that they were wary of LSA's being given class teachers' tasks.

“They talk about having a class assistant relieving you and having non-contact time. But then I see myself as a professional and I'm thinking well how can a classroom assistant be left with a whole class? I don't see how that's going to work. I've done the planning for this I know what needs to be delivered. And I'd have to find time to talk to that classroom assistant, you know, to deliver that class. I wouldn't feel as if I'm in control somehow. “  
(Female teacher, 20 years' experience)

“They're telling teachers to go and mark the books and LSAs take the class. What a stupid idea. I mean how much do the LSAs get paid? Double their salary before they stand in for teachers.” (Female Deputy Head, 23 years' experience)

Although teachers were on the whole appreciative of extra help, some did refer to the fact that often extra help added to their workload rather than diminishing it. Directing LSAs and briefing them take up valuable teachers time.

“As we are an inclusive school we have a lot of adult support in the classroom. Great for the children but managing 2-5 adults on top of a class of 30 is stressful.”(Male teacher, 4-10 years' experience)

“ The class teacher is juggling and briefing as many as five adults with one hand as well as three different groups, plus a guided reading session. It doesn't always work!” (Female teacher, 11-15 years' experience)

## **Chapter 7: Pressures on Teachers – The Impact of Educational Reform**

### **7.1 Pressures on Teachers**

Teachers were asked which problems most affected their working conditions by ranking three from a list of ten statements. Table 15 shows the results of this exercise. In the final column an *index of severity* has been constructed to estimate the degree to which a particular problem contributes adversely to the teachers working conditions. A rank of 1 is deemed to make twice the contribution of a rank of 2 and three times the contribution of a rank of 3. Hence the index of severity (I) is calculated using the formula:

$$I = Na + \frac{Nb}{2} + \frac{Nc}{3}$$

where Na is the number of respondents ranking the statement first, Nb second and Nc third respectively.

**Table 15: Problems adversely affecting teachers' workload**

| <b>Problem</b>                       | <b>1<sup>st</sup></b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b> | <b>I</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Lack of time                         | 138                   | 46                    | 28                    | 170      |
| Too many National Initiatives        | 57                    | 46                    | 51                    | 97       |
| Pressure to meet curriculum targets  | 43                    | 72                    | 52                    | 96       |
| Large class size                     | 26                    | 22                    | 14                    | 42       |
| Preparation for appraisal/inspection | 16                    | 16                    | 30                    | 34       |
| Poor pay                             | 11                    | 12                    | 20                    | 24       |
| Low level of resources/equipment     | 9                     | 12                    | 17                    | 21       |
| Limited opportunities for training   | 4                     | 4                     | 7                     | 9        |
| Restricted space                     | 6                     | 4                     | 2                     | 9        |
| Poorly maintained buildings          | 1                     | 4                     | 3                     | 4        |
| Lack of knowledge/information        | 0                     | 0                     | 2                     | 1        |

As Table 15 shows, the degree to which a particular problem impacts on the teachers' workload can be placed in one of four overall groups. The greatest impact arises from the overall *lack of time* available for completing the various demands. Of the 267 teachers in the sample 79% (212) ranked this statement giving a severity index that was nearly twice as large as the next two most frequently ranked items, the *number of national initiatives* and the *pressure to meet curriculum targets*. These two statements, in turn were ranked between twice and three times as frequently as the next cluster which included *class size* and the need to *prepare for inspections*. The last group, including, *opportunities for professional development/training*, *lack of space*, *working in poorly maintained buildings* were not seen as creating a problem.

It would seem that teachers are more prepared to tolerate poorly maintained buildings and lack of space the stress and pressures of coping with an overcrowded curriculum and frequent new initiatives. This is in itself an interesting finding suggesting that solutions which seek to transfer routine or administrative tasks to classroom assistants in order to free teachers to tackle curriculum matters may not meet teachers' main concerns. The evidence shows that creating space for teachers to devote more time to implementing new initiatives and assessing curriculum targets does not fulfil the teachers' main wish that 'there should be more time just to enjoy being with children' as Galton and Fogelman described it in 1998.

Respondents were also asked to say which recent educational reforms had positively or negatively impacted on (a) their working conditions and (b) the quality of their pupils' educational opportunities. The results are shown in Table 16. The four rating intervals ranged from 4 = strong positive to 1 = strong negative, so that mean scores below the mid point of the scale (2.5) indicate that the initiative has had a detrimental effect overall.

The number in the bracket indicates the rank positions of each initiative. It can be seen that, as might be expected, there is a close correspondence between the two sets of ranking so that those educational reforms that have had the greatest impact on teachers' workloads are also felt to have had a positive influence on the quality

of pupils' educational opportunity. Generally the *National Curriculum and the literacy and numeracy strategies* were acknowledged to have had a positive impact on workloads and on the quality of pupils' educational opportunities.

**Table 16: Impact of recent initiative on (a) workloads and (b) pupils' educational opportunities**

| <b>Educational reform</b> | <b>Teacher work conditions</b> | <b>Pupil opportunity</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Positive impact</b>    |                                |                          |
| Numeracy Hour             | 3.48 (1)                       | 3.63 (1)                 |
| National Curriculum       | 3.26 (2)                       | 3.28 (3)                 |
| Literacy Hour             | 3.08 (3)                       | 3.31 (2)                 |
| ITT mentoring             | 2.74 (4)                       | 2.64 (5)                 |
| Further Study             | 2.72 (5)                       | 2.72 (4)                 |
| <b>Negative Impact</b>    |                                |                          |
| Performance Management    | 2.19 (6)                       | 2.11 (7)                 |
| Statutory Testing         | 2.15 (7)                       | 2.12 (6)                 |
| External Inspection       | 1.70 (8)                       | 1.88 (8)                 |

In contrast, it was felt that *inspection, statutory testing and performance management* have given rise to the main burdens while at the same time contributing little to the quality of pupils' educational experiences. This raises a key issue in that the things which take up so much of a teacher's time are the very things which are seen as contributing only marginally to the quality of pupils' learning opportunities.

In the nineteen seventies Doyle and Ponder (1977) argued that teachers reached decisions about their work on the basis of what they termed the '*practicality ethic*'. This involved making a balanced judgement between the efforts required to carry

through an activity successfully and the perceived benefit of the activity for pupils. The bigger the effort required the more worthwhile the activity needed to be. Doyle and Ponder's analysis was conducted at a time when there were few statutory requirements imposed on teachers in relation to classroom practice. In a situation where a teacher is compelled to undertake activities which require a great deal of effort, and which he or she feels have minimal benefit for pupils, then considerable anger and frustration is likely to be generated.

In interviews and responses on the back of the questionnaire, many teachers touched on the frustration caused by having to do activities they think have little educational worth. Some of the paperwork is seen as unnecessary and yet a task that takes up increasingly more teacher time. Many teachers were resentful of this.

