

# **WORKPLACE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF A 'FAILING' SCHOOL**

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*This thesis is dedicated to my Mum and Dad*

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## Abstract

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Over the last two decades the UK public sector has seen the introduction of 'new managerialism' – the devolvement to the local level of management initiatives and techniques more traditionally associated with the private sector; this has arguably increased industrial relations tensions in the workplace as both line managers and workers have become involved in actions and negotiations new to them.

This thesis provides a unique, in-depth, consideration of the impact on industrial relations of new managerialism in a 'failing' secondary comprehensive school; it identifies how devolved management and public accountability has inflamed the workplace industrial relations of that school. By taking a qualitative, multi-method, case study approach to the research, the thesis investigates at first hand how management and teachers respond to centralised government initiatives at the school level. It considers, and contributes to, the debate surrounding the extent of managerial autonomy that public sector managers have and how managers may take differing approaches - and achieve different results - when implementing new managerialist initiatives at the local level.

As a study of workplace industrial relations, the thesis, engages with and significantly contributes to, the academic literature stressing the importance of local trade union leadership to trade union activity; indeed, the work furthers the debate concerning the inter-relationship between political and trade union activism and the importance of political factions within trade unions, areas which are under-researched. By exploring the tensions between trade union members and their official union representatives, the thesis examines the complex inter-relationship between union democracy and union bureaucracy.

Finally, the case study identifies policy implications for both the government and the trade union, particularly with respect to the closing and re-opening of 'failing' schools.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AHA	Area Health Authorities
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
ATTI	Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
CDFU	Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department of Education and Employment
DHA	District Health Authorities
DLO	Direct Labour Organisation
EAZs	Education Action Zones
ERA	Education Reform Act
FBU	Fire Brigade Union
FMI	Financial Management Initiative
GM	Grant Maintained
HMI	Her/His Majesty's Inspectorate
HRM	Human Resource Management
IAC	Interim Advisory Committee on Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions
IS	International Socialists
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local Management of Schools
MQI	Management Quality Initiatives
NAHT	National Association of Head Teachers
NAS	National Association of Schoolmasters
NASUWT	National Union of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
NC	National Curriculum
NEC	National Executive Committee
NHS	National Health Service
NUET	National Union of Elementary Teachers
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NPM	New Public Management
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PAT	Professional Association of Teachers
PRP	Performance Related Pay
RCM	Royal College of Midwives
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
SHA	Secondary Heads Association
STA	Socialist Teachers Alliance
STRB	School Teachers Review Body
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
TEC	Technical Education College
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TQM	Total Quality Management
UWT	Union of Women Teachers
WERS	Workplace Employment Relations Survey

**Parents join forces  
to clean up school**

**Teachers threaten  
to quit 'sink' school**

**The scandal school  
crying out for help**

**Parents reassured  
over failing school**

**Blunkett steps in  
at Parkville**

**School closure row head  
'hounded out by militants'**

I'm not resentful – just sad, says old head

# Workplace Industrial Relations in the context of a 'Failing' School

## Introduction

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### *The case of the 'failing' school – introducing 'Parkville'<sup>1</sup>*

*At the end of January 1998, the parents, pupils, management and staff of Parkville, an inner-city comprehensive secondary school, were told by the Local Education Authority (LEA) that, with the agreement of Mr Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, their school, which had been designated as 'failing', was being closed down. Although a new school was being opened on the same site, nobody working in Parkville (management, teachers, support staff or administrators) was guaranteed a job in this; in fact, there was a clear indication that the management and staff in particular, would not be welcomed in the new school. Parkville is the comprehensive school at the centre of this research case study.*

*The case study takes a qualitative research approach in tracking events in Parkville over the eighteen month period from the announcement of its closure until the school eventually closed. As the 'story' of Parkville unfolds, it becomes apparent that there was a significant breakdown in the relationship between the headteacher and the staff in the school; there was a clear 'them and us' culture. Faced with dire budgetary problems, the headteacher instigated redundancy procedures in the school and these were vehemently contested by the staff who withdrew their 'goodwill', their willingness to work outside their contracts. As a direct result of the school being identified, by government inspectors, as having 'severe weaknesses', the headteacher initiated formal competency procedures to monitor the performance of three members of staff; seeing these procedures as unjust and unfair, and believing that the correct procedures had not been adhered to, the teachers were again strongly against the headteacher's actions. As the case study will show, a mutual feeling of distrust and resentment developed between the headteacher and staff in the school.*

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<sup>1</sup> Parkville is a pseudonym.

*The headteacher was convinced that the left-wing political dogma of one particular teacher, a long serving, forthright member of staff and a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), was irrepressible, insurmountable and illogical; this teacher, in line with traditional Marxist ideology, saw any cutbacks in the school (whether financial or staff) as contrary to the promotion of education for working class children, thus, he vociferously opposed changes proposed by the headteacher, the latter arguing that these were a direct result of enforced budget pressures and targets and consequently both unavoidable and inevitable. The headteacher (amongst others) partly blamed the SWP member as being responsible for the closure of the school.*

*Parkville's teachers were prepared to take industrial action; they were prepared to do this for the sake of their own jobs and those of their colleagues, and for the sake of the children they taught (they demonstrated at the Town Hall against Parkville's closure). Due to their willingness to act collectively, the local and national press portrayed Parkville's teachers as 'militant'. The headteacher perceived the teachers' solidaristic collectivism as being counter-productive to the well being of the school and believed that such actions, and the subsequent breakdown of staff/management relations, were due to the (negative) influence of the SWP member; as the case study identifies, however, the staff were far from being mere acolytes.*

*Parkville's headteacher resigned his position with one full academic year of the school remaining; a deputy head took over the role of acting head and the relationship between management and staff improved dramatically. Whilst recognising that the acting head faced different political and financial structures to the headteacher in that he was not charged with 'turning around' a sinking comprehensive school, but rather with steering the school through its final months of operation, the case nevertheless provides an insight into how approaches to managing staff are influential in developing and maintaining harmonious workplace relations, a concept explored in the following chapters.*

*As would be expected of a revolutionary socialist, the SWP member in the school was also a strong trade union activist and his politics influenced his unionism. During the course of the study this person resumed the role of union representative from a somewhat less active member; however, even prior to his official union role, he was clearly the person to whom other teachers turned for help and advice. Moreover, and also in line with his political beliefs, he was also willing to challenge both the regional union official's and the National Executive Committee (NEC) decisions; the case study demonstrates how political activism plays an important and significant role in trade union activism and local leadership, whilst also identifying the role that political factions have in challenging the trade union bureaucracy and attempting to enforce trade union democracy.*

*As (mainly) National Union of Teachers (NUT) members, Parkville teachers turned to their union for support in fighting the school's closure and staff redundancies; this, they felt, was not forthcoming. The teachers believed that the restraint shown by union officials towards industrial action in support of their school and their jobs was politically motivated, thus questioning the representative democracy of the union and highlighting the tensions that exist between the union bureaucracy and the rank and file members; these issues are explored and developed in the thesis.*

*The representations of the teachers and their union went unheeded and Parkville school closed. Despite a huge injection of cash into the new school which replaced Parkville, and sadly for all those concerned with both schools, this also 'failed' its first government inspection.*

## **The aims of the thesis**

As with any research, Parkville cannot be divorced from the environment in which it operates, and with this in mind, the broad aim of the thesis is to investigate, within the wider aspect of educational change, the impact on the management and teachers of a school which was designated firstly as ‘failing’ and then ‘failed’; to explore the dynamics of workplace industrial relations in this context.

The thesis will consider the effect that centralised government imposed changes and the introduction of ‘new managerialism’ have had on public sector employees and managers in general, teachers and headteachers in particular and Parkville’s teachers and headteacher specifically. It will also consider the extent and nature of trade union organisation in the teaching profession generally and in Parkville in particular and in line with this, the dynamic relationship between trade union members and union officials and between political activists and their union.

The case of Parkville is unique; there are very few schools which are actually closed due to ‘failing’ the pupils and this is the first case study to explore the dynamics of workplace industrial relations in such a setting.

As the case study brings together the inter-relationship between management approaches and industrial relations in the workplace, at this stage it is worth briefly re-visiting the dynamics of workplace industrial relations.

## **The dynamics of workplace industrial relations**

Over the past two decades, the public sector in the UK has undergone major restructuring and reorganisation resulting in the introduction of management techniques more traditionally found in the private sector of the economy. This ‘new managerialism’ (Farnham and Horton 1996c:40; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995) has meant that public sector managers are expected to implement at the local workplace level the policies and practices initiated by central government.

There has also been a drive to reduce the power of public sector trade unions. Historically, public sector workers have been highly unionised and although union density has fallen, membership levels remain high in comparison with the private sector. The devolvement of management initiatives to the local level in the public sector has led to the suggestion that there has been an increase in trade union activity as local unionists become more involved in workplace activity (Fairbrother 1990; 1994a; 1996; Fosh 1993:577; Thornley 1998:427), leading to a heightening of industrial relations tensions in the workplace.

Whilst the dynamics of workplace industrial relations tends to focus on the relationship between management and trade unions, the reality of workplace industrial relations encompasses a range of levels, situations and actors. For Salamon, industrial relations is 'a set of phenomena, operating both within and outside the workplace, concerned with determining and regulating the employment relationship' (1998:3). The employment relationship is shaped by the legal, political, economic, social and historical context in which it operates; it is also influenced by the power struggle in the workplace.

Blyton and Turnbull argue that there is an 'asymmetrical relationship' (1994:29) between the employer and the worker in that the balance of power lies with the employer and therefore collective action by employees 'is invariably essential if employee interests are to be represented effectively' (1994:32). The contestation of power is at the heart of workplace industrial relations, however, despite this, Kelly argues that power has 'received very little discussion by mainstream industrial relations researchers' (1998:9).

The case study of Parkville considers how power is contested between the manager and workers in the setting of a 'failing' school, how it is central to the dynamics of industrial relations in this workplace; to do this it draws on the concept of power as determined by Bradley (1999).

Bradley, in her work on gendered power, discusses the 'range of power resource involved in relations between men and women' (1999:32); she draws on the work of Giddens (1979:6) when she suggests that 'women and men have control of and access to different forms of power resource, and to differing amounts of each resource at different times'. She goes on to describe power relations as 'complex and fluid' (1999:32). This analysis can be seen to hold true for workplace relationships not only between workers and management and management and trade unions, but also between rank and file members and their trade unions.

Bradley provides nine 'different types of resource' (1999:34), suggesting that 'power manifests itself through processes of interaction in which these various resources are at play' (1999:36). Five of these types are adopted here as an analytical tool for understanding power relations in the workplace:

1. Economic power: the control of economic resources;
2. Positional power: power and authority gained by virtue of holding positions, such as employer, manager, supervisor, trade union leader;
3. Symbolic power: the ability to impose one's own definitions, meanings, values and rules on a situation;
4. Collective power: the mobilization of collective resources; the ability to organize groups of people to pursue common goals e.g. trade unions;
5. Personal power: the utilization of a multitude of personal resources, such as strength of character, knowledge, ability to get on with people, charisma, experience.

Clearly, in the workplace the various dimensions of power operate both simultaneously and independently as the asymmetrical balance of power (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:31) is contested and this helps shape the dynamics of workplace industrial relations; thus, Bradley's concepts of power are useful in helping to understand the actions of management and workers in the employment relationship.



These actions are also influenced by the perception of the employment relationship, and the balance of power within that relationship, that the individual has. The various perspectives of industrial relations help to provide a framework for understanding the complex and diverse nature of the employment relationship, including that at Parkville, and it is important, therefore, to briefly recall these here.

Firstly, the unitarist approach to industrial relations sees the organisation as an integrated group of people with 'one source of authority and one focus of loyalty'; it suggests a 'team analogy' (Fox 1966:3). Management and workers 'strive jointly towards a common objective' and there are 'no rival groups or factions' (Fox 1966:3). Power is, therefore, legitimately invested in management who have the 'right to manage' and to challenge this is seen as irrational. Although Fox suggested that the unitarist perspective 'has long since been abandoned by most social scientists as incongruent with reality and useless for the purpose of analysis' (1966:4) this is seen as underpinning the more recent approach to managing organisations, Human Resource Management (HRM) (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:23; Salamon 1998:6); by implication, if the unitarist approach to management is flawed, so too must be HRM. As Salamon suggests, however, 'even where managers appear consciously to reject the unitary perspective as unrealistic, it still provides the subconscious foundation (the 'right to manage') for their seeking to maintain a clear distinction between those issues on which they are prepared to negotiate and those issues on which they are prepared only to consult' (1998:7), thus perhaps helping to explain unitarism as the basic principle upon which HRM is developed.

Unlike unitarism, the pluralist approach takes a far less 'utopian' view of the organisation and recognises the inevitability of conflict in the workplace. This perspective considers the organisation as being made up of 'sectional groups with divergent interests' (Fox 1966:4) with management overseeing the 'long-term needs of "the organization as a whole" by paying due concern to all the interests affected'; management are seen as holding the "right" balance between the sometimes divergent claims of these participant interests' (Fox 1977:136). In order to 'meet

management on equal terms to negotiate the terms of their collaboration', workers resort to 'collective organization in trade unions' (1977:136). The pluralist perspective therefore aims to institutionalise conflict by recognising the role of trade unions and attempting to reconcile disagreements.

However, Fox, in his radical critique, places greater emphasis on 'the gross disparity of power between the employer and the individual employee'; this perspective does not see 'the collective organization of employees into trade unions as restoring a balance of power (or anything as yet approaching it)' as 'a great imbalance remains' (1977:141).

Fox's radical critique is influenced by a Marxist analysis of industrial relations. In his Marxist account of the employment relationship, Hyman argues that 'labour is treated as a commodity' and from this stems 'many of the fundamental conflicts in industry' (1975:19); he too writes of the 'unequal power in the formulation of the employment contract' which he argues 'leads to a significant *asymmetry* in its content' (1975:24). This perspective identifies a greater role for trade unions within the wider political and social spheres of society as they represent a collective response to capitalism. The Marxist perspective takes a wider view of the employment relationship than do either the unitarist or pluralist perspectives; it considers industrial relations in the context of social, political and economic terms (Hyman 1975:31). Thus, the Marxist analysis takes us back to the initial paragraph of this section and reminds us that the field of industrial relations is wider than the workplace in which it is being studied, however, Fox may hesitate to adopt a Marxist revolutionary praxis.

Despite the radical critique of unitarism and pluralism, these perspectives are not only influential in underpinning HRM ideas, but they also allow for an understanding of the frame of reference on which each manager bases his or her particular management style; their actions and perception of how others will act are influenced by these perspectives of the employment relationship. They are introduced here because, as will be seen, these perspectives are implicit in the values of the key actors in the

research case study. They also underpin the work of Purcell and Sisson (1983:112-118) who provide a useful analysis of styles adopted by managers in the management of industrial relations, briefly discussed here.

The first typology is the 'traditionalist'; these managers are opposed to trade unions and are 'overtly exploitive' in their treatment of employees. The second management style, which fits comfortably with the HRM approach, is described as 'sophisticated paternalist'; management have the right to manage, trade unions are not recognised and collective action is viewed as 'unnecessary and inappropriate'. Both of these management types adopt a unitarist perspective of industrial relations.

The remaining three management styles are all based on the pluralist perception of the employment relationship. The third type are 'sophisticated moderns' who recognise trade unions but within closely defined consultation and negotiation limits; these managers attempt to institutionalise conflict and promote areas of common interest. This typology is sub-divided into the 'constitutionalists' and the 'consultors'; the former employ strict codes of collective agreements with issues falling outside these being within total control of management, whilst the latter have highly developed collective bargaining machinery; emphasis is on problem solving rather than dispute settlement. The final type is that of the 'standard moderns' who take a 'pragmatic or opportunistic' approach to management; trade unions are again recognised but 'fire-fighting' is adopted when it comes to industrial relations with management approaches changing according to the situation at the time.

Whilst recognising that there are limitations in the use of typologies, the above provide a necessary and important understanding of how managers may differ in the approaches they adopt in dealing with their employees. Consequently, the thesis draws upon these typologies as an aid to understanding the dynamics of the employment relationship in the workplace.

Apart from management styles and power relationships between managers and workers (whether individually or collectively within trade union organisations) in the workplace, the dynamics of industrial relations are further shaped by the inter-relationship between rank and file members and their union leaders.

Clearly, whilst members look to their union officials for guidance and to act on their behalf as a collective ‘voice’ (as indeed this is what such leaders are paid by the membership to do), they also look to have some say in the way in which the union is run and the decisions made on their behalf; in short they expect their union to operate a democratic regime. Indeed, Fairbrother is of the view that ‘any notion of union democracy worthy of the name should be about membership participation and decision-making’ as these are ‘the essential ingredient for the vitality and success of unions’; he goes on to state that ‘democracy is founded on the continual interaction between workers and their delegates’ and that the key features of the process of union democracy are ‘[D]isagreement and discussion, argument and counter-argument’ (1984:23). Fairbrother also suggests, however, that this form of participatory democracy ‘is seldom achieved’ (1984:24). Thus, this brings into question the representational democracy of unions; if rank and file members are unable to have their views reflected in policy decisions, then their union leaders are not representing the membership at the workplace level. Any ensuing antagonism between member and official is a further factor within the inherent tensions of workplace industrial relations.

This section has considered the various elements of the employment relationship which help characterise the dynamics of workplace industrial relations. The next section will provide a brief outline of the rest of the thesis.

### **The thesis – an outline**

The case of Parkville offers a unique opportunity to consider workplace industrial relations in the context of a failing comprehensive school; it does however, need to be situated in the wider context of government imposed changes to public sector services

in general and more specifically, the provision of education. Chapter One discusses the issues of public sector change, particularly since the determination of the 1979 Conservative government to 'roll back the frontiers of the state' (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:142; Shaoul 1999:41). The chapter considers the content and extent of 'new managerialism' (Farnham and Horton 1996c:40; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995) or 'new public management' (NPM) (Black and Upchurch 1999:513; Carter and Fairbrother 1999:119; Farnham and Horton 1996b; 1996a; Flynn 1999) in the public sector, demonstrating how a paradox exists between devolved management practices and closely prescribed and monitored centralised government controls. It examines the effect of the creation of 'quasi-markets' (Le Grand 1991:1257) on public sector services in general and the effect that these, coupled with public accountability, have had on public sector employment, particularly in the polarisation of 'good' and 'bad' schools in education.

The post-1979 Conservative government, were also concerned with ridding the country as a whole, but the public sector in particular, of 'the enemy within' (Timmins 1995:426), the trade unions; Chapter Two considers this assault on public sector trade unions. The chapter also considers the possible contradiction between being a 'professional' and a trade union member, as acting 'militantly' might be construed as acting 'unprofessionally'; the chapter focuses on teacher unions and more specifically on the NUT, the union central to the case study. Factionalism has long been a characteristic of the NUT (Seifert 1984) and this chapter explores this, particularly with respect to political activists who, as the case study will show, were seen to play a significant role in the closing of Parkville school. The chapter also considers the importance of local activists to workplace industrial relations and the extent to which political affiliations may influence and shape the actions of these individuals.

Chapter Three takes the reader on the research journey, describing not only the research methods used, but also the pains and joys of carrying out participative, action research. This chapter explains how the various methods adopted were

significant in developing particular insights into the key aspects of centralised-decentralisation and new managerialism in Parkville.

Having considered the literature on public sector reform and trade unions, and discussed the methodology which informs the research, the subsequent chapters turn to the empirical research gathered during the 'closing' phase of the school, thus providing an insight into the dynamics of workplace industrial relations in a 'failing' comprehensive school.

Firstly, the school, its pupils, teachers and management, as well as its physical and political environs, are described in Chapter Four to allow the reader to situate themselves in the context of the failing school both as a place of learning and of work. This is important as no activity within the workplace takes place in a vacuum; those in the workplace are both influenced by and have influence on, the structures in which they operate.

Chapter Five considers 'New Managerialism at Parkville', contemplating the dynamic relationship between management and staff in the school and the effect of external pressures on these. By exploring the workplace tensions created by 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18) as devolved management initiatives are implemented in a school designated by the government as 'failing', this chapter identifies how workplace industrial relations issues are intensified as headteachers are required to 'transmogrify' from their role as 'first amongst equals' (Ironside and Seifert 1995:244), to that of school manager and how, in Parkville, this raised the collective awareness of the teachers.

Chapter Six investigates the level and nature of the collectivism of Parkville's teachers and considers the extent and appropriateness of their being adjudged as 'militants' by national and local press. This chapter describes how the 'symbolic' power resources (Bradley 1999:34) in the school are contested as the teachers draw

on their 'collective power resources' in an attempt to challenge the headteacher's 'economic' and 'positional' power resources (1999:34).

The 'militant' theme is taken further in Chapter Seven which explores the inter-relationship between political and trade union activism. This chapter identifies a positive link between political ideology and trade union activism and recognises the importance of the need for strong trade union leadership at the workplace level, not only as a means of vocalising the concerns of the workers, but also as a means of contesting the decisions of the trade union leadership, thus challenging union bureaucracy and oligarchy.

Chapter Eight examines the evidence provided by the case study of Parkville. By no means is it claimed here that generalisations can be made from the study of one school, particularly in the fairly unique circumstances of Parkville and indeed, no attempt is made to make such generalisations; neither does the research set out to test or justify any pre-defined theories or hypotheses. What the research does provide, however, is a unique insight into workplace industrial relations in an inner-city comprehensive school which has been subjected to the harsh reality of centralised government initiatives, decentralised through various management initiatives to the local level.

Finally, the thesis completes the 'story' of Parkville, the 'failing' comprehensive school with a postscript which brings the reader up to date with the closing of the school and the opening of the new school.

## Chapter One

### Public Sector Reform and 'New Managerialism'

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#### Introduction

As stated in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to explore the dynamics of workplace industrial relations in 'Parkville', a 'failing' inner-city secondary school. In order to do this, it is necessary to situate the school within the wider context of reform and change within the public sector in general, and education in particular.

During the 1980s and the 1990s in 'a wide range of political economies' there has been 'considerable opposition to nationalization and public ownership and, in consequence, commercialization and privatization have featured prominently in the new era' (Poole *et al.* 1995:271); the UK government 'was not alone ... in being openly distrustful of the public sector' (Black and Upchurch 1999:505). The growing concern with respect to public expenditure and deficit has led, in 'several countries', to a 'new political agenda for the public sector, focussing on questions of efficiency and financial viability of the public enterprises' (Ferner 1987:180). Such concern was formulated in response to the perception of a move towards the globalisation of world markets and increasing international competition, 'the globalization of economic activity' (Brown and Lauder 1997:172). Although it will not be considered here, the extent to which such public sector change and management can be considered as global, however, is questionable (see for example Bach and Della Rocca 2000; Hood 1995; Powell 1999:Ch1).

Nevertheless, there has clearly been major restructuring and reorganisation of the UK public sector. The quest for accountability has led to attempts to introduce into the public sector, management techniques more traditionally found in the private sector of the economy resulting in what is now commonly referred to as the 'new managerialism' (Farnham and Horton 1996c:40; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach



1995) or 'new public management' (Black and Upchurch 1999:513; Carter and Fairbrother 1999:119; Farnham and Horton 1996b; 1996a; Flynn 1999).

This chapter will begin by briefly discussing the nature and extent of public sector reform before going on to contemplate the notion of 'managerialism' within the public sector. By drawing on the published literature, the chapter will consider the marketisation and commercialisation of public services, the devolvement of management practices to the local workplace level, and the introduction of performance monitoring of public service provision; a consideration will be made of the effects of managerialism on public sector employment, focussing particularly on the school sector. An argument will be formulated to suggest that by combining decentralisation and centralisation the state is using the rhetoric of 'managerialism' to gain 'more effective control of work practices' (Walsh 1995:xiii) and that in fact new managerialism is as much a generic term used to restructure 'the state labour process' (Fairbrother 1994:163) as an empowerment of public sector managers.

### **Public Sector Reform**

The public sector in the UK has undergone considerable change over the last two decades with massive privatisation programmes and the introduction of marketisation in the areas left in the public domain (Carter and Fairbrother 1999:131). Indeed, Exworthy and Halford suggest that 'the 1980s and 1990s have marked a period of dramatic transformation right across the public sector, with fundamental implications for the structures, cultures and practices of its constituent sub-sectors and individual organizations' (1999a:3) whilst Clarke and Newman argue that the 'continuous programme of reconstruction' of the welfare state has changed 'both the character and content of social welfare, and the institutional forms of the state' (1997:18). At the end of the 1970s the public sector accounted for almost 30 percent of all UK employment; by the end of the 1990s this had declined to just over 20 percent (Black and Upchurch 1999:513).

Although in 1979 it was undoubtedly the intention of the newly elected Conservative Government to 'roll back the frontiers of the state' (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:142; Shaoul 1999:41; Timmins 1995:360), it is apparent that there was no clear strategy for this when they came into power. The transformation of the public sector was, at least initially, 'highly disjointed and uneven' (Kirkpatrick and Martínez Lucio 1995:17), 'incremental and implemented by a step by step approach' (Farnham and Horton 1993:241) and 'tentative and crudely developed' (Fairbrother 1994a:180). Pollitt *et al.* describe the history of public sector reforms as having a 'fair share of twists, turns and *ex post* rationalisation' (1998:34), whilst Stewart and Stoker argue that the government 'learnt it's strategy through experience' (1995:2) and Walsh purports that 'strategies tended to emerge from practice as much as from theoretical ideas' (1995b:63).

What is apparent is that all governments since 1979 have focused on 'economy', 'efficiency', and 'effectiveness' [Carter, 1999 #790:131; Ferlie, 1996 #452:31; Pollitt, 1993 #649:59; Pollitt, 1998 #738:10; Shaoul, 1999 #763:44; Stewart, 1988 #646:15] within the public sector, with the one clear strategy being the intention of forcing public sector managers to 'manage' (Colling and Ferner 1995:491), 'regardless of union and work-force opposition and any resulting disruption to public services' (Ferner and Colling 1991:394). Emphasis has been placed on the necessity for the control of financial budgets, quality of service and performance of staff (Pollitt *et al.* 1998:34). The massive drive to both 'commercialise' and 'marketise' the public sector, (discussed below), was aimed at both cutting public spending and to gain from the benefits of constructing an 'enterprise culture' in Britain (Exworthy and Halford 1999a:8; Poole *et al.* 1995:272; Rainnie 1994:5).

It is important to recognise here that emphasis on the public sector has continued following the 1997 election. New Labour came into power with an election manifesto stating '[W]e will be the party of welfare reform'; whilst having education as their first priority they also, for example, promised to 'rebuild' the National Health Service (NHS), 'reducing spending on administration and increasing spending on patient

care' and to cut NHS waiting lists (quoted in Powell 1999:8). Rouse and Smith suggest that the 'management revolution brought about by the Conservative government is not to be reversed by New Labour' and that the 'performance management ethos has become even more pronounced under New Labour' (Rouse and Smith 1999:250). It is apparently the intention of New Labour to continue to accentuate the accountability and efficiency of public sector services initiated under the Conservative government regime from 1979.

Prior to 1979, the state had been seen as a 'good' or 'model' employer (Crouch 1995:246; Sisson and Marginson 1995:102; Winchester 1983:155; Winchester and Bach 1995:308); emphasis was on equity and fairness with nationally negotiated collective bargaining agreements, based on the Whitley principles, being the norm (Beaumont 1992:47; Corby and White 1999:6; Fairbrother 2000a:60; Hyman 1995:30; Mathieson and Corby 1999:199; Salamon 1998:311; Winchester and Bach 1995:308). The government were concerned with promoting a model of good management and stable industrial relations to the managers in the private sector.

The good employer image was manifested through 'tangible benefits' such as job security, good pensions, trade union recognition and collective bargaining with pay settlements based on private sector comparability; trade union membership was actively encouraged, resulting in a high level of union membership (Winchester and Bach 1995:308). The model also promoted mutual agreement between employers and trade unions to avoid industrial conflict (Winchester 1983:176).

It is important to recognise, however, that the reality did not always equate with the rhetoric of the 'good' employer (Carter and Fairbrother 1999:141). These employment practices were not universal nor were they evenly applied; accordingly, 'the long-standing concerns of public-sector trade unions with problems of low pay indicate that some groups fared better than others' (Winchester and Bach 1995:308). Women in particular were one of the groups which did not fare well as they were discriminated against in issues of pay and the 'marriage bar' which prevented married

women from working in areas such as teaching and the Civil Service (Black and Upchurch 1999:509; Roberts 1995:117). Women were not always supported by the trade unions in these issues, particularly in the latter; the Union of Post Office Workers and the National Association of Schoolmasters were unions in favour of retaining the bar which was finally abolished during the 1945-50 Labour government's administration (Black and Upchurch 1999:509). The 'good employer' practices were more common in the public services than the nationalised industries and they 'applied to non-manual employees more clearly than to many groups of manual workers' (Winchester 1983:176).

Although O'Connell Davidson identified 'fairly harmonious industrial relations' within the public utilities (1993:6) this was not to last (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:157; Beaumont 1992:1; Corby and White 1999:7; Crouch 1995:246; Winchester and Bach 1995:308). As a result of a series of incomes policies during the 1970s which emphasised pay restraints, 'there had been a general deterioration in the pay of public sector employees' (Winchester 1983:165); these workers, with the government as their paymasters, fared worse than those in the private sector. The resultant 'industrial militancy' (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:157) culminated in the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1979 and the election to power of Margaret Thatcher and the 'New Right' who believed that the Welfare State was 'under- and poorly-managed, acted as an unaccountable monopoly, was professionally dominated, and lacking in client involvement' (Ferlie *et al.* 1996:31); it was also seen to be a drain on public resources resulting in high taxes, interest rates and inflation (Winchester and Bach 1995:309).

The newly elected government was committed to 'breaking the power of public-sector trade unions, reducing public expenditure and reversing the employment practices associated with the model employer' (Winchester and Bach 1995:309). They perceived a 'need to strengthen the management function' in order to 'ensure greater efficiency, value for money and responsiveness to public needs' (Winchester and Bach 1995:305); changes were 'aimed at reshaping the public sector in the image

of the private, complete with markets, consumers, contracts and profit incentives' (Fredman 1999:53).

Indeed, Politicians have put great store in the use of 'management' to counteract the nation's ills. Pollitt quotes Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State in 1980 as follows:

'Efficient management is a key to the [national] revival ... And the management ethos must run right through our national life - private and public companies, civil service, nationalized industries, local government, the National Health Service' (Heseltine 1980 quoted in Pollitt 1993:3).

Although Clarke and Newman argue that 'managerialism ... is shaping the remaking of the British state' (1997:ix), Walsh suggests that 'throughout its history the public sector has intermittently rediscovered the need for a focus on productivity, performance and control' and therefore, to some extent 'the "new managerialism" is no more than another wave of a tide that had long been flowing, however slowly' (1995b:xiii).

Shaoul argues that underpinning the government's public sector reforms 'was the assumption that the toolkit of private sector management could improve output and thereby resolve or at least contain the "problem" of the rising cost of the public sector' (1999:44). Public sector managers were encouraged to "emulate" the behaviour of their private sector counterparts' (Boyne *et al.* 1999:407) by incorporating into the public sector what the government perceived as the 'good' management practices of the private sector such as performance related pay (PRP), quality initiatives such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and the introduction of a 'flexible' workforce; as a result, 'a new public sector management paradigm began to emerge at the beginning of the 1990s' (Kitchener and Whipp 1995:190). Further, in an effort to "individualize" the employment relationship' (Smith and Morton 1993:99) and change the face of public sector industrial relations (Crouch 1995:246) attempts have been made to marginalise trade unions.

Carter and Fairbrother state that '[P]ublic-sector restructuring has effectively ended discussion of the state as a "model employer"' which has been 'replaced' by "economy, efficiency and effectiveness" and, more recently, by "best value" and "best practice"' (1999:141-141); likewise, Black and Upchurch argue that 'the concept of "model employer" no longer applied under the Conservative governments in the 1980s' (1999:513).

In comparing the Human Resource Management (HRM) policies and practices of the public and private sectors, Boyne *et al.*, paradoxically suggest that 'public sector organizations have retained a commitment to their traditional role as model employers' (1999:416). They base this on the results of a survey of members of the Institute of Management, the findings of which they suggest show that 'activities associated with the conventional state role as a model employer, such as staff training and the promotion of equal opportunities, are still more likely to be found in public organizations' (1999:417). One strength of public sector training they suggest to be the Investors in People initiative whilst they also point to greater employee involvement in the public sector, particularly with a role for the trade unions; the latter is hardly surprising considering the continued presence of trade unions in this sector as will be discussed in the next chapter. In contributing to the 'model employer' debate, however, Boyne *et al.*'s (1999) findings are flawed; firstly the views of management may well differ with those of the workers and secondly, their criteria for measuring the 'model employer' is limited and does not take account of issues such as pay comparability and security of employment.

One of the main issues surrounding the introduction of private sector management initiatives into the public sector is whether it is possible, or indeed appropriate, to do so. It has been argued that the tasks undertaken in the public sector require fundamentally different skills to those in the private sector (Hood 1991; Pollitt 1993); it is also claimed that the 'ethos' of the public sector which promotes equity and the belief in 'citizenship' is of a different nature to the 'profit' ethos of the private sector (Ranson 1995). Acroyd *et al.* argue that there is a difference between the relationships

of 'public sector workers and their clients' and 'the relationships in the provision of services in a market' (1989:603). Each of these views suggest that it is difficult, if not impossible, to indiscriminately impose private sector management techniques on the public sector; they need to be 'balanced by approaches that recognize the values of the public sector' (Stewart and Walsh 1992:517). Corby and White argue that there has been a 'decline of the public service ethos' (1999:19) and Farnham and Horton are also of the view that the public service ethic 'has been abandoned to a new managerial ethic' (1996d:275).

Acroyd *et al.* suggest that public service managers are 'mediators' between the 'control and the delivery' of public services (1989:605); that they have the task of 'reconciling the sometimes diametrically opposed demands of external "controllers" and internal "carers"' and that this is what gives public sector management 'its special features' (1989:607). For public sector workers the ultimate responsibility for their actions lies with government ministers, Acroyd *et al.*'s 'controllers' (1989:607).

Aucoin suggests that two distinct sets of ideas have influenced the way in which the public services should be managed; the first emanates from public choice theory, which 'focuses on the need to reestablish the primacy of representative government over bureaucracy' and the second from the 'managerialist' school of thought which 'focuses on the need to reestablish the primacy of managerial principles over bureaucracy' (1990:115).

Aucoin's account of public choice theory is that 'too much power has been assumed by the professional bureaucrats' and that control of 'the public purse' should be with the elected politicians (1990:117). He argues that in contrast the 'managerialist' idea is to give the managers the right to manage and allow them to pursue efficiency in their own way; it advocates decentralisation (1990:118, 122); a dichotomy therefore exists between public choice theory which 'promotes centralization, coordination and control' and the managerialist view which 'favours decentralization, deregulation and delegation' (1990:129). Aucoin suggests, however, that 'the two sets of principles,

derived from two different paradigms lead to prescriptions which promote movement in both directions simultaneously' (1990:129). It is with this 'paradox' in mind that the chapter now turns to the issue of 'new managerialism' in the public sector.

### **'New Managerialism' in the Public Sector**

Although, as stated earlier, the changes in the public sector were not part of a planned government strategy, as the 1980's wore on and the successive governments increased in confidence, their incursion into public sector management also increased with a number of parliamentary acts being introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s<sup>2</sup> (Le Grand 1991:1257).

It must be recognised that government interest in the management of the public sector was not new, neither was their copy-cat approach of private business. Challenges to the way in which the NHS was managed were as early as 1954 with the Bradbeer Committee Report (Moon and Kendall 1993:177; Kendall *et al.* 1996:201), followed by a number of changes looking for 'managerial efficiency' (Timmins 1995:194) in the 1960s and early 1970s. Likewise, Fairbrother points to the Fulton Report on the Civil Service in 1968 which suggested the implementation of "accountable management", derived from General Motors in the USA' (1994a:19). Indeed, Walsh suggests that 'in the 1980s we witnessed no more than the continuation and enhancement of a managerialist process that had long existed' (1995b:xiii).

Nevertheless, there has been in the public sector an introduction of management techniques more usually found in the private sector. Bach and Winchester suggest that this restructuring had two distinct phases, the first from 1979 to 1987 'concentrated on reforming management ... to enhance efficiency and accountability for performance' (1994:266); this, the authors suggest, included appointing managers from the private sector, the delegation of budget responsibility, the development of performance targets and performance related pay. The second phase came after 1987

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<sup>2</sup> For example: Education Reform Act, 1988; Housing Act 1988; Housing and Local Government Act 1989; Griffiths Report on personal social services 1988; NHS Review 1989 (Le Grand 1991:1257).



and ‘marked a more radical programme of market based restructuring’ which was ‘underpinned by previous managerial reforms’ (1994:266).

The next section addresses issues related to ‘new managerialism’ in the public sector; although these have been analytically separated, it is recognised that they do overlap and interlink. Examples will be drawn from various parts of the public sector, however, as the education sector is the focus of the case study, the effect that government initiatives have had in this area will be discussed in greater depth later in the chapter.

### *Marketisation and Commercialisation*

The ‘New Right’ Conservative government believed that to create an ‘effective and efficient’ public sector, the public services, like businesses in the private sector, should operate within market conditions. This ‘marketisation’ and ‘commercialisation’ consisted of a number of initiatives such as ‘compulsory competitive tendering’ for the provision of services, the creation of ‘internal markets’ and the development of ‘quasi markets’.

Contrary to what is often popular opinion, the initiative for both marketisation and commercialisation within the public services was not conceived by the Thatcher Governments post 1979. A decade earlier the Labour Party firmly embraced the idea of competition in the provision of local government services; Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) would compete for their work with external contractors (Walsh 1995a:29). However, although some local authorities began to introduce such initiatives, this was gradual - and mainly in the Conservative-controlled South-East of England; Walsh argued that change would only come ‘from government pressure and legislation’ (1995a:30) and the first of this came in 1980 with the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), hence the connection of marketisation and commercialisation with the post-1979 governments. Although reluctantly embraced, CCT affected public sector management as DLO managers entered the commercial

markets for the first time and pressure was placed on keeping costs down (Walsh 1995a:32), as discussed below.

By the late 1980's the Conservative Government were in full flow and the Local Government Act 1988 reinforced previous legislation with respect to CCT. At the same time various other legislation was introduced throughout the public sector (see above), all creating market conditions within which managers had to operate. The aim of the government was, through 'marketisation', to develop the commercialisation instigated in the local authorities to incorporate all sections of the public sector regardless of the diversity of these (e.g. NHS, Education, Social Services, Civil Service); 'no area of local government responsibility escaped scrutiny' (Cochrane 1991:282). It is again important to note that the New Labour government have continued with marketisation and competitive policies in the public sector, ('albeit in a modified form' (Johnson 1999b:94)); for example, the "Best Value" initiative introduced in local authorities modifies the 'more stark' elements of CCT (Johnson 1999b:94).

The government instigated 'internal markets' (Walsh 1995b:138) and 'quasi-markets' (Bartlett *et al.* 1994; Propper *et al.* 1994:1) as a way of creating market pressures within public sector organisations where, 'for political or practical reasons', it was 'not feasible to introduce privatisation' (Walsh 1995b:138). One example of 'quasi-markets' is the establishment of NHS trusts in 1991 (Bartlett and Harrison 1993) and the linking of doctors' pay to the number of patients on their list (Flynn 1990:18; Thompson 1995:73), thus forcing them to 'compete' with one another for patients.

By creating individual business units and 'cost centres' (Bach 1999:181-2; Black and Upchurch 1999:513; Sinclair *et al.* 1995:256) which separated the service providers from the purchasing authorities (Bach 1999:182; Propper *et al.* 1994:1) competition was created between the providers of public services (Winchester and Bach 1995:315); in some cases services, such as cleaning and catering, were 'contracted-out' to the private sector (Black and Upchurch 1999:512). Privatisation, CCT and

contracting-out had the additional effect of fragmenting the ‘collective bargaining framework’ of the unions and thus reducing their power (Black and Upchurch 1999:512); Rainnie suggests that this is one of the main aims of these initiatives as, he argues, ‘there is no reason to believe that there is not a government strategic drive to confront and in some cases attempt to destroy trades union organisation in specific sectors’ (1994:5). The government were clearly intent on replacing national bargaining structures with small local agreements – or no agreements at all (Crouch 1995:240). As Black and Upchurch suggest, ‘workers in key areas of “industrial muscle”, such as rubbish collectors, now found themselves working (if they were taken on) in un-unionised and anti-union companies’ (1999:512). (For discussions on the diverse effects of privatisation on industrial relations see for example Fairbrother 1994b; Ferner and Colling 1991; Pendleton 1998; Rainnie 1994).