“I love being a teacher, it is the admin. side of the job I did not sign up for. I joined the profession full of idealism, I wanted to touch the lives of children and I'm still in the job for them. I feel much of my energy is wasted on time consuming paperwork which is of no benefit to me or my class.”(Female Teacher, 4-10 years' experience)

“ I became a teacher for the job satisfaction, not monetary reward. I remain in teaching because I love the real job, not the red tape and demand for setting and achieving targets according to some new trend or initiative. My priority is to teach children, not spend an imbalance of time on form-filling in and inappropriate 'must-do's' from senior management, governors and most especially the government.”(Female teacher, 21+ years' experience)

“When you're an experienced teacher you don't need to write down tonnes. You need to know where you're going and what you're trying to do. It's as if we have to justify everything we do with the child.” (Female teacher, 8 years' experience)

## **7.2 Teachers' views on acceptable workloads.**

The present survey asked the hours it was thought reasonable to work in school outside the teaching day (non teaching time). The majority of the sample (94%) considered anything over 15 hours unreasonable. However 40% of this majority set the limit at ten hours while 33% thought that up to five hours was sufficient. This compares with the answers to an identical question in Campbell and Neill's (1994)

survey. Then 89% were opposed to more than 15 hours but 35% of these teachers were prepared to work more than 10 hours and 50% between 5 and 10 hours. This suggests there has been a slight hardening of attitudes since the early nineteen nineties. Now most teachers appear content to stay in school for upwards of an hour to two hours outside teaching. If a typical day began at 8.30 a.m. and finished at 4.30 p.m. that would result in around a 40 hour school week. This figure is also close to that which was regarded as the norm by teachers in Hilsum and Cane's 1971 study.

These estimates appear to be relatively unaffected by either the years of experience or the level of responsibility of teachers who responded to the survey. Somewhere between six and ten hours of non-teaching time in school was thought reasonable by 39.5% of those with three years or less experience, 51.4% of those with between four and ten years of teaching behind them and 41.2% of teachers with more than ten years' experience.

Among class teachers, 43% thought between six and ten hours work in non-teaching time in school to be reasonable. The corresponding figures for those with responsibility point or with a leadership role and for deputy heads were 44% and 45.8% respectively. Whether in terms of experience or level of responsibility, on either side of this six to ten hour range, there were more teachers who opted for five or less hours additional work than there were those who thought more than ten hours was acceptable.

### **7.3 The Teacher's Week**

By combining the various estimates of time spent on various activities we can build up a picture of a classroom teacher's typical week using the Price Waterhouse Cooper (2001) benchmark 54.8 hours as an average weekly workload. This is shown in Table 17. Where there is overlap the figures from Campbell and Neill (1994) and Hilsum and Cane (1971) are also included.

**Table 17 The teacher's week (average hours)**

| <b>Activity</b>   | <b>This survey</b> | <b>Campbell &amp; Neill (1994)</b> | <b>Hilsum &amp; Cane (1971)</b> |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Teaching + evaporated time + assembly                             | 24.2               | 22.0                               | 18.8                            |
| Informal activity in non teaching time, including lunch and break | 3.3                | 2.2                                | 11.1                            |
| Supervision in breaks   | 1.2                | 1.6                                | 4.2                             |
| Supervision before/after school                                   | 1.1                |                                    |                                 |
| Meetings  | 2.0                | 2.9                                | 0.4                             |
| Marking   | 4.6                | 6.3                                | 3.8                             |
| Meeting Parents   | 0.9                | 1.2                                |                                 |
| Putting up display  | 1.3                | 2.2                                |                                 |
| After school/lunchtime clubs                                      | 1.2                | 1.1                                | 0.7                             |
| Planning / Preparation etc. in week                               | 9.6                | 10.9                               | 2.3                             |
| Weekends  | 5.4                | 3.2                                | 3.3                             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>54.8</b>        | <b>53.6</b>                        | <b>44.6</b>                     |

The comparisons in Table 17 should be treated with caution since they not only involve extrapolations in an attempt to match categories but also are based, to some extent, on the extrapolations of other research. For example the figure of 3.8 hours for marking in the Hilsum and Cane column was obtained by subtracting the sum of the remaining categories from the overall total. Hilsum and Cane's figures are for actual teaching contacts with pupils with no allowance made for assembly or transition times. Some of these additional hours will have been included in the supervision category where the total of 4.2 hours is much greater than in the case of either Campbell and Neill's estimates or our own. Some of these activities could also be included under the 11.1 hours of informal activity in non-teaching time.

We were unable to measure actual teaching time because we did not carry out observation or request teachers to keep a diary. But if we add the 22 hours of

curriculum time in Table 7 to the time for assemblies, registration and transition in Table 4 we get an estimate of 24 hours and twelve minutes. This is not untypical of the accounts teachers gave us at interview and represents 44% of the working week. This compares with a figure of 41% in the case of teachers in the early nineties and 42% in the early seventies. Teachers have therefore succeeded in achieving a slightly more favourable balance, mainly by giving up time used for informal contacts with colleagues. It was argued that when Campbell and Neill presented their figures this unfavourable ratio was the result of teachers having to adjust to the demands of the National Curriculum and its assessment programme. It was foreseen that the balance would be redressed somewhat once primary teachers became more confident and competent in its delivery. Yet despite two attempts at reform there is little sign of improvement and teachers are now working slightly more hours each week, on average, than when they were initially attempting to implement the National Curriculum with all the additional planning and training that was involved. This additional hour is mostly found by adding it to time spent on schoolwork at weekends and by spending less time with parents and in informal contacts with colleagues.

#### **7.4 Coping with change, Getting a life**

Curriculum, assessment, non-teaching time, homework, pressure and support may all be treated as issues of concern each in their own right, but it is, ultimately, the cumulative impact on teachers' personal and professional lives that tells the workload story.

“I feel that teaching takes over my whole life and my home! It becomes more wearing as time goes on and I feel less inclined to devote so much time and effort to it. For the last five years I have suffered badly from stress and this has affected my marriage and my life in general. I am now divorced.” (Female teacher, 16-20 years' experience)

“Teaching is becoming all consuming, taking every minute of every day, leaving little or no time for ‘a life’. Working long days during the week has always been expected but now weekends are filled with more planning and preparation. Family life suffers.” (Female teacher, 16-20 years' experience)

Teachers interviewed spoke of having to manage their heavy workload carefully, juggling their own needs, family needs and school requirements without burning themselves out. For some this meant having to go part time. Others relied heavily on supportive and understanding partners. Some could find no balance and are looking to leave teaching.