Linked to the introduction of markets was the emphasis placed on ‘the importance of responsiveness and accountability to the customers’ (Winchester and Bach 1995:315), the need for more stringent financial and performance targets (Bach and Winchester 1994:265) and the ‘devolution of managerial autonomy’ (Propper *et al.* 1994:1). In the Civil Service, for example, Sir Derek Rayner was appointed to head an ‘efficiency unit’ in search of cost-effectiveness; the resultant ‘Rayner scrutinies’, were aimed at reducing staff numbers and ensuring ‘value for money’ (Horton 1996:159; Winchester and Bach 1995:311). In conjunction with the scrutinies was the Financial Management Initiative (FMI) which devolved budget responsibility to cost centres (Winchester and Bach 1995:311); this, in theory, ‘increased line manager control’ (Fairbrother 1994a:22) (although, as discussed below, this was not necessarily the reality). Fairbrother advocates that these initiatives were ‘the first steps in the Civil Service’s transformation from a bureaucratic organization to a managerial one’ (1994a:25). Similar ‘scrutinies’ (Bach and Winchester 1994:266; Pollitt 1993:62) in the NHS were followed by the ‘Griffiths Report’ which introduced ‘a system of general management aimed at processual as well as structural change’ (Ferlie *et al.* 1996:43); it is argued that such general managers were the ‘prerequisite’ for what

were seen as the ‘more radical, market-based reforms’ (Bach and Winchester 1994:266; Winchester and Bach 1995:313) of CCT and NHS trusts.

There is, however, an inherent tension between marketisation and professionalism; professional workers in the public sector ‘may be forced to forgo their assumed commitment to service according to need *as professionally defined*, and orient their activities to those aspects of their work which are *managerially defined* as being most cost-effective or revenue maximizing’ (Flynn 1999:33 original emphasis). Nevertheless, Pollitt suggests that as many ‘managers’ within the NHS are first and foremost doctors, they are likely to ‘frustrate’ the government by refusing to implement, or only partially implementing, ‘market-driven’ changes (1993).

For the government’s marketisation and commercialisation concepts to develop, the initiatives had to be put into practice in the public sector workplace. Whittington *et al.* warn of the problems of ‘market-driven change’ as it involves ‘far more than simply grafting on new marketing initiatives’ and that ‘the process is often complex and slow’ (1994:842). In line with this Ferner argues that government strategies ‘do not automatically lead to reduced labour costs and new working practices by smooth mechanistic processes’, it is necessary to consider ‘how external pressures become internalised within the corporation and *affect the strategies and actions of management and unions*’ (1987:181 – emphasis added). It is with this in mind that the paper now turns to the ‘devolution’ or ‘decentralisation’ of managerial autonomy.

### *Decentralisation*

According to Pollitt *et al.* ‘[T]he notion of decentralisation lies at the very heart of the dominant contemporary theories of public management’ (1998:1). Undoubtedly, one of the ‘key features’ of the introduction of managerialism into the public sector was ‘the decentralization of responsibilities to staff lower down the hierarchy of state bureaucracies’ (Kirkpatrick and Martínez Lucio 1995:28); Stewart and Walsh describe this as ‘the attempt to separate policy-making and the political process from the management process’ (1992:507). Such a strategy is contradictory to public

choice theory and appears, therefore, to lie firmly within the bounds of 'managerialism' as defined by Aucoin (1990:118).

The principle theory behind decentralisation, according to Aucoin, is that it 'is central to the deconcentration of power for it emphasizes the need for managers to take initiatives to get things accomplished and to achieve results' and is, therefore 'meant to empower line managers' (1990:122). Decentralisation of managerial authority, like other public sector changes, was incremental, or perhaps even 'an intensification of an existing trend' (Pollitt 1993:182). Hoggett suggests that it was the 'municipal left' who first introduced the idea in the 1980s in 'the face of the threat of privatisation' of local authority services but that by the mid 1980s 'real progress in creating more devolved managerial forms began to occur' (1991:248). It was not until the legislation of the late 1980s that decentralization of managerial autonomy emerged as a government strategy.

The emphasis of decentralised management autonomy in the public sector was 'to force managers to manage operations and people rather than to administer processes and systems' (Aucoin 1990:122). To this end, through 'decentralisation of decision making' (Le Grand and Bartlett 1993:3) public sector managers were 'accorded greater authority over finance and personnel policy' in order to 'be responsive to market conditions and business targets' (Winchester and Bach 1995:316). The extent to which public sector managers are allowed autonomy is, however questionable (Fairbrother 1994a; 1996; Hoggett 1991; 1996; Pollitt 1993).

As mentioned above, the idea of decentralisation is concomitant with 'managerialism' whilst public choice theory looks towards the 'centralization' of management with politicians taking a more 'hands-on' role (Aucoin 1990:119). Throughout the 1980s the successive Conservative governments promoted the rhetoric of a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the management of both private and public sector employment (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:145), hence the promotion of decentralisation and managerialism in the public sector. In reality, the government retains tight control

over public sector organisations as it establishes and maintains the corporate culture, sets objectives and performance targets and then puts into operation procedures to monitor and evaluate these targets (Hoggett 1991:252). Direct control through hierarchical management may be relinquished (Pollitt 1993:182) but this is replaced by what Hoggett terms 'control at a distance' (1996:24). This is in line with Rainnie who found that in local government 'forms of tight-loose control appear to be the order of the day, combining strong central strategic control alongside decentralisation of peripheral management concerns, with the latter supposed to conceal the former' (1994:19).

Corby and White suggest that for both the public and private sector 'the trend to decentralisation is not straightforward and there are centripetal pressures: the centre has an interest in exerting control, for instance to ensure efficiency, quality and consistency' and that these pressures are compounded in the public sector because 'in the last resort ministers are accountable to Parliament for the public services' (1999:16). Carter and Fairbrother describe how there is 'a tension between the decentralization of operational activity and the centralization of control relations' (1999:134).

Therefore, a perhaps more realistic view of decentralised management is that they are expected to 'push through' the changes in working practices (Colling and Ferner 1995:509) that the government policy makers feel are appropriate; they 'occupy the ground between control and delivery' of public services (Acroyd *et al.* 1989:605). Public sector managers may well have more discretion as to how budgets are to be dispersed but as Hoggett suggests the 'promise of greater autonomy through financial devolution disguises the simultaneous centralisation of strategic command' (1991:255) and such devolution is a form of 'regulated autonomy' or 'freedom within boundaries' (1991:251); they have autonomy but 'within clearly defined and prescribed parameters' (Fairbrother 1996:116). This form of 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18) helps to explain how the principles of both public

choice theory and managerialism can, as Aucoin suggests, be made to move ‘in both directions simultaneously’ (1990:129).

Evidence of ‘centralized-decentralization’ following both public choice theory and managerialism was the way in which the government intervened during the 1982 strike of British Rail drivers. In a continued effort to carry through their strategy of curbing trade union power, the government not only ‘signalled to BR managers that it would bear the political consequences of conflict’, they ‘actually encouraged them to adopt a firm line in the dispute’ and made it very difficult for the managers to back down even if they had wanted to (Ferner 1987:189).

Within the Civil Service, decentralisation was part of the ‘most radical’ (Winchester and Bach 1995:311) round of changes, following the 1988 publication of the Ibbs Report, ‘the Next Steps’ (Corby and White 1999; Fairbrother 1994a; Horton 1993; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995). The report suggested that the ‘inflexible and centralized systems of financial and personnel management’ prevented effective management (Winchester and Bach 1995:311). The outcome was the creation of autonomous ‘Agencies’ which were led by senior management often recruited externally and who had ‘a greater flexibility over financial and personnel matters’ (Winchester and Bach 1995:311), albeit this being to ‘enable them to meet their performance targets’ (1995:311). The Agencies which can be viewed as ‘wholly owned subsidiaries’ (Fairbrother 1994a:42) grew rapidly, covered approximately 60 percent of the total civil servants and varied in both size and in the range of their activities (Winchester and Bach 1995:312). As to whether Agencies are truly ‘autonomous’, however, is questionable; in line with the centralised-decentralisation debate, Fairbrother suggests that Agencies have ‘autonomy within limits’ (1994a:37).

From the viewpoint of Civil Servants, Horton argues that the creation of Agencies and the resulting fragmentation could jeopardise individual career progression (1993:148) although she later qualified this by proposing that ‘[M]ost civil servants will remain in the agency to which they are first appointed or will move in and out of

the civil service developing their own careers' (1996:176), thus implying a degree of agency over the control of their careers.

As with CCT in local government, the fragmentation and decentralisation of management structures introduced localised collective bargaining, with local managers having greater control over their own budgets; the workers have not, however, passively accepted change, but have turned to their unions for support (Fairbrother 1994a; 1996; Winchester and Bach 1995) resulting in some industrial action (Black and Upchurch 1999:517). As the unions have come to terms with the changes that have taken place, particularly the restructuring into Agencies, and have themselves reorganised (albeit reluctantly), this has allowed for more participative forms of unionism (Fairbrother 1994a:168; 1996:141).

The NHS is evidence of how initiatives such as decentralisation were being introduced prior to the election of the 'New Right' in 1979. The 1974 McKinsey (management consultant's) report, the Grey Book, called for massive structural reorganisation and the creation of Area Health Authorities (AHAs); Timmins describes how "[M]aximum delegation downwards" was to be accompanied by "maximum accountability upwards" with the entire ship being run on "consensus management" (1995:295), a clear example of 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18). The newly elected Labour government 'inherited the plans' and apparently 'had no choice' but to implement them (Timmins 1995:331). The decentralisation theme was then continued by the Conservative administration with AHAs subsequently being replaced in 1982 by District Health Authorities (DHAs), this time in an attempt to reduce layers of management (Moon and Kendall 1993:177).

As suggested earlier, the issues related to the introduction of new managerialism in the public sector overlap and interlink and the forgoing sections clearly show how decentralised management goes hand-in-hand with marketisation and commercialisation. One of the main effects of market initiatives has been to enhance the flexibility of both time and pay of public sector workers whilst at the same time



reducing labour costs (Colling 1999:148; Hoggett 1996:13). Management have introduced 'a raft of procedures' (Fairbrother 1996:116), including 'quality' initiatives, performance appraisal and performance-related pay (PRP), all of which come under the umbrella of performance management and are intended to achieve the compliance of the workers with managerial objectives within an 'enterprise culture', as considered in the following section.

### *Performance management*

One of the main reasons for the introduction of market principles into the public sector is the belief, by government ministers, that the outcome will correspondingly be a reduction in costs and an improvement in the efficiency and the quality of service (Exworthy and Halford 1999b:4; Fairbrother 1994a:43; Kirkpatrick and Martinez Lucio 1995:1; Pollitt 1993:183; Walsh 1995b:222). There has consequently been an increased focus on 'quality' throughout the public sector.

The introduction of quality into the public sector is highly controversial as the extent to which 'quality' can be measured is questionable; the whole concept of quality is ambiguous (Fitzgerald *et al.* 1996; Kirkpatrick and Martinez Lucio 1995; Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie 1999; Pollitt 1993; Walsh 1991). Sinclair *et al.* describe quality and efficiency as 'ideologically loaded management concepts' (1995:254). The rhetoric of 'quality' is frequently used to legitimate the reorganising of the public sector (Fitzgerald *et al.* 1996:107; Kirkpatrick and Martinez Lucio 1995:25; Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie 1999:157), as a mechanism for gaining workplace 'consensus and conformity' (Fitzgerald *et al.* 1996:109) and as a strategy of control (Hoggett 1996:23; Reed 1995:46). Fairbrother describes how 'increasingly the rhetoric of quality has crept into the Civil Service' (1994a:44); likewise, there has been a quest for 'quality' in the NHS (Harris 1995; Kirkpatrick and Martínez Lucio 1995; Kitchener and Whipp 1995; Thompson 1995).

To ensure quality objectives are met 'elaborate systems of performance measurements and external audits' have been established (Kirkpatrick and Martínez

Lucio 1995:27), such as the 'Citizens Charter' (Corby and White 1999:10; Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie 1999:158) and the publication of 'league tables' (Sinclair *et al.* 1995:251); thus quality can be viewed as a government control mechanism and this reinforces the dichotomy of centralised-decentralisation.

Quality initiatives emphasise 'results' (Hoggett 1996:21) and like other political strategies have to be '*transmitted* to the public enterprises' (Ferner 1987:181) by the decentralised managers. However, as quality is usually perceived as a shared value<sup>3</sup> which requires the 'involvement and participation' or the 'empowerment' of employees (Kirkpatrick and Martinez Lucio 1995:4), managers may encounter problems in the introduction of this initiative. As Hoggett points out, notions such as quality and shared 'organizational missions' do not sit comfortably with increased class sizes, job insecurity and redundancy which leave in their wake a highly cynical staff (1996:23). Also, although managers are required to adhere to policy decisions, and whilst they probably wish to be seen to be doing so, they might regard the implementation of these as running contrary to their (and that of their workers) professionalism and may, therefore, be reluctant to fully implement them. As Flynn argues (above) there may be a tension for public sector workers between '*professionally defined*' and '*managerially defined*' aspects of their work (1999:33).

As the centralised-decentralisation debate has shown, managers' autonomy is 'within boundaries' (Hoggett 1991:251) and they are subject to control mechanisms; managers too are being closely monitored and have similar 'feelings of uncertainty and insecurity' (Fitzgerald *et al.* 1996:118) to other workers with the threat of redundancy etc. hanging over them. Therefore, whilst in accordance with Fitzgerald *et al.* it can be seen that 'quality initiatives are managerially driven' (1996:103), it is necessary to question to what extent managers themselves are being driven by

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<sup>3</sup> Advocates of quality argue that this 'can only be achieved if all staff are equally involved, committed, and given the space and responsibility to innovate and make decisions' (Kirkpatrick and Martinez Lucio 1995:5).

government policy over which they have no say.

Another performance management initiative is that of PRP; according to Walsh, there has been a growth in the use of PRP in the public services, 'particularly at senior levels' (1995b:164), however, such growth has its roots firmly in the decentralisation of pay determination.

Historically, public sector pay bargaining was centralised, involving national agreements with trade unions, committed to pay comparability with the private sector and 'standardized conditions of employment' (Winchester and Bach 1995:317) - issues at the heart of the 'good employer' image of the government from which the post-1979 governments were keen to distance themselves; there was consequently a determined effort to emphasise 'affordability' rather than 'fair comparison' in pay determination (Black and Upchurch 1999:517; Ironside and Seifert 1995:17; Winchester and Bach 1995:322). It was envisaged that public sector managers would have greater control over their budgets through locally determined pay agreements; Farnham and Giles perhaps vocalise the view of the government when they describe how public sector managers were 'constrained by national bargaining' (1996:123).

Trade unions were, however, particularly keen to maintain control over pay bargaining (Winchester and Bach 1995:318) as decentralised negotiation was seen as a way of both marginalising them and invoking a strategy of 'divide and rule' (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:196). As one of the main tenets of the 1979 Thatcher government was to get rid of 'the enemy within' (Timmins 1995:426) trade union fears were clearly well founded.

Alongside trade union fears were those of the professional bodies who were very much in favour of retaining national salary structures as these not only 'define terms and conditions of employment' but also 'shape career expectations, influence mobility and safeguard professional standards of service' (Bach and Winchester

1994:275); ironically the latter argument is the same as the government used *in favour* of decentralising pay bargaining.

As with the other government initiatives, local pay determination has developed, and still is developing, in a slow and piecemeal manner (Fairbrother 1994a:123; Thornley 1998:414; Winchester and Bach 1995:318); ‘the transformation is far from complete’ (Carter and Fairbrother 1999:135). This is partly due to, in line with government policies of public sector pay restraints (Blyton and Turnbull 1994; Winchester and Bach 1995), Treasury attempts to maintain control over public sector pay (Bach and Winchester 1994:279; Kirkpatrick and Martínez Lucio 1996:6; Winchester and Bach 1995:318); once again highlighting the dichotomy of centralised-decentralisation.

Another reason for the slow uptake of this initiative is that trade unions have resisted changes in pay bargaining (Black and Upchurch 1999:517); Winchester and Bach cite as examples strike action in the civil service and ‘days of action’ in the NHS (1995:322). Thornley found in the NHS that far from marginalising trade unions, local pay bargaining was actually strengthening them as staff affected were ‘more likely to become actively involved’ and she suggests that this will lead to a growth in union membership (1998:427). Conversely, Winchester and Bach argue that within local authorities unions have indeed been ‘marginalized’ and play only a consultative role in pay bargaining (1995:327).

Corresponding with the theme of localised pay bargaining is a move towards PRP; the view is that local managers need to have the ability to award individuals for their performance outside of the ‘collective’ mechanisms. Farnham and Giles suggest that in the case of public sector managers ‘one of the most widely copied private sector practices, used to get their personal commitment, is PRP’ (1996:123).

PRP is said to result from the ‘assessments of individual performance and *personal value* to the organisation’ (Farnham 1993:112; 1996:123, emphasis added); such ‘assessment’ is carried out by management (Smith and Morton 1993:102). Clearly the

emphasis here is on individualism rather than collectivism and points again to union marginalisation. (See, however, Healy, (1997b) and Kessler, (1995) for a debate on how trade unions can become involved in apparently 'individualised' issues.)

The emphasis on individualism and personal performance leads some critics to suggest that PRP can be divisive and inequitable (Bach and Winchester 1994; Sinclair *et al.* 1995); it may also have a demotivating effect on employees (Brown *et al.* 1995:134) and force them to 'compete' with each other (Smith and Morton 1993:102). This leads Black and Upchurch to suggest that in the case of schools where there is a reliance on trust and teamwork between teachers 'few heads are likely to be willing to threaten this by the introduction of potentially divisive merit-based pay' (1999:519). It is possible that NHS managers had similar concerns; although PRP was introduced for general managers in 1987 (Pollitt 1993:64) 'non-Whitley pay and employment packages have spread only very slowly' (Bach and Winchester 1994:275) with the centralised pay system only being 'altered rather than fundamentally challenged' (Black and Upchurch 1999:518).

PRP may also be viewed as having a gender bias. Heery found that managers felt there was a need to 'differentiate between "nine-to-fivers" and those working beyond the confines of the contractual working day' (1998:84); by implication people with family responsibilities and who are prohibited from working longer hours, generally women, would be disadvantaged by this. Women may also be discriminated against due to being absent on maternity leave during the period of performance assessment (see Fairbrother 1994a:69).

PRP necessitates the evaluation of an individual's performance and their 'value' to the organization, involving close monitoring and can therefore, like quality initiatives, be viewed as a control mechanism.

The introduction of performance management initiatives are part of the overall 'package' of government changes to the public sector that have 'evolved' over the

last two decades (Fairbrother 1994a:66; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1996:131; Martinez Lucio and Kirkpatrick 1995:271). Again, it is important to note that a change of government has not changed the notion of ‘accountability’ in the public sector; Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie argue that ‘the culture of blame, the interest in performance monitoring and the use of indicators to increase work-related effort levels have been assimilated into the Labour government’s public sector policies and discourse’ and that ‘the government has exhibited a political fascination with the whole question of performance measurement and the concept of “failure”’ (1999:170).

### *Summary*

This section has considered the initiatives of ‘new managerialism’ in the public sector in general. It has highlighted the dichotomy that exists between decentralised management autonomy and centralised government control; it can be seen that this dichotomy is at the heart of public sector restructuring and the implementation of management initiatives. The next section will focus in greater depth on the implication of such management initiatives in one particular section of the education sector, schools.

### **New Managerialism in the education (schools) sector**

The education sector encompasses all aspects of education and is one of the largest areas of public sector employment. In particular, teaching is one of the largest occupations with, in 1998, 437,715 teachers (including headteachers and deputy headteachers but excluding those working in grant maintained schools) employed in England and Wales, of which 388,189 were in full-time regular employment. The two main areas of occupation for teachers are nursery/primary (205,523) and secondary (201,466) schools, with the remaining (30,726) unattached to schools and providing specialist services such as support for the teaching of children with special educational needs (School Teachers' Review Body 1999:53). The estimated paybill of teachers for the year 1999-2000 was £12,095m (School Teachers' Review Body 1999:56).

As an occupational group teaching is highly feminised with approximately 259,400 women teachers compared to 125,900 men teachers; of these, women (150,600) predominate in the nursery/primary sector (compared to 31,000 men) whilst the secondary sector is more evenly split having 99,000 women and 90,100 men. The gender imbalance in teaching is, however, reversed in the school hierarchy with only 10,400 (48.2%) of the total number of headteachers (21,560) being female. Despite providing almost 83% of the teaching force in primary schools, women account for only 52.8% of the headteacher posts whilst in secondary schools where 52.3% of teachers are women, approximately 36% of headteachers are women<sup>4</sup> (School Teachers' Review Body 1999:58).

Historically, teaching has had little government intervention with the provision for education being left in the hands of voluntary and church organisations and often depended on social class (for detailed discussions on the historical provision of education see Aldrich 1996:Chapter 1; Benn and Chitty 1996:Chapter 1; Timmins 1995:Chapter 4); indeed, there was a fear that “too much education might lead to disaffection” in a society where the labour and service of the many supported the wealth and leisure of the few’ (Timmins 1995:67) (see also Bacon 1978; Fenwick and McBride 1981).

The Industrial Revolution prompted a small measure of government intervention during the early 1800s with, in 1833, the first government grants to subsidise education (government inspectors<sup>5</sup> of schools were established in 1839 to ensure that such grants were being spent effectively). In 1861 grants became linked to ‘payment by results’ based on the centrally controlled national curriculum exam success of pupils; the aim was to achieve an increase in efficiency and a corresponding reduction in government expenditure (Aldrich 1996; Fenwick and McBride 1981). It was not, however, until the Elementary Education Act of 1870 that there was real intervention

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<sup>4</sup> These (1997/98) figures are not conclusive as the STRB have calculated their figures by excluding positions where the postholder has changed (approximately 3,700 posts including special schools) (School Teachers' Review Body 1999:58).

<sup>5</sup> Known as His/Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) (Aldrich 1996).

to improve access for poor children to basic education with the introduction of a statutory requirement for elementary schooling for working class children and the establishment of directly elected school boards to ensure that the gap was filled where voluntary education systems failed (Aldrich 1996)<sup>6</sup>. It was also becoming apparent that schooling in the USA and Continental Europe was far superior to that in England (see Benn and Chitty 1996; Timmins 1995). Nonetheless, although the government were beginning to acknowledge that education needed more than voluntary systems, it was still believed that the state should remain at a distance in its provision (Aldrich 1996).

Despite the Board of Education Act 1899 establishing a Board of Education comprised of government ministers, there was still little central government control; the board was 'a fiction and never met' (Aldrich 1996:85). In 1902, however, Balfour's Conservative Government's Education Act had a profound effect on the management of education; school boards were abolished and local education authorities, which became part of local government, established (Aldrich 1996:86; Simon 1974:239; Timmins 1995:71)<sup>7</sup>. The legislation provided for the payment of teachers' salaries from public funds and for the authorities to 'fund education "other than elementary"' (Timmins 1995:71) thus making secondary education more generally available to the working class for the first time<sup>8</sup>.

The next significant piece of legislation was the 1944 Education Act which created a Ministry of Education with centralised control and funding over state education. For

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<sup>6</sup> By the start of the 20th century, schooling was compulsory for all children up to the age of 12 and was, by this time, free of charge. The school leaving age was raised to 14 following the first world war and raised again to 15 as a result of the 1944 Education Act. It now stands at 16 and has done so since 1972 (Aldrich 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Writing in 1972 Coates describes how, in 'the day to day running of the education system, power lies at the local [LEA] level and that although the Department of Education and Science (DES) had 'a number of general controls' over the activities of LEAs, 'these controls have rarely been used this century to dictate the detail of educational content' (1972b:6), a situation that existed until the late 1980s as discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>8</sup> The 1918 Education Act abolished fees for elementary schooling and ensured that 'not less than half' the cost for education was met from central government funds (Timmins 1995:72); broadly speaking, up until the 1940s, elementary 'all age' schools catered for the working class with 'a small proportion of these children escaping on scholarships into secondary education' (1995:72-3).



the first time secondary education was compulsory (and free) to all children up to the age of 15 and primary and secondary education was split into two sectors<sup>9</sup>.

Between the 1944 Education Act and the mid-1970s the government intervened very little in the provision of education, although there was fierce debate during this period surrounding the establishment of comprehensive schools and the removal of grammar school selection<sup>10</sup>. During the 1960s a view developed within government that there was a need to change the education system in order to achieve both the social and economic aims of the UK (Aldrich 1996; Chitty 1992). This idea gathered momentum in the 1970s when both politicians and business people suggested that the needs of industry were not being met (Aldrich 1996; Blackman 1992). In 1976 when the government were focused on reducing public expenditure (Fenwick and McBride 1981), the Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan made his famous Ruskin College speech which decried the standard of education in the UK (Muschamp *et al.* 1999:104; Rees and Rees 1992) and called for more accountability in education and a core curriculum (Aldrich 1996:4). However, as his speech was met with anger and contempt by the teaching unions, no action was taken (Fenwick and McBride 1981)<sup>11</sup>. The tenets of the speech were, however, enthusiastically and overwhelmingly embraced by the Conservative government a dozen years later (Aldrich 1996) and continue to be so under the current New Labour Government; to some extent, the

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<sup>9</sup> The Act also provided for the welfare of children with the introduction of free school milk (abolished by Margaret Thatcher during her term as Education Secretary 1970-74 (Timmins 1995:254)), meals, transport and medical inspections (1995:93). Benn and Chitty, however, argue that those who implemented the Act 'failed to grasp the opportunity it presented to move two steps farther rather than just one' (1996:5-9) as a two-tier system of secondary education developed in the form of secondary modern and grammar schools; the former developed to accommodate 'academic' children who would proceed into 'white-collar' work whilst the latter were seen as the domain of the 'future hewers of wood and drawers of water' (Aldrich 1996:13).

<sup>10</sup> Comprehensive secondary schools were gradually established amid opposition by both Conservative and Labour politicians during the 1960s; this system was formalised under the 1976 Education Act (Benn and Chitty 1996; Timmins 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Benn and Chitty state that '[I]n all its years of government from 1924-1979 Labour has never implemented a major education act – nor introduced any major new academic qualifications. All such changes have been implemented under coalition or Conservative governments' (1996:9). It is important to note, however, that New Labour have now put 'education, education education' to the forefront of their political agenda (Blair 1996).

‘remarkable degree of accord between the major parties’ identified by Fenwick and McBride in 1981 appears to hold true in 2000.

For the first decade of their power, the post-1979 Conservative government generally left education alone, perhaps as they concentrated on the NHS and the Civil Service. The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) dramatically changed this; its implementation had a profound effect on the delivery of education (Healy 1997b; Ironside and Seifert 1995; Mac an Ghail 1992; Sinclair *et al.* 1996) and gave ‘the DES (Department of Education and Science) and the Secretary of State extensive new powers’ over the work of LEAs and schools (Bowe *et al.* 1992:7).

The ERA introduced Local Management of Schools (LMS) which delegated budget responsibility to local management and enhanced the ‘managerial role of head teachers’ (Bach and Winchester 1994:267); Benn and Chitty suggest this is an attempt to make schools themselves ‘undertake the cutting of public services’ (1996:13). It was perceived that as ‘better management and a better curriculum go hand in hand’ it made sense to ‘delegate decision-making as close as possible to the point where the decisions bite’ (Ranson 1995:108)<sup>12</sup>.

LMS also allowed for schools to choose ‘grant maintained status’ (GM) whereby they could ‘opt out’ of the funding system and receive their budget directly from central government, thus distancing them from LEA control completely (Corby and White 1999:10; Power *et al.* 1996:105; Winchester and Bach 1995:315). However, only a small minority chose to do so and these are concentrated in the secondary sector (16 percent compared to 2 percent in the primary sector) (Causer and Exworthy 1999:96; Power *et al.* 1996:106); a greater proportion of voluntary aided (i.e. set up by voluntary, usually religious, organisations) rather than state schools have taken advantage of this (Benn and Chitty 1996:125). Although a Conservative government

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<sup>12</sup> Budgets are delegated to the local, school, level through a complicated ‘funding formula’ based both on the numbers and ages of a school’s pupils and the average salary cost of staff in the LEA (see Levacic, (1995) for a detailed explanation of the system).

initiative, this has been fully endorsed by the present New Labour government with the Prime Minister opting to send his children to GM schools rather than the local comprehensive schools.

The 'managerial' role undertaken by headteachers includes the recruitment and selection of teachers and formal disciplinary matters, including 'competency procedures'<sup>13</sup>, all of which prior to the 1988 Act had been outside their remit and would have been undertaken by the LEA; headteachers were previously viewed as 'first and foremost professional teachers who also had administrative duties concerned with running the institution' (McVicar 1993:190). There has been an increase in atypical workers with short-term and part-time contracts utilised as headteachers aim for 'flexibility' of staff costs to stay within their budgets (Ironside and Seifert 1995:141; Levacic 1994:44); this creation of 'a crude core-periphery model of labour markets' (Ironside and Seifert 1995:141) has coincided with attempts to employ younger, cheaper, teachers (Calveley 1996:5; Healy and Kraithman 1996:198; Ironside and Seifert 1995; Winchester and Bach 1995). This is of particular relevance to the more mature, and consequently more expensive, teachers returning to work following a career break and who are disproportionately female (Healy and Kraithman 1996:198) and also those teachers in the latter stages of their careers who are persuaded to, or feel obliged to, opt for early retirement (Calveley 1996:5; Healy and Kraithman 1996:201), thus causing 'career uncertainty' amongst the teaching profession.

The Act also introduced a government driven National Curriculum which prescribed what teachers had to teach and when (Healy 1997b:209; Ironside and Seifert 1995), arguably reducing their 'professional autonomy' (Healy and Kraithman 1994b; Ironside and Seifert 1995). Hyman argues that 'the concept of skill normally denotes both a highly trained and versatile competence *and* a considerable degree of

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<sup>13</sup> Competency procedures are formal procedures instigated by the head teacher to monitor the performance of teachers who are considered to be 'unable to meet the requirements of the post' (Ironside and Seifert 1995:203); failure to reach the desired standards may ultimately lead to dismissal.

discretion and initiative' however, 'if the variegated meanings of "skill" are unpacked it becomes evident that subdivision of tasks, specialisation of functions, intricacy of competence and susceptibility to managerial discipline and surveillance can vary (within limits) independently' and that this susceptibility 'determines the potential for direct control' (1987:39); therefore, it can be argued, that the National Curriculum 'unpacks' the skills of teachers and thus gives the government a degree of control over the labour process of teachers.

Bowe *et al.* suggest that 'Government strategies for changing schools clearly link the use of market forces with the reform of school management' (1992:24). Such market forces were introduced through the publication of 'league tables', the rhetoric of which allows for the identification of the levels of achievements of different schools thus enabling parents to choose the 'best school' for their children; this was also a drive for 'quality' (Sinclair *et al.* 1995:254)<sup>14</sup> and is a mode of performance monitoring through public accountability. Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie suggest that 'externally derived measures of performance ... have contributed to a decreasing level of trust between head teachers and their staff' (1999:164).

School funding is commensurate with pupil numbers and this has led to the creation of quasi markets as schools compete with each other for pupils (Bach and Winchester 1994:267; Bartlett 1993:127; Bowe *et al.* 1992:24; McVicar 1993:194). The rationale behind such marketisation of education was that parents would 'choose' to send their children to schools which 'performed well' and that this would consequently improve school performance (Connolly *et al.* 2000:61) as the popular schools received more funding (Walford 1994:79).

Under the 'league' system schools therefore become categorised as 'good' and 'bad'. The rhetoric is that the former 'would be rewarded with more enrolments and more

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<sup>14</sup> League tables for secondary schools are based on the numbers of children achieving A\* to C GCSE grades; they do not take into account such things as environmental factors which may effect a child's learning ability.

resources' whilst the latter 'would be punished' (McVicar 1993:194). The use of market mechanisms in relation to parental choice is, however, complex; the reality is that as they compete for pupils schools become more selective in their intake and they practise 'cream skimming' (Bartlett 1993:148). In order to remain a 'good' school they need to have 'good' pupils who achieve the necessary results; parents of children who do not measure up to the required criteria may find that 'it is the schools who choose which children to accept rather than the parents and children choosing a school (Walford 1994:84). Ranson identifies the inequalities inherent in such a system as only the parents 'with time, resources, knowledge and confidence to "promote" their children' get the choice of school they want (1995:120) whilst Walford also identifies a cost factor in that some parents are better able to pay for transport for their children to attend a particular school (1994:84). Parents, and more importantly their children, inevitably become 'winners' and 'losers' (Sinclair *et al.* 1995:255) with 'the excluded children and their parents' being, in market terms, the 'unsaleable goods' (Blyth and Milner 1996:40).

As Connolly *et al.* suggest '[W]here parental choice is limited, market pressures may be weak. Where market forces do work, the decline of one school and the ascendancy of another has significant implications' (2000:61); this is evidenced by the polemic affect that league tables create. Schools at the 'top' have both pupils and staff competing to enter them whilst those at the 'bottom' face the dire consequences of under subscription which could result in closure. This two-tier level of schools was further reinforced by the 'Naming and Shaming' policy introduced by New Labour. Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie proclaim that the 'culture of quality has given rise to a culture of blame, exemplified in the way "bad teachers" became scapegoated within the system' (1999:165). Clark<sup>15</sup>, perhaps unsurprisingly, argues that "[N]aming and shaming" a failing school can further demoralize competent staff and drive pupils away if used as a stand-alone policy' (1998:200); this is reiterated by Rafferty *et al.*

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<sup>15</sup> This is a headteacher seconded to 'turn around' the failing, now infamous Ridings School, notoriously dubbed the 'worst school in Britain' by the popular press at the time; he was later awarded a CBE for his work.

who report that the policy ‘caused great great hostility within education. Morale in schools plummeted, heads reported serious difficulties recruiting and retaining staff and scores of parents withdrew their children’ (1998:1). The government withdrew this policy, in October 1998 (Rafferty *et al.* 1998:1).

Whilst recognising that reality is somewhat more complex, Johnson argues that there are basically four types of secondary schools: ‘the private, the ex-grammar, the successful comp, and the sink’ (1999a:54), the latter he refers to as ‘underclass schools’ which attract children from ‘the European urban underclass’<sup>16</sup> (1999a:53) and suggests that the question should be asked ‘how is it that the worst schools in the country happen to be the ones with the most deprived intake?’ (1999a:54).

In discussing factors surrounding the closing of Hackney Downs school, Professor Tim Brighouse, Chief Education Officer in Birmingham, argues that ‘the exercise of loosely regulated parental preferences has been the innovation which has caused the most damage’; he goes on to talk of ‘the market virus, of which parental preference is the most insidious ingredient’ (1999:ix). He also reiterates the view that rather than parental choice, it is often schools who choose parents and this is ‘an accelerator to the pecking order system that makes some schools like Hackney Downs desperate to admit any pupil, however awkward, who is excluded from another school, to “keep our numbers up”’ (1999:x).

Writing from the practitioner’s viewpoint, the views of both Johnson and Brighouse point to the complexities of introducing market-type initiatives in education; they echo Bowe *et. al*’s. suggestion that ‘there is no one “market in education” and no one set of market conditions. Schools operate in relation to multiple markets, usually

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<sup>16</sup> Johnson describes the underclass as families from ‘areas where virtually no-one has a job, and where whole families have been without work for as long as they can remember ... where available, jobs are casual, temporary, and most work is within the informal economy’; he likens this to ‘the Marxist concept of the lumpenproletariat’ and proclaims to use the term ‘in a purely analytical way’ and because ‘it is an apt term to describe social reality’ (1999a:42).

local, which have very specific conditions, constraints and histories' (1992:35).

Marketisation in education has gone a step further with the introduction of Education Action Zones (EAZs) by the New Labour government in 1998, allowing for private businesses to become involved in the provision of education (Muschamp *et al.* 1999:108). Schools within these zones are not required to fully follow the prescribed national curriculum which they can modify to allow for the introduction of 'specialisms' such as languages, arts and media or technology<sup>17</sup>.

Although government inspectors have existed from 1839 (Aldrich 1996:46), these were considered to be more for 'advice and support than inspection' (McVicar 1993:191); monitoring was intensified with the introduction of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), an independent agency which was privatised under the 1992 Education Act, allowing inspectors to bid for inspection contracts<sup>18</sup>. This extended marketisation in education through the creation of an 'inspection market' (Lee and Fitz 1994:101). Ofsted's remit is:

'to improve standards of achievement and quality of education through regular independent inspection, public reporting and informed independent advice' (Ofsted 2000)

Schools, which are subject to 'Ofsted inspections' at least once every six years, are given a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of ten weeks notice prior to inspection; this consists of, for secondary schools, a team of approximately fifteen inspectors who are in the school for approximately four days (Ofsted 2000) and results in a public report<sup>19</sup>. Following the 1993 Education Act, Ofsted is allowed to identify 'failing' schools (Ranson 1995) which can be put into Special Measures (see

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<sup>17</sup> The DfEE explains EAZs as 'local clusters of schools ... working in a partnership with the LEA, local parents, businesses, TECs and others', which are situated in 'areas of educational underperformance ... where schools need additional targeted support'; EAZs can expect to receive grants 'of up to £500,000 a year' with some partners also providing 'valuable support in kind' (1998a).

<sup>18</sup> The ultimate responsibility for school inspection comes under the remit of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Schools who is appointed by the Secretary of State (Levacic 1995:14).

<sup>19</sup> Schools have forty working days to produce an 'action plan' to address problems raised in the report.

Appendix 1), or ultimately closed. Muschamp *et al.* suggest that the ‘surrogate control begun by the Conservatives in the form of a National Curriculum, national assessment and the publication of performance tables has been continued and increased by the Labour government’ (1999:117).

Both league tables and Ofsted inspections are a form of centralised performance monitoring of teachers. Another form of monitoring, and closely linked to both, is that of performance appraisal. The Education Act (No 2) 1986 allowed for the Secretary of State to make regulations on appraisal and this was followed by the Education (School Teacher Appraisal) Regulations 1991 which made appraisal a statutory requirement (Bartlett 2000; Healy 1997b). This is a clear example of centralised-decentralisation as school managers and teachers have to conform to a centralised government dicta<sup>20</sup>; in practice, and again in line with Ferner’s argument that government strategies ‘do not automatically lead to ... new working practices by smooth mechanistic processes’ (1987:181), many schools have been slow to implement appraisal (Bartlett 2000). Nevertheless, New Labour have followed in the footsteps of their predecessors and are now intent on strengthening appraisal as a control mechanism by linking it to PRP (DfEE 1998b).

Historically, the teaching profession has been highly, although somewhat fragmentally, unionised and covered by collective bargaining under the Burnham agreement<sup>21</sup>. In 1987 the introduction of the Teachers Pay and Conditions Act negated Burnham and abolished full collective bargaining for teachers (arguably as a direct result of the teachers 1985 industrial action over pay (Beaumont 1992:71; Coates 1972a:192; Ironside and Seifert 1995:3)); consequently teachers lost the right to full collective bargaining and the government now has direct control over teachers

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<sup>20</sup> The regulations state that ‘teachers and head teachers are required by their statutory conditions of service to participate in appraisal arrangements made in compliance with the Regulations’ (DfEE, 1991:8).

<sup>21</sup> This joint negotiating committee of employer and employee representatives set national rates for all teachers in all state schools (Ironside and Seifert 1995:3)



pay (Kessler and Bayliss 1995:134), although they take advice from the statutory, independent School Teachers' Pay Review Body (STRB) (Healy 1997a) (previously the Interim Advisory Committee on Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions (IAC), (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:41)). The Review Body is restrained by government pay policies.