“ I’m not looking for a career with more money, I’m looking for a career with more levels of satisfaction and I want to be challenged by things that I want to be challenged by. At the moment I just feel challenged by everything. I want to be challenged by things which I feel have real value.” (Male teacher, 11 years’ experience)

“ If I didn’t have a very understanding and supportive husband I would be in trouble because he does listening to the children read, he cooks the evening meal, he’s brilliant. If I wasn’t in that position I don’t quite know what I’d be doing.” (Female teacher, 23 years’ experience)

Much of this was said and written was about simply keeping up with change, change being seen as a constant in teacher’s lives.

“As soon as we decipher and alter what we are doing to fit in with new ideas, it changes again.” (Female teacher, 4-10 years’ experience)

“Initially I supported the changes and worked long hours implementing them in the belief that the pupils’ education would be enhanced by a better structure. However as each year saw the introduction of yet more change in the curriculum framework, policies, schemes of work, lesson plans and reorganisation of resources I became disheartened and de-motivated.” (Female teacher, 16-20 years’ experience)

These comments were less about change of itself, which they recognised as inevitable, than about the undermining effects of imposed change and, in its wake, the devaluing of the teacher’s professional worth.

“ After all my years in teaching I feel that my methods and opinions are worthless. With every new initiative we have to throw away other tried and tested methods which worked for us. And with each new initiative some aspects of pupil learning improve at the expense of other areas which deteriorate.” (Female teacher, 21+ years’ experience)

Increasing prescription from above was seen as bringing with it a loss of control , initiative and imagination. Preparation and teaching had lost its ‘sparkle’.

“Now we have the incredibly prescriptive Literacy and Numeracy Hours and the prospect of scripted lesson plans. Well there wasn’t much joy in the National Curriculum but at least I could use my initiative and imagination to make it more interesting and stimulating, but for how much longer?” (Female teacher, 16-20 years’ experience)

“Preparation and delivery of lessons has lost much of it’s sparkle because of the time spent on recording assessments, writing down detailed plans and cross referencing to Literacy/Numeracy/National Curriculum documentation.” (Female teacher, 16-20 years’ experience)

The effect of this was seen as demoralising not only to teachers but also to pupils. One teacher wrote about the danger of turning children off to learning.

“I feel that some children are being damaged by the constant round of targets and assessments and that the primary curriculum is now far too academic in content and is actively turning some children, particularly boys, off education altogether.” (Female teacher, 16-20 years’ experience)

It was allied, in the view of many teachers to the publication of results, exerting severe pressures on teachers for those results, whether individually or collectively.

“Publishing results is unnecessary pressure which stresses headteachers who then pass on the stress to their staff who then through no fault of their own pass on the stress to the children. When I hear stories of 6 and 7 year olds not wanting to go to schools to do tests or star wetting the bed again I wonder if this is really the sort of world we want to bring children up in?” (Female teacher, 4-10 years’ experience)

Inspection had a further impact on morale and lifestyle, described by one teacher as “the most humiliating and depressing event in a teacher’s life”.

“Our recent OFSTED inspection has meant that for seven weeks I have worked all my free mornings and almost every evening and the majority of weekends.” (Female teacher, 21+ years’ experience)

“OFSTED and the stress involved with this is too much. The stress before and during is immense leading to stress, lack of home and social life. After one in October I am only just beginning to feel ‘normal’ and I had a fairly positive report.” (written in January) (Female teacher, 4-10 years’ experience)

Inspection has to be understood, not as one stressful event in the course of four or five years but in the context of other demands and pressures on teachers. The inability to cope with a relentless succession of new government initiatives was explained by other contextual factors - changing social conditions, changing pupil and parent expectations, pupil learning difficulties and special educational needs. Six teachers wrote at length about discipline and behaviour management as issues which compounded the difficulties and pressures they faced. They saw themselves as unable to cope with new curriculum and assessment demands while at the same time trying to cope with an sharp increase in “violent”, ‘abusive’ or ‘disruptive’ children.

“ Behaviour and management of pupils has broken down in some schools due to poor leadership and lack of resources (people and cash) to back teachers up.” (Female teacher, 4-10 years’ experience)

The backdrop to this increasing failure to cope was placed by teachers within a context of a perceived lack of respect from parents, public and government and teachers both spoke and wrote about a lack of esteem for the profession, about feeling ‘worthless’, using words such as ‘humiliation’, ‘disillusion’, ‘demoralisation’, ‘lack of confidence’, ‘tired’, ‘exhausted’, ‘feeling useless’, and ‘low self-esteem’.

“ In my own school there is a general feeling of disillusion with the profession. There is a lack of respect, from parents, the media, OFSTED and the government.” (Female teacher, 4-10 years’ experience)

It was the cumulative effect of this, a gradual erosion of confidence that was seen as sapping energy and motivation.

“Exhaustion creeps up on us eventually, plus we never get a ‘pat’ on the back.” (Female teacher, 21+ years’ experience)

In a climate of pressure without commensurate support the challenge was seen as particularly acute for newly qualified teachers, as this teacher describes it:

“I am extremely concerned about the negative effect this workload has on young teachers. They arrive in school as keen and enthusiastic NQTs and after only a term are starting to consider other careers that will pay more for the time and effort they put in or leave them with some free time and energy to develop and pursue their own interests.” (Female teacher, 16-20 years’ experience)

One newly qualified teacher, speaking for himself, describes the pressure on targets, planning, testing, reports, plus the ‘demands of a busy classroom’ without the support of experienced teachers.

“I almost gave up teaching in my first year as a full-time teacher because of the appalling way I was treated. It took me three years as a supply teacher and a lot of support from my wife and friends before I had the confidence to take on a full time post again.” (Male teacher, 4-10 years’ experience)

Five teachers wrote about their loss of commitment. All professed to having enjoyed teaching but having now lost the commitment through diverting their energies into ‘bureaucracy’, ‘form filling’, ‘red tape’, ‘new initiatives’,

“Having taught for nearly 30 Years I have now decided to leave the profession at the end of the year... What ever I do, and I have always been a conscientious teacher, I don’t feel I make a difference any more. One more statistic for Estelle Morris.” (Female teacher, 21+ years’ experience)

And from one who has decided to battle on:

“I would not enter the profession now for £1,000 a week. It is stressful and socially destroying. I just love the children, that is why I continue.” (Female teacher, 21+ years’ experience)

## **Chapter 8: Three Teachers' Stories**

Data on workload tells only a partial story. It provides information on a broad sweep of issues but provides little insight into what it means for the individual teacher. It can only hint at what it means to balance the demands of home, work, family and friends. In this chapter we have tried to give a flavour of the human impact by presenting three cases from among the teachers we met during our interviews. The three teachers we have called Penny, Mark and Miriam. We do not claim they are a representative sample, but we have chosen them to suggest a range of teaching experience, different settings and at different points on their career path. We are confident, however, that these stories reflect some of the pressures currently affecting their colleagues in primary schools across the country.

### **8.1 Penny**

Penny has been a teacher for 20 years. She teaches a Yr.3/4 class in a rural primary school with 150 children. She is also Deputy Head, Science, D.T and Inset Co-ordinator. She is in her forties.

#### **Hours of work**

Penny arrives at school at least an hour before the children and leaves two to three hours after the school day. With her lunchtime being used almost entirely for work, she estimates that on top of teaching time she is working in school for 17 hours a week. Having arrived home in the evening she will eat and have a couple of hours off before sitting down for another two to three hours. At weekends she tries to have Friday and Saturday off and then on Sunday will often work for another five hours. In total therefore, Penny works for more than 60 hours a week.

#### **No non-contact time**

Despite all her added responsibilities, Penny receives no non-contact time within the week. The paperwork associated with these roles is carried out in the evenings and at weekends, with non-teaching time in school being spent on meetings, organising resources and marking. She feels frustrated that she is unable to fulfil all her responsibilities as Subject Co-ordinator as there is no time to monitor

children's learning in other classes. She also regrets that there is no time for herself and her colleagues to observe each other and reflect on practice. Non-contact time was therefore one of the main initiatives that would help Penny manage her workload. As she says,

“I think it is crucial for all teachers. We all have positions of responsibility and we all do need some non-contact time to be able to fulfil everything we have to do really.”

“ I would use it for monitoring, that would be my main area. The opportunity to get into other classes to monitor children's work and obviously evaluating my own work because that takes up a lot of time too after your lessons.”

Having non-contact time however, is not helpful if the class teacher then has to spend precious time preparing for a supply teacher. Penny emphasised that the amount of work expected of teachers if they leave their class is phenomenal and that for this reason many were choosing not to leave to attend courses.

“When you're off on a course, gone are the days when you could leave the supply teachers and say well you bring in your own material and decide what you want to do. Everything has to be planned for that supply because you know that if you leave it for a day, you're another day behind and you've got to catch up somewhere along the line.”

### **Increase in paperwork**

Penny describes the greatest change in her workload over the last 20 years is the amount of paperwork. Apart from taking up time it also reduces her energy levels and she finds her teaching suffering.

“What I find is that by the time all your admin and preparation and paperwork is done you're exhausted before you've even stepped into the classroom. Especially when you're getting to the end of term you are physically lacking energy with all the time and effort that has been put into all the paperwork etc.”

Penny explains that she does not mind paperwork that has a clear purpose and educational benefit. However, she finds some paperwork unnecessary and it is this time consuming exercise that she resents.

“ I don’t mind if the paperwork is purposeful. The problems arise when I feel I’m literally filling in a form for the sake of filling in a form. It is not going anywhere, it is not informing anybody and that is when the resentment comes in. I feel is this just sitting in someone’s filing cabinet somewhere.”

### **Loss of confidence**

Penny talked at length about how the pace of externally imposed systems in the form of new initiatives had undermined her confidence. She was very appreciative of many new initiatives but was resentful that she felt that her expertise and knowledge were not respected.

“ Initially because we were getting so much at once, myself and other members of staff felt undermined. I felt my confidence suddenly going. I felt de-skilled as if everything we had been doing all these years, in a way it was almost like the government saying, ‘You haven’t been doing it well enough. This is how it should be done now. This is what we’re prescribing. This is what we want you to deliver. That was a hindrance because my confidence was suddenly plummeting again and that had to be built up.”

### **Loss of time to develop children’s interest/ Loss of time to listen**

The other point that seemed key to Penny’s sense of poor working conditions was the feeling she had very little flexibility within the teaching day. She finds there is less possibility for extending periods of learning or answering children’s questions because of the pressures on her to teach a full curriculum. Penny spoke about her frustrations that so many aspects of learning now felt rushed. She has less scope for spontaneity within teaching day and less time to talk and listen to children. This was something that Penny thought not only crucial to primary school education, but also a thoroughly enjoyable part of teaching. With less spontaneous opportunities her dissatisfaction was therefore increased.

“ I feel more restricted in a sense that I cannot veer off a planned piece of work because I know if I do I’m going to lose that time and I’ll never catch up.”

“ It’s the spontaneity that’s gone. I mean if it had snowed we used to run to the window and we’d stop and do some creative poetry. That’s gone now because everything is very much structured now, very planned and that’s a shame.”

“ Another thing is you’re losing the one to one contact time through this time constraint. Gone are the days when you could sit down and really get to know the children and talk to them on a one to one basis. It’s either very much group based or whole class.”

### **Loss of social life**

She manages this heavy load by having a very reduced social life. She reflects that it also helps that she has no children of her own. In the past she was able to teach and maybe enjoy other pursuits twice a week. However, it now eats into her leisure time. If she did do more activities she thinks her work would suffer, she would get behind and her stress levels would rise.

“ I have a very reduced social life. Before I could very much explore my own interests. In previous years I have attended night classes but I had to drop those, I swam once a week but I find that slipping out now.”

## **8.2 Mark**

Mark has been teaching for 11 years. He currently works in an inner city school with 400 children. He is a Year 6 teacher and Music Co-ordinator. In the past he had a management role within the school but decided to drop that due to the ‘unbearable pressure’ it caused. Mark is in his early thirties.

### **Leaving Teaching**

Mark is leaving teaching at the end of the year. He reflects that teaching is now a profession where there is ‘no-where else for him to go’. He is exhausted and wants to pursue other aspects of his life that he feels have been neglected over the last few years. The long hours he spends in the evenings and weekends on schoolwork means there are fewer opportunities to develop his interests.

“Its a lifestyle change. I’m looking for a career with more levels of satisfaction and I want to be challenged by things that I want to be challenged by. At the moment I just feel challenged by everything. I want to be challenged by things which I feel have real value.”

“ I’ve been a teacher for 11 years and I feel that I don’t want to go anywhere else in teaching. I’ve tried stepping up the management ladder a little bit and I found that

incredibly stressful and really difficult to manage. The way to get more money is to take on unbearable levels of stress in teaching and I couldn't do it so I've stepped down the management ladder."

"The planning and preparation is immense! I am very fed up. Friends who graduated at the same time as myself are valued and get weekends off because they are not teachers! I must get a life!"

### **Health Problems**

Mark is tired. Another reason for him leaving the profession is due to this exhaustion and how it prevents him leading a full life. He also feels undervalued and as though there are no systems working to encourage, praise and support him.

"There is copious and needless paperwork which on top of your preparation and marking and getting resources organised leaves you demoralised and physically and mentally drained."

"There are often a lot of health problems for teaching staff aren't there and I'm sure a lot of them are to do with the time that they have to put in. If schools were able to do more to look after their staff then that would be good. Like buying a water machine, away days together and team building, relaxing together, paying for a meal out at Christmas. It's just little things to show staff they're valued."