Despite the position of unions having been weakened through the abolition of Burnham, teachers remain a highly unionised professional group; in 1993 new national curriculum testing was successfully 'boycotted' forcing the government to back down (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:118). As Healy discovered, teachers still look to collective union support in 'individualistic' areas such as career development (1999) and appraisal (1997b) and Ironsides *et al.* found that 'school teacher trade unions are deeply embedded in the workplaces' (1995:131). Despite attempts to the contrary, the extent to which teacher unions have been marginalised is questionable, as will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

It can be seen from the above that the changes which have taken place in education have been fast and furious. The ERA introduced a 'plethora' of change which encompassed many of the changes that had been 'incremental' in the Civil Service and the NHS; within teaching, the programme of change was accelerated (Pollitt 1993).

Although Pollitt argues that there has been 'extensive centralization' in teaching (1993:79), the evidence pointing to a 'simultaneous centralization and decentralization of managerial powers heralded by LMS' (Sinclair *et al.* 1995:253) is stronger. Combined with performance monitoring, intensification of work and changing contractual agreements, it would appear that 'changes to the teacher labour process are deeply embedded in the package of measures that creates the reformed education system' (Sinclair *et al.* 1996:658).

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the nature and extent of public sector reform. Clearly the public services have undergone a number of changes over the last two decades and these changes have brought with them a plethora of management initiatives more traditionally associated with the private sector and commonly referred to as new managerialism.

It is evident that such initiatives were not entirely the prerogative of the post-1979 'New Right' government as the quest for cost containment and efficiency in the public sector pre-dates this (and indeed, as has been identified, will continue under the current New Labour government). Nevertheless, the structures within which public sector management operate are fundamentally different from two decades ago. The search for 'economy', 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' (Elcock 1996:180; Ferlie *et al.* 1996:31; Pollitt 1993:59; 1998:10; Shaoul 1999:44; Stewart and Ranson 1988:15) has resulted in the commercialisation and marketisation of the public sector and the introduction of more stringent management controls.

Although control is at the centre of new managerialism, central government have been reluctant to fully relinquish this to local managers, resulting in 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18) and 'tight-loose control' (Rainnie 1994:19) with managers having only 'regulated autonomy' or 'freedom within boundaries' (Hoggett 1991:251). Centralised control is manifested through an emphasis by the government (past and present) on both financial (devolved budgets) and public accountability (Citizens Charters, league tables etc.); the initiatives to achieve these are delegated to local public sector managers who are expected to exert control over their workforce in the guise of performance monitoring – the quest for 'quality' and PRP.

It must, however, be recognised that in implementing new managerial initiatives managers have some agency in the way they act; as Ferner and Colling suggest '[S]tructures constrain managerial strategies but do not, except in extreme circumstances, determine them completely' (1991:407). The implementation of new

managerial initiatives have not gone uncontested by either managers or workers, particularly where professional autonomy and standards are concerned; tensions arise when managers, as ‘mediators’ between the ‘control and the delivery’ of public services (Acroyd *et al.* 1989:605) have the task of ‘reconciling the sometimes diametrically opposed demands of external “controllers” and internal “carers”’ (1989:607).

As the chapter has shown, the introduction of new managerialism and the quest for the three E’s (Pollitt 1993:59) has affected public sector workers as managers have attempted to pare down and create flexible workforces; Black and Upchurch, using the NHS as an example, suggest that as labour savings can be ‘identified as an aid to competitiveness ... fears over job security have arisen as a result’ and that employers have ‘often responded to their new powers by challenging working practices, and tightening up on discipline and sickness procedures’ (1999:515). As has been highlighted above, there has also been an attempt to fragment and marginalise public sector trade unions (the extent to which this has been successful will be considered in the following chapter).

The chapter has focussed specifically on the school sector of education, identifying implications for schoolteachers and their managers of centralised government control following the introduction of the 1988 ERA. In describing how financial and public accountability has been intensified (and how this is continuing under the present government), this section gives an insight into the marketisation and commercialisation of schools.

The evidence presented above identifies how, in the search for ‘economy’ efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’, the initiatives introduced by ‘new managerialism’ have changed the emphasis and structure of work in the public sector and, in line with Fairbrother’s suggestion, there has been a ‘restructuring of the state labour process’ (1994a:163).

The later chapters of the thesis will, by drawing on the empirical research from the case study school and by combining this with the forgoing literature review, contemplate the concept of 'new managerialism' in action at the workplace level. In particular there will be a consideration of centralised-decentralisation and, of specific relevance to a 'failing' school, the government imposed quest for public and financial accountability; the thesis examines the impact of these initiatives on the workplace industrial relations of such a school. To begin with, however, the following chapter contextualises trade unions within the public sector in general and education in particular.

## Chapter Two

### Trade unions in the Public Sector – the case of teachers

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#### Introduction

As identified in the previous chapter, it was the aim of the ‘New Right’ Conservative government elected in 1979 to marginalise and reduce the strength of trade unions in the UK (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:146; McIlroy 1995:72; Salamon 1999:183; Winchester and Bach 1995:304). Indeed, unions were viewed as “‘overmighty subjects’ in need of reform’ and reducing their power ‘was perceived as economically essential for freeing the labour market’ (Undy *et al.* 1996:1). Public sector unions were met with the ‘greatest hostility’ (Winchester and Bach 1995:304) as they faced ‘either directly or indirectly a particularly determined and aggressive anti-union employer’ (Undy *et al.* 1996:15). Undy *et al.* suggest that the ‘crushing defeat for the NUM, showed that the government would go to extreme lengths to defeat any union opposing its public sector policies’ (1996:14).

This chapter briefly considers the extent of marginalisation and demise of public sector unions, focussing primarily on the sector central to the research case study, education. In particular, it focuses more deeply on the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the largest and, arguably, most politically motivated of the teacher unions. This union, central to the research case study, is characterised by factions, groups of members who organise around their own personal ideological and political beliefs; the effects of such factionalism on school based industrial relations will be considered. Kelly states that there is ‘practically no literature at all’ on the influence that political factions have in trade unions (1998:54); in line with Darlington’s (1994; 1998; 1999; 2000) argument, this chapter will consider the role such factions play in sustaining workplace activism and engage with the relationship between factionalism and ‘union renewal’ (Fairbrother 1994a; 1996; 2000a; Fosh 1993).

## **Marginalisation and demise of public sector unions?**

Public sector unions have tended to maintain union membership levels, although union density has decreased. Undy *et al.* state that in 1989, 69 percent of public sector workers were still unionised, which compared favourably with 28 percent in the private sector (1996:15). Mathieson and Corby maintain that during the period 1979-96 union members in the public sector declined by only 2 percent, compared to 40 percent for the whole economy. Thus, union members in the public services are 'becoming an increasing proportion of total union membership', rising from 26 percent in 1979 to 42 percent in 1996 (Mathieson and Corby 1999:201). Further, taking into account the fact that some general unions also recruit in the public sector (approximately one in three GMB members was employed in the public sector in 1996 (Mathieson and Corby 1999:201)), almost half of total union membership was in the public services in 1996 (1999:201); interestingly, this is at a time when public sector 'share of employment in the economy' decreased from 'a high of 30 percent to just over 20 percent' (Black and Upchurch 1999:513).

As in the workforce as a whole, composition of public sector union membership has also changed, becoming increasingly feminised. In 1996 women trade unionists accounted for approximately 66 percent of the total public sector membership (slightly more than their share of the labour force), a rise of 18 percent since 1979 (male union membership declined by 25 percent during the same period) (Mathieson and Corby 1999:202).

Eight out of the seventeen largest unions (over 100,000 members) were public sector unions (Mathieson and Corby 1999:201), UNISON with 1.3 million members being the largest (Black and Upchurch 1999:523). This is of particular significance with respect to representation on the Trades Union Congress (TUC), where seats are apportioned relative to size of union (Sinclair 1999:147); public sector unions accounted for 37 percent of the total TUC affiliated unions in 1997 (Mathieson and Corby 1999:210).

Union density which Mathieson and Corby suggest 'provides a more accurate estimate of union penetration' has, however, declined dramatically since 1987 when it was 79 percent, (which compared favourably to the 80 percent of 1979) (1999:208); by 1996 they estimate public sector union density to be 'around 55 percent' with some sectors faring better than others (1999:208) although Sinclair cites the Labour Force Survey figure of 61 percent for 1995 (1999::161). Either figure is, however, significantly higher than in the private sector where density is approximately 32% (1995) (Sinclair 1999:161).

Some writers suggest that there has been an increase in individualism within the public sector (Corby and White 1999:18; Farnham and Horton 1996d:274); Corby and White propose that the advent of unitarist HRM practices such as 'team briefing, staff attitude surveys, total quality management and business process re-engineering' (1999:19), combined with derecognition and the advent of individual performance reviews, has led to 'the erosion of collectivism' (1999:18). Farnham and Giles state categorically that unions have to be 'more collaborationist or they are marginalised' (1996:123).

Certainly, as was discussed in the previous chapter, to some extent collective bargaining has diminished within the public sector, for example the teachers' right to full collective bargaining was removed under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 (Black and Upchurch 1999:519; Winchester and Bach 1995:328); although there is a Schoolteachers Review Body (STRB) (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:41) this is restrained by government pay policies. Teacher unions, despite a high level of union density (see below) are, therefore, not involved in collective bargaining. This diminution of public sector collective bargaining is reflected in the 1988 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) which found that, partly as a result of the establishment of pay review bodies, the aggregate coverage of collective bargaining fell from 80 percent in 1990 to 63 percent in 1998 (Cully *et al.* 1999). Notwithstanding this, the extent to which collectivism has been 'eroded' is debatable; as stated in the previous chapter the centralised Whitley based pay systems have

generally persisted (Bach and Winchester 1994:275; Black and Upchurch 1999:518). Public sector unions, regardless of HRM practices and attempts to erode collective bargaining, have, compared with the private sector, had a 'continuing relative resilience' of membership and a 'higher propensity' for industrial disputes (Black and Upchurch 1999:520); Mathieson and Corby state that they have 'become more political and more militant' (1999:199).

Corby and White suggest that public sector unions have themselves adopted the individualist tenets of HRM, giving the example of a 24 hour advice line established by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) (1999:19). Black and Upchurch suggest that public sector unions have a dual role in that they both defend the terms and conditions of their members and act as 'representatives of their "professional" interests' in offering them services such as training and career advice which 'enhances their appeal' and thus their ability to maintain membership levels (1999:524). However, the 'individualist' nature they attach to these can be questioned; individualist reasons for union joining were not reflected in the findings of a study of NUT members (Healy 1997a) where such reasons featured low on the list of reasons for union joining, nor were they reflected in the more general, wider ranging survey of Waddington and Whitson (1997).

Moreover, Healy makes the observation that careers, rather than being viewed as purely individualist 'may be bound up with solidaristic forms of collectivism, where the impact on an individual's career is subsumed to the interests of the collectivity' (1999:212); 39 percent of the teachers in her survey looked to their union to take a 'solidaristic collective approach to career development' (1999:212). 'Policy issues' (11.8 percent) which reflected 'the concern that standards are central to teachers' work' and better funding for education (10.1 percent) were important to teachers in their career development (Healy 1999:222). Both clearly reflect 'the public service ethic with regard to education' (1999:222), thus questioning the extent of the demise of this as suggested by Corby and White (1999) and Farnham and Horton (1996d:275), discussed in the previous chapter.



A further point made by Black and Upchurch and which fits comfortably with the notion of solidaristic collectivism, is that public sector unions act both in defence of jobs and the defence of service provision<sup>22</sup>; this adds legitimacy to their actions (1999:524), thus helping their resilience. Solidaristic collectivism therefore goes some way to sustaining a role for unions within the public sector. Interestingly, and linked to maintaining the quality of service provision, Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie suggest that trade unions are able to turn performance measurement to the advantage of their members by making 'alliances' with local communities also opposed to issues such as closing of schools and fire stations (1999:168), thus harnessing the support of the general public.

With respect to collectivism in the form of industrial action, the public sector has been characterised in recent years by the high level of industrial conflict as compared to the private sector (Black and Upchurch 1999; Mathieson and Corby 1999). This is in stark contrast to the 1950s and 1960s when public sector industrial action was relatively rare (Mathieson and Corby 1999:216; O'Connell Davidson 1993:6); indeed the Donovan Commission Report in 1968 paid very little attention to public sector industrial relations which was viewed as being 'relatively satisfactory' (Beaumont 1992:1). Although industrial action has been fairly widespread throughout the public sector, the miners' strike over pit closures in 1984-5 and the teachers' strikes over pay in 1985-6 are both seen as major challenges to government strategies at the time (Beaumont 1992:126). As Mathieson identifies, public sector industrial action has often been a reaction to government policies, such as contracting-out, market testing and privatisation (1999:219), once again demonstrating how the defence of service provision can become a collectivist, unionised issue. A further interesting factor with respect to industrial action is the removal by the RCN and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) of the no-strike clause from their statutes, although neither have as yet acted upon this (Mathieson and Corby 1999:219). Consequently, in the light of

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<sup>22</sup> See also the early writing of Webb who argues that a teacher, when fighting for himself (sic) 'fights also for an improvement in the quality of service he renders' (1915).

public sector changes, unions appear to have demonstrated a move towards greater, rather than less, militancy.

Undy *et al.* suggest that public sector unions have had to ‘consider the appropriateness of their internal organization’ (1996:15) in the light of public sector change; many unions historically had ‘highly formalized and centralized systems of national negotiations’ and in some there were ‘few, if any, local full-time officials’ (1996:16). Fairbrother also discusses the challenges to the centralised structures inherent in Civil Service unions (1994a). Mathieson and Corby, drawing on Heery and Kelly’s work<sup>23</sup> argue that there has been ‘a noticeable move to managerial unionism, with a shift from an activist focus to a member focus’ (1999:199); they suggest that managerial unionism has arisen ‘partly out of a critical analysis of the perceived weaknesses of the activist based, often politically driven, so-called participative trade union model of the 1970s’ (1999:215)<sup>24</sup>. The authors go on to cite as examples of managerial unionism the teachers’ unions emphasising their role in defending members’ professional interests and the telephone ‘hot-line’ set up for nurses (1999:215). It is suggested here that the authors use the typology in a limited and deterministic way; not only do they fail to recognise the relationship between professional interests and solidaristic collectivism as identified above, they also fail to acknowledge that the RCN has abandoned the no-strike clause (although they comment on this fact later in their chapter), both issues fitting more with Heery and Kelly’s (1994) ‘participative unionism’ than ‘managerial unionism’.

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<sup>23</sup> Heery and Kelly argue that during the post-war years, unions have adapted their ‘approaches to servicing their members’ (1994:1) and suggest that there are three discernible phases:

- ‘professional’ (1940s to mid-1960s): members relied on professional negotiators and were themselves fairly passive;
- ‘participative’ (mid-1960s and 1970s): union officials were seen as facilitators and there was a greater role for local activists;
- ‘managerial’ (1980s to date): members are viewed as ‘reactive consumers’ and look for ‘packages’ of services; decision making is transferred from lay activists to union leaders (1994).

<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note here that Undy *et al.* suggest centralisation of union decision making is frequently influenced by costs and that ‘[D]rawing power back to the centre was seen as a means of exercising greater control over expenditure’ (1996:57); they also suggest that in some unions this resulted in a greater influence for factions (1996:58).

Heery and Kelly are clear that their types are ‘constructed at a high level of generality’, that there are ‘hybrids’, unions which demonstrate more than one type, and that each type has ‘necessary limitations and can never be fully implemented in unions’ (1994:11-13). Whilst their typologies are useful in giving a general analysis of trends in trade union/member relations, they clearly should not be adopted in isolation as Mathieson and Corby have done when they declare that ‘public sector unions, like their private sector counterparts, are engaged in so-called managerial unionism’ (1999:220), despite also arguing that workplace representatives ‘are no longer confined to individual case work and information giving but ... are increasingly involved in negotiating terms and conditions’ (1999:220) which points more to Heery and Kelly’s ‘participative’ type (1994); indeed, Fairbrother argues that ‘in the circumstances of state restructuring there is a possibility of participatory forms of unionism’ (1996:113).

Although Heery and Kelly recognise that there has, in some unions, been ‘increased support to workplace representatives, faced for the first time with local pay determination’ (1994:12) neither they, nor Mathieson and Corby (1999) appear to consider this with respect to workplace unionism. Fairbrother, however, whilst recognising that unions in the state sector ‘are changing both structurally and ideologically, with new forms of unionism becoming a distinct possibility’, argues that the emphasis is on ‘involvement and participation rather than passivity and remoteness’ and that the features of ‘participative unionism ... constitute a set of practices which define the possibility of union renewal’ (1996:112); this finding is supported by both Fosh (1993) and Thornley (1998) but is, however, dismissed by McIlroy (1995)<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> McIlroy scathingly critiques the ‘grandiosely termed “the workplace renewal-of-unionism thesis”’ as being ‘slender and drawn from a small number of case studies’ and suggests that the evidence of union resilience ‘appears mistaken’; he takes the contrasting view that ‘decentralisation diminishes the utility of national co-ordination and the deployment of external power unavailable in the enterprise. It is a sign of weakness, not strength’ (1995:138). This view is correctly critiqued by Gall who argues that ‘even if all the studies did show little evidence of renewal this would not necessarily invalidate Fairbrother’s thesis in that he was attempting to identify the conditions or basis for renewal’ (1998a:156).

It would, therefore, appear that public sector trade unions have not been totally marginalised. Moreover, the move towards a more managerialist approach in the public sector has led to the possibility of union renewal as local unionists become more involved in workplace activity (Fairbrother 1990; 1994a; 1996; Fosh 1993:577; Thornley 1998:427), or at the least, union 'resilience' (Fitzgerald and Stirling 1999:47). Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie suggest that combined with the politicisation of public sector employee relations, 'new forms of managerial behaviour within the workplace, may form the basis of new types of industrial conflict' (1999:171) whilst, in line with the renewal thesis, Black and Upchurch suggest that as there has been work intensification in the public sector, workers perceive an inequality in the 'effort-bargain' which is 'likely to increase feelings of "them and us" and create opportunities for active unions to polarise feelings and cement loyalties towards the trade union case' (1999:524).

This section has identified that, despite the attempts of the consecutive post-1979 governments, public sector unions are far from decline. Although union density is purported to have fallen (Mathieson and Corby 1999), membership levels have remained resilient (Black and Upchurch 1999:520). As the public sector has been restructured and reorganised, and with the advent of new managerialism, there has been a move towards more local involvement in industrial relations and it appears that collectivism has not been eroded.

The chapter will now consider the nature and extent of trade unions in the teaching profession.

### **Teachers and their Organisations**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, teaching is one of the largest single occupational groups in the UK (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:73); teachers, like other public sector workers, have a high propensity to unionise. The 1994 Labour Force Survey suggested a density amongst the professional occupations in schools - not

specifically teachers – of 81% (Corcoran 1995:197); Ironside *et al.* found from their own research that union density of teachers was ‘at least equal’ to that figure (1997:123).

Ironside and Seifert state that ‘teacher trade unionism has a long and complex history’<sup>26</sup> and that:

‘[T]eachers organised themselves into strong associations to address their concerns about their conditions of service and about their professional activities – aspects of teaching that are in fact inextricably bound together’ (1995:73).

Clearly, there is an analogy between teachers and workers in general who ‘join unions in order to overcome their weakness as individuals in the employment relationship’ (Kelly 1998:9); their ‘power is amplified when it is collectivized’ (Carlson 1987:284). Both these views are borne out by Waddington and Kerr’s recent survey of UNISON members which found that membership retention was underpinned by ‘collective reasons’ (1999a:164). As will be seen in the following sections teachers, as employees, also need the collective power of their trade unions.

Teacher organisations have historically, as a result of the segmented and stratified nature of the profession, been characterised by fragmentation, divided between those in ‘primary and secondary, women and men, qualified and unqualified, and classroom teacher and head’ (Ironside and Seifert 1995:78); at present there are six different teacher organisations (discussed further below).

According to Ironside and Seifert ‘the current structure of teacher unionism is rooted in the early struggles of the teacher organisations to gain some control over the conditions of their members’ working lives as the state education system took shape’ (1995:73); thus the origins of teacher organisations lie in the early history of teaching

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<sup>26</sup> For detailed accounts of the history of teacher unions see Ironside and Seifert (1995), Webb (1915).

as a profession and the endeavours of teachers to enhance the educational opportunities of the children they teach.

The early days of teaching as an occupation were characterised by the diversity of the status of teachers which ranged from headmasters of boys' public schools, who had considerable status and influence and were well remunerated, to the lowly position of the elementary school teachers who 'were not only poor: they also lacked the academic status accorded to primary school teachers in many other European countries, including Scotland' (Aldrich 1996:69-70).

In 1846 the Minute of the Committee of the Privy Council simultaneously introduced exploitation of the unqualified 'pupil teacher' and better terms and conditions for the qualified 'certified' teachers. Whilst undergoing their apprenticeship the pupil teacher was paid little in return for long hours; being cheap to employ, they were popular with the managers of schools (Aldrich 1996:65). At the end of their apprenticeship they could progress to a teacher training college (if they obtained a Queen's Scholarship) to become a certified teacher or alternatively continue in teaching 'uncertified'.

For the certified teacher, working conditions improved; they received an enhanced salary, linked to a government supplementation, rent-free accommodation, a payment for the training of pupil teachers and provision for their pension (Aldrich 1996:65; Webb 1915:4). It is important to note however, that 'mistresses earned two-thirds of the grant which was paid to masters of the same class' (Balfour, 1902 quoted by Webb 1915:4) which highlights the gender segregation in teaching still evident in the 1990s.

Also in 1846 the first teacher organisation, the College of Perceptors (granted Royal Charter in 1849) was established (Aldrich 1996:45; Webb 1915:1) as an 'independent body of schoolteachers' (Aldrich 1996:45) with a Scholastic Council which introduced qualifications for teachers in order to guarantee their 'learning and

competence' to the general public (Aldrich 1996:45). This notion of self-regulation was an initial attempt by teachers to attain the status of 'professional' in line with workers of the legal and medical professions (Webb 1915:13).

The improved status of teachers was, however, short lived as a form of managerialism was introduced into education through the Revised Code of 1862. This was a direct result of the perceived status enhancement that teachers acquired as a result of the 1846 Minute with both politicians and administrators within the Education Department expressing 'alarm' as teachers emerging from training colleges 'considered themselves to be superior, both to the humble origins from which most of them had sprung, and to the necessary drudgery of teaching the basic subjects' (Aldrich 1996:70); Webb suggests that the message of the day to teachers was 'you are the personal servants of the managers' (1915:5). The government at the time were intent on subverting the status of teachers within society; the setting of teacher salaries was delegated to the managers of the schools, teachers were employed on short-term (six month) contracts and their payment was directly linked with the success of their pupils – introducing PRP into schools for the first time (Aldrich 1996:70; Webb 1915:4).

At the time of the Revised Code, the largest body of teachers were those in the Elementary Schools, in which the vast majority of children who attended school were taught (Aldrich 1996:3). These teachers, being treated as 'a menial, a state servant' (Ozga and Lawn 1981:77) formed the National Union of Elementary Teachers (NUET) (later to become the NUT) in 1870, coinciding with the introduction of the Education Act in that year, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Webb reports how, during this period, the elementary teacher felt exploited by the Government Inspectors and the Local School Boards as value for money became the focus in education and teachers had to provide services outside of their normal teaching work (1915:4). Teachers not only felt 'social isolation' due to the fact that they slotted into neither the 'educated classes' to which they aspired nor to the

‘working class’ from which they came, they also found themselves excluded from the ‘higher ranks’ (i.e. secondary school or university teachers) of their profession (1915:4). It was in this climate of exploitation, isolation and social exclusion and with teachers feeling the need to protect their ‘professional status’ that NUET was formed. However, it was not only elementary teachers who were affected by the unfavourable climate towards teachers at the time, so too were secondary school teachers who followed suit and formed organisations of their own to protect both their working conditions and their professional status<sup>27</sup>.

*The search for professional self-regulation and unity*

Despite the early failure of the College of Perceptors’ Scholastic Council (1846-1873) to establish one single register of teachers (due to the protests of the secondary associations who were in ‘fear of being swamped’ by the elementary teachers (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:84)), teachers have continued to promote their occupation as a ‘profession’ through consistent attempts to establish a teachers’ register (Coates 1972b:53; Ironsides and Seifert 1995:84). The aim of a register is to restrict entry to the profession and therefore control the quantity and quality of teachers. Such attempts to create a self-regulatory body have, however, been fraught with internal divisions amongst the different sections of the teaching profession, along with resistance from government.

Such divisions caused the first Teachers’ Registration Council established in 1902 to fail four years later. The second such Council lasted from 1912 until it was abolished in 1949, five years after the 1944 Education Act allowed the Minister of Education to grant qualified teacher status (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:84), thus taking self-regulation out of the hands of the teachers and, arguably, turning them into full

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<sup>27</sup> NUET excluded uncertified teachers and these teachers later went on to form their own union, the National Union of Uncertified Teachers. There were also organisations representing different sections of elementary teachers, viz.: class teachers, non-collegiate certified teachers, head teachers, and women in elementary schools. Alongside the elementary teachers’ organisations were those representing secondary teachers, for example, the Associations of Women Teachers in Girls’ Public Secondary Schools and the Associations of Men Teachers in Boys’ Public Secondary Schools (Webb 1915).



government 'employees'.

Enthusiasm for professional self-regulation then waned until the mid 1960s when the teacher unions united in their desire for a Teachers' General Council to control both entry into the profession and professional discipline and which would seek the right to award 'qualified status' to teachers (Coates 1972b:53). To be effective, the Council required the backing of government legislation; this was denied as the government were reluctant to lose control over the profession (Coates 1972b:54). In 1969, however, the Secretary of State, Edward Short, previously a teacher and a NUT sponsored MP, pushed the idea forward by establishing a working party to consider the matter. The working party, despite initially being 'endangered by inter-union rivalry' as debates developed as to its composition (Coates 1972b:54)<sup>28</sup>, proposed that a Teaching Council should be established, alongside an advisory body for teacher training. Although a change of government meant that the idea of the Council was blocked, it was unlikely to have come to fruition anyway due to the ultimate rejection of the working party's proposals by both the NUT and the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions (ATTI) who were unable to accept the proposal that the Secretary of State would have the power of veto over Council recommendations (Ironside and Seifert 1995:85). The Secretary of State at the time was able to use this discordance to refuse to act on the working party's proposals (Coates 1972b:57).

As with a teachers' register, the aim of a General Council is to attain closure to the profession. Such closure can be viewed either as a way of maintaining the standards of entry into the profession in order to exclude unqualified teachers and therefore protect the quality of teaching, or alternately it can be seen as a method of 'social closure' which is 'based on exclusion, to secure resources, status and power' (Flynn 1999:22). In line with this, Aldrich identifies two views with regard to professions; firstly that professionals are 'groups motivated by the highest ideals, dedicated to the service of the public' and secondly that they are 'bodies designed to corner a market

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<sup>28</sup> The NUT wanted, and eventually obtained, greater representation than the smaller organisations (Coates 1972b:55).

and raise the price of goods and services' (1996:74), the latter signifying the exclusionism identified by Flynn (1999:22). In the case of teachers, the first argument would recognise their public service ethic and acknowledge their commitment to the education of children. The second argument conforms to the views of numerous governments over the years of public sector professionals in general as they have fought for the right to comparability of pay with other professionals, 'a moral and social argument associated with fairness' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:17).

There have also been attempts throughout the history of the teacher organisations to create one single teachers' organisation (see Coates 1972b:Chapter 5 for a detailed summary). A renewed initiative for this also failed during the 1960s (Coates 1972b:51; Ironsides and Seifert 1995:85). As can be seen above, this lack of organisational unity, or sectionalism, could be blamed for the failure of the creation of the General Council; the NUT argued that an 'all embracing organisation of teachers was a pre-requisite to professional self-government' (Coates 1972b:57). Coates, however, disagrees with this arguing that organisational unity and professional self-government are 'related yet distinct themes' as 'it is not clear that one automatically requires the other'; the 'functions of a Teachers' General Council and of a single teachers' union differ' in that the former controls entry and qualifications of the profession whereas the latter negotiates salaries and conditions of service whilst protecting the rights of the individual teacher (1972b:57).

The reasons for sectionalism within teacher unions and the extent to which this dilutes the collective power of teachers is discussed further below, however, Coates' argument above, would allow for the fact that teachers have differing motives for joining unions but not necessarily different 'professional' standards. Also, it should be noted that when fighting for a single teaching union in the 1960s, the NUT as the biggest and most politically influential union had the most to gain (Coates 1972b:47)<sup>29</sup>; consequently it has to be considered whether the union's motives may

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<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Coates argues that the impetus for the creation of a single organisation has always come from the NUT (1972b:47).

have been more influenced by the quest for organisational growth and development than by the notion of a united representative body.

It can be seen from the above that teachers have, throughout history, striven to protect their professionalism; the next section will consider how they have turned to trade unions in order to accomplish this.

### *Professionalism and trade union membership – a dichotomy?*

The notion of ‘profession’ is a ‘muddy concept’ (Healy and Kraithman 1996:); Ferlie *et al.* suggest that ‘the concept of a “professional” has always been an ambiguous one’ (1996:168) and Ball argues that it is ‘both slippery and ill-used’ (1987:135). It is not the intention of this chapter to embark on a discussion regarding the status of ‘profession’ or ‘professional’ however, the highly unionised nature of teacher employment calls for a brief exploration of the interrelationship between unionist and professional objectives.

Since the election of the ‘New Right’ in 1979, ‘professional’ groups within the public sector have been viewed by the state as having a ‘narrow and self-serving monopoly’ and who, due to their ‘expert’ knowledge are able to remain unaccountable for their decisions (Kirkpatrick and Martínez Lucio 1995:23). As a consequence, the state is concerned with retaining close control over the work of teachers and other professionals in the public sector.

Governments have viewed teachers and their unions as being concerned with their own self protection rather than the education of children and of having too much control over the teaching process. However, the 1988 ERA and subsequent introduction of New Managerialism severely challenged this; Ironside and Seifert argue that teachers’ duties and conditions of employment are becoming ‘increasingly codified and enforced through state rules and managerial control’ (1995:85).

Despite reluctance to grant self-regulatory powers to the teaching profession, governments use the term 'professional' as a form of control over teachers as 'it provides a code of conduct that operates in favour of the employer' (Ball 1987:136). Such conduct includes 'responsible behaviour, consultation [and] concern for standards' (Healy 1994:3); to act against the code of conduct is 'unprofessional'. This is evidenced in the way that teachers have been portrayed in the media as 'uncaring, improperly trained, resistant to change, politically suspect and mercenary' (Ball 1987:136).

Thus, Healy suggests that 'the inherent contradiction in the concept of "professionalism" points to its contested nature' (1997b:210); 'professionalism' can be used both as a form of control and a form of resistance. This is evident in Ozga and Lawn's argument that although 'professionalism' can be 'an ideological weapon aimed at controlling teachers' at the same time it is also 'a weapon of self-defence for teachers in their struggle against dilution' (1981:2); it is to this end that teachers have sought to have their own self-regulatory control mechanism.

As discussed above, teachers have been unable to obtain professional status through the introduction of a teachers' register or a General Council<sup>30</sup>, emphasising the need for teachers to act collectively through their trade unions; it is through unionisation that they aim to strengthen their bargaining position with their employers, the government, thus contesting the 'asymmetrical' balance of power (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:31). Ozga and Lawn suggest that the unionisation of teachers is an example of how teachers are active in their labour process (1988:329); such action, however, is not necessarily viewed in a positive manner. For example, Ball identified a reticence amongst some teachers in taking industrial action for intrinsic reasons, such as pay, as they felt 'guilty'; it was at odds with their 'professional responsibility'

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<sup>30</sup> Although it is important to note that a General Teaching Council has been established under the new Labour Government and came into effect in September 2000; the aims of this 'new professional body for teachers' which is funded by teachers' registration fees, are 'to provide a voice for the teaching profession; to maintain and enhance the profession's high standards; to enhance the public standing of teaching'. All teachers in maintained schools 'are required to register' and the Council will have 'powers to remove teachers from the register for serious misconduct or incompetence' (DfEE 1999).

(1987:273; 1988:300). This exemplifies how trade unionism may be viewed as conflicting with the nature of professionalism.

The professional or trade unionist argument prompted Secretary of State Edward Short, in a speech to the NUT conference in 1969, to suggest that some teachers did 'not want professional status, but something akin to industrial status' (quoted in Coates 1972b:60); Coates rightly suggests, however, that this misses the 'link between militancy and self-government'<sup>31</sup>, and that militant action may be the only sanction teachers have to achieve their 'professional' goals (1972b:60). Teachers not only act collectively for intrinsic reasons, such as fair terms and conditions of employment, they also organise in order to *be* professional; they believe in their right to participate in decisions in order to uphold the standard of the profession for the children they teach (Seifert 1987:2). Therefore, a 'sterile dichotomy of professionalism versus unionism' (Ozga and Lawn 1981:vii) is inappropriate; unionism and professionalism are not essentially divided – one is the expression of the other (Ozga and Lawn 1981:120).

Both Coates and Ironside and Seifert argue that the militancy of the teachers' unions during the 1960s<sup>32</sup> increased their ability to influence the government far more than either organisational unity or professional self-government would have done (Coates 1972b:60; Ironside and Seifert 1995:86). This contributed to the government putting teachers, along with other public sector workers, at the forefront of their attempts throughout the 1980s and 1990s to marginalise trade unions in the UK; as discussed in the previous chapter, they attempted a strategy of 'union exclusion' in order to 'deny workers access to resources of collective power' and to therefore "'individualize" the employment relationship' (Smith and Morton 1993:97-99). In the case of teachers, however, this strategy failed as the unions continued to retain their membership and their willingness to act 'militantly' to a greater or lesser extent.

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<sup>31</sup> Coates' use of the term 'militancy' includes both strike action and action which falls short of a strike e.g., refusal to supervise school meals (1972b:60).

<sup>32</sup> Teacher unions were involved in a number of pay disputes with the government during the 1960s (Coates 1972b; Ironside and Seifert 1995).

Despite his rather pessimistic, and inaccurate, prediction that teacher unions would be smaller and less influential during the coming decades, Adams believes that not only will they continue to 'provide a measure of protection for teachers' they will seek 'a more generous allocation of society's resources for the education of its children' (1982:202), perhaps suggesting that the professional/trade union dichotomy is a false one.

Nevertheless, the professional/trade union dichotomy helps to clarify efforts made by teacher unions to both influence and resist government imposed policies on education, especially where these entail cost cutting and a corresponding decline in service provision. It also goes some way towards explaining the development of teacher organisations and the sectionalism which is inherent within the occupation, discussed in the next section and later in the chapter.

#### *The nature of teacher organisations*

Blackburn's (1967) notion of unionateness<sup>33</sup> is a tool by which to measure the extent that an organisation can be classified as a trade union and this section will consider the unionateness or otherwise of teacher unions. In their attempt to protect both their working conditions and standards in the provision of education for children, teachers are represented by six different organisations<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Blackburn suggested that there were seven different characteristics against which an organisation could be measured to ascertain their level of commitment to the principles of trade unions, their 'unionateness': i) the organisation regards collective bargaining and the protection of the interests of members, as employees, as its main function, rather than professional activities or welfare schemes; ii) it negotiates independently of employers; iii) it is prepared to act militantly, using all forms of industrial action; iv) it declares itself to be a trade union; v) it is a registered trade union; vi) it is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC); vii) it is affiliated to the Labour Party (quoted in Beaumont 1992:51).

<sup>34</sup> The organisations are the Secondary Head Association (SHA) and the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), representing headteachers and deputy headteachers; the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL); the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT), the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) and the National Union of Teachers (NUT) all mainly representing classroom teachers. The NUT will be discussed in greater detail within the body of this chapter, however, see Appendix 2 for a summary of the other five unions.

As discussed earlier, teaching is an occupation that would, on the face of it, benefit from a united front. McIlroy suggests that such a 'plethora' of unions proves the 'absence of any impetus to industrial unionism<sup>35</sup> in education' (1995:16). Although teachers are a coherent occupational group and their unions are formed around this basis, 'the teaching occupation is not homogenous' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:92) and it is the union sectionalism inherent within the profession which allows for the different groups within teaching to be represented.

Although in the 1980s teachers, along with the miners, were seen as a major challenge to government strategies (Beaumont 1992:126) their unions do not readily conform to Blackburn's notion of unionateness. Only two, the NUT and NASUWT actually declare themselves as unions and are TUC affiliated (Mathieson and Corby 1999:203), the other four are non-affiliated and prefer the term 'Association', reflecting the professional/union debate. Not all the organisations are prepared to take industrial action with both PAT and ATL being distinctly against this (see Appendix 2) and teacher unions will not always put their own interests before their 'professional' aims. Nevertheless, all of the teacher organisations are listed as 'Trade Unions' in the Report of the Certification Officer (2000:Appendix 1) as defined by the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992:

'an organisation ... which consists wholly or mainly of workers of one or more description and whose principal purposes include the regulation of relations between workers of that description or those descriptions and employers and employers' associations' (2000:8)

Therefore, despite various forms of non-compliance to Blackburn's unionateness model, by uniting to further both their personal and collective aims, and the aims of their profession, teachers organisations are indeed 'unions' in the sense of the broader legal definition.

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<sup>35</sup> The aim of an industrial union is to organise its members vertically, i.e. to represent all the workers within a certain industry. McIlroy uses the example of the Miners Federation of Great Britain (1995:8). The industrial model of a trade union would not, however, fit education where the teachers' unions represent their members' professional interests as well as their terms and conditions; other workers in schools join general unions, such as UNISON (the public services union).

However, Blackburn's model was not designed to describe the nature of trade unions, rather it was developed as a mechanism to help identify similarities and differences in union character. For example, trade unions are not homogeneous organisations in terms of attitudes and patterns of behaviour; some may more readily be willing to advocate the use of industrial action than may others.

Nevertheless, the model is somewhat limited. As McIlroy suggests, 'Blackburn's criteria are historically and geographically specific' (1995:6); it is based on traditional manufacturing unions in the mid-1960s, representing blue-collar manual workers and developed at a time when unions were characterised by militancy. Union character has since changed with a growth in white collar, service sector unions operating in a different economic and political climate. Nevertheless, the model is still a useful tool to give some indication of a trade union's level of unionateness as compared to the traditional industrial trade union.

Blackburn's model does not allow for the complex dynamics that operate within trade union organisations themselves; the multifarious nature of union members. The objective of the model is not to measure the different attitudes, beliefs and ideologies of trade union members, nor does it take account of the fact that there are organisations within organisations, factions. However, the model might well be developed further to measure the extent to which the views of some of the members within a union differ from those of the national union leaders; for example, a faction within a union may demonstrate a greater degree of unionateness than the union executive itself. As McIlroy suggests, unions are best 'conceptualised and studied, not in isolation, as industrial bargainers, but as part of a wider totality, a labour movement with industrial and political wings' (1995:6).

The next section will consider the nature and unionateness of the National Union of Teachers, the organisation which is central to the research case study.



## **The National Union of Teachers (NUT)**

The NUT is the largest and oldest of the teacher unions, established as the National Union of Elementary Teachers in 1870. Writing in 1915, Webb found there were 150,000 ‘public elementary teachers’ and that about 90,000 of these were members of the NUT<sup>36</sup>, ninety percent of those eligible to join (1915:2)<sup>37</sup>. Current membership is stated as 293,610 (Barnard 2000).

The NUT has always been (and still is) characterised by factionalism. Webb describes how organisations such as the National Federation of Class Teachers and the National Association of Non-Collegiate Certified Teachers came under the NUT umbrella; even the majority of the members of the National Association of Head Teachers held dual membership of both associations (1915:2-10).

A main aim of the NUT when it was originally formed was to ensure the ‘professionalism’ of the occupation by excluding entry to the uncertified teachers, one-third of elementary teachers (Webb 1915:3), the vast majority of whom were women, paid considerably less than men and viewed by the NUT as ‘cheap unorganised labour’ (Ozga and Lawn 1981:76). Under pressure from local organisations, in 1919 the NUT began to admit uncertified teachers turning it from, in Ozga and Lawn’s terms, a ‘craft’ union to an ‘industrial’ union (1981:97). This move also prompted the NUT to fight for equal pay, an action which both won and lost it members; although they gained uncertified teachers they lost members to NAS (see Appendix 2), whilst the delay in taking up the cause frustrated some women members who formed the National Union of Women Teachers in 1909 (dissolved in 1960) (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:93).

The NUT now recruits members from all areas of the teaching profession and is described as a ‘general union for teachers’ (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:100) or a ‘general open union’ (Ironsides *et al.* 1997:123). It follows the characteristics of a

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<sup>36</sup> NUET dropped ‘Elementary’ from its title in 1889 (Webb 1915:3).

<sup>37</sup> At this stage it recruited only qualified teachers (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:92; Webb 1915:3).

trade union in that it is committed to collective bargaining and will adhere to industrial action when necessary (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:92; Webb 1915:3); one of its principle aims since admitting uncertified teachers has been a single pay scale for all teachers. The NUT rates fairly highly on Blackburn's unionateness scale.

The NUT has sporadically suffered membership losses whilst the other teacher unions have grown. During the early 1970s when white collar unions were gaining members, the NUT was one of the few losing them (NASUWT was growing). Hyman suggests however, that although NASUWT was recruiting from the expanding secondary sector at the time, the NUT's loss of members must in part be 'regarded as evidence of a failure of strategy' (Hyman 1983:41), a theory he fails to develop.

One reason for the NUT's loss of membership is possibly because it differs from the other teacher unions in that there is open factionalism within it; there are strong 'socialist and feminist traditions of activity' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:102) within the union (although presumably not mutually exclusive). One of the principal objectives of the NUT when it was established was the improvement of education for working class children. Webb gives full voice to this concern and argues the fact that 'the activities of the NUT, taken as a whole, have had a beneficial effect on the great community of working-class children' and that 'in more ways than one the N.U.T. has identified itself with the needs of the wage-earning class family' (1915:11)<sup>38</sup>. Thus, the NUT has been viewed as the more politically 'left' of the trade unions with a highly visible 'organised left wing presence' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:103); in discussing politics and unions in general, McIlroy states that the NUT 'remains the union where the left is strongest' (2000:36).

Another reason for loss of membership is the NUT's willingness to engage in industrial action; the union has a long history of militant action (see for example Ozga

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<sup>38</sup> See also Simon (1974) on the NUT's objection to the creation of secondary schools under Balfour's (1902) Education Act which they viewed as 'thwarting and hindering the higher educational interests of the children of the working classes' (quote from the NUT's annual conference in 1907, cited by Simon 1974:268).

and Lawn 1981:ch 3; Seifert 1987). On the other hand, it would appear that it's 'militancy' is also one of the reasons that teachers both join and remain in the union; Healy found in her study of NUT members that 40 percent of those surveyed had joined because it 'appeared to be more active than other unions', a factor which she suggests points to a union whose members have a 'more solidaristic orientation' (1997a:Ch 7). Considering the fact that, following the pay dispute in the mid-1980s, the NUT lost members to the less unionate organisations, such as PAT (see Appendix 2) it could be argued that by definition those who remained had a more solidaristic orientation (Healy 1997a)<sup>39</sup>.

The NUT is also renowned for its efforts to be involved in educational policy decision making at government level (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:103; Simon 1991) and this may also influence some teachers in their decision regarding which union to join, especially if they believe that collective action can influence national policy making; they join a union to *be* professional (see above).

### **Sectionalism within the teacher trade union movement**

Kelly suggests that in the various literature discussing sectionalism 'it is not always clear exactly what the term sectionalism is meant to refer to' (1988:131)<sup>40</sup>; here sectionalism refers to the division and separation of workers, in this case teachers, both within and between their representative organisations.

Kelly suggests that 'teachers as an occupational group display a wide range of political orientations' (1998:138) and as Ball rightly asserts, the 'ideological complexity of educational issues ... factionalizes teachers' (1987:148); teachers cannot be regarded as a homogenous group of workers. Indeed, Winchester argues

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<sup>39</sup> With the exception of NAHT (down 0.8%), all teacher unions have gained membership recently, reportedly as a result of job insecurity fears; interestingly, however, although the unionate NUT increased membership by 2.5%, the non-unionate ATL and PAT increased by 9% and 3.6% respectively (Barnard 2000). Again the teachers appear to be joining these unions for individual and instrumental reasons, rather than from a solidaristic orientation to union joining.

<sup>40</sup> For his discussion on 'the question of sectionalism' see Trade Unions and Socialist Politics (1988) chapter 6. (See also Fairbrother (1984) for his debate on sectionalism.)

that '[I]nter-union conflict between teachers' unions is deeply rooted in differing conceptions of status, professionalism, and the legitimacy of industrial action' (1983:162). This is portrayed by the sectionalism that exists with regard to trade union membership within the teaching occupation. Kelly argues that particular types of workers (i.e. teachers) are not prone to a certain kind of trade union (1998:138) and uses the teaching profession to demonstrate what he describes as 'competitive unionism' pointing to the fact that teachers are able to join the militant NUT or NASUWT or 'the right-wing, anti-strike PAT' (1998:138). As is evident from the account of the NUT (above), teacher unions are characterised by both inter-union and intra-union rivalry.

Whilst each of the six teacher unions act on behalf of their members they 'represent different interests and alliances of interests' (Ball 1987:274) and are consequently divided both by occupational segmentation and ideology. As stated earlier, much of the division between the unions is historical and this has been fuelled by inter-union rivalry, particularly between the NUT and NASUWT who 'have had a long history of mutual recrimination and competitive recruitment' (Coates 1972b:50) - Kelly's 'competitive unionism' (1998:138). Such rivalry can be seen as damaging for the unity of the profession and for the ability of the teachers to act collectively. An example of rivalry is reported by Ironside and Seifert when they quote the NUT secretary in 1959 as estimating that since 1921 NAS and the NUT had spent £1¼m on fighting each other (1995:96); such in-fighting within an occupational group may hinder the advancement of the whole profession. Alternatively, Winchester argues that inter-union rivalry in the early 1970s 'provided additional encouragement for leaders to abandon the traditional "moderation" of public service trade unionism' (1983:168), thus introducing a more militant stand point for pay bargaining.

In 1985 the teachers embarked on their longest, largest and most bitter dispute with the government (Ironside and Seifert 1995:41; Kessler and Bayliss 1995:133) over pay. At the time 'the Prime Minister appeared as determined not to surrender to the teachers as she was to the miners' (Timmins 1995:426), a fact which suggests that

teachers should be added to Gall's list of print workers, miners, dockers and television technicians as 'the "*betes noire*" of Thatcherite management' (1998b:45). Initially there was a certain amount of unity between the teacher unions (Ironside and Seifert 1995:41) with teachers embarking on both strike and non-strike forms of industrial action. As Kelly notes, however, in line with other public sector strikes (notably the civil service in 1981 and the miners in 1984/5), the teachers' strike was 'bedevilled by non-support' from sections of the workforce (1988:136). As the action dragged on and the teachers were drawn into the battle between Margaret Thatcher and the 'enemy within' (the public sector unions (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:158)), unity between the teachers wore thin. They became more divided and not only were there splits between unions, but also within them (Ironside and Seifert 1995:41; Timmins 1995:426); ultimately inter- and intra-union sectionalism contributed to the failure of the action.

Kelly argues, however, that sectional action does not necessarily produce a 'corresponding form of sectional consciousness' (1996:137); this is evidenced in the way teachers displayed a united collectivism for their profession when boycotting the national curriculum tests in 1993. This boycott, which was also supported by headteachers (Winchester and Bach 1995:329), ended in victory and highlights the importance of 'union-organised resistance to reforms' (Sinclair *et al.* 1996:646) and the need for unity between the unions. This does not only suggest that sectionalism can be transcended by a common belief or ideology, in this case the education of children, it also demonstrates that the professional/trade union dichotomy is a false one.

Nevertheless, sectionalism can, through its divisive nature, be detrimental to the collective organisation of workers. As mentioned previously, workers, in this case teachers, are not homogenous and have different values, beliefs and interests, which they feel should be represented by their unions. To this end, as Kelly suggests, "sectional" action may be seen as a normal and pervasive feature of trade unionism' (1988:146). Writing from a socialist viewpoint, he argues that '[S]ectional, economic

interests should not be seen as the antithesis of socialist priorities but as the raw material out of which a desire for socialism must be created' (1988:146); this helps to explain why there is not only inter union conflict but also intra union conflict and thus the factionalism that exists within the NUT as discussed in the next section.

### **The NUT and factionalism**

Factionalism is a distinguishing feature of the NUT and this section will consider its origins and growth in the union.

In 1915 the NUT was characterised by sectionalism and at the time Webb stated that the sections had some 'different interests, and are to some extent concerned about different questions' but puts this mainly down to the fact that the majority classroom and women teachers were represented by 'a small minority of men ... college trained and head teachers' (1915:9), what might be described as the 'vertical division between trade union leaders and rank and file' (Kelly 1988:129). Webb argues that sectionalism distracts 'the energy' that might otherwise have been spent on 'the advancement of the interests of the NUT or of the profession as a whole' (1915:9). Although the sectionalism of the early 1900s became diluted as the disaffected groups of teachers (for example, NAS) broke away to form their own organisations factionalism, with groups of teachers organising around their own political ideologies but *within* the auspices of the NUT as a whole, has remained strong<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Seifert suggests that the 'concept of faction as power-seeking groups at any level of the Union organisation' provides a 'useful way of studying Union political practice'; 'power-seeking' embraces 'the holding of office, the winning of policy decisions, control over policy implementation, and control over educational and propaganda activities'. He argues that factions 'are not simply the institutional representation of sectional interests within the Union' as at any given time they may be 'more securely based in one section' of the membership; however, unless factions do transcend 'sectional considerations' they 'cease to have political meaning within the organisation'. Further, he suggests that factional groups move along two different continua; the first is organisational type, which varies from 'loose and informal groupings to fully-equipped and highly controlled group activists' and the second is their dependence on an outside, possibly political party. He cites as an example how the independence from external control of both the Communist and Catholic factions within the NUT has varied over time. He concludes that 'power-seeking' groups are important 'in so far as they transcend sectional boundaries; develop extended organisational forms; and become dependent on outside bodies' (Seifert 1984:374-5).

Kelly comments that although political factionalism exists within unions, and their policies are subject to 'fierce debate' between the different parties, there is very little literature discussing the issue (1998:54). Factionalism is, however, acknowledged as having an important part to play in the operation of the NUT (Ironsides and Seifert 1995; Ironsides *et al.* 1997; Seifert 1984). Seifert (1984) provides an in-depth discussion regarding the demise of Rank and File, a political faction connected to the SWP and which folded in 1982.

The Rank and File organisation was established by a group of teachers from the International Socialists (IS)<sup>42</sup> organisation in 1967 and attracted 'predominantly young leftwing activists' (Seifert 1984:372). At that time, it was the policy of the IS to create rank and file organisations for members of unions throughout the country, it was not unique to teachers. Context is always of significance when discussing both industrial relations and politics; the development and demise of Rank and File in the NUT therefore has to be contextualised within the politics and government of the UK during the fifteen years of its existence. As discussed in the previous chapter, the early 1970s were characterised by a succession of government imposed incomes policies (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:157) and these 'generated the discontent out of which revolutionaries began to mould classical rank and file movements' (Kelly 1988:148); teachers, along with other public sector workers, began to turn to the left in politics. Militancy in the public sector, in the form of strikes, increased during this period<sup>43</sup> (Beaumont 1992:125; Bach and Winchester 1994:263; Salamon 1992:416) and Rank and File developed a small, but active, following<sup>44</sup>.

The importance of Rank and File and similar organisations such as the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), formed in 1976 and now viewed as 'the largest and most

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<sup>42</sup> This later became the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

<sup>43</sup> Beaumont argues that public sector trade unions began to change character during this period and uses the Civil Service Clerical Association as an example of a union removing its no-strike clause, in line with a "leftward" or "radical" shift in the leadership of a number of civil service unions from the late 1960s' (1992:56)

<sup>44</sup> The journal 'Rank and File teacher' printed 10,000 copies in 1973 although only about 42% of these were sold (Callinicos 1995). Rank and File consisted of approximately 2 percent of the NUT membership (Seifert 1987; 1984).

influential left grouping within the NUT' (Hatcher 1994:58)<sup>45</sup>, to school based industrial relations is the activity of their members. Seifert ascertains that the strength of Rank and File was in 'its ability to attract active Union members' (1984:375); his own research found that the NUT IS members were active. Despite this, Seifert is scathing of the organisation which had 'usually impossible demands' and 'little impact' in schools (1984:377). He also maintains that the beginning of the end for Rank and File was when the SWP decided to 'secure tight political control' over it (1984:378) and tried to use it to promote their own political agenda (1987:124).

According to Seifert the demise of Rank and File was due to both internal factors such as strong opposition from the Communist faction within the NUT and the 'moderate left' in the guise of the STA, the opposition of the NUT executive and external factors such as the changing political situation in the UK from 1979 (1984:378). What Seifert does not make clear, however, is why an organisation which was both small and had 'little impact' (see above) was targeted by the NUT executive and other factions within the union; if it was of such little significance why the concern? From an SWP perspective it would appear that external factors played a large part in the organisation's demise; Calinicos argues that the whole rank and file movement was mis-timed in that the balance of power in the labour process had already started to shift in favour of capitalism (1995:51).

Therefore, regardless of the reasons for its demise, Rank and File is an important example of how political factions within unions can cause consternation amongst the union bureaucracy which has the authenticity of practices and policies challenged by active members. Challenges are imperative in the interests of trade union democracy as there may be a disparity of interests between union officials and union members (Heery and Fosh 1990:20; McIlroy 1995:158) (also see Darlington (1994) who provides a detailed discussion on this issue and Callinicos' critique of the 'trade union

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<sup>45</sup> McIlroy describes how the NUT Executive was controlled by a 'moderate broad left group' but that 'a split left organised in the Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union (CDFU) and the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA) advanced in the early 1990s' (1995:175).



bureaucracy' which he argues allows for 'the emergence of a distinctive social layer of full-time officials with interests different to those of the rank and file' (1995:18); thus partially reflecting Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy' (1915)). From a Marxist perspective, it is necessary to challenge the union leaders as is evident from Trotsky's scathing critique; he argued that by 1933 the trade union bureaucracy had 'become lieutenants of capital in the intensified exploitation of the workers' and that consequently 'the most important task of the revolutionary party became the liberation of the workers from the reactionary influence of the trade union bureaucracy' (1977:77). Kelly explains how Marxists view the 'revolutionary struggle' as being on 'two fronts: "outwards" against capital and its agents, "inwards" against the trade union bureaucracy and other reformist leaders of working-class organisations' (1988:147); thus SWP members, in this case Rank and File teachers, would view it as legitimate to question and challenge NUT officials<sup>46</sup>.

The concern of union executives in this respect is perhaps evidenced in the desire of the NUT to marginalise Rank and File. The opposition from the Communist Party and the STA demonstrates the antagonism that exists between different factions within unions and is again an example of 'competitive sectionalism' whereby the actions of one group of workers 'are taken at the expense of another group' (Kelly 1988:145). Seifert proposes that in the case of the NUT, the 'exaggerated warring between the left groups ... enabled the Union to fall under the control of an increasingly pro-Labour Party set of officials and national local leaders' (1987:125), suggesting that the NUT was moving towards the right of the political spectrum<sup>47</sup>.

Despite the demise of Rank and File and the suggestion that the STA has a 'less sectarian and less confrontationist method of work' and 'little outside political control' (Seifert 1984:378), the NUT are concerned about the 'infiltration' of political

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<sup>46</sup> Kelly suggests that the growth in the interest of the election and remuneration of union officials was 'a tribute to the organised dissemination of orthodox classical Marxist ideas by small groups of revolutionaries and militants' (1988:148).

<sup>47</sup> Blackburn's model might be applied here to demonstrate the varying levels of 'unionateness' *within* an organisation.

factions into their hierarchy; this is perhaps because, contrary to Seifert's opinion, McIlroy argues that 'compared to other unions there is a high degree of informal collaboration' between the three 'left' groupings in the NUT, namely the STA, CDU and the SWP and that in recent years 'the left has been only two or three seats short of control of the executive, a powerful force at conference and dominant in many regions' (McIlroy 2000:36). In order to limit the impact of 'the left', prior to the 1999 national election for the position of General Secretary of the NUT an 'urgent message' was posted in The Guardian newspaper, urging teachers not to vote for the CDFU candidate opposing the current General Secretary (Doug McAvoy) as she represented 'all the factions on the extreme left' who, '[T]hrough her would control the Union' (NUT 1999). The NUT executive are acutely aware that the 'extreme left' would promote the use of industrial action to both protect and advance the working conditions of teachers as well as protecting the education of the children they teach; the union leaders are likely to be extremely wary of the confrontations that would arise within the union through this and which would also challenge their own political base.

Contrary to evidence which suggests a correlation between industrial action and the growth in trade union membership levels in general (Kelly 1996:94) (however, see Fitzgerald and Stirling 1999:55 for their argument of a 'more complex' relationship between membership levels and militancy), the NUTs commitment to industrial action - combined with factionalism and the overt politics of some of its members - has to some extent lost it members; Beaumont claims that the strike action in the 1980s caused teachers to leave the more militant unions (1992:58), which appears to be the case with the NUT as membership declined consistently after 1985 (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:91)<sup>48</sup>. Indeed, members of PAT would abhor the industrial action undertaken by NUT members (as being un-professional) and likewise, ATL members are seen to be less militant. Although Ironsides *et al.* suggest the NUT is 'held back by ultra-left sects forcing militant sounding resolutions through the union's conference' (1997:124), the next section will consider how factionalism, militancy and political

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<sup>48</sup> There has been a recent reversal of this trend.

affiliations when practised in the workplace might contribute to what Fairbrother describes as 'union renewal' (1990; 1994a; 1996; 2000a).

### **Political factions, militancy and union renewal**

As commented upon above, despite the general decline in trade union membership throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Fairbrother argues that there is a possibility for union renewal in the workplace, particularly in the public sector (1990; 1994a; 1996; 2000a). This argument is supported by Fosh's research in five different workplaces (including the public sector) (1993:577), Thornley's research into decentralised pay bargaining in the NHS (1998:427) and to some extent by Gall's research in the newspaper industry (1998b:59). Fitzgerald and Stirling, however, argue for the case of union 'resilience' rather than renewal (1999:47).

The broad essence of Fairbrother's argument is that as new managerialism has emerged in the public sector, a more decentralised and devolved form of management has developed, albeit within the confines of centralised government controls, with a corresponding devolvement of industrial relations issues. As a result, workers have turned to their immediate trade union representatives for assistance and 'more participative forms of unionism' have emerged (1996:141) which in turn encourage union renewal in the workplace (1990; 1994a; 1996; 2000b; 2000a). Renewal is seen as comprising a set of processes concerned with union survival and development within the workplace – recruitment and replenishment of new generations of activists, building workplace activity in the context of restructuring, the development and promotion of mutual support between levels of union members and leaders, and the conditions for international unionism (Fairbrother 2000a:47-78; 2000b:18-23).

In his fraternal critique of Fairbrother's work, Gall suggested a number of weaknesses (1998a:150), including the lack of acknowledgement of political agency which he suggests should be added to the renewal thesis in 'recognition of the important part played by the politics of the workplace union leadership and activists' (1998a:154). On the subject of politics, however, Fairbrother acknowledges that 'political

affiliation and involvement of union members is a 'neglected aspect of the way in which unions may begin to change and develop' and suggests that 'an understanding of the processes of union renewal require a direct engagement and consideration of the politics of trade unionism' (1996:114).

Fairbrother suggests that 'the development of more vibrant and participative forms of union renewal is something that must come from within the workplace, rather than from outside the union, from a political group' because there is 'the danger of an elitism emerging whereby external agents decide what is in the best interests of those in the workplace' (1996:142); although he acknowledges that union members who were also political 'were effective trade unionists because they were both of and for the workplace', the question, he suggests, 'is not whether political groups should play a part in the development of active forms of unionism ... but that the touchstone for active and democratised forms of unionism is the workplace and the workplace members, and not others' (1996:142)<sup>49</sup>.

Whilst Fairbrother acknowledges the interrelationship of political activists and trade unionism in the workplace, this is not the focus of his thesis. Gall (1998a), in his critique, provides a deeper analysis of different political groups in trade unions and enriches the renewal debate. Gall differentiates between two political groupings active in the workplace, the Broad Left/Militant and the SWP; what is important from his distinction is that the former looks to influence unions through becoming part of the union bureaucracy whilst the latter 'seeks to build a network of socialists and militants based in the workplaces whose task is to lead fights based in and around the workplace' (1998a:154-5). Thus, for the latter, workplace activity is of a premium.

McIlroy's view on the 'left's' influence in trade union politics is that the 'influence of Marxist and socialist conceptions of trade unionism waned with militancy in the

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<sup>49</sup> Fairbrother later acknowledges Gall's comments with respect to political groups, but suggests that 'unless such groups are both in and of the union form, their contribution is necessarily limited to that of the outsider' (Fairbrother 2000b:329-30).

1980s' (1995:411). He argues that the Marxist's pro-syndicalist approach is unrealistic due to lack of representation in Parliament and in key positions in the unions, the education system or the press which leaves them with no 'powerful political purchase' and reduces them to 'a negligible force'; he uses the 'destruction of the NUM' as an example of the 'weakness of militant trade unionism in the 1990s' (1995:411-412). Nevertheless, he postulates that to regenerate labour, there is a need for renewal at the workplace and a 'reconstruction of more politically conscious, participative, solidaristic shop steward organisation with wider horizons than in the past and workplace organisation which nurtures in its members a sharp sense of involvement in a wider movement' (1995:412-413); this would appear to correspond with the aims of the SWP as defined by Gall (above), albeit without revolutionary socialism.

Clearly, there has been a general demise in trade union power since 1979 due to a number of factors (see Waddington and Whitson 1995), however, despite his arguing the need for workplace activism, McIlroy would appear to underestimate the extent of militancy at the workplace level<sup>50</sup>, as identified at that time by Darlington (1994) and Fosh (1993), subsequently reiterated by Calveley and Healy (2000), Darlington (1998; 1999; 2000) and Thornley (1998) and which can, to some extent, be attributed to the influence of socialist politics (Calveley and Healy 2000:136; Darlington 1998:69; 1999:1; 2000). Consequently, it is necessary to consider McIlroy's 'negligible force' (above) in a different light. The views of the 'left' may *appear* to be 'negligible' at a national level, both from a political and a trade union point of view, however, it is necessary to consider the influence these activists are having at a local level, an area which, as Kelly suggests, is under researched (1998:54). In line with McIlroy's argument, therefore, Gall would suggest that socialist organisations may

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<sup>50</sup> Although he does, to some extent, recognise this in his later work when discussing the role of 'the left' in industrial disputes (McIlroy 2000).

not be able to ‘create the material conditions for a fight back’, however, they ‘have often initiated or influenced such fightbacks’ (1998a:155)<sup>51</sup>.

Calveley and Healy (2000), Darlington (1994; 1998; 1999; 2000), Fosh and Cohen (1990) and Fosh (1993) all identify the importance of the role of leadership in trade unions; Fosh suggests that ‘the possibility for union renewal comes through building up the base level of participation by careful local leadership so that members can more easily be encouraged to take part in collective activities in times of necessity’ (1993:577). The argument postulated by Darlington is that left-wing leaders or shop-stewards ‘with an overtly ideological and solidaristic (rather than instrumental and individualistic) commitment to trade unionism’ have a crucial role in mobilising workers ‘for collective action against management’ (1999:2) and therefore political affiliations play an important role in workplace industrial relations<sup>52</sup>; indeed, Hyman suggests that ‘Marxists have played an important role in the formation and activity of shop steward organisation, workers’ committees, and rank-and-file movements’ (1975:176). Although Fitzgerald and Stirling argue that union activism in a metropolitan Fire Brigade Union (FBU) was not due to the influence of left wing activists, rather a result of ‘a culture of collectivism that supports trade unionism and is resistant to changes that challenge either service provision or conditions of service’ (1999:58), suggesting that politics and ‘militancy’ do not necessarily go hand-in-hand, they do acknowledge the relevance of Darlington’s views with respect to the Merseyside fire brigade (1999:55).

It would appear that an important strength of political factions is that their members support one another across sectional boundaries and that they ‘act as a link between different workplaces both through their own organisations and through the shop stewards networks’ (Gall 1998a:155); in teaching, for example, the teachers in one

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<sup>51</sup> See, however, McIlroy’s later argument that ‘within the limits set by depleted membership, debilitated workplace organisation, limited industrial confidence and firm, popular government, there are openings for the left’ (2000:30).

<sup>52</sup> Political (socialist) affiliations played a major role in the early formation of the NUT which was initially a union for teachers of working class origins fighting for equality of education for working class children.

school may well seek support from teachers in another school, thus transcending workplace sectional boundaries. Wider support networks may also be advantageous to union activists who become visible (and therefore vulnerable) in their willingness to contest management decisions. What is not clear from Fitzgerald and Stirling's work (1999) is the extent to which the metropolitan FBU looked for support and/or assistance from fellow members in other areas.

What is apparent from the above is that, regardless of political affiliation, union 'renewal' or 'resilience' is reliant on trade union activists who are able to motivate the workforce to act collectively, and to reflect their grievances. Workplace union activity is not a static phenomenon, it varies over time with members becoming more active if there are issues which they feel are relevant to them (Fosh 1993:577). The role of the union activist is to engage workers in union activities on an on-going basis; the later chapters of the thesis will consider how the dedication and motivation of political activists play an important role in this.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that, although there has been a fall in public sector union density, it would appear that contrary to the belief of some commentators (Corby and White 1999; Mathieson and Corby 1999) there has not been a sustained erosion of public sector collectivism (Black and Upchurch 1999; Fairbrother 1994a; 1994b; 1996; Fosh 1993; Thornley 1998) and that the decentralisation which accompanied the introduction of managerialism, as discussed in the previous chapter, has in fact given rise to conditions which favour union renewal (Fairbrother 1994a; 1994b; 1996; Fosh 1993; Thornley 1998). The evidence supporting a wholesale move towards 'managerial unionism' (Mathieson and Corby 1999) would appear to be scant.

In considering the teaching profession, the chapter has shown how teachers throughout history have had their occupation controlled by government edicts and been denied the right to self-regulation allowed to other professions such as medicine and the law. In their desire to protect their professional status, their terms and

conditions of employment and the educational standards for the children they teach, they have turned to collective organisation through trade unions.

As identified above, unionism does not always sit comfortably with the notion of professionalism; a tension sometimes exists between the objectives of the two. Like all workers, teachers join unions for different reasons and with different political viewpoints and this serves to explain the sectionalism that exists within the teaching unions. Sectionalism can, and does, dis-unite workers fighting for a common cause, however, on the other hand it allows workers to follow their own beliefs and to act collectively within these beliefs.

For some teachers the idea of ‘militancy’ in the form of industrial action is antagonistic to the notion of ‘professional’, resulting in a contradiction between being a trade union member and a ‘professional’. Nevertheless, teachers can and do act militantly in order to be professional; teachers who are willing to act in this way usually join different organisations to those who abhor industrial action. Nonetheless, those teachers with less ‘militant’ tendencies also look to their unions over issues of professional concern to them, such as the National Curriculum testing; they also unionise to be professional. These factors combined suggest that the notion of the trade union/professional dichotomy is a false one.

As the union central to the research case study, the chapter focussed closely on the NUT, highlighting the factionalism in existence within it. Although denounced by the union leadership due to its ‘divisive’ nature - and this is certainly true as can be seen in the Communist Party opposition to the Rank and File members in the 1970’s (Seifert 1984; 1987) - factionalism has an important role to play in union democracy. Without the questioning of rank and file members, union leaders are able to follow a more comfortable and less difficult middle road; they may well put their own positions (and salaries) before those of the members. At a time of a Labour Government, it is also likely that trade union leaders are closer to government ministers who will argue for restraint in industrial action so as not to upset the



political apple cart. At these times, it is likely to be the political factions within the union who will work to remind members what they are fighting for and why; factionalism is, therefore, important and necessary in understanding contemporary trade unionism.

The chapter has highlighted, and engaged with, the somewhat limited discourse that surrounds the impact of political affiliation on workplace unionism. What the available literature tends to suggest, however, is that the political affiliation of local leaders does affect workplace unionism (Calveley and Healy 2000; Darlington 1994; 1998; 1999; 2000). It is evident that active local union leaders are also of vital importance (Calveley and Healy 2000; Darlington 1994; 1998; 1999; Fosh and Cohen 1990; Fosh 1993), especially as managerialism is being introduced into public sector workplaces, including schools. Such leaders are able to give voice to the concerns of members and their enthusiasm and commitment to the job is likely to keep the momentum of workplace unionism going.

Members of left-wing political parties are active in workplace unionism as is evidenced in schools by the SWP and Rank and File in the 1970s (Seifert 1984; 1987) and the Socialist Teachers Alliance in the present day (Hatcher 1994). It would appear, therefore, that if these members are active as union members they must, by definition, be active as local union leaders; their political ideologies and beliefs sustain their commitment to workplace unionism and helps in the union renewal process.

By drawing on the empirical research, the later chapters of the thesis will explore the issues raised in this chapter. Chapter Six will consider how new managerialism and devolvement of management initiatives to the local level heightened industrial relations tensions in the school, and how the collective actions of the teachers earned them a reputation for being 'militant'. Chapter Seven will explore the dynamic relationship between the political ideology of the local NUT representative and his

trade union activism and consider the tensions that developed between the rank and file members and their national union.

The following chapter will describe the methods used in the gathering of the research data.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

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My aim in this chapter is to take the reader with me on my research journey to provide an understanding of how my work has been informed by theoretical perspectives and how these have been developed and sharpened during my time ‘in the field’, to explain why I chose the methods that I have used and finally to share the trials, tribulations, fears - and indeed joys - of my research experience<sup>53</sup>.

#### **Methodology – taking a ‘realist’ approach**

Whilst recognising the academic debate surrounding ‘realism’, the thesis draws on variants of this methodological approach as espoused by Layder (1993) and Sayer (1992)<sup>54</sup> and does not aim to explore the wider philosophical debates surrounding this. By taking such an approach, the thesis aims to understand and develop academic theories with the use of empirical research which gives ‘voice’ to the subjects - the actors - being researched.

One of the first things that I, as a social researcher, discovered is that research does not take place in a vacuum – nor indeed is the researcher situated in a vacuum. Sayer suggests that ‘social scientists are invariably confronted with situations in which many things are going on at once and they lack the possibility, open to many natural scientists, of isolating out particular experiments’ and he goes on to say that ‘the task of assessing the nature of each of the constituent processes ... throws a huge burden onto abstraction’ (1992:3). It is clear that whoever, or whatever, is being researched (and also the person conducting the research) is affected by the wider environment of

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<sup>53</sup> To encapsulate the personal nature of the fieldwork, the chapter will be written in the first person.

<sup>54</sup> Realism is used in the sociological sense as defined thus by Layder: ‘[T]he realist model of social science has been developed as an alternative to the conventional positivist notion. Put very simply, a central feature of realism is its attempt to preserve a “scientific” attitude towards social analysis at the same time as recognising the importance of actors’ meanings and in some way incorporating them in research’ (1993:16).

the social setting; both researcher and researched are influenced in the way they act by issues in the world at large, such as laws, rules and regulations and also by issues closer to their own personal life whether it be at home or in their working environment. The issues themselves may well have been influenced by historical factors. Sayer is correct in his suggestion that the abstraction of individual processes is difficult (1992:3) however, Layder provides a 'Research Map' (see Appendix 3) as a resource to help the researcher with this process (1993). He suggests that his map 'is designed to facilitate research which works across the macro-micro division' (1993:102); it is useful in that it illustrates the problems associated with bringing together the various levels of research and is particularly relevant in this context where the wider, macro, changes in education have affected the teachers' working environment at the local level of the school.

Layder, in discussing the problems of 'bringing macro and micro analyses closer together', suggests that a realist approach offers 'a layered or "stratified" model of society which includes macro (structural, institutional) phenomena as well as the more micro phenomena of interaction and behaviour' (1993:7). Consequently 'it enables social research to address the problem of the division between macro and micro levels of analysis in sociology by concentrating attention on the organic links between them' and also that 'viewing society or social reality as a series of interdependent layers each with its own distinctive characteristics enables the researcher to be sensitive to the different units and timescales that are involved in social processes and social change' (Layder 1993:7). His 'map' breaks research down into a number of elements, 'self', 'situated activity', 'setting' and 'context' which all 'overlap and interweave with each other' (1993:8). Layder also identifies the importance of the dimensions of power and control in the research setting, suggesting that the researcher 'should be aware of forms of power and control relations that operate "behind the scenes" of the observable interactions of everyday life' (1993:170).

By drawing on the elements of Layder's map, it is possible to situate the subject of the researcher into the wider dimension of the arena in which they operate. For example, in the case of teachers in a school, one must consider the 'self' as in the beliefs and experiences that shape the actions of individual teachers and how these influence, and are influenced by, the school environment in which the research is taking place, the 'setting'. It is also important to be aware of the 'situated activity' of the teachers, their interaction both as individuals and as group members, with each other as colleagues, with the management of the school and with children and parents. Also, the wider 'context', will affect the teachers, for example the position of the school within the league tables or, more recently, the 'naming and shaming' of schools. All of these elements clearly overlap and inter-link with each other and all are influenced by the historical context of education and the teaching profession (as discussed in the previous chapters); as Layder suggests, 'the micro processes of everyday life as reflected in the situations and identities of the persons involved can only be understood properly when seen in conjunction with the more macro features' (1993:10). Consequently, by considering the various elements of Layder's map, it is possible to unpick or 'abstract' (Sayer, above) the various processes that contribute to the actions of the individual being researched; the map is a useful tool for organising the data in an attempt to explain the dialectic relationship between structure and agency.

Taking a realist approach to research has taken this researcher into the realms of the 'structure and agency' debate. Whilst avoiding entanglement in the finer points of this debate, the thesis engages with the ideas of Giddens who argues that a 'dialectic of control' exists within collectivities because 'however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her

a certain amount of power over the other' (1979:6)<sup>55</sup>. Giddens suggests that those in 'subordinate positions in social systems are frequently adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of those social systems' (1979:6); Bradley, influenced by Giddens, also argues for the importance of resources within power relations (1999) (as discussed in the introduction of this thesis). The thesis, as a consideration of workplace industrial relations, necessitates an engagement with the notion of structure and agency as the 'actors', whether they be employers, employees, trade unions or the government, use the various rules and resources to the best of their advantage.

Within the employment relationship, there is an inter-relationship between the various actors whilst their actions both influence, and are influenced by, the external environment; to understand workplace industrial relations requires an understanding of what is happening outside the workplace (Blyton and Turnbull 1994:32), an understanding of the structures created by, and shaping the activities of, the actors. Education, for example, has, as discussed in Chapter One, undergone radical and fundamental change since the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act; the structures created by the Act set preconditions within which teachers and their managers make choices.

Nevertheless, as Giddens (1979) argues, whilst acting within structural constraints actors also have the ability to use their own agency to a greater or lesser extent. Hyman suggests that within the labour process capital is faced with contradictory requirements: 'to limit the discretion which workers may apply against its interests; and to harness the willing application to profitable production of that discretion which cannot be eliminated' (1987:40). He goes on to say that 'the function of labour

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<sup>55</sup> Giddens argues that agency 'does not refer to a series of discrete acts combined together, but to a continuous flow of conduct' and that action involves a 'stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world' (1979:55); he goes on to suggest that 'it is a necessary feature of action that, at any point in time, the agent "could have acted otherwise"' (1979:56). Structure he defines as 'rules and resources, organised as properties of social systems' (1979:66); these are procedural rules, moral rules, material resources and resources of authority, all of which actors draw upon.

control involves *both* the direction, surveillance and discipline of subordinates whose enthusiastic commitment to corporate objectives cannot be taken for granted; *and* the mobilisation of the discretion, initiative and diligence which coercive supervision, far from guaranteeing, is likely to destroy' (1987:41) (original emphasis); thus capital has to acknowledge the ability of workers to use their agency either individually or collectively through their trade union organisation, they do not simply do as they are told for the benefit of capital. Likewise, Blyton and Turnbull suggest that the nature of the employment relationship 'is not simply one of (management) control versus (worker) resistance, but a more problematic mix of dissent and accommodation, conflict and cooperation' (1994:31).

The generation of the theory informing this research was influenced by the review of the literature as discussed in the previous chapters. However, the empirical research also influenced the generation of theory. Glaser and Strauss argue the importance of 'grounding theory in social research itself – for generating it from the data' (1967:viii); in this way they suggest that the theory will fit the accumulated data and that the data will not be made to fit the theory. Whilst this in itself is an important contribution to theory generating, as Layder points out, the Grounded Theory approach 'tends to encourage the researcher to focus on the "close-up" features of social interaction and, in this sense, neglects the seemingly more remote aspects of the setting and context' and I would agree with Layder that an awareness of 'the existence and operation of structural phenomena' is needed by the researcher 'in order to be sensitive to their implications for emerging theoretical ideas and concepts'(1993:55). As I went into the research with a belief that government imposed changes in education have affected the way in which schools are managed, that industrial relations issues have become a local, school level issue, my theory generation cannot be described as pure grounded theory (see Glaser and Strauss 1967). There was an inter-relationship between the literature reviews and the empirical research in developing the theories. The concepts generated by the published literature were developed and sharpened as the empirical research progressed, however, concepts also emerged during the research and the literature

was then utilised to illuminate these findings (this is discussed further later in the chapter when I describe my data analysis). The thesis considers the dynamic inter-relationship between theory and practice. The next section describes the methods used to achieve this.

### **Research design – the use of case study**

The area of study for this thesis - the employment of teachers - was instigated firstly by a quantitative study carried out jointly by my principal supervisor and one of her colleagues (Healy and Kraithman 1994b)<sup>56</sup> and secondly by my MA Dissertation (Calveley 1996). The former provided statistical evidence (and some qualitative data) that the working lives of teachers had been severely affected by government imposed education changes, whilst the latter followed this up by interviewing some of the respondents.

Whilst the importance of quantitative studies is recognised in that large-scale surveys illuminate ‘the dynamic components of change and continuity over time’ and they underline ‘the extent to which industrial relations practice in the workplace is shaped by wider management structures and market environment’ (Marginson 1998:383), their limitations must also be recognised (McCarthy 1994); McCarthy suggests that the study of industrial relations ‘cries out for a case study approach’ (1994:321). The richness of the data gathered in the interviews for my MA Dissertation supported the latter viewpoint; the honesty and openness displayed by the interviewees identified, we felt, an area waiting to be investigated.

The end of my MA coincided with Tony Blair’s now famous speech at the Labour Party Conference in which he promised to put ‘education, education, education’ to the

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<sup>56</sup> The study was carried out in collaboration with the NUT and the questionnaire was sent to 3,600 NUT members; 1,855 teachers responded (52%). The survey focussed on teachers’ employment in the context of educational change, with key findings being submitted as evidence to the School Teachers’ Review Body (Healy and Kraithman 1994a). The survey also allowed for a consideration of a number of issues with regards to the employment of teachers and their unionisation, including amongst others, appraisal (Healy 1997b), union joining (Healy 1997a) and career development (Healy 1999).



forefront of his political agenda (Blair 1996). A matter of months later (May 1997) New Labour were elected into government and the time seemed right to follow up on his promises to teachers and to investigate whether the working lives of teachers would change, for better or worse, under New Labour. In October that year I began my research.

Sayer distinguishes between ‘intensive’ research design which incorporates the study of individual agents in their causal contexts, interactive interviews and ethnography and ‘extensive’ research design which incorporates large-scale survey, formal questionnaires, and standardised interviews (1992:fig 13) (see Appendix 4). As identified above, the Healy and Kraithman extensive quantitative study had already identified major issues of concern for teachers, for example, longer working hours, high stress levels, loss of professional autonomy, performance appraisal, career development, (see for example Healy and Kraithman 1994a; Healy 1994; 1997b; Healy and Kraithman 1996; Healy 1999). It was now felt that the research should take a more qualitative, intensive, approach. Whipp suggests that qualitative research allows for the construction of ‘explanatory frameworks’; theory ‘emerges from the data’ and is then “‘grounded’ in the empirical data’ (1998:52). It also allows for problems to be investigated in their natural settings and, of particular relevance to this research, it is ‘an advantage when trying to uncover the many hidden features of the employment relationship’ (1998:56).