### **Pay**

Although Mark says his decision to leave teaching is not directly to do with money he thinks it is highly unfair that there is very little scope to earn more. Basic living costs in the city are high. He also wants access to leisure activities. His friends earn much more than him and have got far more potential of increasing this.

"Pay is important in terms with what you are worth. You come out of university, you've got a good degree, you're well qualified and you leave university with friends who have all decided to go off and do different things and your friends earn three times as much and they've got the possibility to keep on going and you're still struggling away down here and you're at the top of the pay spine. There's nowhere else to go and you're working more hours! You've got the same qualifications, you've done the same amount of training, same grades."

### **Pressure of National Curriculum Tests**

Being a Year 6 teacher, Mark has felt a great deal of pressure to achieve 'acceptable' results in the tests. For the whole spring term and early summer term his main focus is getting the children through the tests which he finds stressful and demoralising. It also means subjects other than Literacy, Numeracy and Science get squeezed making the curriculum very limited.

"I feel I've got a lot of pressure on me to keep the level of improvement that's been going on going. It's really hard to squeeze a year 6 programme in given that it really does feel as though it's all about levels and targets."

"I think if you're not careful everything is geared to one week in May and I question the value of is that what education is about? I don't think it is. I think you don't end up delivering a broad and balanced curriculum because I think your whole focus is on Science, Maths and English because that's what you're being tested on and we put a lot of pressure on the children and on ourselves."

### **Curriculum: Loss of creativity and spontaneity**

The pressure Mark feels to meet targets and achieve results has affected his job satisfaction. There are activities he has done with classes before, particularly longer creative things, that he can no longer find time for. These are activities that were not only enjoyable for the children but also very rewarding for him.

"I think it's too prescriptive and the timetabling of it is too limiting and it's taken away a lot of stuff that I think we used to do very well like book making and extended writing. And reading when do the kids really really read now?"

"The creative stuff is going isn't it; the art, the building, designing, making. Also we used to do a lot more learning that started with children bringing something in so it didn't matter what you had planned for the day. All of a sudden your day was focussed around this thing, it was spontaneous and fun."

Mark also worries that the highly structured day puts a lot of pressure on children. He thinks that the rise in the number of disruptive children, that sap his energy, is partly due to the overemphasis on content and an inflexible day.

“Backchat and tantrums now seem to be a daily feature of classroom life. Is it just because kids are worse or is it their reaction to a curriculum that has become more pressured, more driven with less room to be off-task?”

### **Resources**

The school does not always have the resources that Mark needs to make his lessons fun and creative because all the resources are swallowed up by the needs of the literacy and numeracy strategies. So he finds himself going out and buying card, glue, stickers and also putting effort in to trailing around to get freebies.

“This constant need to dig into my own pocket, to scabble around for resources really, really gets to me.”

Mark has often found that classroom resources often come too late. He has very little time to review what is on offer and is therefore dependant on handouts.

“ What I find really annoying in Year 6 is that you get a lot of these brochures and handouts and flyers about how to teach this or preparing for the planning of SATs and they always come about two months after you’ve started teaching it. It’s like no-one thinks in time. And I find that really frustrating.”

### **8.3 Miriam**

Miriam has been teaching for 20 years. She currently works as a Reception teacher for 4 days a week in an inner city school. Miriam is in her forties.

#### **Hours of work**

Typically Miriam arrives at school by 8am and leaves around 6 pm. Evening work and weekend work is the norm. The time before school is used preparing resources and setting out the classroom. She also uses some of this time to brief classroom assistants about tasks for the day. At lunchtime she tries to sit down for 10 minutes but is usually either getting things ready for the afternoon session or doing administrative tasks. At the end of the day there are meetings twice a week and planning and assessment tasks. Miriam tries to do as much work as she can before going home although she often finds herself doing work in the evening in front of the telly. Miriam uses Sunday afternoon to do all the planning paperwork for the

following week. If she doesn't do this then her evenings in that week become much fuller.

“I would like to be able to leave the building sometimes and think I don't have to think about this job until I come back into it again and I find I can never do that. I resent that. If a weekend goes by and I haven't done school work it's like, 'God, when am I going to find the time to do it now?' So that's why it's midnight Tuesday, midnight Wednesday to gather up the time that I could have done on Sunday afternoon.”

“Its my own social life, I find, has diminished. Especially when you've got your own family as well. You think, well, my family needs to come first really and, and then you're stuck behind sorting out assessments and things. I think in the past, report writing took up a lot of your time, outside time, and I was prepared to give up three weeks of my time solid. But now you've got other things coming in like assessment and you're giving up more of your time, you know. And I think out of everything you don't have a life, really. Even the holidays, you're thinking about what you're doing for the next term. I would say the only real break I actually get, to stop thinking about teaching, is in that six weeks block. But then you've got your last week towards the end of the six weeks holiday. I'm always in that last week as well.”

### **Increase in stress**

Miriam finds it increasingly hard to find time to 'switch off' from her heavy workload. Balancing the intensity of work with time to relax and recharge was a main theme running through the interview. Miriam feels that she can never feel as though she is 'on top of it all' which has increased her levels of stress.

“It's hard to switch off and when you're not doing it [school work] you're very aware that you must find some time to do this but when you're trying to have a life it's like it's always there.”

“We're not quite good enough. You never get to the end of your list of things you're supposed to be doing. You put all these hours in and you've still not finished it. And you never ever get to finish it and I find that an ongoing battle really.”

She explained that to cope with the workload intensity she has decided to go part – time.

“What I’ve had to do is go part time the longer I’ve been doing this job and learn to live on less money.”

Miriam also finds the increased amount of work she is doing at home has at times put pressure on her family life. Sometimes her partner

“can get quite cross at times to be perfectly honest. He’ll say, ‘Do you really have to do this?’ But I think he’s concerned about me to be honest. He can see I’m extremely tired a lot of time.”

### **Pay**

Miriam highlighted straight away that poor pay was also a major issue. She feels that the poor pay package reflects the governments long standing devaluing of the teaching profession and is the reason why few young people want to become teachers. She also struggles to have ‘a life’ in the city, partly because costs are high. For Miriam, the poor pay makes her question why she came into teaching at all.

“ I mean it’s just awful what they’ve done to our pay. It’s like papering over the cracks all the time rather than paying teachers a decent wage. It does sometimes make you wonder why me? Why did I do this? What a silly person I was! You are almost saying ‘I am only a teacher’ and it’s true, people do say that sort of thing still.”

### **Loss of control**

Another theme arising from the interview with Miriam is the increasing amount of lack of control she is feeling in a profession she once loved and her subsequent sense of despondency. It was a theme she revisited regularly. She thinks her opinions and expertise aren’t respected and feels overloaded by things that external agencies have told her to do. These take up an increasing amount of time leaving Miriam feeling resentful.

“ I just don’t feel like you’re trusted anymore. I think at one time you were very autonomous and that was the great thing about teaching. That is a buzz and a plus about it. It’s you and those kids. Now it’s just pressure isn’t it to fill in the boxes or whatever and I think that affects the performance you can give with the children.”

With the new initiatives Miriam highlighted how, even though many tackled important issues, teachers were increasingly being given set ways of planning and delivering lessons. She worried that this not only limited children's educational experience but also took away teachers' creativity and spontaneity and reflects that this is a reason for many good teachers leaving the profession.

“ That's what we always remember about teachers that taught us. It's the personalities of them and the love of what they were doing that they brought to it and if you start to squash that out of people what sort of teachers are you going to create? And they are the teachers who have gone, and sometimes when you stay you think 'Oh God there's something wrong with me I'm still here! Why am I still here? I know people who have just said I can't do it. I'm not doing it and they're not going to.”

In discussions about the curriculum again she raised the idea that teachers creativity was being compromised. The emphasis on structured lesson plans that were used widely worried her and the over reliance on a set way of delivery.

“ I think there's a danger of taking away teachers creativity as well and I see newly qualified teachers coming through now and they have no experience of that. Brilliant at delivering the literacy hours and very slick and great you know, something I'll never be able to do and I've got something to learn from them about that, but they've not been exposed to other ways of doing things and there is more than one way, more than one path to get to the end product.”

### **Support**

Miriam works with no full time LSA but has three who are in and out of the classroom through the week. She also works with adults working specifically with a child. Miriam finds the management of all the extra adults an added workload although she benefits from adult contact and support in the classroom.

“It's an inclusive school, we have a whole range of children with disabilities and they come with a lot of extra adults. In one way that makes more work for us as teachers because we have to liaise with all these people that we're working with and manage them as well. But I think that having lots of adults around you as a worker means that you're not working with children on your own all the time and that's a good thing.”

#### **8.4 Three teachers – common cause, common causes**

Three teachers, at different stages in their career, different in their personalities and family contexts, holding different levels of responsibility within their schools. All are unknown to one another but share a common cause and common causes for concern.

In their choice of words they reveal much of themselves and the changing nature of their work. The word ‘time’ occurs eight times in these accounts. Tired, exhausted, ‘drained’ or ‘lack of energy’ occur six times. There are six references to pressure and three to stress. The desire for a social life, or just ‘a life’ receives five mentions. Other words with emotional force are ‘demoralised’, ‘struggling’, ‘resentment’, confidence as ‘plummeting’ and references to teaching as a ‘battle’.

This vocabulary of embattlement is juxtaposed with references to spontaneity, fun, creativity, all as aspects of teaching that are seen as lost. Miriam describes the love of teaching being ‘squashed’ out of people. Penny, an experienced teacher talks about being deskilled, by a government saying to her ‘You haven’t been doing it well enough. This is how it should be done now.’ Mark, who will be lost to teaching, might have felt differently if even the ‘little things’ had been done to reward his commitment and effort, small tokens that teachers are valued.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

What does it mean to be a teacher at the start of a new Millennium? In what way has teaching, and the conditions of teaching, changed under New Labour? What is owed to a longer legacy of change? What may be attributed to introduction of the National Curriculum, Key Stage assessment, and to the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy strategies? Teachers have given us answers to these questions through questionnaire returns, written comments and interview discussion.

If there is a single encapsulating headline it comes from one teacher voicing the concerns of her colleagues,

“Time, time, time is the major issue for me. Being given trivial and other paper pushing exercises gets you down and reduces the time you have to spend on children and preparation for them.”

Teachers overwhelmingly put ‘lack of time’ as the main impediment to their ability to fulfil their daily responsibilities satisfactorily. It is the clearest single message emerging from this study and reminds us that what brought teachers into teaching, and what is impelling many of them to leave, is the denial of opportunities to get to know children, to make time for them as learning and growing individuals.

It is not the physical conditions of teachers’ work which demoralise - conditions which would be intolerable in other professions. Teachers are prepared to tolerate these if their work has vitality and brings them satisfaction; although poor physical conditions contribute to stress. The IPPR report (Edwards 2002) coined the term ‘intrinsic satisfiers’ to denote those things which gave teachers’ satisfaction - creativity and autonomy. They concluded that professional wastage would only be reduced by enhancing the positive features of the job - the core work of classroom contact with pupils, responsibility and freedom to determine the course of events in the classroom, to apply initiative and creative skills to both content and pedagogy.

What deeply matters is time – time as a resource for learning and teaching, time for the important. Time is the unifying thread, which runs through teachers’ stories, but is not a

simple quantitative issue. Teachers tend to work longer hours than they did a decade or two decades ago but the difference is a marginal one. Even some patterns of work, ratio of teaching to non-teaching time for example, have not undergone a radical change in that period. For 56% of the working week teachers are not teaching pupils, only a slight improvement on comparable to the figure for the early seventies and mid nineties. The compounding factor is that those who were in teaching at that time lived on the promise that once the National Curriculum and attendant assessment had bedded down the balance would be redressed. This did not happen. What followed was wave on wave of new initiatives so that teachers finally lost confidence that things would ever be different.

While teachers recognise the importance of non-teaching time they become concerned when the burden exceeds the fifteen hour benchmark that was seen by virtually everyone as the upper limit for the week. 'Evaporated time', time lost to classroom teaching, may in fact have decreased in recent years but it has been replaced by other responsibilities such as monitoring of behaviour outside classrooms. One of the most substantive changes to non-teaching activities is in time devoted to formal meetings, a mere six and half minutes per week in the seventies rising to around two hours a week today; a reduction of almost an hour a week from the 1994 high of 2.9 hours. While such shared occasions might be viewed as a good, or not so good, use of teacher time, it does provide a significant indicator of a shift away from face-to-face contact with pupils in the classroom.

Meetings have become an imperative because of the need to keep everyone abreast of centrally-driven policies. Many of these are, however, seen as unlikely to enhance pupils' educational experiences. Inspection, statutory testing and performance management were the three priorities most often cited by teachers as contributing least to pupil learning and, not coincidentally, as most inimical to teachers' working conditions. Demanding so much of a teacher's time and energies these three initiatives in particular failed the cost-benefit analysis, or 'practicality ethic'. Yet, each in its own way, has had a significant impact on the nature of classroom teaching and learning.