As public, media and government focus was on school league tables, identifying ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools, it was decided that an investigation into the working lives of teachers in three schools - one each at the ‘top’, ‘middle’ and ‘bottom’ of the tables - would provide a fruitful insight into the similarities and differences for these teachers. (Ultimately the research focussed on one particular school and this will be discussed in more detail below). Although the original survey identified areas concerning teachers, what it could not do was explore more deeply their feelings and concerns and as Whipp identifies, the way in which ‘individuals construct the meanings of phenomena is paramount’ to qualitative researchers (1998:52); as Yin

suggests ‘surveys can try to deal with phenomenon and context, but their ability to investigate the context is extremely limited’ (1994:13). It was with this in mind that it was decided to give teacher’s ‘voice’ (Goodson 1992) by interviewing them in their natural work environment, the school.

The interview is ‘the primary means of accessing the experiences and subjective views of actors’ (Whipp 1998:54) and as such is ‘one of the most important sources of case study information’ (Yin 1994:84). Interviewing, notably the use of unstructured or semi-structured, is invaluable as a strategy for the discovery of information (Fielding 1993b:136), particularly in the situation, such as this one, where the theory is allowed to emerge from the data. The interviewer is able to probe and develop themes which have emerged during the current, and previous, interviews. Interviews also allow the interviewee to talk about areas of concern to them and these may point the researcher in new, previously unthought of, or indeed unknown, directions. Nevertheless, one must be aware of ‘interviewer bias’ (Fielding 1993b:148), as discussed in greater detail below.

Kitay and Callus suggest that case study ‘is the most favoured research design used by industrial relations researchers’ and dates back at least to the Webbs in 1902 (1998:101); they hypothesise that this is because case studies allow such researchers to ‘provide explanations and an understanding of complex social phenomena’ (1998:101). Correspondingly, Yin states that ‘case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real life situation’ (1994), whilst Morrow suggests that ‘the concern in a case study is with comprehending the rich complex of factors that define the case at hand’ (1994:206). Taking into account the realist approach to the research and thus recognising the complex interaction between structure and agency, case study was deemed the appropriate research strategy for asking probing questions of teachers in schools.

Gomm *et al.* warn of the dangers of empirical generalisations made from case study research and suggest that extreme care should be taken in making such generalisations (1998). Nevertheless, Deem argues that case study analysis ‘by focusing in depth on what happens in one or more locations, offers policy makers the opportunity to see what consequences, both intended and unintended, may flow from particular policies’ (1998:16). Case study analysis therefore allows for an investigation into the effect of national policies (in this case in education) at a local level (the school).

One of the advantages of case study research is that it can draw upon a multiplicity of research methods which ‘allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioural issues’ (Yin 1994:92). It also, however, allows for the development of ‘converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation’ (Yin 1994:92) which is important when, as in the current research and discussed above, theory is generated from the research findings, it is emergent. Yin argues that the findings or conclusions of a case study based on several different sources of information are ‘likely to be much more convincing and accurate’ (1994:92).

The intensive research took the form of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, non-participant observation, ‘informal’ conversations, the gathering of data from various sources within and outside the school and extensive fieldwork notes; in short, an ethnographic approach was utilised, albeit for short periods of time, as a ‘method of discovery’ (Fielding 1993a:155).

Ethnographic research, which has been accredited to the ‘Chicago school’ (Fielding 1993a:156; Layder 1993:38) allows the researcher to study people ‘in their “natural” settings’ (Fielding 1993a:156). The researcher takes an empathetic, or ‘*verstehen*’ (Fielding 1993a:157; Layder 1993:38; Sayer 1992:35), approach to their research and to do this they have to become a part of the group studied. Layder suggests that this ‘humanist strand of symbolic interactionism favours research methods and strategies such as participant observation, in-depth or semi-structured interviews, and

documentary evidence, which seek to tap the subjective understandings of the people who are the subjects of the research' (1993:38), the methods used in this case study. Of particular importance to social science research is the use of participant observation as 'it is the task of the social scientist to interpret the meanings and experiences of social actors, a task that can only be achieved through participation with the individuals involved' (Burgess 1984:78).

A problem which can arise in all research, but more emphatically so with participant observation, is that 'the researcher becomes his (sic.) own research instrument and is necessarily involved with the subjects of his research' (Punch 1993:185) and therefore there is a 'possibility of researchers modifying and influencing the research context as well as being influenced by it themselves' (Burgess 1984:80); as a researcher one must be aware of this.

An example of this is a discussion which took place between two teachers in the case study school. Prompted by a question from me, the teachers spoke openly and frankly in an informal conversation about an issue in the school; the resulting dialogue was invaluable to me in providing a greater insight into what had been taking place and the strength of their feelings. Whether this discussion would have taken place had I not been present is, of course, an unknown quantity and whether the teachers would have vocalised their feelings in such a vehement way is again open to question. My being there may well have influenced the content of the discussion, how am I to know whether or not I was being told what they wanted me to hear, or even what they thought I wanted to hear? Did they intend to influence my research? This of course, makes the theorising of the research more difficult as it is necessary to 'abstract' (Sayer 1992:3) the relevant information from the data accumulated. However, what makes this possible, is that by utilising various other research methods that a case study allows, as discussed above (e.g. further participant observation and interviews), I was able to identify recurring themes.

The thesis is based on a single case study which was conducted in a school situated at the 'bottom' of the school league tables. Although, as already stated, this was not the intention when the research started, the path of the school followed an unanticipated trajectory and this legitimated the use of a sole case study; it was apparent that the scope for gathering rich workplace industrial relations data in this school was immense. Also, a great deal of time was dedicated to this school and had two or more schools been investigated by necessity the research would have been less intensive. This is supported by Fielding who suggests that due to the emphasis in ethnographic research placed on "depth", "intensity" [and] "richness" such research is usually limited in size and that the gathering of 'very detailed material is demanding and few ethnographers are able to devote such effort to more than one or two settings' (1993a:156).

The changing direction of the school, and therefore the research design, meant that the early pilot interviews were incorporated into the thesis; however, it must be remembered that through the research for my MA dissertation I had previous experience in interviewing teachers. It is also worth mentioning that I spent three days in a 'mid-table' school interviewing a number of teachers, the headteacher, a deputy headteacher and the Chair of Governors in order to gain a comparison with the case study school.

The next section takes you on the research journey.

### **The fieldwork – carrying the egg!**

The characteristics of the case study school will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, however, it is necessary here to give some background as this puts the research into context. The school, which I have called 'Parkville', is an inner-city comprehensive school. Many of the children come from dis-advantaged backgrounds, a large minority are refugees, some from war-torn areas of the world, and the majority speak English as a second or third language. The school buildings are poorly maintained making the working and learning environment unpleasant.

### *Gaining access*

This research has been both characterised by coincidences and chance whilst also being fraught with difficulties and anxieties. The first coincidence, and my initial piece of luck, was in gaining access to the school and this was purely by chance. A colleague of my husband, a governor in an inner-city school which had recently failed an HMI inspection, was interested in my MA research and offered to talk to me about the school and her experiences there.

During the subsequent interview I discovered that the school was battling against closure and that the pressures being put on both management and staff were raising industrial relations issues. I was keen to interview teachers in the school and the governor agreed to approach the headteacher on my behalf, however, as things at that time were fraught she did not hold out too much hope; the headteacher was working late into the night and weekends and was unlikely to have time to spare to speak with me. Nevertheless, she felt that the story of the school needed to be told and was keen for me to speak with people there. I did not raise my hopes and I continued to consider other options for gaining access.

As it transpired there was another coincidence, the headteacher was from the same northern city as I am and was happy to help another ex-patriate. It was agreed that I would write to him outlining my project and he would ask the teachers to take part in the research; he later rang to say that the teachers had not responded but he would be willing to speak with me. The school subsequently featured on the local BBC evening news, with teachers and parents shown demonstrating outside the Town Hall – the fate of the school had been decided, the LEA were to close the school in eighteen months time. That was on a Thursday evening, on the following Monday morning I paid my first visit to Parkville, just as the impact of being closed hit the school.

My first impression of the school was shock and horror; the conditions were appalling with paint peeling off walls, windows broken and litter on the floor. The front door

was secured by an entry-phone system which, I later discovered, was as much to keep the pupils in during the day as it was to keep intruders out! In fact, the deputy head 'operated' the door at lunch time to make sure that only those allowed out got out (the school suffered from a high truancy rate). Having not been inside a school since I left my sedate convent school in the 1970s, my first thought was 'is this what schools are like these days?' (My visit to another school, as mentioned above, suggested this not to be the case.)

The headteacher's room was down a corridor with a key-coded door at the end. We talked over coffee in a nicely decorated and comfortable meeting room. He was very friendly, very much playing up the northern connection and I became convinced that this played an important part in my gaining access to the school. We talked for about an hour (the conversation was taped) and during this time he was very open and frank about what he believed was happening in the school. It was already apparent to me that there were real industrial relations issues to be investigated in this school. He said he would speak with the teachers again; I felt I had found a 'gatekeeper' (Arber 1993:37; Burgess 1984:48) to my access. What I did not realise at the time was that he, and therefore I, were on the wrong side of a gate that was firmly closed.

On my second visit the headteacher told me that although a new school would be opening on the same site as the closing school he would not be appointed as headteacher, he would be made redundant, as would all the staff. During this visit I met the senior deputy head who, coincidence number three, also came from my home city; the 'northern' connection was deepening. On this occasion the meeting was curtailed due to the press waiting to speak with the headteacher; however, he suggested that he ask the deputy head to speak with the teachers about talking to me as he felt they would be more acquiescent if it came from him. In retrospect, this was an early warning about gaining access via management; Burgess suggests that 'the negotiation of access' can 'reveal to the researcher the pattern of social relationships at a site' (1984:40).

I was by this stage acutely aware I was only getting one side of the story, the headteacher was giving me his version of events but I needed to get the teachers' view too; it was essential that I speak with them. Burgess, writing on researching in schools, suggests that researchers should 'consider the extent they rely on a headteacher for initial sponsorship within the school' and that one has to question 'the extent to which a headteacher can grant access to the whole of a school site' (1984:40). Parkville's headteacher was willing for me to speak with the teachers but could not make them be willing to speak with me; at this point I must emphasise the fact that he *wanted* the staff to speak to me, he felt that it would be good for them to talk to someone from outside. Whilst I am in no doubt that his motives were genuine, as Fielding points out 'access-givers ... may have ulterior motives in cooperating' (1993a:160).

I obviously do not intend to detail all my visits to the school but the early ones set the scene for what happened later. Over the next couple of months I made numerous attempts to gain access to the teachers and could not understand why I was getting no response; I saw an article in the press, wrote to the teacher quoted in it but he did not respond. I decided on a direct targeting approach and asked the headteacher to provide me with a list of teachers so that I could write to them independently.

Drawing on Layder's Research Map (1993) it is important here to put the research into a wider political context. At this stage I was still unaware of the micro politics (Ball 1987) of the school which ultimately caused me problems with access as will be discussed further below. I was to some extent, however, aware of the macro politics. The school had been designated as 'failing' and was being closed. The teachers, by implication had 'failed'; they were all being made redundant. Why would they want to talk to an academic researcher from the University of Hertfordshire? As it was, they were being constantly scrutinised internally by the school inspectorate, and externally by the press.



During one telephone conversation with the headteacher he told me about fighting outside the school with machetes and knives; pupils from other schools were taunting the ‘failing’ pupils of Parkville<sup>57</sup>. This was a frightening concept for me as I considered my own personal safety. Access suddenly became less desirable! On the other hand, being a ‘tough northerner’.....

Of the twenty randomly selected teachers from the headteacher’s list (approximately half) two responded. These teachers left messages for me to ring them but I had difficulty contacting them at the school. A sub-finding of my research is that schools are the singularly most difficult institution in which to contact someone by telephone! I still had not been able to make contact with the teacher quoted in the press. He did not return my calls and I was beginning to get concerned that I might annoy him enough to alienate him – I still had not realised that I was on the wrong side of the gate.

By this time I could feel the research slipping through my fingers, I needed some positive action. I rang the headteacher and suggested that I spoke to the teachers directly at a staff meeting and fortunately he agreed. On May 1<sup>st</sup> 1998 I entered the lions’ den for the first time<sup>58</sup>.

### *The lions’ den*

I arrived in the dismal and dingy staffroom for the 8.30 morning briefing flanked by the headteacher and the two deputy heads. Within minutes an extremely hostile atmosphere between management and staff became apparent to me; alarm bells started to ring. Although the headteacher had been extremely helpful in giving me

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<sup>57</sup> I later found that this is a situation not unique to Parkville; Dean reports on primary school children being bullied in the streets following the ‘naming and shaming’ of their school (1998:4). Clearly this was a government policy which had severe consequences for both schools and their pupils.

<sup>58</sup> Becker’s description of participant observation is that ‘[T]he participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed’ (1970:25) and in line with this I suggest that my participant observation began at this moment of the research. (Becker is gender-specific throughout his essays.)

access to the school, I was beginning to experience drawbacks to this; as Burgess points out, gaining access via ‘someone higher in the hierarchy ... raises questions about the trust teachers might put in a researcher who enters the school via the headteacher’ (1984:39). Nevertheless, this was my big chance. I had to sell myself and my research and persuade these teachers, who were being scrutinised by HMI inspectors and criticised by the press, to talk to me. Nervous? Me? You bet!! I was shaking.

Throughout my talk, the teacher from the newspaper article sat and smiled cynically (I recognised him from his photograph). At the end he suggested I should take my findings to the LEA; he would be willing to be quoted, he did not feel the need for anonymity. When I later asked him to talk to me, however, he said that he would ‘at some time’; I felt he was deliberately playing ‘hard to get’ and it was much later in the research that I discovered his ‘role’ in the drama as a ‘key player’ and the reasons for his reticence to talk. Only one teacher came forward to offer himself for interview, however, another did drop in to speak briefly with me during the morning break.

The headteacher allocated me a room to use in the ‘management suite’ and whilst I was in there he and the deputy head came in to ‘get some things’ out of the safe. These ‘things’ turned out to be a very large, vicious looking knife and a heavy carpenter’s file; they explained that these had been confiscated from pupils coming into school and that the police came every so often to remove weapons from the premises, however, I should not worry because they were not for use inside the school only outside! I was again faced with thoughts concerning my own personal safety. Access – who wants access, oh yes, this tough northerner .....

### *Blowing up balloons – the gate begins to open*

Earlier in the day I had offered my services to the second deputy head who was short of help for decorating the dining hall with balloons and posters in preparation for a special African-Caribbean lunch. I was keen to get involved in school activities in order to get a real feel of what working there was like and that was how I found

myself in the dining hall blowing up balloons, trying to keep the children in order and doing 'dinner duty'; my participant observation had begun. This proved to be the first of a few very good moves I made; not only did it give me informal access to the teachers, the management were happy to have me around because, as was later said to me, I was 'willing to get stuck in'.

I then interviewed the first deputy head and this was followed by the teacher who had said earlier that he would speak to me. I interviewed them in the office next to the headteacher's and he came in during both interviews for different reasons. It became clear to me that if I was to build up the confidence of the teachers then I had to get out of this office, to distance myself from management. Having the headteacher as my gatekeeper had to be carefully managed.

However, at the end of the day I had coffee with the headteacher and deputy heads and they were all really grateful for the help I had given during the day and made it clear that I would be welcome in the school again; I had managed to interview one deputy head and two teachers and made myself known to the 'key player'. A number of teachers had seen me around during the African Caribbean lunch and had been pleasant to me – the gate was beginning to creak open.

For the rest of the month I had no response from any of the teachers I had written to and was still having difficulty in speaking to the two who had originally responded. Clearly, I had to get back into the school; I began to realise that access involves 'negotiation and renegotiation' (Burgess 1984:45). This time it was the deputy head whom I spoke with and he agreed for me to visit the school for a day. Access resumed!

The next visit turned out to be important because it got me out of the management suite and back into the lions' den. On this occasion I was invited to a quiz in the hall and whilst there I identified one of the teachers who had left a message for me – she had the same accent as me (another northern coincidence). I made myself known to

her and we went for coffee in the staffroom. This was the first time I had returned to the 'lions' den' and I felt very uncomfortable – as though I was sitting in someone else's seat! I interviewed the teacher in the staffroom and consequently made my break with the management suite.

I then spoke with the second deputy head who invited me to stay to lunch. I became acutely aware of the importance of being on the premises in order to tie people down and this became a part of my research strategy.

During lunch the deputy head had to leave to sort out quite a violent argument between a female pupil and a male member of staff. Two teachers I had met on the African Caribbean day came and joined me and whilst chatting afterwards agreed to be interviewed. Fielding suggests that 'informants are the unsung heroes of ethnography; it is usual to develop several key informants with whom you discuss your research' (1993a:160). One of these teachers became a 'key informant' for me, she was my 'ally' over the coming months, telling me what had been happening and giving me the staffroom gossip. It was at these times that my research entered the 'real' world, a world in which I was a part; I could listen to the gossip but I must not become a part of it. Although my ally was aware of what I was doing and why I was there, at times this made me question the ethics of my approach; as Fielding suggests 'short of wearing a sign, ethnographers cannot signal when they are or are not collecting data' (1993a:159). When chatting 'informally' with subjects it could be argued that 'overt and covert approaches [to research] shade into each other' (Fielding 1993a:159).

On each visit to the school I felt obliged to see the headteacher out of courtesy; I must stress, however, that the headteacher did not make this a condition of my access, it was self-imposed. In saying that, Fielding suggests that the gatekeeper is equivalent to 'a "sponsor" in the organisation, to whom one is accountable' (1993a:160). Whilst I do not think this is necessarily true, I did initially feel I should acknowledge the position of the headteacher, both as the senior manager in the school and as the

person keeping my access open; at this early stage he was, to me and my research, a very powerful person. Nevertheless, in order to convince the teachers of my autonomy from management I needed to be allowed to come and go without his constant permission, and to stay away from the management suite.

On speaking with the headteacher, he was happy for me to come into the school whenever I wanted. He did, however, ask whether I had 'discovered' anything which might make it a 'little easier' with the staff over the next twelve months. Burgess warns that in relying on a headteacher for access consideration must be given to 'the extent to which the researcher may become a consultant to the school and to the headteacher' (1984:40); I had no intention of becoming either and realised that I had to tread very carefully. I suddenly felt as if I was carrying an egg around with me, one false move and I could drop it, it would break and be gone; the gatekeeper must not close the gate. Stress? What stress?

Over the next couple of months I played a sort of 'cat and mouse' game. Each time I went into the school to interview someone I tried to arrange to see another teacher on another day; if a teacher said 'I'm free now' I made an excuse and asked whether I could come back another time - this was my strategy for keeping the gate open. From this point on I avoided the management suite as much as possible although whenever I did bump into the headteacher he was always aware of my presence in the school. I tried to ensure that interviews with teachers took place either in their own classroom, departmental office or in the staffroom where I hoped they would be more relaxed. They often offered me tea or coffee and one teacher even brought in a cake for the occasion! The gate was creaking open little by little but I was still unable to tie the 'key player' down. Was it my imagination or was he avoiding me?

It was now abundantly clear that the relationship between the headteacher and the staff was nothing short of abysmal. They did not trust him and, I felt by association they did not trust me; the fact that he was the gatekeeper was, to some extent, working against me.

### *A change of 'gatekeeper'*

During the last week of term I heard that the headteacher had resigned and the senior deputy was taking over as acting head until the school closed. My first reaction was concern – six months into my fieldwork and my gatekeeper would no longer be there to open the gate for me; then I thought of the times that other gates had closed in my face and I just wondered ... Perhaps things were already beginning to change, even the 'key player' finally agreed to talk to me.

On the last day of term I had the dubious pleasure of witnessing a number of leaving presentations, an emotional occasion with many tears. It seemed to mark the start of the end, the school would be closed twelve months later. I felt like an impostor, but from a research point of view it provided an insight into the collegiality amongst the staff and how they felt, collectively, about the headteacher – there were many acrimonious comments about him. I was beginning to gain an understanding of 'the meanings which participants assign to social situations' (Burgess 1984:79).

I had interviewed the 'key-player' and began to understand his reluctance to talk with me earlier. He had given me a copy of an article from a leading Sunday broadsheet in which he was blamed by the headteacher for most of the school's problems. He had declined to respond to the newspaper as his words 'had been twisted' on previous occasions – in fact, he said 'I don't like interviews' and subsequently took my question sheet from me, read out the questions and answered them as quickly and abruptly as possible. Understandably, he was cautious and, undoubtedly, suspicious of me.

The acting head was happy for me to come in to the school the following term and even suggested that I be a classroom assistant for a week. I had found a new gatekeeper and this time felt that both he and I were on the same side of the gate as my other research subjects. Surely the egg would not break now?

The atmosphere in the school had changed dramatically by the time I went in the following term. As the acting head explained ‘the blame culture that was here before ... that has gone’. My new gatekeeper was willing for me to visit the school and acquiesced when I asked if I could attend a meeting between the LEA and the staff regarding redundancies. He also arranged a full week’s schedule as classroom assistant which was to prove invaluable in giving me access to teachers.

As I mentioned earlier the acting head and I both come from the same city and we have a distinctive accent, we also both have red hair. He constantly referred to me as his sister and I was constantly denying it! I had learned my lesson about being associated too closely with management and my aim now was to try and distance myself – not easy!

#### *Active research – being ‘Miss’*

In becoming a classroom assistant I was now ‘officially’ a member of the lions’ den. I sat in a seat as close to the door and tried to be as unobtrusive as I possibly could. The teachers had agreed to have me in their classrooms and whilst I wanted to be part of the school, I recognised that they had to accept me.

Fielding suggests that ‘[O]ne is participating in order to get detailed data, not to provide the group with a new member. One must maintain a certain detachment in order to take that data and interpret it’ (1993a:158). Whilst I appreciate what he is saying, and this goes back to the point made above regarding the interviewer influencing the research, I think that to obtain detailed data it is necessary to become as much a part of the researched group as possible and that this also helps with the interpretation of the data; the implications of this are, of course, that one has to question one’s interpretations carefully as they may be the subject of bias. Nevertheless, I very much wanted to become a member of the staffroom of Parkville.

I helped with the lessons as much as I could. A dilemma I faced was not being quite sure what my role was. Although when I asked him the acting head simply replied ‘oh

you know, just help out', I was not sure whether the teachers had the same *laissez-faire* attitude to my being there; to what extent had he 'negotiated' access with them? In talking about research within the police, Punch suggests that this dilemma is resolved when 'the researcher is drawn into some participation and must decide for himself (sic.) where the border of legitimacy lies' (1993:186). For me this happened when I challenged a pupil who was misbehaving and the whole classroom went quiet; we had a stand-off situation which I felt I could not back down from or it would lose my credibility in later classes. Eventually the boy acquiesced and handed over the object that had been causing the disturbance. But had I done the right thing? Had I overstepped my remit? When I asked the teacher he assured me I had acted properly because that was the 'role' I was there to play, but I had taken a gamble. (Later in the research I discussed this issue with both newly qualified and supply teachers and they said how important it is to establish a presence in the classroom in order to maintain control, especially in a school such as Parkville; I was now able to have empathy with them in this.)

I really enjoyed my time in the classroom. Although I had been in the school on more than a dozen different occasions I had not really appreciated just what it was like to be teaching there. It was interesting to observe the different levels of discipline and respect teachers were able to command, and also the varying methods they used to maintain control over their classes.

I did my share of 'dinner-duty' and helped sort out arguments in the dinner queue. One very important lesson I learned was not to move from classroom to classroom at the same time as the children if at all possible – the stairs were a very dangerous place! (One teacher had been accidentally knocked down and had to be taken to hospital the previous term – no problem for this tough northerner though!) I also learned about the children. Many were troubled and came from disturbed backgrounds but on the whole they were generally quite polite and did what they were told.



It was only by being in the classroom that I could appreciate the problems facing the teachers. I also realised how committed the staff (including the management and administration staff) were to the education of these (mostly) underprivileged children. I also gained from informal as well as formal access to the teachers. They began to treat me as a new colleague and talk to me politely whilst queuing up for coffee at break-time. I became acclimatised to the 'Pavlov's dog' syndrome, every time the school 'pips' went I knew I should be somewhere. I was now free to come and go in the staffroom but was, nevertheless, aware of not quite being fully accepted; this led to a feeling of isolation.

A word about the children. They did not really question my presence – I was already used to being asked 'Miss, are you an inspector', but now they saw me as a learning support teacher. One young boy spoke little English and I helped him with his English lesson; two girls needed help in history, another in doing a science experiment. And I genuinely enjoyed it all. I can't describe the pleasure I got when a pupil said to me 'Miss, will you come into Sir's class again next week? Please miss?'

I strongly believe that my enjoyment and enthusiasm were noted and acknowledged by the teachers and that this helped in my future dealings with them – I was ever so gradually becoming 'one of them'. I often spoke with a teacher after a class telling them how much I had enjoyed it and what a thrill I got out of helping the children and they seemed to take vicarious pleasure from this, after all, it was their school and their pupils.

Only on two occasions did I feel totally downhearted and disillusioned. The first was when I went to a lesson and the teacher was quite abrupt and rude to me. This teacher was also the union representative; he refused to be interviewed. The second occasion was when I asked whether I might attend a union meeting and was told to turn up and wait outside while they decided. After standing outside for hours (well ten minutes actually, but it seemed like hours) I was told that the issues were too sensitive for me to be there; that was quite a humiliating experience. When I told my 'ally' the story

she said she would have attended the meeting herself if she had known that they would not let me in and then she could have reported back to me! The union representative, however, continued to be unpleasant towards me, often looking straight through me as if I were not there. Overall I went to the school on almost forty different occasions over an eighteen month period and apart from the time I spent in his classroom, not once did he acknowledge my presence.

Again, this reminds us that researchers are not themselves in vacuums, personalities come into play. For some reason this person had decided he did not like me and he was not going to speak to me. I had a similar experience with a female teacher who, although very co-operative in a first interview, 'forgot' about a second interview which we had arranged. This may have been a genuine mistake but my instincts, upon which I relied heavily throughout the fieldwork, told me she did not like me and I did not push to make arrangements for another interview.

My relationship with the teachers developed significantly when I attended a 'Multi-Cultural Evening'; the teachers were clearly pleased to see me there and appreciated the effort I had made, some even hugged me. Burgess comments that 'developing trust and establishing relationships are a crucial part of a researcher's involvement in the social scene' (1984:92); I felt on this particular evening I was not only finally becoming accepted by the teachers, but that they wanted me to be there to enjoy the event with them. It was important to these teachers that I understood that they had not abandoned this 'failing' school. They were proud of the evening; one teacher gave me a flyer produced to advertise the event and asked me to include it in my thesis (see Appendix 5). Even the 'key player' was pleased to see me there, he thanked me for coming and his attitude towards me changed completely from this evening on, he became more relaxed and willing to talk with me.

I believe that the Multi-Cultural Evening marked the point where it was acknowledged that I had entered the 'social setting' (Layder 1993) of the teachers, not only by them but by me too. I suddenly realised how emotionally attached I had

become to the research; Parkville was now 'my school' too. Again, I was acutely aware of the dangers of such involvement; I found truth in Fielding's perception that objective observation 'is hopeless to achieve' (1993a:164). I am confident that rather than weakening the validity of the research data, my attachment to the school enhanced my concern with providing an unbiased account of the findings, resulting in a more rigorous and questioning analysis of my data, as discussed later in the chapter; as Fielding suggests '[U]nderstanding is derived from experience' (1993a:164).

My acceptance in the school from then on was almost total. More and more teachers had been acknowledging me prior to this (partly because with all the supply staff I was beginning to be one of the more recognised faces!) but now they would actually make a point of saying hello and having a chat, I had become a part of 'Parkville'.

The above was a chronological journey through my field work, however, the following sections will, I hope, give some insight into the 'doing' of participant observation .

#### *The inner-sanctum: the 'smokers room'*

Fielding suggests that 'most organisations contain factions' (1993a:160) and this was certainly the case within Parkville's staffroom with teachers affiliated to different groups. One of these groups gathered in the small kitchen area, the 'smokers room'; here they not only smoked, but they also discussed school issues and gossiped. Although the 'key player' was not a smoker he would often go into the room for a chat. My problem was how to get in there – should I take up smoking?

The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the union representative was a gatekeeper to this room; whenever I entered the room to make a coffee, if he was talking he would immediately cease to do so and often the conversation would stop until I had left. It was difficult for me to go in, I felt awkward and out of place. Eventually I suggested that I interview some teachers in this room which not only got me in there and accepted, but the teacher's being interviewed were relaxed because of

the environment (and of course they were smoking). By the end of my time visiting the school the conversation no longer stopped when I walked in, although the union representative often walked out.

### *Inside the 'outsiders'*

I discussed earlier my 'ally' in the school and I have a lot for which to thank her. Not only did she make a point of introducing me to other members of staff when I was finding it difficult to get to talk to them, she also introduced me to her friends with whom I sat during break time and whom I could join for lunch. What I did not mention earlier was that this teacher, and one of her friends, were black. Why do I mention this now? Because they also were 'outsiders'.

These two women always made me feel welcome and included me. Going into the 'lions' den' only got easier towards the end of the research as the barriers came down. Most of the time I had been accepted by the teachers, but I was still an outsider and I would agree here with Paetcher's findings that 'a visiting researcher is a relatively unimportant aspect of a busy and demanding school life' (1998:103). Sometimes, and in particular during the early stages of the research, I could sit and no one would speak to me or acknowledge me unless my ally and her friend were there; they always went out of their way to include me. I mentioned this to them one day over lunch and they laughed and said 'but you're an outsider aren't you, just like us'.

I think this is telling not only from the perception the black teachers had of their colleagues (I had not perceived that there was racism in the staffroom) but also from the point of the researcher. I had worked so hard to become 'accepted' by the teachers, and the black teachers, drawing on their own experiences, could identify with this.

This is not to say that the other teachers were unpleasant or rude to me, on the contrary they were always polite, they just did not make any effort, they did not think. We must not forget, however, that this was understandable in the light of there being

a continuous stream of supply teachers who were often only there for a day or two; they had probably seen too many new - and temporary - faces. Also, as discussed above, it took them a long time to trust me, they were not sure what I was doing there, and were very cautious. I must also point out that the headteacher, the acting head and the deputy head were always helpful and the deputy often invited me to her office for coffee; I know that she too felt like 'an outsider' in the staffroom.

### *Talking teachers*

It is sometimes suggested that taping an interview inhibits those being taped and in one case this was so; my 'ally' told me she felt as though she could relax and say what she wanted once the tape had been switched off. Another teacher refused to be taped because, he said 'I don't know who you are or what you will do with the information you gather' and one of the support staff also refused to be taped.

Nevertheless, I would argue that taping the interviews had a positive effect; by taping I was able to give my full concentration to the answers to the questions, thus keeping the conversation flowing, particularly at sensitive moments; Fielding warns that by not recording interviews it is inevitable that data is lost and that the interaction is less fluent as the interviewer stops to make notes (1993b:146). Once they relaxed the teachers seemed to forget the tape recorder, but would have been acutely aware of my scribbling down notes. I was able to be far more empathetic by sitting and listening and, of course, keeping eye contact.

Of all those asked to be interviewed, only two said no. One, as mentioned previously was the union representative and the other was an extremely quiet teacher who eventually started talking to me – off tape – during the last few days of the school. In all, I interviewed twenty-four teachers, a number of them more than once<sup>59</sup>. (See Appendix 6 for a brief profile of those interviewed.)

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<sup>59</sup> At the start of the research there were thirty-six teachers in the school; this included a SPEAL (English as a Second Language) team of four. When the school closed there were eighteen of the original teachers, including one SPEAL member still at the school; four of the teachers who left were

One of the amazing things, for me, was what people were willing to say to me. I, like Finch, 'claim no special qualities which make it easy for me to get people to talk' (1993:168) but once the teachers started talking they did not want to stop. I think that the use of semi-structured interviews helped this because the interviewee is able to take more control of the conversation and perhaps feel less like they are being grilled, or expected to have 'right' answers; the interview becomes more of a 'chat'. The teachers appeared to enjoy the interviews, for example I had comments such as 'you're very easy to talk to, I enjoyed our chat'; 'I enjoyed speaking to you yesterday'; one teacher told me that she 'felt elated after we'd had our talk' and that I had made her 'sit back and reflect' both on her career and the situation in the school.

Towards the end of the research it was suggested by the acting head that I had almost provided therapy for the teachers who had needed someone without pre-conceived ideas to talk to. As Paetcher points out 'most people only rarely have the opportunity to be listened to exclusively and attentively for an hour at a time' and the teachers involved in her research used the interview 'as an opportunity to let off steam about their situation, to talk through things that were bothering them or simply to tell someone how they felt' (1998:103); I felt that this was often the case with Parkville teachers. It is also significant that these men and women were all re-considering their future careers inside or outside teaching; they were all facing redundancy. Many of them were interested in my own career and wanted to know about life as a 'mature' student; one teacher asked me to obtain for her some information about doing an MA at the university, and another told me I had 'inspired' her to finish the MA she had started.

At the start of the research I found it was mainly women teachers I was talking to. I think there are possibly two reasons for this; one is that I simply found it easier to approach a woman in the staffroom, in the playground or in the dining hall and ask

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replaced by long-term supply teachers, and two SPEAL members were also replaced; there were approximately twenty-four teachers at the close.

whether she would be interviewed. I found it far more difficult to approach the men, however, this did change once I had met them in their classrooms. Secondly, as Finch (1993) also found, the women were quite happy to talk to me, as another woman.

An example of this was when, about half-way through interviewing one woman teacher she started interviewing me; she asked whether I had children and wanted to know why not. This gave me a dilemma, I did not really want to discuss such personal information, however, on the other hand I was expecting her to be open and frank with me and I came to the conclusion that she had a right to the answers to her questions and we chatted about my personal life for about ten minutes (I also made a conscious decision not to switch off the tape although I did draw the line at transcribing this part of it!). This 'giving' as well as 'taking' of information paid dividends. She became more relaxed and more open for the rest of the interview; it was almost as if she now knew who she was talking to. This very much brings to mind Finch's comment that 'the woman-to-woman interview ... does seem to me to be a special situation' (1993:169). Once again, one realises that the researcher cannot be totally detached from the researched, we may share the same life experiences.

#### *The closing of Parkville – 'my school'*

By the time the school closed in July 1999 it had well and truly become 'my school'. I had been extremely angry when I read a newspaper article which talked about the school in un-favourable terms and got the facts wrong. How dare they! I really empathised with how the teachers felt when they were being constantly barraged by the press. I had become a part of what I was researching.

I was in Parkville when the school finally closed helping out with an 'activities' week during which I learned to juggle, play a steel drum and make jewellery! I also took a group of children, with another teacher, to the cinema. The last day was especially emotional with lots of tears and I played my part in that too, especially as one of the children presented me with a necklace she had made for me.

I thanked each of the teachers before I left and I think a very telling comment was from one teacher who said to me ‘no, thank-you, you’ve done a very good job’.

The gate had finally opened wide for me and the egg did not even crack! I shall miss Parkville.

### *Afterword*

On my last day in the school I was approached by a BBC programme producer who was intending to make a ‘fly on the wall’ documentary of the new school<sup>60</sup>. He had been attempting to contextualise the closing of Parkville by asking the teachers in the school what had happened and they were reluctant to speak with him; some, including the acting head, had suggested he should talk to me as I ‘knew all about it’. I refused to discuss my research with him and pointed out to him that this would be completely unethical; his answer to this was ‘oh come on, give me a break, you know how difficult it is to get them to talk’ and then promised he would use anything I gave him ‘in confidence’. Of course, it goes without saying that I discussed nothing with him.

In order to give the reader an insight into the teachers interviewed, Appendix 6 provides a brief profile of these showing, where possible, their status and tenure in the school. During the course of the research it became apparent that the teachers formed informal groups which had a significant impact on activities within the school (as discussed in the following chapters). I have, therefore, categorised the teachers into broad groupings which I have called the ‘core’, ‘peripheral’ and ‘outsider’ groups<sup>61</sup>. Throughout the rest of the thesis teachers are referred to by their related number as identified in Appendix 6; in this way, the reader is acquainted with the teacher referred to without impinging on the latter’s anonymity<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> The acting head had been approached by all the TV channels asking to make a similar documentary of the closing of the school and had refused them all.

<sup>61</sup> These groups are created purely from my observations; it is acknowledged that caution must be taken in the use of typologies.

<sup>62</sup> The descriptions provided in Appendix 6 would allow the teachers to be recognised within the internal setting of the school (and possibly by LEA members) and would therefore have to be removed prior to any form of publication of the thesis outside the University.



Apart from the interviews conducted with the teachers, I also interviewed the headteacher three times, the senior deputy both in this position and again as acting head, the second deputy head (twice), a seconded deputy head, one support staff and two of the administration staff.

In order to put my findings at Parkville into the wider political setting I also carried out interviews outside the school. I talked to a LEA official who was involved with the school's closing and the opening of the new school, one member of the governing body and both the current and previous Chair of Governors. I also talked with the NUT Area Negotiating Secretary and the Regional Secretary. To put the new school into context, I interviewed the incoming Principal.

In all I conducted forty-seven interviews, lasting between thirty minutes and two hours<sup>63</sup>. The interviews were semi-structured but broadly followed interview schedules (see Appendix 7) devised to assist in developing concepts and themes previously identified by an analysis of the published literature. Questions were linked to key concepts such as new managerialism and trade union membership; as the research progressed, these concepts were refined to encompass themes emerging from the fieldwork (discussed below), thus allowing the data gathering to be directed towards 'particular matters to which the observer has become sensitive by provisional analysis' (Fielding 1993a:167). The primary analysis of the data was therefore taking place during the research process. Although the literature reviews informed the research, the emerging themes also influenced the review of the literature and subsequent interviews.

The interview schedules varied according to who was interviewed and when. For example, in order to obtain the various perspectives on what was happening in the school it was necessary to ask the teachers different questions to those put to the

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<sup>63</sup> The interviews followed the chronological order of developments in the school in that some teachers left and others joined during the course of the research.

headteacher; likewise, the supply staff who joined the school following the headteacher's resignation had different experiences to the longer serving staff members and the schedules were adjusted accordingly.

With the exception of three, interviews were taped and fully transcribed; I found the latter a useful process in assisting to order the data and in this I would agree with Fielding who suggests that transcribing helps 'guide your analysis and quite possibly reveal lines of analysis you had not thought of' (1993b:146). Transcribing the data also confirmed that certain themes were emerging from the research. Although the use of computer packages for data analysis were considered, I chose to process the data personally, as described below.

As identified above, throughout the collection of the data clear, strong, themes were emerging in line with the earlier literature reviews. It was evident, for example, that from a wider perspective public and financial accountability were major issues with respect to the closing of the school whilst at the local school level new managerial initiatives such as performance monitoring and redundancy were of major concern; from a trade union perspective, the role of both the local representative and the national union were of importance to the local members. Issues such as these were categorised into themes as part of the data analysis process (Yin describes this as 'pattern matching' (1994:106)).

Having transcribed the tapes I repeatedly scrutinised the data for evidence of the various themes and marked the relevant sections of the interviews (Saunders refers to this process as 'unitising the data' (1997:341)); these I then categorised separately by copying them from the transcribed interview into another file. This was a method I had used in dealing with the interview transcripts for my MA dissertation and also used by colleagues at the University; a similar method is suggested by Fielding (1993a:163).

Apart from interviewing the teachers I also kept full fieldnotes in the form of a research diary and these were invaluable in analysing my data. I used this method to record not only the actions and comments of the subjects being researched but also to describe the physical environment of the school (the buildings in general, staff room, dining hall etc), my own emotional feelings and my perception of tensions in the workplace. As one would expect, this was no easy task, particularly as time was often short – and it was not always possible to make notes whilst being involved with the subjects. Apart from my diary I always had to hand a small notebook in which I could scribble a quick *aide-mémoire* to be used later<sup>64</sup>. An example of my fieldnotes can be seen in Appendix 8.

In his discussion of the ‘selection, and definition of problems, concepts, and indices’ during participant observation, Becker states that ‘the observer looks for problems and concepts that give promise of yielding the greatest understanding of the organization he (sic) is studying, and for items which may serve as useful indicators of facts which are harder to observe’ (1970:27); he also suggests that during participant observation ‘analysis is carried on *sequentially*’ (his italics) (1970:27). In line with this, throughout the whole of the current research process there was an interactive relationship between the collection of data and data analysis; the primary, empirical, research was initially informed by the secondary data provided by a review of the literature. However, during the collection of the primary data, analysis was taking place both during the process of data collection and during the transcription of the tapes and re-reading of field-notes; in turn, this analysis shaped the further gathering of both primary and secondary data (see Saunders *et al.* 1997).