The profile of teachers' work evidences a marked increase in whole class teaching at the expense of pupil-directed work and exercise of pupil choice. This is a direct consequence of an OFSTED mandate, which despite resting on dubious evidence (Reynolds and Farrell, 1999) has contributed to the decrease in time spent with individual pupils, whether going over work together or discussing homework on a one-to-one basis. One of the knock on effects of this is for pupils' homework to become each teacher's homework, marked in the absence of the pupil and thereby reducing the opportunity to listen, to give time, to explore misunderstandings. Marking homework 'in absentia' can only serve a formative function if the teacher is able to invest a significant amount of his or her time in providing written feedback.

On the plus side teachers now enjoy more assistance in the classroom than a decade ago. One third of teachers now have such support for more than eleven hours a week, which compares with only one in ten eight years before, as reported by Campbell and Neill. This benefit of this extra help is seen by teachers as in redressing the balance of class teaching, deploying classroom assistants in small group and individual work and in preparation. The corollary to this is the marked fall in the use of auxiliary help for assessment and recording.

It is in the pattern of the teacher's day and working week that we find explanations for the pervasive sense of loss - the loss of opportunities for the spontaneous and the unpredictable, for one-to-one discussion, for time *off* task. Where is the space in this new busy driven day and pressure for targets, teachers ask, for learning without measurement, without one eye on the clock?

This is not to deny the satisfaction, even elation, that a teacher may experience when a child does well on a test, when she exceeds her own or the teacher's expectation. Yet, again and again, the need expressed is for a balance, a contextualisation of achievement, a time, place and educational purpose for testing and targets.

The debate returns insistently to the issue of control. Being in, or out of, control has been shown to be the single most important predictor not only of job satisfaction, but

also of physical and mental health. That link is amply demonstrated by teachers' numerous references to health and well-being during our interviews.

The literacy and numeracy strategies have, however, met with overwhelming support. That positive view is attenuated, however, by issues of preparation, balance and control. The twin strategies are embraced for a variety of reasons – enhancing teachers' confidence and skill in teaching in those areas, the innovative methods they have introduced and the structure and security they bring. Their prescriptive nature releases teachers from constant invention and improvisation, which is both a plus and a minus, but in a high pressure and high stakes environment, something to be embraced. Both strategies require intensive preparation time but, at the same time, serve to plug gaps in teachers' knowledge and expertise. A similar ambivalence is found in the evaluation of the strategies by the Canadian team (Earl *et al*, 2001). While they reported that teachers were very positive about the benefits of this large-scale reform, the report carried with it a warning of 'collateral damage', a reference to the imbalance in the curriculum.

There is certainly evidence here of a growing imbalance in the curriculum. Five hours a week for Maths as against half an hour for music. As many hours in a week for English as for History, Geography, Design and Technology, ICT and Art combined. And within that statistic lies a clear indication of a move away from integration of knowledge, which, in the world outside, is increasingly seen as necessary for continuing life long learning. Actually the trend is to import content to literacy and to export strategies to other subjects (e.g. how to take notes).

Teachers' choice of words is in itself illuminating. References to, 'squeezing', 'tightening', 'narrowing' all convey a sense of being constricted, hemmed, channelled into activities in which there is little or no professional reward. One consequence of is for teachers to compensate the lack of complete coverage of the curriculum during class time with after school clubs. Many of these, under the generic name of 'study support' (financed through the New Opportunities Fund) have taken on a compensatory character. Rather than expanding, and enriching learning, as advocated in the Study Support Code of Practice, (DfES 2000), there has been a tendency to extend curriculum and assessment pressures into out of hours and Easter or summer catch-up programmes.

The issue of balance applies also to what is achieved in school and what is taken home. While teachers perhaps stay no longer in school than they once did they take home more. The overfilled box journeying between home and school, as depicted on the report's cover, is symbolic of the Third Millennium teacher. It is no longer possible to separate personal; and professional lives or to be effective without taking the school home with you. Sundays are no longer the day of rest, a time of relaxation or renewal but a day to retrieve one week and prepare for the next. At least some family break up was attributed by teachers to an out-of-kilter home life. There is not one but many stories of how those tensions are manifested – in households where teachers are married to teachers, teachers living with an unemployed partner, single parent households, single parents with infant children, widows and widowers with grown up children. In each the impact is different and the coping strategies more or less manageable.

Staying on at school to display children's work is now overtaken by more pressing external demands. The teacher, with a family to go back to, leaves school at six o'clock frustrated at yet again sacrificing something that he deems to be a gratifying priority. The pleasurable duty of display has to be set aside for routine and morale-sapping administrative tasks. Yet, apparently simple things like the exhibit of children's work is not an administrative task to be delegated to classroom assistant, but a celebration of the real outcomes of teaching; even more so when engaged and discussed with colleagues. The collegial discussion of children's work is not only satisfying but also challenging and an important occasion for assessment, reflection and self-evaluation. The quality of work on the walls of a classroom is the, for a teacher, a reflection of herself.

Three issues dominated in the questionnaire returns, written comments and elaborations in interview – time, initiative overload and pressure to meet curriculum targets. These are not separate issues but cluster together under the generic title of 'workload'. However neutrally 'workload' may be treated as a descriptive term it is one heavily charged with emotional connotation. It is as much about personal lifestyle as professional fulfilment. Politicians may caricature teachers as 'moaning' and policy-makers may point to Canada, the United States, the Pacific Rim or other countries of the

world where the pressures are the same. This is a manifestation of globalisation, a widely shared belief that education is primarily for economic benefit and that schools and teachers are ultimately responsible for national growth and decline. Not only is there a lack evidence to support such a view, but also were it true teachers would have to be given respect and support that such a significant responsibility merits. No strategy for change can be effected without recognising and rewarding those charged with making it happen.

### **Recommendations**

Our recommendations are essentially about change and are derived from sound and valid evidence of the need to do things differently. The evidence from this and other studies is that, without fundamental rethinking, teaching will cease to be a sensible career option. It is clear that, for many teachers, professional satisfaction is diminishing and teaching is becoming less and less rewarding.

Two decades ago Prime Minister Callaghan called for a ‘great debate’ on education. That never happened in the sense of an open, wide-ranging and informed discussion of education’s prime purpose and what schools are for. The need for shared, informed understanding is now more vital than ever. The first recommendation is addressed to those who hold the levers of power as well as the wider public constituency to whom politicians listen ever more carefully and anxiously.

#### **1. Recognise the critical nature of the issues**

At the heart of the issue lies the very nature of teaching and learning. The quality and vitality of that process is the common bond between teachers and pupils. Both parties suffer when the spontaneity and fun has gone out of teaching. Its key constituent is time. When time is the driver it means time to pack everything in, to ritually cover the ground, to ‘make’ time through forfeit, sacrificing the important on the altar of the urgent. ‘Making time’ then becomes a question of filling every available space, reducing break times, increasing after hours time, filling up home time, measuring not the quality of homework but the number of hours put in. Yet, paradoxically there is something *more* that teachers want. There is a missing discourse.