Before the end of the research I wrote, with my principal supervisor, a paper reporting on my findings to date. We felt that the teachers at Parkville should have the chance to comment on this document and they were given a copy. The paper was met

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<sup>64</sup> A useful discipline was to write-up my fieldnotes immediately following the research (this was often on the train journey home following a visit to the school).

favourably by the teachers and the management team in the school<sup>65</sup>; they accepted the findings and felt that it was an accurate account of what had taken place. I also sent a copy to my original 'gatekeeper' the headteacher who resigned; unfortunately he refuted the findings in the paper and suggested that these were inaccurate and misleading. Although he was asked to comment on his views, and an offer was made for him to meet with myself and my principal supervisor to discuss these, he made no further response.

A couple of months after the school closed one of the teachers rang me to tell me she was consulting a lawyer to consider taking an unfair dismissal case to the employment tribunal. She promised to keep in touch as she wanted the outcome to contribute to the research but has not done so. Another teacher did take his case to the employment tribunal and telephoned me to ask whether I was able to provide him with any information to help his case. I explained that the data I gathered was completely confidential and that to discuss with him the comments of other interviewees would be unethical and he fully accepted this. I am still in touch, on a regular basis with the Acting Head.

## **Conclusion**

The above has, I hope, taken you with me on my research 'journey'.

By taking a realist methodological approach to the research, and through utilising Layder's research map (1993), I have contextualised the working environment of the research 'subjects', to place the individual in the wider setting of what is going on in the educational world. This allows us to gain an understanding of why individuals involved in the case study made certain choices at certain times. The realist approach allows for the complex relationship between structure and agency to be explored.

In particular, by using the methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, as the researcher I was able to become a part of the research group and

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<sup>65</sup> The ex-Chair of Governors was also given a copy via the acting head.

gain an understanding of what made this group 'tick'. This fits with Fielding's theory that 'in any natural setting there are norms or rules of action in which members are competent' and that the observer has to become aware of, understand and be able to explain these to others (1993a:164). I believe that it was imperative for my research for me to become involved in the day-to-day working life of the school; to 'dip in and out' by doing short interviews would not have allowed me to develop the relationship I finally had with the people in the school and, I believe, their initial reluctance to talk with me would have persisted. The data I gathered was enriched by the feelings and emotions of those interviewed.

Both the research and data analysis have been informed throughout the thesis by the literature reviews documented in the previous chapters. The secondary research identified a growth in the use of 'new managerialism' (Farnham and Horton 1996c:40; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995) techniques in the public sector in general and schools in particular and linked these with 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18) and the search for 'economy', 'efficiency', and 'effectiveness' (Elcock 1996:180; Ferlie *et al.* 1996:31; Pollitt 1993:59; 1998:10; Shaoul 1999:44; Stewart and Ranson 1988:15). The literature also identified a link between the devolvement of management initiatives to the local level and an increase in trade union participation at that level (Fairbrother 1994a; 1994b; 1996; Fosh 1993). The empirical research builds on these concepts. By giving 'voice' (Goodson 1992) to those affected by these initiatives, and studying them in the context of the workplace setting, the empirical research, as will be seen in the following chapters, gives greater insight into and elaborates on, these concepts in the setting of a 'failing' school.

Although it can of course be argued that a single case study should not be taken as the norm (Gomm *et al.* 1998), I would argue that in this fairly unique case of a school which has been designated as failing and then closed, the data gathered contributes to the world of industrial relations research as it helps us to understand the working lives, and the implication of government policy on the working lives, of these teachers at the 'chalk face'.

Yin suggests that as most case studies are about 'human affairs' they should be 'reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees' and that 'well informed respondents can provide important insights into a situation' (1994:85). By giving the various actors associated with Parkville a 'voice' (Goodson 1992), the following chapters will interpret the 'human affairs' of Parkville through the eyes of these 'well informed respondents'. The next section will provide you, the reader, with an account of Parkville, the 'failing' school.

## Chapter Four

### Parkville: Setting the Scene

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#### **Introduction**

In order to fully engage with the ideas emerging from the empirical work it is necessary to have an understanding of the environment in which the research takes place and the characters being researched. By using Layder's Research Map as an analytical tool and drawing upon its various elements (whilst remembering that these all 'overlap and interweave with each other' (1993:9)), this chapter contextualises Parkville and its staff within the macro context of the education market place and education reform ('context' and 'history' (1993:8)). It focuses more closely on the micro context of the school itself by describing the school and its pupils ('setting' (Layder 1993:8)) before moving on to provide a 'pencil sketch' of the management and staff which will give an indication of the experiences and ideals of the people working in the school ('self', 'power' and 'history' (1993:8)). Finally consideration will be given to the role that both the government and the LEA played in the circumstances at Parkville ('power', 'context' and 'history' (1993:8)). 'Setting the Scene' in this way will provide a greater understanding of the structures surrounding the working lives of the management and staff of Parkville.

#### **Background**

Parkville is a school which has suffered from the desire of both the previous and current government to raise standards in education through public accountability and the rhetoric of parental choice. Situated at the bottom of the school league tables, Parkville found it increasingly difficult to recruit pupils as the process of 'cream skimming' (Bartlett 1993:148) meant that other schools higher up the tables could recruit the more able pupils.

The school is located in a LEA which caters for the education of children from both 'middle class' and 'socially disadvantaged' families; the parents with the ability to do so, mainly the former, chose to send their children to other schools (both state and independent) in this and the neighbouring areas and Parkville's recruitment problems became further entrenched. This is identified in the following comment made by an LEA official from the LEA in which Parkville is situated:

'at the end of the day the kind of parents who live in the vicinity of the school, or the middle class parents which the school needs to get a proportion of if they want to get a balance of intake, are parents who, by and large are pretty well middle class professional families in [area] and they've certainly got options in places like [school], which is a nice comprehensive school up the road, but more importantly they can buy their way into private education if they don't like what they've got. And lots of them do, so if you've got an interest in being in that market place, you have got to be good' (LEA Official)

This view was echoed by a deputy head at Parkville:

'it's a self-generating thing and once people think you're good then you get better kids and you get more money all the time and you become good, whereas at the bottom of the scale you just go under, you know...'  
(deputy head 1)

Apart from the fact that school funding depends on pupil numbers, a full roll helps a school control its intake; if a school has spare places they may be obliged, by the LEA, to take children who have been excluded from other schools in the area or 'transient' children such as refugees. The former may have a disabling effect on school discipline whilst the latter may have lower educational abilities due to their disrupted and often disadvantaged backgrounds and their linguistic difficulties. (For a good example of this see the account of the closure of Hackney Downs school (O'Connor *et al.* 1999)) As Bowe *et al.* suggest, and as Parkville provides evidence



for, 'there is no one "market in education" and no one set of market conditions. Schools operate in relation to multiple markets, usually local, which have very specific conditions, constraints and histories' (1992:35); a school which gets a reputation for being a 'bad' school does not fare well in the local market.

An example of the effect of low intake is Phoenix high school which 'pioneered the Government's Fresh Start<sup>66</sup> policy' (Barnard 1999:2) and is still not attaining desired standards; however, it expects to improve shortly because 'the lower years are now full, ending the school's obligation to take refugees and pupils excluded elsewhere' (1999:2), a choice unavailable to the management and staff of Parkville.

Within the education market place, Parkville is a school which, measured against government prescribed criteria, is seen to have 'failed' to meet the required standards in the provision of education. It is a school which initially passed its Ofsted inspection (for an impression of the inspection see Appendix 9), an achievement met with relief and delight by the management and staff of the school. Although the school Ofsted report stated that the school had 'major weaknesses', the standards of attainment were 'low', the standard of teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in a quarter of all lessons (it was good or very good in approximately one third), the school was seen to be 'overstaffed' and was 'not providing value for money', it was thought that if the management team had the 'whole-hearted support of the entire staff and governing body' then they would succeed in overcoming these issues; although there were 'still major problems' the school was 'slowly improving'. The senior management team were praised for attempting to remedy the existing problems and the headteacher particularly for introducing a redundancy package in order to reduce the overstaffing of the school (although HMI still reported this as being a problem); the report also stated that since his appointment 'many beneficial changes

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<sup>66</sup> The 'Fresh Start' initiative for schools was introduced by New Labour in their White Paper 'Excellence in Schools', July 1997. Schools under this programme may either be taken over by another 'successful' school in the area or be closed and re-opened with a new name and usually a new headteacher. Change has to be 'more than superficial' in order for the school to improve (Blunkett 1997).

have taken place'. The school's areas of strength were in drama, design technology, art and PE and 'poor or bad teaching' was reported in English, modern foreign languages, some areas of mathematics and religious education.

Despite having passed the Ofsted inspection and drawing up a 90 point action plan to address the weaknesses, six months later the school failed an inspection by HMI. As a result of this failure, the school was put into 'special measures' which meant that both budget and staffing responsibility were taken away from the management and returned to the LEA, although the 'every day' running of the school was still managed at the local level.

An action plan, which aimed to address the criticisms of HMI, was produced and implemented by management. Nevertheless, upon further inspection the school was deemed not to have made significant progress and six months later the LEA decided, against the wishes of many of the staff and parents, to close the school and re-open it as a Specialist School<sup>67</sup> under the Fresh Start initiative. It should be noted here that the school was put into special measures in July and the closure statement issued the following January; the management and staff were given a maximum of only six months (including the Summer and Christmas vacations) for the school to improve, a not insignificant task.

The next section will illustrate a school which, due to public accountability, was situated at the bottom of the school league tables, was branded a 'failure' and finally closed down.

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<sup>67</sup> The idea of 'specialist' schools was introduced by the previous government and continues to be promoted by New Labour. These schools have private sector sponsors and additional government funding to enable them to 'build on their particular strengths' (school report 1997) such as the arts, languages or technology.

## **Parkville and its pupils<sup>68</sup>**

### *The buildings*

Parkville, situated in a built up inner city area, is a school which has suffered from lack of financial investment in the buildings which are poorly maintained. Centralised-decentralisation (Hoggett 1996:18) ‘heralded by LMS’ (Sinclair *et al.* 1995:253) is partly to blame for this. Ironside and Seifert suggest that head teachers ‘do not have either the experience or the inclination to become business managers’ (1995:244) and this has been a problem for Parkville. The school is in severe financial difficulties, mainly due to the poor financial management of a previous headteacher and the governing body. A school governor explained:

‘I would have said economics or finance was not her [the headteacher] strong point ... she made hazarded guesses at where we were and sometimes she was right and sometimes she was wrong [we] didn’t really have the, the knowledge in one sense to pinpoint where she might be wrong, where she might be right ... And that did lead us into some difficulties I think’ (Governor 1)

As a result, the school became run down, making both working and studying conditions unpleasant. Due to health and safety concerns one building has been virtually closed with only the library and computer lab open on the ground floor; this has resulted in classrooms being utilised for other subjects – maths is taught in science labs with pupils working on benches around gas and water taps. The school’s main hall is also the dining hall which has to be cleared for exam sessions.

The school has no playing fields, only concrete playgrounds and the sports hall is ill equipped. The sports teacher helps to finance the football team by paying out of his own pocket the £6 a week required to hire the football pitch. In the winter the art classrooms suffer from lack of heating as the system is so old that it can’t cope with

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<sup>68</sup> The data quoted in the following sections, unless stated otherwise, are from school reports, LEA documents and Ofsted and HMI reports written in 1997/8 which are not referenced due to confidentiality.

heating the top floor of the building. The art teachers have a chart of the temperatures from the previous winter on the wall and on several occasions it dropped to 13 degrees centigrade.

### *The pupils*

Parkville is a mixed comprehensive school with around 450 pupils aged 11-16 years, well below its 900 capacity. The proportion of pupils gaining five grade A-C GCSEs was just under ten percent in 1998, compared to a national average of 46.3% (published school league tables 1998). The school suffers from a high rate of pupil turnover, mainly due to the fact that there is a high proportion of transient pupils often attending on a temporary basis; up to twenty-five percent arrive or leave during the year. It is the norm for only a small minority of the pupils taking GCSE exams in year 11 to have started as part of the year 7 intake. Punctuality is also a problem – reporting on one inspection, HMI found a quarter of pupils late on one day. Approximately one-third of the pupils have special educational needs.

Compared with a national average of fourteen percent (Ofsted 1997) Parkville has approximately seventy-three percent of children eligible for free school meals, demonstrating the high level of pupil intake from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as measured using government methods.

The pupils come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (African, Afro-Caribbean, Asian, British, South American and Turkish). Just under sixty percent come from families where English is not the home language and thirty-eight ‘mother-tongue’ languages are represented; around one-third of the pupils are refugees. This is reflected in the educational attainments of the children who enter the school in year 7; of the September 1998 intake, only three of the fifty seven children tested had a reading age of age eleven and above; thirty-eight of the children (i.e. two-thirds) had a reading age of seven and below, therefore starting at a level of four or more years below the norm for secondary education.

An example of a refugee pupil was a particularly hyper-active child whom, staff explained, had never attended school until he arrived at Parkville twelve months earlier. He hadn't understood the meaning of school and it had to be explained to him how to sit at a desk; on entry to the school this child spoke no English whatsoever (field notes).

Some of the children come from war-torn areas and are, understandably, emotionally disturbed. An art teacher gave an example of this:

'some of the real refugees, nutters who have been through a lot of shit – and it's basically kids that are disturbed – they come in and they sit there and they will break pencil, after pencil, after pencil; just break it and drop it, break it and drop it and that's it, that's all that goes on. It's just destructive force from a disturbed background' (teacher 18)

For many of the children the only way to express themselves is through art and the school has particularly good GCSE results in this subject (ninety-one percent A-Cs in the 1998/9 school year). On the wall in the art room is an incredible drawing of a soldier with a gun, drawn by a child who had seen both of his parents shot.

There is constant noise in the school which reaches a crescendo at lunch time, described by a deputy head as 'a high level of low level disruption'. Discipline is a problem in the school, exacerbated by the 'failing' and the closing of the school as children became unsettled with regard to their own futures and that of the staff; pupils are concerned about their teachers not being in the new school.

An interesting point in relation to Parkville's pupils is that a number of them capitalise on their slow start later and go on to sixth form college and, in some cases, university; this was commented on by a number of the staff who were clearly proud of this fact.

A number of GCSE pupils spoken to during the course of the research had aspirations of becoming lawyers, vets and engineers. The posters on the walls in the careers

room, however, tended to promote the less ambitious occupations of shop assistants, hairdressers and factory workers.

It can be seen from the above that the physical conditions and the broad range of educational standards at Parkville would severely challenge the work of the teachers. The next section provides a 'pencil sketch' of the management and staff in the school.

### **Parkville's 'Actors'**

Having discussed the pupils above, the term 'actors' here relates to the management and staff (including support staff) in the school. When the LEA decided to close the school they were all told that they would be made redundant; there were no guarantees of jobs in the new school. The next sections will, by giving 'voice' to those researched, provide some background as to why these people were in the school and what they were trying to achieve.

#### *The Management: The Headteacher, Deputies and Acting Head*

Like all schools in the state sector, Parkville is managed by a governing body and a senior management team which has, since the introduction of LMS, the 'delegated responsibility for financial and staff management' (Bach and Winchester 1994:267); in practice, however, it is perceived that most operational activities in schools are delegated to the headteacher (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:133; Levacic 1995:136).

At the start of the research the senior management team at Parkville consisted of the headteacher (male) and two deputy headteachers, one male and one female ('very often you'll get one of each in a school' (deputy head 2)). It could also be considered that Heads of Faculty and Year Heads are management, however, in this case they are classed as 'teachers' as the division between 'management' and staff which becomes apparent from the research deems this to be necessary.

The headteacher was appointed in September 1995 at a time when the school was suffering from severe financial difficulties; it was his first appointment as a

headteacher. He was aware that there were severe problems as the LEA documented at the time of his appointment that ‘the gravity of the position of the school was explained’ to him and ‘ways of making rapid progress were explored’. From a public and financial accountability viewpoint the school was rapidly ‘sinking’ and the headteacher had been appointed to ‘turn the school around’.

It can be argued that ‘decentralized-centralization’ (Hoggett 1996:18) and the advent of ‘new managerialism’ (Farnham 1993; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995), manifested through the greater role headteachers have in financial and people management in schools, have brought about the need for a ‘new headteacher’ as the ‘work culture involved in *being* a secondary headteacher was changing’ (Evetts 1996:127). Parkville’s headteacher had not only the greatest access to the ‘economic power’ resources (Bradley 1999:34) but also, as the manager of the school, had ‘positional power’ and ‘symbolic power’ (1999:34), the latter also identifying his position in the school as ‘first amongst equals’ (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:244)<sup>69</sup>; as identified above, as school governors often delegate operational activities to the headteacher level, the latter can be viewed as having the authority of the governing body when making management decisions, thus reinforcing their position of power. Consequently, Parkville’s headteacher was a pivotal figure in developments in the school.

It is clear from the following quote that when he arrived the headteacher was looking forward to the task of improving the performance of the school:

‘when I came here I was full of the joys of Spring and deeply optimistic and had a regard for my fellow professionals which was unsurpassed. I believed in teachers, I believed that in working together we could make things happen’

particularly as he was committed to the school:

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<sup>69</sup> Ironsides and Seifert argue that many headteachers see themselves ‘first and foremost as the heads of institutions devoted to the education of pupils – as head teachers, and as first among equals rather than ‘the management’ (1995:244); (see also McVicar 1993:190).

‘I believe in comprehensive education, I believe in state education - all of those things that wouldn’t surprise you with my [working class] background’

and to his chosen profession:

‘I chose to become a teacher because I thought I could make a difference, I really did’

He took the job being aware of the personal sacrifices he would have to make:

‘many nights I’m here until ten o’clock, and on those nights I stay over in [area] with my sister ... I’m here for long, long hours. Particularly since HMI have been in’

His mission for the school was clear:

‘... what I want, and I’ve been having discussions with local parents, is a genuine, non-selective, mixed, multi-faith comprehensive school on this site for these people who live in the Parkville area. That’s what I want’

Nevertheless, he saw himself as a realist:

‘I know if I’m being realistic, I have to pursue that objective within current financial realities’

His previous job as a deputy head had been to introduce LMS into a school and he clearly saw sorting out the budget as a major priority:

‘I went about reducing the staffing budget, if I hadn’t done that at the time, I think when Ofsted came in last January they’d have closed us down on value for money alone because we’ve now got something not far off a half million deficit on a budget of only one and a half million pounds, absolutely ridiculous’

The above comments demonstrate the headteacher’s commitment to the education of working class children and his strong belief in comprehensive education. The following quote from a governor suggests that not only did he have to work within



very tight government imposed financial constraints but also within less tangible structures:

‘when [he] started, he was presented with a large budget deficit, he was presented with a group of staff who were ... reluctant to change, he was presented with a governing body that was probably not very skilled, he was presented with an education authority who were probably demanding things from him, to get them off the hook’ (Governor 1)

Although the headteacher tried to achieve his set objectives in, as he saw, the best possible way:

‘when I came *here* it was with all that philosophical background and an awareness of the current reality and I tried to match those together without compromising my basic principles’ (headteacher)

unfortunately he failed to save the school and he is acutely aware of this fact:

‘I didn’t expect to fail. I expected that I could help this school to perform well to achieve ... and it’s made me very, very sad that that’s not proved to be the case’

and of the consequences of this for him personally:

‘... and as long as I live this will be on my CV and on my record ... took on a failing school and killed it off!!! (sad laugh) Well done!! (laugh)’

One of the governors had this to say about the effect that failing had on the headteacher:

‘from being a very happy, confident, person ... [he] took one hell of a knock, several knocks. And I don’t think he deserved that, at all’ (Governor 1)

He did not apply for the headship of the new school because he had been told ‘in quite ... abrupt terms that I wasn’t of the calibre they were looking for’.

The headteacher was supported by his 'senior management team', two deputies, who also saw themselves committed to comprehensive education. The senior deputy, who was involved in school planning and staffing matters, had been at Parkville for eight years and had acted as deputy to the previous headteacher. The other deputy had more of a pastoral role and had joined the school three years previously, shortly before the headteacher; both enjoyed their jobs.

When the headteacher resigned his position in July 1998 with a full academic year remaining before the school closed the senior deputy was appointed acting head. The other deputy was supportive of his appointment:

'the obvious thing was for [him] to take over ... [he's] been here for a long time and knows the school much more than I do ... he is the right person to take over the acting headship' (deputy 2)

although she suggested that she would have felt otherwise had there been an appointment from outside the school.

The appointment left the school with only one deputy head although another was seconded in the following January to help see it through to closure. The acting head saw the appointment in a very positive way from his own career viewpoint:

'if, at the end of this year, this academic year, I go for headships elsewhere, then I think it's a much stronger position for me to go as an acting head as opposed to when I was a deputy. And particularly to go from this situation. It's not that many people who have this wonderful experience erm, and if any governing body had anything about them they could see that, you know, it's good experience and it might be worth taking me on' (acting head)

He was also aware of the problems he faced when taking the school over for its final year and likened his job to 'taking over the captaincy of the Titanic after it hit the iceberg'.

The next section will consider the teachers working in Parkville.

*The Teachers (See Appendix 6)*

As discussed in the previous chapter, at the start of the research in February 1998 there were a total of thirty-six teachers. However, mainly due to the fact that the school was closing, a number of teachers left for more permanent positions in other schools or to take early retirement and by the time the school closed there were approximately twenty-four teachers. Teaching experience in Parkville varied from twenty-eight years down to one-year contract staff. Over the months leading up to the closure, the full time permanent staff were supplemented by supply staff, some on a yearly basis, some on a termly basis and some on a daily basis.

Seifert suggests that '[I]t remains the purpose and pleasure of all those involved in the provision of education to witness the success, each in their own unique way, of individual children and of the collective children of each generation' (1996). This is supported by the following (typical) comment of a teacher at Parkville, speaking about what they got out of their job:

'to see children learn and understand what it is they've just done and to feel success and pride in their own performance is, I think, the most astonishing, kind of, pay back' (teacher 7)

The Healy and Kraithman (1994b) quantitative study found that teachers reported a high level of job satisfaction with their actual work. It also found that teachers were suffering from increased workloads and stress levels, a finding supported by Calveley's qualitative study (1996) and Travers and Cooper (1996). This teacher at Parkville (amongst others) verified these findings further:

'... and I think that teachers today feel like the low of the low ... you know they're kind of - they're sniped at about still having five weeks summer holiday ... nobody realises that they come in and they work in the summer holiday - at least two weeks of that time ... the hours that

I've spent in the evening, every night, night after night after night doing things ... Awful!' (teacher 7)

It might be surmised that some of the teachers were teaching in this run down, failing school because they were not able to get jobs elsewhere, however this would be a mis-conception. Others commented in a similar vein to this teacher:

'I looked at a variety of schools before coming here, and was offered several jobs ... but here seemed to present a particular challenge and it seemed quite an exciting post to take' (teacher 4)

Johnson, in his personal account of working in 'underclass' schools argues that 'ordinary teachers' cannot survive in these and that '[O]nly extraordinary teachers can stay, remain committed, and continue to produce quality performance and become part of the core staff who are the essential stabilising influence in the school' (1999a:11). Despite their apparent commitment to both their profession and the school, the teachers were vilified for its closure by the LEA and the national and local press. It was public knowledge that the teachers were not guaranteed jobs in the new school and were facing redundancy at the end of the 1999 Summer term and some of the children used this to taunt their teachers by saying things like 'you won't get a job in the new school sir, because you're crap' (this example was quoted by the headteacher of Parkville).

The period from the announcement of closure to its actuality was clearly an uncertain time for the teachers of Parkville. One teacher explained how insecurity affected his work and that of his colleagues:

'... and also people don't know if they are going to be working – some, some people feel that they stand a good chance of working here in the new school, so they put the energy in, but even they ... don't know for sure and then you can see the doubt creep in a bit and then their attitude is well, why are we doing this for someone else to benefit? ... you can virtually see people marking lines on bricks! Crossing them off, days, days counting down' (teacher 14)

whilst the headteacher gave a very succinct summation of the situation for the teachers working in a 'failed' and closing school:

'... and I think it's a very difficult position for staff to find themselves in. This is an incredibly difficult school to teach in anyway. To rob people of hope - and it's a hope of an income ... and then to tell them that what you're offering them is statutory redundancy pay ... the very best you'd get would be ... twenty-something weeks pay?! And then it's goodbye! With the stigma of having taught in a failing school! And the authority expects morale to be maintained! And they expect the new school to get off to a flying start!' (headteacher)

It is to the role that the 'authority' (LEA) and the government had to play in the closing of the school that this chapter now turns.

### **The LEA and the Government**

The LEA maintain that the school was closed because it failed to make significant improvement following the HMI inspection which put it into Special Measures (interview with LEA official). Although there was opposition from some parents, pupils, staff and governors to the school's closure resulting in a demonstration at the local Town Hall, an LEA official suggested that this was orchestrated by politically activated staff:

'the group of people who opposed the closing of the school ... the spokes-people for them were parents ... but it was significantly an organisation that had been encouraging resistance by staff in the school ... they formed a demonstration at the Town Hall ... but I have to say it wasn't anything like what you'd call a huge demonstration, I mean we've just gone through a primary review and a primary school that's half the size had five times as many people at the Town Hall - and they were seriously genuinely parents. I mean it wasn't sort of a whipped up campaign in the staff room' (LEA Official)

However, a governor suggested that the LEA wanted to close Parkville partly due to their own poor reputation:

‘the LEA has not had a good reputation as an education authority for an awful long time. And Parkville has always been near the bottom, if not the bottom school, next to the bottom ... we were too easy a target for newspapers and we’ve had some very bad articles written about us in the papers. And [name] education authority didn’t like getting bad, bad press because they were as nervous themselves and I think that was why ... they didn’t like us’ (Governor 1)

Parkville was not the only school in the area that had problems, another school had failed its Ofsted inspection but had not been failed by HMI and was not being closed. Once again, however, marketisation comes into play. Despite being seen as a school which catered for refugee children, as the same governor explained, the LEA:

‘didn’t see any value in having a reputation in looking after refugee children, they wanted a reputation for providing a good education, for providing good exam results and we couldn’t come up with that. So ... we didn’t offer them anything! (laughs). It was very sad!’ (Governor 1)<sup>70</sup>

Most of the staff believed that the decision to close was made on purely political grounds, a theory vocalised by this teacher:

‘I just thought it was a political decision ... I mean it was just, was another evidence of someone from the council trying to make a political career for themselves, under New Labour, really ... I don’t know how much to believe the conspiracy theories that it was imposed on us, or was it more of a coincidence that, that we passed our Ofsted with serious weaknesses and [school] failed and yet they have got traditionally a much

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<sup>70</sup> Parkville had often been praised in the local press for the good work done with refugee children, with frequent visitors to the school to view this (deputy head – fieldnotes); however, marketisation changed the value of such work as it is adversely reflected in GCSE results with refugee children (i.e. many with little/no spoken English) often having a negative effect on results. An interesting recent development is that, in an attempt to encourage headteachers to give school places to refugee children, the latter will be excluded from schools’ performance data (Henry 2000:9).

better reputation than we have, so then it was kind of, was it coincidence that HMI suddenly came back in to us? You know and overturned that, and then tried to overturn [school's] one to try and reverse it. It, it really stank of a, a political conspiracy' (teacher 14)

and by this one:

'I was not prone to believing in ... political conspiracies before. But having been through the process that led up to closure, I now subscribe to the belief that the school, the authority wanted to close the school, erm, before it was inspected ... I think I, I was one of the few members of staff at the time who supported the head still and feel that he was not supported enough by the authority and I don't see why that head couldn't have been given the opportunity the new head has been given' (teacher 4)

The political conspiracy theory, as constructed through the discourse of the governors, management and staff of Parkville, has two main strands: one is that some of the teachers were viewed as militant, left-wing activists who were blamed, by some, for the failing of the school and there was, therefore, a need to remove them from the school, closure being seen as the only option (this will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapters); the second strand is that the current Prime Minister is believed to have a particular interest in improving the standards of education within this specific LEA.

The closure of Parkville has also to be situated in the wider political arena of government policies on education, especially as New Labour were determined to influence the actions of the 'poor performing' schools through their 'Naming and Shaming' policy; one teacher commented thus:

'I think, you know [it was] a slight political one in terms of what had happened in terms of the Government sort of getting in as it were ... there was sort of a big drive, if you like, on education, a big drive about ... failing schools' (teacher 5)

whilst another felt that the government really didn't understand the problems of inner-city schools:

'the people like Blunkett, should actually get into the schools and see what it's like here. They should see the fact that Sue in her school in Barnet when she goes into year seven doesn't have to call for attention - OK that may be the nature of the school but I actually think that it's the nature probably of the pupils as well. Ours are not the same - and there have been a few things that say "come on, don't let's be surprised that inner city school results are not as good as others"' (teacher 7)

such lack of government insight, arguably, contributed to the closing of Parkville.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to locate the research in the environment in which it was conducted by describing the physical and working environment of a 'failing' school and the motivations of the people who work there, thus helping to explain the complex relationship that exists between the structures in which the management and teachers operate and their use of agency.

The chapter also situates the research in the wider political climate of an LEA that was itself under pressure to improve, and the drive for the raising of standards in education of a newly elected government who had put this to the forefront of its political agenda.

Finally, the chapter positions Parkville in the education 'market place' which gives evidence to the fact that the ability to attract pupils plays an important role in the survival of a school. A deputy head described Parkville as the Accrington Stanley of football in that it played the same game as the big teams but the inability to attract people through the gates meant that it was in a different league; Parkville, like Accrington Stanley, were eventually relegated from the league altogether.



The following chapters will explore the theories emerging from the empirical data.

## Chapter Five

### New Managerialism at Parkville

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#### Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, the Conservative Governments post 1979 focused on the drive for 'economy', 'efficiency', and 'effectiveness' (Elcock 1996:180; Ferlie *et al.* 1996:31; Pollitt 1993:59; 1998:10; Shaoul 1999:44; Stewart and Ranson 1988:15) within the public sector, together with a quest for 'quality', themes which have continued under the New Labour government elected in 1997. To attain these initiatives emphasis has been placed on the accountability of public sector managers, both to the government and the general public. Through decentralisation and devolvement of management to the local level, together with the introduction of 'quasi-markets' (Bartlett 1993; Ferlie *et al.* 1996; Le Grand and Bartlett 1993) public sector managers have been 'empowered' to control their own financial budgets and the quality of service their organisation provides, whilst also monitoring the performance of their staff. This chapter will consider such 'new managerialism' (Farnham 1993; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995) initiatives at Parkville.

#### Micro-politics at Parkville

Layder's research map, as identified in Chapter Three, is a useful analytical device to help identify the 'different levels and dimensions of social reality' (1993:7-8); the map allows the bringing together of the macro and micro elements of research. In this research the macro elements are the centralised government policies and practices (as discussed in Chapter One) which affect teachers' working lives; the micro elements are the 'setting' (the school), the 'situated activity' (the inter-relationships within the school) and 'self' (teachers' own identities) (Layder 1993:8). This section will consider the dynamics of the micro elements of 'social reality' (Layder 1993:7) at Parkville and contemplate how these inter-link with the wider, macro, context of educational reform.

As stated in the previous chapter, the headteacher at Parkville was appointed in an attempt to ‘turn around’ a school which was in severe financial difficulties and suffering from the negative aspects of the marketisation of education. Although he inherited a massive budget deficit he also inherited an experienced and stable core of staff who had been in situ at Parkville for a number of years and who, due to a deep attachment to the school, wanted it to be a success (see Appendix 6).

Over the years of working together, a collegiality<sup>71</sup> had developed between this long-serving core group of both male and female teachers; they had many shared experiences in the school (including an earlier merger between the two schools which subsequently became Parkville) and consequently a culture of mutual support evolved. As a number of them were heads of faculty and year heads they held ‘middle-management’ positions which entailed some involvement in the decision making processes within the school; they also formed a nucleus which was undaunted in challenging senior management decisions and giving voice to any discord in the staffroom. Although there was clearly respect amongst other teachers towards the longer serving members of staff (both core and peripheral) as voiced by this teacher:

‘I think that heads of department here ... have put this school on the map – there’s a lot of teachers who’ve been here a long, long time, you know, up to say twenty years, and they’ve put a lot into this school’ (teacher 2)

they were also seen to some extent as representing the ‘in’ crowd. A ‘newer’ (three years, ‘outsider’) teacher described a feeling of exclusion:

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<sup>71</sup> ‘Collegiality’ is used here as a term intrinsically linked with professionalism in that it brings together individuals (in this case teachers) as ‘professionals’ working for the good of education; it can be associated with a unitarist approach to management as the headteacher, the ‘first amongst equals’ (Ironside and Seifert 1995:244), makes decisions in the interests of the ‘profession’ and the ‘professionalism’ of the staff. On the contrary, ‘collectivism’ is the uniting of individuals, through their trade union, in order to contest the unitary approach to management and attempt to redress the imbalance of power relations within the workplace. Although it is sometimes assumed that a dichotomy exists between collegial (professional) actions and collective (trade union) actions this is generally not the case (see Chapter 2).

‘... and there’s the ‘old boys’ network as well in this school ... there’s the them and us thing’ (teacher 11)

and when asked whether some of the staff felt intimidated by these longer serving members she had this to say:

‘Yes, yes. If something is really bad ... people won’t say it and that perpetuates it. It’s a crappy situation ... in a lot of respects ... at the end of the day ... that’s what makes my job harder. You know, a lot of them old established systems – “we never used to do it like this, back in the early days” ... But you don’t want to rock the boat’ (teacher 11)

and was somewhat contemptuous about them:

‘I don’t want to be a part of that and I don’t want people telling me who I should be nice to and who I shouldn’t be, that kind of thing. It’s sad that’ (teacher 11)

Another teacher felt less excluded but was also derisive towards the group:

‘the only thing is that the gang kind of does make itself open but would you want to join them (laughter)?’ (teacher 14)

The last two comments demonstrating that not all the teachers viewed the core members with respect.

Despite being a fairly small group, it is clear that the core group were seen to be influential in the school. From a management point of view, they offered a wealth of experience in teaching in a school such as Parkville, however, they were also a force to be reckoned with when it came to implementing management decisions. The headteacher had a similar comment to make about these teachers as teacher 11:

‘I lay a lot of the blame for this dispirited and de-skilled staff at the door of the ideology which has driven the school for donkey’s years before I came here, which has not allowed people to say “that’s interesting, how can we work together to make that better? how can we develop this? How can we implement that?” it’s all been about “no, we’re not doing that

because we can't" and we've ended up with staff ten or fifteen years out of date. And new people coming in with bright ideas and a fresh impetus have soon succumbed to that. For some it's taken a year or so and they've left, you know (sardonic laugh), but others have, have sadly become tarnished by that approach ... very sad' (headteacher)

To counter-balance this, however, there is an 'outsider' point of view from a long-term supply teacher who had been at the school for just under six months when she was interviewed:

'the staff, for me, made a good, really good first impression. Everyone was just very relaxed and you know, everyone was very happy to chat to you and help you and show you around. Erm and I've since learned the reasons for that, because this staff has just been asked to band together in a way that no other, other group of people I think would ever be asked to do in the workplace ... it didn't take me long to settle in to the, the group dynamic and the people, and getting to know people' (teacher 16)

This quote also gives an insight into how, in the face of adversity, collegiality may have been strengthened between the teachers.

The introduction of LMS has been contentious in schools. Evetts states that 'the early experiences of LMS indicated an increase both in the extent of and the contexts for micro political activity' (1993:53) in schools; Parkville was no exception to this. A deputy head suggested that the staff at Parkville were resistant to LMS and partly reiterates the headteacher's views:

'I think what you had here was a fighting resistance to say "we don't agree with it and so we're not going to do it" and we talk about LMS what fifteen years ago? Ten years ago? When I came here and I started to get to know the school more I felt like, it seemed a bit like Parkville had been time-warped somewhere, because we are, or have been over the last couple of years, asking staff to do things which really should have been done, put in place ten years ago! you know?' (deputy head 2)

This is in line with Huckman and Fletcher's findings that 'LMS and the restrictions of a budget imposed by external agencies became the enemy from without and provided cohesion within the group' (1996:138); the centralised government imposed changes due to LMS have been resisted at the local level of schools, thus highlighting Ferner's (1987) argument that the implementation of government strategies is not always a smooth process.

The deputy head went on to highlight the cohesion amongst the core group of teachers at Parkville:

'I am not talking about all the staff here, I'm talking about a small group... who are a strong group who have been attached to the school from the days when it was [names of schools] and they joined together' (deputy head 2)

Both deputy head's felt that whilst there was no lack of commitment from this group of teachers, there was resistance to change in general:

'there's a core of staff, the one's who've been here a long time, basically. Erm, they're really committed to the school but maybe that's one of the problems, you know, they're over committed, they don't want to see it changed' (deputy head 1)

'I think some staff have been very reluctant to change ... there is quite a strong political group in the school which erm ... do hold quite a lot of power over a lot of the staff in general ... I don't think it's because there's lack of commitment, or anything, from the staff here' (deputy head 2)

The reference to the political group made by the latter deputy head relates to the membership of two 'core group' teachers to the SWP (although only one was overtly so). The SWP promotes a belief in the education of working class children and members would be ideologically opposed to cuts in public spending; the funding formula of LMS (see Chapter One) is seen as perpetuating social class divisions as

schools become selective, taking children from 'affluent families' whilst 'schools in working class areas get pushed further behind' (Rosenberg and Ovenden 1999:1). The SWP members in the school would *per se* be opposed to cutting costs, as the headteacher at Parkville found to be the case:

'a lot of the view that's mostly taken around here as the staff view, is informed by the Socialist Workers Party at the school who have a particular political line to take, and that line is that in order to improve the schools, and this school in particular, the ... real line should be about getting more resources' (headteacher)

These teachers, and one in particular, were perceived to instigate issues in the school, as is evidenced by this comment made by an LEA official:

'I don't know all the members of the SWP in the school - erm, it is certainly the case that some members of the SWP in the school have been leading ... er, lights, in many of the oppositionalist policies that have been in the school ... And my impression is that they hold ... considerable sway in how teachers' views are portrayed in the school' (LEA Official)

One SWP member in the school was also a teacher governor. Another governor gave her understanding of the influence he had in the staffroom:

'I get the impression [that] particularly one of the teacher governors has very much got his own agenda, he's very hard, radical left wing. And I've been told, kind of off the record by the governors at the meetings, that he's actually a bit of a bully and you know, some of the teachers feel - I imagine, particularly the training teachers and some of the more vulnerable staff go along with what he says, you know, he's been there for years ... and they're sort of cowed into submitting to what he thinks they should or shouldn't do. So I'm pretty sure if you actually managed to get some teachers on a one-on-one situation they wouldn't necessarily go along with some of his views' (Governor 3)

It is clear from the above that, despite the numerically low representation of the SWP, they were perceived to have significant - and not wholly welcome - influence in the school; the extent of the accuracy of this perception will be explored further in the following chapter.

Whilst acknowledging caution in the use of typologies, Mac an Ghail's 'Old Collectivists' typology provides a similar generic description of the 'core group' of teachers at Parkville:

'usually a member of a trade union and active in past industrial action ... strongly opposed to Education Reform Act and changes in pay and conditions ... strong use of 'us' and 'them' in relations with headteacher ... strongly supportive of colleagues, promoted values of collectivism, egalitarianism and meritocracy ...' (1992:179)

Although Mac an Ghail suggests that the use of the term in his case study refers not to the age of the teachers but to 'their fading ideological significance within the school' (1992:179), at Parkville the core group of teachers and their ideologies played an extremely significant role; this is not to say, however, that teachers outside the 'core' were passive observers in events that took place in the school as will be seen in the following sections and the next chapter.

### **Economy, efficiency and effectiveness at Parkville – controlling the budget**

As a result of LMS, emphasis in school management is very much on the three 'Es' (Pollitt *et al.* 1998:10); Ironside and Seifert argue that school managers 'must cut costs to remain within their budget while maintaining or improving the performance of the school to retain their share of the market' (1995:168). The headteacher at Parkville was faced not only with a budget deficit which he was clearly under pressure to reduce, but also a school suffering badly from a declining market share. It was clear to him that:

'one of the first things I had to do was to reduce expenditure'  
(headteacher)



deploy public money assigned to them as they choose, and to enable them to benefit from any economies they achieve' (quoted in Ironside and Seifert 1995:134). The head of Parkville demonstrates the down-side of utilising such 'power' and 'choice':

'it was quite clear that by conventional standards this school was quite heavily overstaffed on the teaching side ... so we went through a programme of voluntary redundancies, not without coercion of course, people had to be persuaded to take voluntary redundancy, and we reduced the staff count by nearly four' (headteacher)

thus reinforcing Evetts' argument that a headteacher's work 'is now far removed from the professional activity of educational leadership. Their work now focuses on financial management and on the managerialist activities found most commonly in industrial and commercial organizations' (1996:119). Parkville's headteacher had to make decisions as he saw fit within the structures of tight budget control and centralised forms of monitoring; he is likely to agree with Ironside and Seifert who suggest that cuts in funding to schools have meant that 'they have no alternative but to reduce the number of teachers' (1995:176). Nevertheless, the authors go on to suggest that 'the head teacher and governors are not simply responding to an LEA decision that their school is overstaffed; they themselves are taking the decision to shed staff in order to remain within their delegated budget' (1995:176); they are utilising their own agency - particularly in deciding which jobs should go - albeit within tight financial structures. Such decisions highlight the tension that exists between this headteacher's position as the 'senior figure' among a team of 'like-minded professionals' and his position as 'human resource manager' (Ironside and Seifert 1995:220), for example:

'that's not withstanding the fact that I would love to have twice as many teachers ... In spite of that it was pointed out by Ofsted, twice, we still are overstaffed ... as a consequence we have a lot less money, as you can imagine, for curriculum spending on books and equipment and also quite

increasingly rapid decay' (headteacher)<sup>72</sup>

(Thus highlighting deficiencies implicit in the LMS funding formula.) Likewise, Huckman and Fletcher found that school managers 'transferred monies into their salary budgets from supplies and services, which meant substantially reducing their teaching materials' budget; premises costs were also reduced' (1996:139). Both examples demonstrate the real impact of 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18) in the guise of LMS as managers contend with devolved budgets. Schools such as Parkville are particularly vulnerable to budget rationalisation due to the funding formula for schools which links allocated money to number of pupils; a school with declining pupil numbers also faces a declining budget, regardless of the size of the fixed costs relating to buildings etc.

Another reality of LMS is the effect it has on the relationship between headteachers, as managers, and their teaching staff. Evetts suggests that a 'consequence of the changing orientations of management ... is that a gulf is developing between heads and their staffs' (1996:125); this was clearly the case at Parkville following the 'coerced' (Parkville headteacher, above) voluntary redundancies as is evidenced below.

One of the deputies gave an insight into the decision making process the head went through with regard to redundancies:

'on any criteria the school's overstaffed ... he had to make people redundant ... he did it on a curricular basis - and one of our teachers was a sociology teacher, and we had sociology as an option in the upper school only because she was there, that was the only reason, and that was

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<sup>72</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, funding under LMS is partly based on average teacher salaries; teacher salaries are based on experience (Ironside and Seifert 1995:176). Consequently, schools with a high proportion of experienced teachers would have a greater salary bill than a comparable school employing a high proportion of less experienced staff. Parkville employed a number of more expensive, long-serving staff (see Appendix 6).

(deputy head 1)

It is not unusual for headteachers to identify specific subject areas when reducing budget spend, or to encourage 'volunteers' for redeployment (Gillborn 1989:73), early retirement or voluntary redundancy (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:171). Such decisions are often influenced by centralised government policy; the National Curriculum, combined with the enforced cost consciousness of LMS, has resulted in teachers of non-core subjects becoming more vulnerable, particularly with regard to redundancy, as money is deployed to staffing the core subject areas (Calveley 1996). Prior to LMS such 'operational decisions' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:168) would have been made by the LEA, thus keeping the inherent conflict caused by these outside the school. As one Parkville deputy explained:

'there's a lot of people who ... were quite happy when local authorities made decisions on staffing because they used to say you need this many staff and you can pay them this amount of money - that was it, it was their decision' (deputy head 1)

and the other had this to say:

'before LMS ... it would have been the authority that's doing the dirty work and not the head, but now the head has to do that ... before, as a head, you could make change but you'd push the dirty work over to the authority' (deputy head 2)

By doing this 'dirty work' in the form of the coerced redundancy of one of the longer serving teachers (of a non-core subject), Parkville's headteacher faced resistance and a display of solidarity from the other staff, culminating in a breakdown in management-staff relations as this deputy explains:

'she'd been in the school for at least ten, twelve years and ... she was nominated to go, people were up in arms because they said, well you know, she was the mainstay of the school, she's one of our stable staff who's been here for years, and they couldn't understand why she had to

to do it but there was huge resistance from them ... that was the real start of his major problems in that he pushed that ahead and people started saying well you know, he shouldn't be allowed to do this' (deputy head 1)

Due to decentralised management, however, the headteacher, with the agreement of the governing body, was 'allowed' to make such decisions, he had been empowered to do so; 'LMS schools are able to determine their own staffing ... and to decide their own redundancy criteria' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:174). Ironsides and Seifert acknowledge that 'the application of LMS formula funding to state schools has led to redundancies amongst teachers' (1995:170); as a Parkville deputy explains cutting staff, especially those experienced and therefore costly, was a way of saving money:

'if we spend money on teachers, which we do, it's hugely expensive, there's no money for anything else, which is why the buildings are a problem, and there's not enough material resources for teaching because you know, one teacher with on-costs is worth minimum some thirty thousand quid! So get rid of one teacher and release thirty thousand quid and you can do an awful lot with that!' (deputy head 1)

yet again, high-lighting problems with the LMS funding formula. The headteacher saw such cost-cutting as the reality of devolved budget responsibility; he had hoped that the staff would see this too and support what he considered to be inevitable decisions, but felt this not to be the case in Parkville:

'in other schools I know that this has happened, I know that the union groups have said "well sadly the LMS is a reality so of course we'll cooperate and help you out". That would never be the case because of the inclination of the Socialist Workers Party – only one card carrying member remains by the way and he's very influential both within the school, in the locality and nationally' (headteacher)

Once again emphasis is placed on the political affiliation of one of the teachers.

‘staff are the resource – the best resource in the school to change it round, to turn it round, given the right support and leadership, which was sadly lacking ... sorry to say’ (teacher 8)

‘it was the way the head was trying to wield power we didn’t like and plus redundancies, he was responsible for redundancies and we didn’t feel he was very supportive to us - when you hear stories about other heads of school ... fighting against redundancies, you know, heads who really do their best to oppose it ... sort of feeling like the head is kind of trying to be on your side or trying to look out for your rights, we felt he wasn’t looking out for our rights at all’ (teacher 14)

In discussing job losses in schools, Ironside and Seifert suggest that ‘the processes through which volunteers are sought, and candidates for redundancy are selected, raise many issues of fairness and justice. The potential for conflict is enormous’ (1995:176). This proved to be the case at Parkville; although the senior management team could point to overstaffing and budget deficit as the rationale for staff cutting, industrial relations tensions in this highly unionised school (the role of the union at Parkville will be discussed at length in the next chapter) were mounting, as this deputy head explains:

‘one member of staff who eventually went on voluntary redundancy didn’t really want to go. Was sort of pushed into it, I think. And, you know, I suppose there was bad feeling there ... obviously from the union’s point of view, you don’t cut staff’s jobs. But the way things are with LMS, you know, schools are being forced to reduce their staff budget. So that was the start of it, really, I think’ (deputy head 2)

This teacher, although incorrectly confusing redundancy with dismissal, was not opposed to redundancy *per se*:

led to believe that they might be made redundant - or sacked actually' (teacher 1)

however, her perception of a lack of equity at Parkville prompted her to react:

'I think that people can accept redundancies if they are redundancies in the true sense of the word or if it's explained clearly that there's only so much money and it has to be divided out but ... it wasn't handled in that sort of way ... I withdrew my goodwill for after school activities ... it was a direct response to the redundancy and the manner in which the redundancies were given out' (teacher 1)

It was, therefore, the threat of redundancy and the introduction of competency procedures (discussed below) which activated the union at the local level and the teachers withdrew 'goodwill' in the form of lunch time duty and after school clubs. This teacher explains how the redundancy issue was perceived collectively:

'then issuing the compulsory redundancy notices and then getting a union reaction - of course you'll get a reaction! It doesn't mean you can't issue the compulsory redundancy notices - I am a realist! you know, if you're not doing anything then maybe you shouldn't be here ... but ... you're in the union, you're bound to take - we only withdrew goodwill, we didn't take strike action, we only withdrew goodwill!!' (teacher 7)

It can be seen from the above how, due to an antagonism of interests, the reality of LMS and devolved control of the budget to local management level can inflame industrial relations issues in a school. This is particularly so in this school where the teachers believe that the special problems of their pupils require more, rather than less, financial and human resources in order for them to operate effectively as professionals. Also, as Ironside and Seifert have identified, cost cutting and budget control initiatives in a school must not be at the expense of maintaining or improving standards as a decline in the latter may result in a loss of market share (1995:168) and a further reduction in available finances; this was a further issue which came to the fore of new managerialism at Parkville.

### **Economy, efficiency and effectiveness at Parkville – monitoring performance**

As discussed in earlier chapters, the centralised monitoring of schools is carried out through Ofsted and HMI inspections. For the staff at Parkville, a direct result of the Ofsted report which stated that Parkville ‘is a school with major weaknesses’ and the subsequent HMI report which said that ‘the school requires special measures since it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education’ was an increase in the monitoring of their performance by the management. Despite performance appraisal being a statutory requirement, this form of centralised-decentralisation was not happening at Parkville and was criticised by both Ofsted and HMI. Management’s failure to implement appraisal was mainly due to staff resistance, with the support of the union.

On his arrival at the school the head had queried the lack of appraisal and discovered that:

‘when the actual mechanics started to bite, the first head of department at the time who was due to be appraised, was advised by the union not to take part on any account’ (headteacher)

and a deputy head confirmed this:

‘there was resistance, union resistance and staff resistance ... because they saw it linked to pay scales ... but because of the resistance we couldn’t take it up ... and it just never happened’ (deputy head 1)

Both the above quotes demonstrate that the teachers were able, and willing, to utilise their ‘collective power’ (Bradley 1999:34); not only is the level of union strength and participation in the school identified here, but there is also confirmation of how ‘an apparently individualised approach is collectivised by union involvement’ (Healy 1997b:206).

was a result of previous weak management, whilst once again referring to the perceived influence of politics in the school:

‘[previous head] was scared ... She herself went through appraisal and she wasn’t able to tackle it with the staff because the staff – at that stage, were unanimous that they weren’t going to go along with it ... and I thought it was a bad mistake. In fact I know it was a bad mistake. It was an appalling mistake. And we should have ... erm, said to [name] “no, you can’t opt out” ... regardless of what would have happened ... but she didn’t feel strong enough to tackle it. And that was linked into this business of how, how Bolshie the staff of Parkville are’ (Governor 1)

When asked about appraisal, however, the teachers interviewed tended not to be against it *per se* and made comments such as:

‘I think it’s important to appraise teachers work if it’s done in a supportive way, yes, yes, I’m not opposed to it in principle’ (teacher 12)

‘I think there should be a formal procedure for looking at people in the department and for senior management looking at departments, yes. Otherwise if something is wrong then there is no time at which you can say it’ (teacher 1)

‘if it’s developmental I’d say it’s ideal ... but it’s - people feel vulnerable about it you see’ (teacher 7)

The resistance to the introduction of appraisal at Parkville must, however, be put into a wider context; it was introduced into schools ‘at a time when teachers’ employment was undergoing profound changes’ (Healy 1997b:209). Parkville’s teachers were not alone in their reticence towards appraisal; as Ironside and Seifert point out, teacher unions were ‘arguing strongly against the use of appraisal for any purpose other than professional development’ (1995:194)<sup>73</sup> whilst 320 respondents (17%) to a survey of

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<sup>73</sup> NASUWT, in warning teachers of the self-appraisal process reminded them that ‘anything you say may be used in evidence against you’ (Healy and Calveley 2000:12).



performance appraisal requirements (Healy and Calveley 2000:12). In line with the discourse surrounding the use of appraisal as a control mechanism (see Healy 1997b; Ironside and Seifert 1995; Walsh 1987), the teachers of Parkville were also concerned with its usage:

‘I don’t agree with necessarily the model I’ve seen imposed, I think it should be more collaborative, a little bit more along the lines of erm, a mentoring relationship’ (teacher 3)

‘but of course there’s the knock on affect that it’s a marking process, it’s flagging up those weak teachers, it’s written down. What happens to those records is very important’ (teacher 7)

These comments identify how performance appraisal can be viewed as a form of performance monitoring, a management control mechanism, and consequently why teachers might resist it<sup>74</sup>. In her work on teacher appraisal, Healy describes how an apparent ‘control/development “dichotomy”’ (1997b:210) has emerged as the government pursue control and the teacher unions development. Arguably, in Parkville the consequence of appraisal resistance was that it led to more performance monitoring with the emphasis firmly on control, as this deputy head explains:

‘one of the things we’ve done as senior management over the last couple of years is more monitoring of lessons ... we thought people were doing what we thought they were doing, and HMI found differently ... and so we thought “well, we need to get in and see” - people felt threatened by it, you know, monitoring every lesson’ (deputy head 1)

Had an appraisal system been in place the issues raised by Ofsted and HMI may have been recognised and dealt with, therefore negating the perceived need for lesson monitoring. Two of the governors commented in this light and one in particular had this to say:

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<sup>74</sup> New Labour are currently attempting to concretise the link between performance appraisal and performance monitoring through the introduction of appraisal linked performance related pay.

by inspection systems and how to monitor, you know, the outcomes of inspections' (Governor 2)

The monitoring subsequently resulted in some teachers being put into competency procedures. The headteacher explained how, with the agreement of the governing body:

'I went down the competency route, initially with three teachers, one left, one decided to resign her position as a head of faculty and just become an ordinary classroom teacher, and I stopped the procedure there, and the one remaining I am continuing to this day setting targets and monitoring her performance'<sup>75</sup> (headteacher)

It is important to note how, through centralised-decentralisation, there exists an intrinsic interrelationship between performance monitoring of teachers and accountability (both public and financial). At this time Parkville was being scrutinised by HMI, the LEA and the local public; management was, undoubtedly, under pressure to take action. The NUT area representative suggests that the headteacher's motives were more of an instrumental nature as he had to be seen to be taking action:

'if you say that the school is failing because of bad teaching that you need to weed out, then you've obviously got to be seen to be trying to do something about that. So teachers were identified, for competency procedures, who had got outstanding exam results ... in my view, they were identified in a completely unjustifiable way and they were targeted because [the headteacher] had to be seen to be identifying failing teachers and doing something about it. Otherwise, he would have been open to the accusation that, that the teachers were being criticised in the school for being incompetent and nothing had been done about it' (NUT area representative)

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<sup>75</sup> This was a teacher of modern foreign languages, an area identified by Ofsted as demonstrating 'poor teaching' (Ofsted report January 1997).

competency procedures were instigated were heads of modern languages and maths, both areas identified by Ofsted as demonstrating 'poor or bad' teaching (the third, who left, was the music teacher). In particular, it commented that 'the management of the modern foreign languages faculty is weak, with no systematic monitoring taking place and no forward planning' (Ofsted report January 1997).

It is also possible that the pressure to reduce the budget may also have played a role in the competency procedures; Ironside and Seifert suggest that in order to reduce staffing headteachers 'may apply pressure to the more expensive teachers to leave, or they may target teachers who they believe to lack either ability or commitment' (1995:176). To what extent the headteacher was reactive to the various pressures cannot be known, although it is apparent that he was responding to some extent to the Ofsted report, however, it is evident that he saw his actions as being proactive. As the manager of the school he felt that competency procedures were justified and he had the support of the governing body<sup>76</sup> on this matter:

'this was the natural consequence of the process of looking at individual teachers' performance and in agreement with the governing body, everything I've done has been agreed by the governing body of course, an agreement by the governing body that should improvements in certain areas not be manifest then I ought to use more formal means in trying to secure those improvements in order that children got a better crack at the whip. And I duly did this, following closely personnel advice from the governing body' (headteacher)

Ironside and Seifert argue that in targeting teachers as suggested above 'there are many possibilities for discrimination which may be perceived as unacceptable' (1995:176); the teachers at Parkville felt that discrimination came into play in the

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<sup>76</sup> Ironside and Seifert suggest that in practice 'most of the important operational aspects of the school can be delegated to the head' and that (at the time of writing, 1995) 'schools operate with the head in control' whilst governors give support (1995:133); a view endorsed by Levacic who argues that in practice headteachers 'exercise the power given by the legislation to governing bodies' (1995:136) (See Appendix 10 for a brief summary of the role of governing bodies.)

selecting of teachers for competency procedures and once again the question of equity arose:

‘the competency procedure has not been successful so far ... mainly because these people are very competent people, one person in particular’  
(teacher 6)

‘One member of staff was put under disciplinary procedures, competency, she is - this particular person had excellent GCSE results, I mean excellent, even for the [area] ... to institute competency procedures against a teacher who’s producing results like that seems fairly ironic’  
(teacher 7)

Although it is clear that the motivation of these teachers to dispute the instigation of competency procedures was their perception that selection was unfair, the former also suggests that collective action was not necessarily contingent on this perceived injustice:

‘there’s one or two teachers who have been picked out for competency procedures ... and again, that did not help the relationship between staff and the senior management because in our view the competency procedures were unfair, you know? We would have opposed them, whether they were fair or not, but they were unfair and you know, these were good teachers, these people were not bad teachers and so it was very unfair’ (teacher 6)

thus, the rift between management and staff widened. A number of teachers particularly felt that there was an injustice towards one particular teacher, the head of modern languages, a long serving member of staff. A deputy head empathised with the teachers by acknowledging how, regardless of the competency of the teacher, these feelings might have originated:

‘the staff were saying very much, you know, that they felt that there should have been more support. And I think there is an argument to say if a teacher’s been teaching for twenty years, to suddenly tell them they’re

incompetent - you know, you understand why it's being done, but something should've been done fifteen, sixteen years ago ... I feel that the system has failed that person, to actually end up with a person towards the end of their career being told that they haven't been very good for x number of years I think is awful' (deputy head 2)

This raises the question of the process involved in instigating such procedures and also whether a developmental performance appraisal system may have allowed for identification and remedy of any problems at an earlier stage, thus negating the need of competency procedures. Despite being a party to the decision to implement competency procedures one of the governors saw the necessity for them as management failure and was prepared to admit such 'failure':

'no, I think we let them down ... so they didn't get the help that they should have had. And that was perhaps ... that may have been through the governors not knowing enough'<sup>77</sup> (Governor 1)

Somewhat understandably the teacher in question felt aggrieved and responded to her competency procedures thus:

'I mean if you see the reports I got from all the teachers, my results - I mean for the last twenty years I've been above the national average, every single year and then this man [headteacher] come to see me - I'm crap I cannot teach! come on!! ... It's crazy!! ... I think he picked on the wrong person and the wrong people, not just me, there are other colleagues who are in the same position as me ... it is just crazy, really ... sad really ... I've got plenty of friends down here at the school, nearly everyone. They've been brilliant to me and really, really helped me through it' (teacher 9)

Again, there is evidence of collegiality amongst the teachers at Parkville as, in line with Healy's findings in relation to performance appraisal (Healy 1997b), these teachers took a collective stand against the individualistic issue of competency

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<sup>77</sup> This governor also maligned the lack of governor training in general and in this LEA in particular.

had the support of some of the teachers who were reluctant to challenge the ‘core’ group of teachers, and it was this that caused him problems:

‘but that [competency procedures] has, again, raised hackles among the union people - although many staff privately have said to me of course you must do that, we are all being dragged back by the fact that some people are not fully capable of discipline ... so why aren’t you doing something about it - but nobody will say it publicly because of the culture of the school’ (headteacher)

Indeed, as he proclaimed there was some support for his actions; the problems he encountered with staff appear to have arisen because of the way he chose to carry these through, as this teacher explains:

‘he put himself into a situation when he started competency procedures against certain teachers who I thought – this is confidential, you know? – who I personally believe are incompetent and shouldn’t be, shouldn’t be here. So on one hand, you know I agree but on the other hand ... but he had put himself in the situation where he wasn’t, in the school, supported by people who actually might have agreed with what he was trying to do. The way he did it was wrong, whereby he didn’t follow procedures, he did it in a ... very underhand and, and uncaring way. So, he didn’t win any friends, he didn’t win any support, so he was trying to do something which requires, you know, quite a lot of support of a lot of teachers’ (teacher 14)<sup>78</sup>

Again, the question of the competency procedure process is open to question. Clearly, despite the headteacher stressing the fact that he had followed the advice of the governing body, teachers felt that the procedures were not correctly adhered to.

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<sup>78</sup> An important aspect is the discourse surrounding the process; the teacher in question claimed (and this was widely accepted by the staff) to have been informed of the instigation of the procedures by a memo in her pigeon hole on returning from her mother’s funeral; this was, however, refuted by the acting head (the headteacher, who had left the school before this became known to the researcher, was not asked about this).

Ball suggests 'decision-making is not an abstract rational process which can be plotted on an organizational chart; it is a political process, it is the stuff of micro-political activity' (1987:26); however, it is important to remember that school level decision making is also a consequence of the macro-political activity, of government policy. The headteacher at Parkville was making his decisions within the wider context of marketisation and public accountability, within a school which was perceived as 'failing' its pupils; the choices he made were under constant external scrutiny. Decisions he made with respect to redundancy and competency procedures had potentially dire consequences for the teachers involved and were therefore resisted by them. Micro-political activity developed in the school as these teachers were supported by their colleagues and their union.

Ironside and Seifert suggest 'the great advantage of the LEA officers carrying out the duties and functions of teacher control and dismissal was that repercussions could be restrained within the school as the LEA could be the outside agency to blame for muddle and/or lack of fairness' (1995:142). As is evidenced at Parkville the repercussion of enforcing the 'three Es' (Pollitt *et al.* 1998:10) was the institutionalising of blame within the school and a breakdown in collegiality between the staff and the headteacher. In line with Ironside and Seifert's comments both Fairbrother (1994a; 1996) in his work on the Civil Service and Thornley (1998) in her work on the NHS found that devolvement of 'managerialism' had resulted in more active participation of union members at a local level as managers had to deal with union representatives at a local level. The interpretation of the data from Parkville suggests that teaching is no different in this respect and consequently reinforces these findings.

It would appear that a power struggle emerged in the school between the headteacher and some of the longer serving members of staff, teachers who perhaps saw themselves 'caught and crushed in the nexus between management and the market' (Ball 1994:62). Ball suggests that as a result of the ERA 'professionalism is replaced

introduction of new managerialism into schools. Whilst, as mentioned above, the consequences of cost cutting through redundancies and the greater monitoring of staff at Parkville was a loss of collegiality between the headteacher and the staff, paradoxically there was a commensurate strengthening of the collegiality amongst the teaching staff.

In 1994, Hatcher wrote 'at school level we are likely to see a growing tension as heads and governors are charged with imposing the new management regime on an increasingly reluctant workforce' (1994:61); in 1998/9 this was clearly evidenced in Parkville. Ball suggests that management can be seen as a 'polyvalent discourse' in that 'it both liberates and enslaves. It empowers and subjects' (1994:56). This can be seen at Parkville where the headteacher was liberated and empowered to make the staffing decisions he made, however, these were within the structures and confines of intense accountability and budget constraint. Pollitt *et al.* make a distinction between 'normal times' and 'turning points', with the latter being 'those occasions when the leaders of organisations are forced to think in a more calculative and strategic way' (1998:127); arguably Parkville was at such a turning point when the headteacher was appointed and this goes some way towards accounting for his subsequent actions.

Importantly, not all teachers blamed the head for the school's problems and some highlighted the structures which affected his decision making; one teacher described how the problems had been 'inherited' from the previous head whilst another had this to say:

'I was one of the few members of staff who supported the head still [at the announcement of the closure] and feel that he was not supported enough by the authority' (teacher 4)

Nevertheless, even the teachers who acknowledged the structures within which the headteacher at Parkville was working felt that it was his management that was flawed, that he had made 'some really bad strategic decisions' (teacher 10). When the



retrospect when he commented:

‘things which he had to do had to be done, now maybe ... maybe they might have been done differently’ (acting head)

and perhaps one of the management strategies he may have employed differently is the way in which he communicated with the staff.

### **New Managerialism and HRM - consultation and communication at Parkville**

In their attempt to gain the commitment (or compliance) of their workforce, managers throughout the public sector have engaged with the unitarist ideology of HRM practices (Bach 1999:182; Corby and White 1999:18; Fairbrother 1994a:189), with the managers of schools being no different (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:5). One of the major tenets of HRM is the rhetoric of consultation and communication with the workers, often in the guise of direct communication and team briefings. Such initiatives are viewed as a way of promoting the ‘inherent individualism’ (Corby and White 1999:18) associated with HRM and designed to undermine the collectivity of the workforce, thus allowing decisions to be implemented without conflict and resistance. This section will discuss the reality of consultation and communication at Parkville.

When Parkville was put under Special Measures the school management team were obliged to produce an action plan to address the problems. The extent to which the staff were consulted with respect to this is open to debate; one deputy had this to say:

‘well on quite a few things he did [consult] ... but there was, there was a confusion as to what was consultation and what wasn’t in terms of – I think [the head] felt that he was consulting, for example ... he’d put out a paper to heads of faculty – “take it to your faculty meetings and bring it back, bring back your ideas”. And often he’d get no comments back, on things, and therefore he then felt that people weren’t interested, or couldn’t be bothered or whatever, erm, but staff would not see that as

head 2)

and the views of the teachers on this varied. One teacher felt that there was consultation, albeit under constrained circumstances:

‘I don’t actually believe that school’s are democracies. The head is the head, he’s a manager, he’s paid to manage and he’s got to produce this document within a short space of time, it’s got to be done. So he made efforts to consult ... erm, they weren’t huge efforts but he did make some effort. But he’s got a definite time limit ... so I’m, I’m sympathetic to both views. Some people think they didn’t have enough time to consult, but you can talk about things constantly and nothing much would get done. What you need is someone to sit down and do it – [the head] sat down and did it ... I felt that [he] tried his best and consulted’ (teacher 4)

The language of this teacher is significant in that he clearly emphasises the role of the headteacher as a manager, reinforcing Evetts’ suggestion that the role of the headteacher is changing significantly (1996). Other Parkville teachers were adamant that there had been no consultation regarding the action plan:

‘well, initially we weren’t consulted about the action plan, we didn’t draw it up. It was drawn up by [the head] and, to some extent, I don’t know how much, [deputy heads] ... The lack of consultation was the key thing’ (teacher 8)

‘no consultation at all, whatsoever, throughout the document’ (teacher 3)

and yet others were cynical about consultation, for example:

‘we were consulted about a lot of things but as I said earlier – why? ... In the action plan I, I can’t see anything that I can say “I had input in that”... So ... I feel really cynical ...’ (teacher 11)

One deputy head, however, suggested that the lack of input to the action plan by teachers may have been instrumentally motivated:

people don't want to take responsibility for any input that they did have, or, or maybe by choosing not to have any input that means they can say they didn't have input, you know what I mean?' (deputy head 2)

It is apparent from the above that consultation means different things to different people. Ironside and Seifert describe consultation as 'the seeking out of opinion without any obligation to act on the views of others' (1995:9). A governor and a deputy head of Parkville eloquently voice this:

'there was disagreement with the staff ... because everything they said hadn't been taken on board in the action plan, they felt they hadn't been effectively consulted. Erm, but you know, I think that one of those difficult things about sort of consultation is you've got to consult and then you know, ultimately the governors had to take the final decision about what did and didn't go into the action plan' (Governor 2)

'[the teachers think] that we don't consult but this then is a question as to how you consult with people ... we feel that we do, but we want to consult with people not at huge staff meetings we want to give people ideas to talk about through smaller meetings so that they can all contribute, but that's not seen to be the way in this school ... I always get the feeling that if things go the way they want them to, then they're quite happy, consultation's fine then, if things don't work out the way they want them to consultation - there hadn't been any consultation! you know, and it's been imposed upon us' (deputy head 1)

Both of these quotes highlight the tension that exists between consulting with staff and management simply implementing decisions. The latter comment is synonymous with the findings of Ironside and Seifert, and questions the extent to which consultation actually takes place:

'this method of "sounding out" staff gives the appearance of a systematic approach to obtaining their views. In reality it amounts to no more than a vehicle for passing messages from senior management to staff about their

intentions ... The messages that get passed back ... have little real value ... under this method change is decided by management unilaterally rather than through negotiated agreement' (authors' emphasis) (1995:223);

it is apparent that the Parkville staff viewed consultation with the headteacher in this way. Not only did they feel that the headteacher had instituted redundancies without their prior consultation but he also expected them to be committed to an action plan to which they felt they had no input and this again heightened industrial relations tensions. As far as the staff were concerned the headteacher's approach was more authoritarian than consultative as this teacher suggests:

'and you know, I think that sometimes you've got to listen carefully to the people who are doing the actual job and attempt to listen and unpick what is going on there, and see how you can manage a situation which would move that forward, and I don't think that was going on at all! It seemed to be, in my opinion, [the headteacher's] opinion about the school is this and this is what will happen. You either agree or don't agree, if you don't agree I'll give you a hard time, you know ...' (teacher 3)

Staff/management relations were infinitely more settled following, on the resignation of the headteacher, the appointment of the senior deputy as acting head. He was seen to take a more consultative approach:

'I think that people have been given an opportunity to voice their opinions on things' (teacher 16)

'he's better at handling people ... he certainly works with carrots rather than sticks, whereas [headteacher] certainly worked with sticks' (teacher 4)

'[he] wants a less confrontational approach which will make things easier and funnily enough, people probably work harder because of it!' (teacher 10)

It must be recognised, however, that, as many of the budgetary pressures had been removed, the acting head had very different structural constraints than did his predecessor, and did not have to make imperative decisions within very demanding time-scales. The acting head agreed that he did consult, but preferred a more informal, 'sounding-out' method through dialogue with the teachers:

'but not necessarily through formal consultation. I think once you set up procedures for formal consultation it sort of erm ... prevents things happening because people take corners as to how they talk about things. I think if you talk to people, you know just generally talk to people then erm, you can find out an awful lot about what people want and then make sure that when you do start any, sort of, semi-formal consultation you've met someone half way in the first place, rather than put something up and saying "look this is my idea, I won't consult about it"' (acting head)

He also recognises that there is an inherent difference between consultation and negotiation:

'I think there are things you can't consult about. I mean it's the difference between consultation and negotiation ... you can negotiate if you've got an idea, then you can bend it a little bit' (acting head)

In talking about negotiation (in the context of trade unions), Ironside and Seifert suggest that 'managers may resist genuine negotiations since "good faith" bargaining requires the bargainers, such as the managers, to make concessions from their "ideal" position (1995:9). The headteacher at Parkville took decisions by which he stood. He clearly felt that these decisions, such as redundancy and competency procedures were non-negotiable, they were his 'ideal' positions; if the budget was not reduced and the school's performance in the league tables not improved the school would be closed down, thus, marketisation and accountability were his driving forces. Ironside and Seifert use Goodrich's (1920) term when they describe the 'negotiability of issues' as the "'frontier of control" which separates the two parties'; they suggest that this term 'reminds us of the ... clash of interests and the thinly veiled threat of conflict' within traditional industrial relations (1995:9). It would appear that conflict came to the fore

at Parkville partly due to the lack, or perceived lack, of consultation with the teachers; such consultation may have led to negotiation and the headteacher was, he would probably argue, unable to negotiate.

Ball talks about the extent to which ‘consultation and decision-making is a trick’ (1987:137). To suggest that the acting head was involved in ‘trickery’ would be rather extreme, however, he explains here how he utilised the knowledge he gained informally in a manipulative way to avoid confrontation, whilst recognising the futility of alienating the staff:

‘I think with things like experience, you know where people are at to start with, so you’ve already, sort of, gone through the consultation and you can make sure that whatever you want to do carries those people anyway. I think if it doesn’t then you’ve had it, I mean, you know, you’re just bashing your head against a brick wall, you’ve had it’ (acting head)

Alongside the issue of consultation is that of communication. At Parkville this took various forms, none of which were met with enthusiasm by the staff. Ironside and Seifert suggest that the ‘emphasis on the benefits of good communication is itself predicated on elements of unitarist ideology and rarely based in evidence’ (1995:9); the evidence from Parkville suggests that communication from the headteacher was somewhat unilateral and rather than proving the benefits of good communication it highlights, as will be seen, the way in which poor communication can increase the potential for management/staff conflict.

Every day there was a morning briefing which according to the head:

‘I inherited from my predecessor and everyone thought it was a good idea so I meet the staff for ten minutes before the start of the school day’  
(headteacher)

Such forms of ‘communicative involvement’ (Richardson 1999:394) are very much in the vein of HRM and a unitarist approach to management as is seen in the ‘new managerialism’ adopted by public sector managers (Bach 1999:185; Fairbrother

1994a:189). Some of the staff at Parkville saw the morning briefing as a method of control:

‘he enforced directed time, but you see the enforcements that he did were done in a way that didn’t encourage staff to feel that they were doing a good job. I mean I know there’s a very, sort of, left side in this school but I mean he got, he got up everybody’s back, everybody’ (teacher 15)

‘and making us come, we had a briefing ... every morning, so people were getting resentful and people wanted to come, I think – I mean now, now that he’s gone people still happily come along, so it wasn’t the thing, it was the way he was making us, his style of, of doing it, so yes, I mean when, when it comes down to people forcing you to, to do things’ (teacher 14)

How the teachers were ‘forced’ to attend is unclear, however, it is likely that the headteacher employed his ‘positional’ power (Bradley 1999:34) as the manager of the school. It is apparent from the above comments that it was the style of management that the teachers objected to and not particularly the practices; there were morning briefing meetings prior to the headteacher taking over and they continued after he left until the school closed. The objection of the staff to the meetings must be situated in the wider context of redundancies and competency procedures which heralded the break down in manager/staff relations and the creation of a ‘them and us’ culture within the school.

Another strategy employed by the headteacher for communicating with the staff was through the use of written memoranda; these teachers show their frustration at both the morning briefings and the use of memos:

‘one morning I got a letter saying that I was three minutes late for roll call and I wasn’t, he just couldn’t see me. And you just felt on tenterhooks all the time. You’d get these memos and ... he just seemed to be threatening, that’s what I felt’ (teacher 17)

‘memos for example! His way of controlling staff was to build up a file about you and the file was full of memos! If you were a few minutes late you got a memo! And then of course you have to reply to the memo explaining the situation and to put it right on your file – what a complete waste of time!!’ (teacher 10)

One teacher told how he dealt with the situation:

‘well I questioned the memos and was told that it was the new management style, new aggressive style of management ... [deputy head] told me that, when - because I complained about it. And I sent a few memos myself about senior management who hadn’t done things as they’d promised to, and I didn’t get any more memos after that!! (laughing) So I had very few memos actually’ (teacher 4)

whilst another teacher saw such remoteness as a weakness:

‘management by memo is, is another sign of weakness really, it’s a sign of insecurity as well. He should have confidence and trust in his staff and he should be able to talk to people’ (teacher 8)

Interestingly, in their account of the closing of Hackney Downs school in London, the authors describe the headteacher at the time as ‘a manager with a “systems” approach, whose main means of communication with staff was through memos, forms and meetings’ (O’Connor *et al.* 1999:62), thus suggesting that such ‘business’ methods are not uncommon in schools.

Parkville’s acting head acknowledged that the headteacher’s method of communication by memo had caused problems in the school and his own actions were influenced by hindsight:

‘where he lost a few people – was sending paper to people, memos, which really upsets people. I think they don’t mind if you talk to them first and then give it to them, rather than just get things, you know ... people resented that, they just felt it was the wrong way to operate. I’ve tried to



avoid that. I mean I still keep sending memos to people about what information I want, but if it's a confrontational type of thing I'll talk to them first, then send them a memo – I'll tell them "I'm going to send you a memo", you know, so that they know it's going to come along' (acting head)

and this apparently worked as his approach to management was seen by the staff to be far more 'inclusive':

'a popular choice. Man of the people! Yes, he is ... people have no problem – well I, I perceive most people would have no problem with him. You go in and loads of people are talking to him, or telling him things' (teacher 14)

It must not be forgotten, however, that the acting head had been part of the senior management team with the previous headteacher. Despite this he does not seem to have been 'tainted' by this association; arguably, his eight year tenure as deputy head went some way towards smoothing his passage to acting head as will be discussed later in the chapter.

Another major cause for discontent which was frequently commented upon by the teachers during interviews was the fact that the headteacher appeared to isolate himself from the staff when he moved offices and separated the 'management suite' (his own, his secretary's, the senior deputy's, and the administration offices) from the rest of the school by a key-coded security door to which the staff did not have the combination (although they were able to access it through the administration office). These teachers believed that this was bad both from a staffing point of view and from that of the children:

'he really isolated himself ... In the old office you could actually see the playground, see the kids. He moved somewhere that was smaller where he couldn't see the kids, we couldn't get to him' (teacher 17)

‘and so the Ofsted report, I believe, isn’t right and I believe the HMI report isn’t right because they both say that the headteacher is managing this school well ... and I think he mis-manages it - I mean he’s down the corridor he’s not even visible is he?’ (teacher 7)

The visibility of the headteacher is particularly relevant in a school suffering the disciplinary problems of Parkville. One teacher argued that the head being ‘closeted away writing the action plan’ meant that the school suffered as it needed a ‘more *visible* senior management than we had at the time’ (teacher 4). Another teacher felt that whilst the door was, undeniably, a barrier between management and staff this was used as an excuse by some staff:

‘people have that as a hidden agenda, that they lock themselves away. But all you have to do is knock on the door. That’s, that’s another thing you see, you get the, the hard line people in this school will tell you “yes, management are over there, they lock themselves away and are unapproachable” - in a sense they are unapproachable but if you really feel strongly about something then you go to them and you go and make your point ... They are in a sense un-approachable because of where they are’ (teacher 11)

Nevertheless, this teacher explained how the headteacher’s isolation contributed to the antagonism between him and the staff:

‘it [goodwill] went very very quickly when he did certain things like erm, suddenly shutting, shutting the senior management away behind the [door], at that end. Which was, really, awful ... and nobody was supposed to be given that number for it, erm ... And of course, one never really saw him around the school. Very, very rarely’ (teacher 15)

The physical move of the offices may perhaps be viewed as visible evidence of a shift, for this headteacher, from the ‘first amongst equals’ (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:244), collegial, stance to a more ‘new managerial’, business, stance. This teacher described her annoyance and bewilderment:

‘I have no idea whether that was imposed on the school or it was their personal choice but it’s very, very irksome ... I’ve never been to another school where the headteacher doesn’t have an office right by the front door which they, you know, leave the door open to. Perhaps after the headteacher was stabbed in St George’s, perhaps headteachers have started to be a little bit paranoid, I’ve got no idea, but all I know is that I don’t know the combination to the door and many other teachers don’t either, they’re not allowed in there’ (teacher 1)

A deputy head acknowledged that the headteacher wanted to isolate himself:

‘the staff used to just walk down the corridor and go in ... I think the whole idea was for [the headteacher] to create a bit of distance, you know, and so I mean there’s that code on the door as well. I mean it’s not just security, I think, you know, it’s in terms of making some distance with staff, I think with parents as well, particularly the way things are at the moment, you need a bit more security ... I don’t think it’s ideal ... I certainly think that staff were a bit prohibited by it’ (deputy head 2)

A newer teacher summed up the feelings in the school quite succinctly:

‘from what I understand, that combination lock was apparently fitted on the door in the last two years and I think that physical distance has also brought on a sort of emotional distance between the management and the staff’ (teacher 2)

again demonstrating the shift from collegiality to new managerialism by this headteacher. Prior to becoming acting head, the senior deputy commented on the door thus:

‘I think the staff feel that we are isolated and that [the headteacher] isolated it even more by putting a lock on the door at the end of the corridor and moving down here because the previous head was in an office further up where the general office is ... we’re not felt to be around’ (deputy head 1)

nevertheless, when he was appointed as acting head the management suite and the security code remained and he explained:

‘that stops children coming through, still, but the staff are quite happy to come through the office, you know’ (acting head)

Significantly, in none of the interviews from the time of his appointment until the school closed was the locked door raised as a current issue by any of the teachers; those that did mention it always did so in the past tense. The acting head had not removed the physical barrier, however, the ‘emotional distance’ between management and staff had clearly narrowed. The locked door may well have been a symbolic further manifestation of the growing discord between management and staff rather than an actual issue.