The problem is that filling the spaces runs counter to everything we have learned in the last few decades about learning, about the nature of knowledge, about motivation, emotional intelligence, physical and mental health, when, where and how the brain does its best work. It is futile for government agencies to commission and publish work on thinking skills, creativity and lifelong learning on the one hand while, on the other, diminishing the space and time for thinking. Or is it that departments and agencies of government themselves don't have the time to join up their own thinking?

Time is, however, only the servant of policy and practice and that is where the issue lies. Teachers are now so tightly locked into time-driven curriculum and assessment policies that for them and their pupils time has eventually run out. Recognising this and understanding the invidious situation it promotes is the prelude to any policy change that may follow.

## **2. Redress the imbalanced curriculum and its deep-lying fault line**

Evidence on imbalance within the curriculum is not hard to find. Redressing the balance, however, will not be achieved by taking time from one subject and giving it to another. The deep lying fault line is in the construction of 'subjects' themselves. The paradigm case is ICT. Time is set aside to teach ICT. 'Setting aside' is the operative word; adding to the curriculum, as if ICT did not permeate every aspect of children's lives. Likewise numeracy and literacy are not 'subjects' to be learned in isolation. Nor are they even simply skills. They are habits and values. They are for life and they permeate every aspect of learning. They are tested by what children, young people and adults do with their literacies and how they value them.

The evidence is strong that the literacy and numeracy strategies have been welcomed by teachers. One of their primary achievements has to been fill the gaps in teachers' knowledge both in terms of content and methodology. They have given teachers more confidence in teaching, particularly in numeracy. Indeed

‘maths’ is a subject with an unhappy legacy, which many teachers carry with them from their secondary school experience.

It has also to be recognised that these twin government strategies have served primarily as a form of professional development and that with a growing shared professional competence they may wither on the vine. So, as the system matures and as teachers grow in confidence they will need encouragement to loosen the tight boundaries of literacy and numeracy and ICT ‘hours’ and discover how these may infuse learning and teaching and may be in turn be fused in a more learning-centred, thinking-centred approach.

When we fundamentally address this way of thinking about the curriculum we may begin to deal with time not as the enemy and teachers may come to see the curriculum not as a problem but as a new opportunity.

### **3. Make testing the servant, not the dictator, of what is taught and learned.**

Teachers’ priorities are driven as much by what is tested than what is mandated by the curriculum. Children do not want to let their teacher down. Teachers do not want to let the school down. In collusive conspiracy they work together to improve test scores while agreeing in common that these fragile proxy measures do not tell the story of learning. Neither do they truly reflect the character of teaching nor the effectiveness of school. We have learned much in the last few years about the purposes and nature of assessment, not least from the work of Black and Wiliam (1998). Assessment and feedback, we know, has the capacity to be destructive of learning, can distort its essential aims, and can confuse its diagnostic, formative and summative purposes.

National testing performs an important function in monitoring standards and benchmarking. Headteachers and teachers are today more aware of data and its uses and often find the ‘reality’ check of internal and external assessment a useful support. When this is turned into a stick to beat them with is when they become defensive and demoralised. When assessment is pursued for the wrong reasons it not only devalues assessment itself, but also devalues what it is intended to

measure. The problem is that none of these insights are new. They are known to researchers. They are known to policy-makers and civil servants. But they are part of the lock-in phenomenon. Once created and once embedded they are difficult to dismantle.

Reform of testing, as is the case with curriculum, cannot be pursued in isolation. They are inseparable twins. Nor will they seriously address the issues by dilution, review and mandate from the top down. Teachers' confidence in a better world has been dented by promises over the lifetimes of four successive governments. Teachers, their unions, professional associations and networks have a leading role to play not simply in advising government, but in actively shaping educational futures. They need to be given that opportunity.

#### **4. Never mind the quantity, develop the quality of classroom support**

More classroom assistance is seen by some as the panacea. It also suggests ways of alleviating the burden on teachers by relieving them of tasks, ironically some of which give them greatest satisfaction. Simply increasing numbers is patently not the answer. There is a wide spectrum of quality among learning support (or 'classroom') assistants and as wide an understanding of their role. They can be a source of immense help to teachers but also a source of frustration and extra imposition. Classroom assistants too can become frustrated with the lack of clarity around their role and resentful when they are used as an extra teacher without commensurate salary.

There is, therefore, a need for development and training in the nature and parameters of the job. This should not lead to a uniform, fragmented job description, but it does imply the development of a more holistic understanding on their part of school and classroom, teaching and learning. It should be accompanied with an ability by teachers to deploy classroom assistants in ways that they see as most effective, while enhancing the confidence of the learning support assistant.

## **5. Make provision for teachers to work with, and learn from, teachers**

While learning support assistants have their place and value, what teachers would welcome most is support from other teachers. Teachers enjoy and profit from collaboration with their colleagues. Planning, implementing, cooperative teaching, and evaluating is the keystone of professional growth. The NUT's initiative on peer coaching has been received warmly by teachers, because, as we know, teachers learn from other teachers. Time for teachers to work together has to be placed, therefore, high on the policy priority list. In a context of teacher shortage, curriculum and testing pressures, this seems like a vain hope. But reversing the vicious circle and creating a more virtuous circle is the key to addressing the issue.

The vicious circle is one in which tired teachers leave the profession and newly qualified teachers find it hard to stay the course. So retention and recruitment assume the status of a self-fulfilling 'crisis'. In under-staffed schools there is no time for luxuries such as peer evaluation, peer coaching or co-operative teaching. Time becomes ever more precious and pressurised. Supply cover fails to address the issue because conscientious teachers do not want to 'lose time' with their class and heads find it hard to let teachers out of the classroom for courses, conferences or professional development. The virtuous circle is powered by job satisfaction, sustained by teachers doing what teachers enjoy and do best, fuelled by opportunities for collegial learning and professional renewal. That is what will keep teachers in teaching and help to reverse the attrition trend.

We are not oblivious to other dimensions of teacher dissatisfaction. The world outside school has changed radically and it has carried into the classroom. Children and families are not what they used to be. Issues of pupil behaviour and discipline, lack of support from some parents, new forms of violence and intimidation, drug and health related issues all have to be taken into the equation. These issues do not detract from the case, but also should not be allowed to deflect attention from the central concern. Indeed it becomes all the more imperative to examine the extent to which an inappropriate and pressured curriculum may simply exacerbate the problem. Placing a changing social and economic context into the equation

compounds the need for greater collegial, managerial and community support for teachers.

#### **6. Put workload in its place**

Workload needs to be understood in context. It has to be addressed in the nature of teachers' work. It is about what we expect of teachers and how we evaluate and reward them. It is fundamentally about how we construct learning and teaching, curriculum and assessment and the imperative of reconstruction. That is the single most important message from this study.

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