It is evident from the above that the use of consultation and communication as an effective way to instigate the unitarist ideology of HRM was more rhetoric than reality in Parkville. There was clearly a breakdown in communication, including the divergence between the management and staff as to the understanding of ‘consultation’ and the use of the morning briefing meetings. In his strive to attain ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’, the headteacher appeared to the staff to issue dicta which they saw as a management offensive; this form of direct, but unilateral, communication increased the discord in the school. At this stage it is important to recognise that the poor management/staff relationship was almost exclusively between the headteacher and the staff and did not involve the deputy heads to any great extent; this and the contrast in attitude of the staff towards the acting head will be discussed in the next section.

### **New Managerialism and new management at Parkville**

As mentioned above, the deputy heads were not subjected to the same acrimonious relationship with the staff; nevertheless the more recently appointed of these did have this to say:

‘in a way, I mean, a deputy’s job is to kind of be between the head and the rest of the staff. Erm, I’d like to think that I, that I did manage that go between job ... But very often I would find myself confronted with – only certain, not all members of staff, just a few members of staff – that brick wall, you know, you are senior management. And I actually found that quite difficult ... I’ve never worked in a situation which is so much an us and them. I mean you, you’re always going to get it, but not like here. And I find that really difficult because ... if people put that barrier up to you, or mistrust you, then you get sort of back-stabbing and then you feel vulnerable so you then put your barrier up and before you know it you both put your barriers up and you have got an us and them’ (deputy head 2)

The other deputy head who had worked in the school for eight years did not encounter the same problems, perhaps reinforcing the notion of a ‘time-served’ approach to collegiality amongst the staff and thus easing his transition from deputy to acting head. On the other hand, the relationship between the teaching staff and the headteacher was clearly adversely affected by the way in which he chose, or felt obliged, to practice new managerialism in the school. His resignation was widely welcomed throughout the school as was the appointment of the acting head; when asked about the latter a number of teachers commented that ‘he should have been head years ago’. The other deputy explained the acting head’s acceptance by the staff:

‘I think [acting head] got a lot of support, from the staff, erm people were very unhappy with [the headteacher] ... I think ... there’s a mixture of a sense of loyalty towards [acting head], but also I think the staff do feel, I don’t know, they feel different since [the headteacher’s] gone. I think a lot of them felt, started to feel sort of threatened by him’ (deputy head 2)

The teachers used adjectives such as ‘approachable’, ‘firm but fair’ and ‘visible’ to describe the acting head, thus perhaps highlighting some of the differences between his and the previous headteacher’s management styles, as will be discussed further

below. Some teachers went as far as ‘excusing’ the role he played in the management team under the previous headteacher by suggesting that:

‘[he] was caught in-between, you know, with the last head’ (teacher 14)

It is important to recognise, however, that although the acting head inherited many of the structures in place when the previous headteacher was in situ – including the centralised control of HMI inspections which continued until the school closed – these were not nearly as profound or as potentially threatening; the school had moved along the continuum from ‘failure’ to ‘closure’; unlike his predecessor, his remit was to see the school through to closure and not to save it. However, as he admitted, the ‘blame culture’ disappeared when his predecessor left:

‘[his] leaving actually took a lot of things with him ... in terms of staff relationships, they’ve been excellent and people are being mutually supportive and not blaming everyone – the blame culture that was here before ... that has gone’ (acting head)

The teachers transferred their vitriol outside the school towards the LEA, the Government and the previous headteacher; once again the significance of decentralisation on school industrial relations and the role that the LEA previously played as the ‘outside agency’ (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:142) in taking the blame in decision making is discernible. The acting head capitalised on the transfer of blame by encouraging a ‘team spirit, all in it together’ attitude within the school viz.:

‘I said on the first day back in September at the staff meeting, that we were basically all in the same position ... what we knew was we were going to be made redundant at the end of the year, the school’s closing at the end of the year, erm, what I wanted to see was ... the staff re-establishing their self esteem and professionalism, taking a positive attitude’ (acting head)

This was a 'soft' HRM (Legge 1995)<sup>79</sup>, unitarist approach to management with the emphasis very much on 'team'. The acting head was attempting to use his 'first amongst equals' (Ironside and Seifert 1995:244) position to enhance the collegiality between himself and the staff; he attempted to re-create a more positive attitude of the staff towards the school and also eliminate the 'them and us' attitude which had developed under the previous headteacher. The benefit of hindsight allowed him to recognise that the teachers were both willing and able to act collectively to protect their school, their pupils, their own jobs and those of their colleagues; he recognised the pluralist nature of the work relationship. Perhaps with this in mind, the 'controlling' approach of performance monitoring gave way to a more 'developmental' one; he spoke to each of the staff individually because:

'I thought it's, it's good for them to actually have a sit down and a proper talk, not official, not sort of formal but just a chat about what they want to do and things they don't want to do' (acting head)

and although this idea initially met with resistance from the NUT area representative the teachers in the school went along with it because, according to the acting head:

'they trusted me. 'Cos I'm not going to tell anybody else about what they want to do' (acting head)

this was in line with what the staff said about him<sup>80</sup>, viz.:

'he often pops into classes but it's not at all threatening because he's being pro-active rather than re-active' (teacher 13)

thus highlighting the weakening of staff/management tensions within the school. As commented upon earlier, one of the major problems under the previous headteacher

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<sup>79</sup> In brief, Legge distinguishes between 'hard' and 'soft' approaches to HRM; the former views employees as a resource, a factor of production, whilst the latter views employees as 'valued assets' who should be nurtured and trusted in order to gain their commitment to management initiatives and decisions (Legge 1995:66).

<sup>80</sup> Although the following opinions are those of 'peripheral' teachers, it should be noted that *all* the staff spoken to following the appointment of the acting head - either through interviews or informal conversations - were pleased with his taking over; this is also supported by observation of inter-actions between the acting head and teachers and the general atmosphere in the staffroom. The researcher feels confident in suggesting that his appointment was a popular choice.

was the perceived lack of equity; the opposite was perceived to be the case with the acting head:

‘he’s very sensitive to your feelings, erm, he fits in often very well with things that you want to do. He’s very encouraging and, erm, he’s very thoughtful. He’s very thoughtful and sensitive! And he’s also very caring. I think he cares very much, and I think he likes to ... do the best he can for everybody. He’s very, very fair. Yes, he’s very fair indeed in everything that he does. And I think this is why he’s been so successful. He’s fair with the children, he’s fair with the staff ... he thinks about everybody. And even the new school he thinks about very much as well, he want’s to do the best. He’s very professional, want’s to do the best for the staff and the children’ (teacher 15)

As suggested above, it would appear that, unlike his predecessor, the acting head practised consensual industrial relations or ‘soft HRM’ (Legge 1995:66) thus identifying to a greater extent with the role of the headteacher as the senior figure ‘among teams of like-minded professionals’ (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:220); the teachers reacted positively to the change in management attitude thus eliminating much of the antagonism in the school. Yet again it must be remembered that the acting head was operating under different circumstances to the previous headteacher with little necessity for him to make ‘hard’, unpopular, management decisions such as redundancy; this was something of which he was well aware.

Nevertheless, the school was still operating under tight fiscal constraints and still being monitored by HMI which was resented by the teachers as this one commented:

‘every three months HMI come in, every month there’ll be inspectors in, they’re coming in at the moment to help line managers watch the people they manage, monitor their lessons ... I mean the school is shutting! Why don’t they just bugger off and leave us alone and let’s get on with things?’ (teacher 7)



It was imperative that the acting head engaged the commitment of the teachers to see the school through to its closure; he needed the teachers to ensure some level of stability in the school. Fowler questions whether HRM practitioners are indeed ‘offering a covert form of employee manipulation dressed up as mutuality’ (1987:3) and whilst not suggesting that the acting head was calculatingly employing such HRM practices, this certainly has to be borne in mind in contemplating his actions.

The following quote demonstrates how he attempted to utilise the tension that existed between the previous headteacher and the staff to his own advantage; he was aware that the staff would like nothing more than to prove the previous headteacher wrong:

‘we need to ... make sure that we don’t go backwards and this is why for things like the HMI visit next week I’ve said to people we want to be at least reasonable - which is their judgement that we’re getting all right ... but I’ve also said wouldn’t it be nice if we could be so good that they took us out of Special Measures before they closed us, you know! But at least be saying nice things about us even if we don’t get there’ (acting head)

However, despite the fact that, as can be seen from earlier quotes, the acting head was undoubtedly liked and respected by the teachers, their jobs were severely affected by events in the school and it was his task to manage this; as will be seen in the next section, it was no easy task.

### **New Managerialism and the working environment at Parkville**

The work of the teachers at Parkville was affected by a number of different factors, both tangible and intangible, the most acute of the latter being the culture of blame that embraced the school. As identified earlier, relations between the headteacher and the staff became more and more strained as time went on, however, staff resentment towards the headteacher was fuelled by his apparent willingness to talk to the local and national press. Whether these reports were accurate is open to debate, however, what is clear is that the headteacher made no attempt to refute the quotes attributed to

him. This had a seriously negative effect on teachers and their morale as this teacher commented:

‘you imagine going and working somewhere where you’re working day in and day out very, very hard under very, very difficult circumstances and then your boss writes an article in the local paper saying you’re rubbish er, a) you feel personally bad but b) you know that the kids that you teach are reading it!, you know, and you’re trying to have order and discipline in your classroom and there’s your headteacher gone to the local paper and said that you’re rubbish!’ (teacher 12)

Although as mentioned earlier this ‘blame culture’ eased once the headteacher resigned, other, more tangible, factors remained, perhaps the most significant of these being the problem of staffing. Initially, the staff head count was cut by the headteacher under the redundancy programme; these teachers were viewed as superfluous to requirements (on a curricular basis) so in theory this in itself should not have affected the workload of the remaining teachers. However as the acting head commented, in a school such as Parkville it was important to have ‘bodies’ in the form of ‘responsible adults’ around the school to help with discipline.

In their report on the closing of Hackney Downs, also viewed as a ‘failed school’ O’Connor *et al.* describe how

‘from the official point of view, heads, teachers and governors in post at “failing time” bear a heavy responsibility. They are not only held to be responsible for failing children who, in the emotive language of the 1992 White Paper “have only one chance”, they are also failing local communities and the whole nation!’ (1999:254)

Some of the teachers at Parkville were no doubt wary of such a stigma whilst others were concerned about their prospect of employment following the closure, they did, after all, need an income on which to live. At the end of the term following the announcement of the school’s closure five teachers left through either early retirement or to take up positions in other schools. Two teachers were not replaced

and the curriculum was reorganised to make allowances for this. The other teachers were replaced by supply staff on short-term contracts. A further four teachers left at the end of the following term and were also replaced by short-term contract staff. At the start of the school's final academic year the acting head expressed his concern over the loss of staff:

'but as the year progresses, there will be some people leaving ... now we'll get supply teachers again, but we won't necessarily get the same quality, but the more you get in, the more destabilised it becomes, because you are losing what our kids need, which is the basic stability of people' (acting head)

thus explaining one aspect of the loss of staff on the work of the other teachers.

Another implication for the teachers was the intensification of work for those remaining who had to endure larger class sizes and an increase in workload and stress levels. This teacher explained:

'the problem is the size, you see, the amount of pupils ... and this is the frustration that I end up getting – is that my room's [Technology] made for eighteen pupils but it's towards thirty, at least twenty-six' (teacher 14)

which results in practical teaching sessions being disrupted due to lack of equipment and space.

The increased 'casualisation' of employment contracts (Sinclair *et al.* 1996:642) through the employment of 'supply' teachers under short-term contracts (and in some cases no contracts at all) and the change in the contracts of previously full-time teachers to part-time meant that a 'peripheral' labour force of part-time and temporary workers developed at Parkville. Having a 'flexible' workforce is one of the growing features of new managerialism within areas of the public sector (see for example Fairbrother (1994a) on the Civil Service; Hatcher (1994) and Ironside and Seifert (1995) on education); the epitome of such flexibility is the use of a 'peripheral' labour market. Ironside and Seifert suggest that 'flexibility' in schools is defined by

management and ‘means enabling the right work to be done at the right time, in the right quantity and to the right standards’ (1995:169) and this would appear to be the case in schools where headteachers embrace it as a way of responding quickly to staffing demands caused by expansion or contraction of the school roll. As noted above, however, Parkville’s acting head had no choice in his use of casualised labour, he was responding to the structures in which he was operating; flexibility in this case was more of a coping strategy than a strategic management decision.

Such casualisation introduced complex problems which necessitated careful management; once again the work of the permanent staff was affected as greater demand was placed on them due to their continuously being called upon by the supply teachers for assistance and advice. As mentioned previously, one of the issues at Parkville was the behavioural problems of the children and a strategy to deal with this was to allocate to an intake year a form tutor who remained their tutor until their leaving the school five years later; both pupils and tutor built up a ‘stable’ relationship and thus respect. Naturally, with supply teachers such a relationship does not exist and behaviour problems increase resulting in intervention by the permanent staff; it was not unusual for a teacher to be called upon several times during a lesson to regain control of the pupils in a class being taken by a supply teacher – the quality of both lessons suffering as a consequence.

One teacher described how lack of consistency in discipline had a negative effect on his own behaviour:

‘I mean I try every day to get kids to take their jackets off, to stop chewing – the basic things that everybody should be doing and I know that other people don’t ... And to do their homework – I punish them if they don’t do their homework, ‘cos it’s a rule and other people don’t. So you tend to feel now – oh what’s the point, you know, what’s the point?’

(teacher 14)

It was not only the work of the permanent staff that was affected as this supply teacher explained:

‘if I would support someone else who was a supply teacher, [teacher 21], that the students had no respect for and had no, they were not willing to let her do her job, and, you know, I was support teacher there, there was just really nothing either one of us could do to help that. And it was difficult because for a long time you felt like, well I’m really not very good at this’ (teacher 16)

and she went on to explain how the casualisation of the teaching staff at Parkville also affected the children:

‘I think the kids find it really distressing when ... for example, my form has had ... five different English teachers this year!? ... to them they don’t see any continuity – it’s already hard to show these kids continuity in a subject area, but it’s especially difficult if it’s not the same teacher all the time. And every teacher is going to have their period of settling in so that, for the kids that’s really wasted time, almost, because that teacher is just trying to get to know them. And they’ve changed their form tutor as well. They had a form tutor that they really liked, that was so hard on them to have a new form tutor, and it’s hard on me to come in because they didn’t like me because their old form tutor that they did like had gone’ (teacher 16)

thus making it a difficult situation with which to cope

Another factor which had a negative effect on the ability of the Parkville teachers to work competently was the poor working environment which worsened as building work for the new school commenced. Again, the supply teacher above, who was long term and from Canada commented on her impression of the school:

‘and, of course, my other first impression was that the buildings, themselves, the infrastructure, was horrendously maintained, so old and I think that was the first thing that I wrote home about, how cold I was every day, in the school, because the heating isn’t sufficient and the windows let in all the cold air, and that kind of thing’ (teacher 16)

Another teacher explained how lack of resources affected his work:

‘I mean this school is a dump. There is scaffolding around and they’re moving people from classroom to classroom, there are kids in rooms with no boards in them. You know, I’m a Geography teacher, I can’t show a slide, I can’t pull a curtain across a window, what am I supposed to say? ... I think, you know, the premises undermine, the management of the premises undermine the ability to teach, always has done’ (teacher 3)

Clearly, in this case the drive for economy following LMS combined with the budget mis-management of a previous headteacher, hindered the effectiveness of the teaching process, once again highlighting the problems that arose following devolution of budgets to untrained school managers. The conditions also had a negative effect on the children as the learning environment was poor; as could be seen from participative observation, they often lacked respect for buildings which were already in a poor state of dis-repair and this had a knock-on effect on discipline, again making the job of the teacher harder.

## **Conclusion**

It is apparent that the events at Parkville have been shaped by a number of factors, some which have influenced from outside the school whilst others from within; frequently there was an inter-relationship between both external and internal factors. Clearly, relations between the headteacher and the staff were fraught with antagonism.

The ‘core’ group of long serving staff had a significant role to play in developments that took place in the school. Due to the collegiality of these teachers and their preparedness to act collectively, the headteacher found it difficult to implement the changes he believed were necessary to turn the school around. Although the nature and motivation of their collective action was disputed, both by management and some of the other teachers, the outcome was a consistent and resilient resistance. These ‘core’ teachers gave ‘voice’ to their feelings and publicly supported colleagues whom

they felt had been unfairly treated. By challenging the 'positional' power (Bradley 1999:34), and indeed the authority, of the headteacher they raised the awareness of the other staff who then also considered whether the manager's actions were fair and equitable; the other teachers were not submissive actors, they made their own choices and decisions based on the facts as they saw them.

Parkville's headteacher appears to have mis-judged the mood and the ability of the teachers to resist his changes. Although initially liked by the teachers, goodwill towards him faded as, in their opinion, he took a hard, unitarist approach to management where consultation and two-way communication was replaced by authoritarian memos and dicta.

His management perspective appears to conform to some extent to Purcell and Sisson's 'standard modern' management typology (1983:112-118) which recognises the complex relationship between unitarist and pluralist approaches to management (as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis). Although taking a pluralist perspective in recognising, and indeed believing in, trade unions, the headteacher nevertheless employs a 'fire-fighting' approach to industrial relations. This was to a certain extent, however, dictated by the fact that, in line with Purcell and Sisson's narrative, he was 'compelled to adopt short-term actions to meet immediate product-market and financial demands' (1983:117); the LEA, in line with centralised government imposed initiatives, required Parkville's headteacher, as manager of the school, to reduce an inherited budget over-spend and improve the school's league table position. His job was further exacerbated by having to act on (and be seen to act on) poor Ofsted and HMI reports on the school.

Purcell and Sisson also suggest that short-term actions by managers means that 'the leeway for manoeuvre in negotiating redundancies ... is often very limited, thereby placing considerable strain on the climate of industrial relations and on the preferred approach to problem solving adopted by "pluralist" personnel managers' (1983:117), thereby instigating a more unitarist approach to the employment relationship. What

the authors also propose, however, is that these actions go unchallenged as they take place at a time when trade union power is weakened; clearly, as identified above, this was not the case at Parkville and the extent of union challenges will be discussed further in the following chapters.

The acting head took a different approach to management, fitting, it is suggested here, more closely to Purcell and Sisson's 'sophisticated modern' type (1983:112-118). He recognised the pluralist nature of the school and aimed at promoting consent rather than conflict; he attempted to minimise 'the areas of avoidable conflict' whilst maximising the 'areas of common interest' (Purcell and Sisson 1983:115), again demonstrating the inter-relationship between pluralist and unitarist approaches to management styles.

Whilst recognising that most of the hard management decisions made by the previous headteacher were no longer relevant, the acting head did have to keep the school operating as an organisation at a time when there was low morale and high stress levels amongst the staff; to this end, he attempted to capitalise on the shared values and common interests of the staff wishing to keep the school running. Thus, he employed 'soft' HRM management practices such as communication, consultation, and team analogies. His version of new managerialism was able to win the support and commitment of the teachers; they worked with him rather than against him.

Notwithstanding the 'type' of managerialism employed by the headteacher or acting head at Parkville, it is apparent that as Fergusson suggests, the role of headteachers is changing with them 'becoming a key actor in an essentially managerialist system' (1994:94). Nevertheless, whilst it is uncontested that the headteacher made his choices within the confines of extremely tight structures, it was the way in which he chose to act within those structures – how he chose to use his 'regulated autonomy' or 'freedom within boundaries' (Hoggett 1991:251) that caused the problems with the staff.



Finally, much was made of the 'political' element in the school by the headteacher, governors and the LEA and indeed, one SWP member was particularly vocal with respect to redundancy and cost cutting in the school, thus reflecting his ideological beliefs with respect to the education of working class children. The extent to which the 'political' element was able to influence issues and encourage collective resistance in the school will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Collective defensiveness or militant action?: trade union activity at Parkville

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#### Introduction

As mentioned in previous chapters, the findings of Calveley and Healy (1999; 2000), Fairbrother (1994a; 1996), Fosh (1993) and Thornley (1998) identify a link between the devolvement of management issues to the workplace level and a change in the nature and level of industrial relations activity at that level in the public sector. The previous chapter of this thesis considered the implementation of devolved management initiatives at Parkville, identifying a link with these and a growth in industrial relations tensions in the school; this chapter will consider the responsive actions of the teachers to these management initiatives.

The chapter will begin by describing the level and nature of trade union organisation before exploring the potential ‘militancy’ of the teachers. Finally, the chapter will investigate the impact that ‘new managerialism’ (Farnham 1993; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995) and devolved management issues had on industrial relations at Parkville.

#### The Union in Parkville

The role of the union and the collectivity of its members has been an important aspect in the shaping of developments within the school, as will be identified from the case study evidence detailed below. As noted in Chapter Four, the Parkville teachers demonstrated a willingness to take collective action when necessary both for the sake of the children (demonstrations outside the Town Hall against the idea of closing the school) and for the sake of their colleagues (in the case of redundancies and competency procedures).

Neither the original headteacher nor the acting headteacher are opposed to trade unions; both initially belonged to the NUT and later SHA. However, this chapter will show how the original headteacher was in constant disagreement with the union which he believed to be heavily influenced by a 'militant' element, notably one member of the Socialist Workers Party.

With the exception of one teacher, who was a member of NASUWT and one who was a member of an art union, all the full-time permanent teachers interviewed belonged to the NUT. None of the three supply teachers interviewed were union members, one of these because she was temporarily working in the UK, another simply said it was due to cost as supply teachers are not paid well and not during the holidays, whilst the third cited a perceived lack of trade union power as her reason for non membership:

'I actually think that trade unions don't really exist anymore ... I think basically that Thatcher and the Thatcherite era have done a really good job in getting rid of unions and making them, erm, very, erm, powerless' (teacher 16)

The school had a history of high membership levels as this activist explains:

'up until September of this year ... I'd say ninety-nine percent of the teachers were in a union of sorts and, and the NUT has always been the biggest. I think now there's only one NAS member ... one ATL member, but everyone else is in the NUT. So ... yes, the union group's been numerically quite strong. We're less, obviously, numerically strong now because of the number of supplys we've got in ... some of whom are members of the union but some of them aren't - there's been a lot of turnover of staff. But the reason over the years is that the union has actively recruited people who weren't union members into the NUT just to make sure that everyone who is teaching staff is, by and large, unionised and it has a presence, because it's in their interest' (teacher 8)

Union organisation in the school was complex. The SWP member had been the local representative but stepped down when he took over a position as head of year. At this stage a group of teachers jointly shared the responsibility and then finally a representative was appointed. It became clear during the research that this person kept a very low profile and did not appear to be very active; a teacher confirmed this to be the case, but also defended his union colleague:

‘you know, it’s hard work ... I wouldn’t say over the top active, no, not at all’ (teacher 5)

It is unclear why the representative had taken the job in the first place as he refused to be interviewed (without giving any reason for this). When asked whether he felt that the representative was reluctant to do the job, the same teacher went on to say:

‘yes he might be ... in the sense that you know, (laughs) nobody else would do it! So yes, so [he] decided to do it’ (teacher 5)

The headteacher went as far as to describe the union representative as the ‘titular leader’ as he saw one of the SWP members as ‘the real mover’. The SWP member, who also represented the teachers on the school’s governing body, was certainly vociferous in the staffroom<sup>81</sup>. He was so visible that one teacher mistakenly believed him to be her union representative and he was also quoted in the press in this capacity. Before the school closed he resumed the role of local representative and explains here why:

‘there was no particular reason other than who had the motivation and the drive and the energy to do it, you know, it needed doing’(teacher 8)<sup>82</sup>

This comment fits with the ideological belief of the SWP which, as Gall suggests (see Chapter Two), ‘seeks to build a network of socialists and militants based in the workplaces whose task is to lead fights based in and around the workplace’ (1998a:154-5). The actual and perceived role that this political activist played in developments at Parkville will be considered further in later sections of this, and the

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<sup>81</sup> This was observed during the fieldwork.

<sup>82</sup> Henceforth, the term ‘union representative’ will refer to this teacher unless otherwise stated.

next, chapter.

### **Parkville's 'militant' teachers**

As mentioned previously, the teachers at Parkville were willing to act collectively in the school, however, as the union representative explains, they were also not averse to acting collectively for matters arising outside the school, whether related to educational issues or not:

'over the years, lots of things that the union has been involved in, I would say ongoing - you know, whether it's arguing for the right for progressive policies in education, mixed ability teaching, or ... policies to do with equal opportunities, all that stuff - I think the union's played a big part, the union's members individually ... and then industrial action, whenever the national union has called on us to take industrial action we've always been willing to do it - over whatever issue, and one or two others as well! (laughs) as you may have gathered, you know, like ambulance workers and that' (teacher 8)

This appears to be not unusual in inner-city schools which, according to O'Connor *et al.* attract 'a high proportion of politically idealist teachers' (1999:19). It was the willingness of the NUT members at Parkville to demonstrate such collectivism that helped earn them a reputation of being 'militant'. As identified in Chapter Four, the Parkville teachers were vilified both in the press and by the LEA as being responsible for the closure of the school<sup>83</sup>. This was partly blamed on the 'militant' ways of the teachers, for example, one article in a national Sunday paper suggested that 'militant left-wing teachers have been largely marginalised ... but in schools such as Parkville, they remain a potent force'<sup>84</sup> and that in the school the teachers practised 'old-style union confrontation'; a local paper suggested that the headteacher's attempts to improve the school were blocked by 'the militant staff, many allied to the Socialist

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<sup>83</sup> Public accountability plays an important part here; the school, situated at the lower end of the league tables, had been given a new headteacher to 'turn it around' and therefore he, and consequently the school, was being monitored for progress.

<sup>84</sup> Newspaper references are withheld to ensure anonymity for the school.

Workers' Party'. One article went as far as to suggest that the school was being closed down in order to 'get rid of staff whose traditional politics are an embarrassment to Blairite councillors'. Such observations, however, run contrary to these comments by teachers, the first on joining the NUT and the second on industrial action:

'well I could belong to a teachers' union ... but I don't really want to because I don't want to go on strike' (teacher 15)

'as long as it's after the GCSEs, I think that's fine. I mean I wouldn't want to piss up the year elevens here, but, you know' (teacher 18)

Such comments identify the tensions that exist for teachers in being both a 'professional' and a trade union member (as discussed in Chapter Two) and reinforce Ball's suggestion that teachers saw industrial action as conflicting with their 'professional responsibility' (1987:273; 1988:300). The latter teacher quote is particularly poignant when one considers that these teachers were losing their jobs, their livelihoods, but were still reluctant to take any action which might disrupt the education of the children.

Nevertheless, the teachers at Parkville, in striving to maintain their terms and conditions of employment, were 'branded' as being 'militant' by the headteacher, the LEA and the local and national press. When asked whether she thought the staff in the school were militant, one teacher had this to say:

'if he [the headteacher] means the staff are angry about the school closing and they don't want it to, then yes, we are all militants, you know. Do we want decent working conditions? Yes. Are we prepared to fight for them? Yes. Do we want – are we prepared to stand by and see our colleagues victimised and do nothing about it? No. You know, now if those things are militant then we're all militants' (teacher 12)

and a governor, who openly opposed the closing of the school said this:

'I didn't feel that I'd suddenly become a militant' (Governor 1)

Clearly, the term 'militant' can mean different things to different people. In fact, Kelly suggests that trade union 'militancy' and 'moderation' are 'ill-defined terminology' and are 'best understood as two ends of a continuum' (1998:60). In an attempt to define militancy and moderation, he 'decomposes' the terms 'into five dimensions: goals, methods, membership resources, institutional resources, and ideology' (1998:60; 1996:79). By taking two of these as an example, 'membership resources' and 'methods', an attempt can be made to position the Parkville teachers on the continuum. 'Membership resources' is defined at the 'militancy' end of the continuum as 'strong reliance on mobilization of union membership' whilst at the 'moderation' end as 'strong reliance on employers, third parties or law'; likewise 'frequent threat or use of industrial action' and 'infrequent threat or use of industrial action' are at either end of 'methods' (Kelly 1998:61). By collectivising their actions and being willing to take, or threaten to take, industrial action, the Parkville teachers would fit closer to the 'militant' end of Kelly's continuum than the 'moderate' end, thus giving some credence to the description of them as 'militant' teachers in this respect.

It must be recognised however, that, as discussed in Chapter Two, the NUT as a union is seen as one of the more 'militant' (along with NASUWT) and would therefore be situated at the militancy end of the continuum. In this respect, Parkville's teachers would therefore not be acting out of character. However, if one also takes into account the comments of O'Connor *et al.* (1999) mentioned above, then as teachers in an inner-city school, possibly with a political consciousness/awareness, they may well be more likely to act and voice their concerns collectively. Certainly, as suggested by Gall (1998a) and discussed above, the ideological belief and political activism of their union representative would promote this. A deputy head seconded to the school for the last two terms gave an 'outsiders' view of militant teachers and Parkville:

'I know there is a history of sort of militant unionists, union activity, which in the past has caused difficulties ... and I know that that's a thread that still runs through, but it seems to me ... that people on the whole are

getting on with things, and are generally committed to the students’  
(seconded deputy head)

Further, she put this into the context of the teachers in the LEA as a whole:

‘a couple of schools, two or three schools in the [area] have - may not be deserved reputations - but have a reputation for having, erm, members of staff who have strong National Union of Teachers, Socialist Workers Party, links and whenever there’s any issue around some kind of action they’re right at the front there. And there were over the years, difficulties in different schools when the staff almost as a whole were on strike for one thing or another ... Parkville had a reputation of being a so-called militant school. And I know there have been difficulties in the past, but I haven’t as yet met these problems myself’ (seconded deputy head)

Notwithstanding this, the teachers at Parkville, as discussed previously, had more recently demonstrated their ‘instrumental’ (Healy 1997a) collectivism in opposition to the instigation of competency procedures and redundancy, interlinked with their ‘solidaristic’ (Healy 1997a) collectivism in vocalising their anger and distress at the school being firstly described as ‘failing’ and then closed; this emphasises the fact that various orientations to collectivism cannot be polarised due to the fluid and dynamic relationship between them.

As mentioned above, the press habitually blamed ‘militant’ teachers at Parkville for the closure of the school. The LEA Official would not be drawn on this, only commenting on the fact that press reports blamed the teachers as follows:

‘yes, and they [the teachers] say it’s terribly unfair, and there you are!’  
(laughing) (LEA Official)

However, a governor did equate the perceived militancy of the teachers with the closure of the school:

‘one of the strongest elements in why the school couldn’t be turned around was because of the seemingly intractable industrial relations



situation ... there were certainly people within the staffroom body who I think had a, had an agenda effectively, which was not merely ... the success of Parkville ... so yes, I think that [militant teachers] was a contributory factor to the, to the way that staff management relations broke down and erm, I think it contributed to the decision to close the school' (Governor 2)

and the 'agenda' was:

'bottom line, there was one of the NUT reps and teacher governor who was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, erm, I think that, together with a number of other supportive teachers, had an agenda that was very much about just furthering political aims, erm and, just not ever buckling down to management, effectively ... and I think the problem was that a kind of ideological commitment and one that couldn't be overcome by negotiation ... it's one of those situations where however much you give they just use that as an opportunity to push for more, effectively ... I'm not sure how that could have been overcome, apart from by, you know, resistance to that agenda from within the teachers body which, you know, I don't think there was a desire for' (Governor 2)

The governor also suggested that although not all the teachers were militant they were reluctant to voice their own opinions:

'they let those who were [militant], speak for them and on their behalf, and lead them, effectively. I think that was the problem ... even teachers who I knew disagreed with, you know, the sort of agenda that was being pushed, and didn't ... feel happy with the sort of staff atmosphere in the school, to a great extent, erm, for quite understandable reasons didn't want to take that on, and wanted to just, kind of, get on with their jobs, erm in isolation ... that unfortunately, that meant that it was actually very difficult to come to a sort of reasoned and measured agreement on issues in a way that you might otherwise have done' (Governor 2)

The suggestion that the ‘non-militant’ teachers were passive observers of what was happening in the school must be challenged. The role of trade union leadership will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, however, it is useful to reflect on Batstone *et. al’s.* (1977) union member typologies which are helpful in understanding the nature of group relationships. Of particular significance here is their ‘opinion-leaders’ typology which they describe as ‘[M]embers, including stewards, who act as informal leaders in relation to their fellows (sic); that is, they have a disproportionate amount of influence over their fellows’ (1977:xiv); they suggest that ‘opinion-leaders’ are ‘those members who are respected by their fellows and have influence over them’ (1977:100), who may ‘form the focus of cliques or groups’ (1977:224).

As discussed above, teacher 8 was identified as the ‘real mover’ (headteacher) prior to his becoming the union representative; he was also the teacher perceived as being the most ‘militant’ (discussed further in the following chapter). This teacher, respected by the other teachers (and indeed the management) for his teaching ability, appeared to have the general respect of the teachers in the staffroom; he certainly formed the focus of the ‘core’ group. Clearly, not all teachers would agree with his views and opinions, however, it is argued here that he could be described as an ‘opinion-leader’; this may have been (mis)-construed by observers from outside the teaching group as a whole as someone who spoke out for, but not necessarily on behalf of, the other teachers.

Some teachers may have been less vociferous in their opinions, this, however, did not mean that they were merely acquiescing to the militant action of others; it could be argued that they relied on others to voice their concerns, perhaps whilst they themselves kept a low profile. Such compliance to the views of the ‘militant’ teachers is acknowledged by this ‘peripheral’, ‘non-militant’ teacher (not a member of any teacher union):

‘it’s there [militant tendency], but you know, its something that’s always been there, and it’s had its uses, I think, in its way ... even I feel comfortable with certain of the things, I’m not militant, by any means at

all and I don't believe in striking so I'm in a different ball game, you know? But erm ... I don't think they mean any harm at all, I think they very much have the ... the children at heart – plus themselves, of course as well' (teacher 15)

Further, asked whether militant teachers could be blamed for the school's closure she was adamant:

'no, oh no!, no, no. I think who can be blamed is [the] council and the way that the school's gone down hill with the previous headteacher, who was very weak, [she] was weak. She was all terribly nice about refugees and things like that but ... it didn't work' (teacher 15)

Another teacher, also placing the blame for the closure at the feet of the LEA and management, upheld the right of teachers to defend both education and their own working conditions, in fact to act 'militantly':

'there's been a number of individuals who have attempted to defend state education and certain attacks on state education whether that's ... compulsory redundancies, the removal of teachers, increases in class sizes, such things like that, worsening of working conditions – which I believe undermines the ability to actually perform, you know, consistently over a long period of time at, at, quality levels ... I've seen people defending that, that's what I've seen. I haven't seen militant teachers destroy – I think I've seen other, other things destroying education. I've seen, I've seen the management of headteachers undermining education, I've seen inspection, Ofsted, undermining education' (teacher 3)

and yet another commented on the value of militant action:

'[if] you have to fight for a thing and it's done at the right time and the right place then it [militancy] needs to be there, really. Otherwise teachers here would have been all pushed out by now, you know, and we wouldn't get double [redundancy] pay' (teacher 18)

In the minds of the press, the LEA the headteacher and the governor above, the term 'militant', became interchangeable with Socialist Workers Party; this is apparent by the following comment made by an LEA Official when asked whether he thought that there were militant teachers in the school:

'yes. I mean it's, it's not a secret. I mean, you know, there are a, a number of teachers in the school who are members of the SWP. They make no secret of it, erm, they openly campaign and stand for the NUT on that platform, so the answer to that's yes, that's no secret' (LEA Official)

and this, despite only two SWP members in the school. Such all-embracing categorising was not only inaccurate but also offensive to some, as this teacher indignantly proclaims:

'this school has also got ... a name, or whatever, every teacher who works here is a member of the Socialist Workers Party, of which I'm not and never have been and I'm extremely angry that - I, I defend the right of any individual to belong to any group that they choose - although I've got some reservations about the Nazis, the National Front - but I don't actually believe that the Socialist Workers Party are a erm, undemocratic group, broadly speaking, and I broadly agree with their aims. But I am certainly not a member, and I certainly don't agree with certain of their means. But having said that, I'm being treated as if I am and people respond to me as if I am ... one thing I have done is always sort of maintained a right to defend my working conditions and those of the people who I work with against unreasonable, you know, rumours, if you like' (teacher 3)

This comment identifies the important factor overlooked by the LEA Official, that collective action in support of one's colleagues and trade union associates whilst possibly coming towards the 'militant' end of Kelly's continuum (1998:61) is not necessarily politically motivated - even if it is instigated or encouraged by politically motivated colleagues.

In discussing ‘mobilization theory’ as a macro concept, Kelly suggests that degrees of union militancy and moderation result ‘from an interaction between unions and their environments’ (1998:61) however, looking at Parkville at the micro level it can be seen that this is also the case, viz. this enlightening comment made by the acting head when asked whether he felt there was a militant tendency in the school:

‘I don’t think there’s a militant tendency in the school, I think there’s a defensiveness about the school, a sort of collective defensiveness, erm, that you know, we’re under attack all the time and we’ve got to stick together and the attack has been coming from the outside. But also from senior management as a thing in the past, and from the authority and from Ofsted and from everybody else and I think that’s made people ... possibly resist certain things which they might not have done before ... yes, I mean it might have given the impression of people being militant in that sense. But I think it’s more reactive than militant, you know, and ... doing what they think is best for them in a situation where maybe they’ve not been given enough information on things, you know, about what’s going on (acting head)

Salamon argues that ‘the conversion of discontent into organised collective action requires the existence or creation of a collective consciousness among the employees’ (1998:401); clearly, the acting head’s quote (above) displays in Parkville, the existence of such a collective consciousness and it was this, perceived as ‘militancy’, that raised the industrial relations conflict in the school as the rest of the chapter will show.

### **New Managerialism and collective action at Parkville**

As discussed in the previous chapter and above, the teachers at Parkville had apparently always been willing to challenge both management and government decisions; this was evident by their ability to resist the implementation of performance appraisal procedures as discussed in the previous chapter. Their collective defensiveness increased, however, as the practices and processes of new

managerialism were introduced into the school; it was management's decisions with respect to redundancies and competency procedures which heightened industrial relations tensions at Parkville, perhaps confirming Johnson's suggestion that 'the fear of redundancy has now entered the collective consciousness of teachers' (1999a:84).

Collectivism is seen as a 'root principle' for unions (Kelly and Waddington 1995:422); the teachers at Parkville saw collective organisation as their means of redressing the balance of power for those individual teachers selected for redundancy or 'picked out' (teacher 6) for competency procedures. In an endeavour to support their colleagues, the teachers took a collective stance against management, initially by the withdrawal of 'goodwill' as discussed in the previous chapter and described by the headteacher as follows:

'their initial response when I pursued the redundancy programme was to withdraw goodwill ... when the withdrawal of goodwill cut in, I turned up one morning for the morning briefing and there was nobody there and I thought this is weird, and then I heard through the grapevine, totally unofficially, that the NUT and NASUWT had jointly withdrawn their goodwill and this was one of the manifestations of it. Another was that there would be no lunch time duties, not that they did many before and they haven't done any since - despite the fact that the formal withdrawal of goodwill has been lifted - so we had a big discussion and we talked about why they were doing it and it was quite clear that they had withdrawn goodwill because I was proceeding with the redundancy objectives' (headteacher)

The provision of 'goodwill' is, and has always been, an important element of a school's life with teachers being heavily relied upon to provide extra-curricular activities such as after school and lunchtime clubs and supervising the children during break times; in effect teachers have become expected to, and do, subsidise the short fallings of the education system (Calveley 1996; Healy and Kraithman 1994b).

During the 1986 pay dispute many teachers withdrew lunch time cover and this resulted in a series of court cases such as Solihull Metropolitan Borough v. National Union of Teachers (1985) (Bowers and Honeyball 1993). In this case it was ruled that the teachers were contractually obliged to provide cover and that failing to do so was the equivalent of taking industrial action; they were breaking their contract of employment. Partly as a reaction to these cases, the government introduced the 1987 Teachers Pay and Conditions Act which Ironside and Seifert describe as being ‘born out of government reaction to teacher strikes rather than from a coherent strategy on teacher duties and work’ (1995:128). In another example of centralised-decentralisation, the Act formalised the provision of goodwill by regulating issues such as providing cover for absent colleagues and the number of extra working hours.

The current New Labour Government are also concerned with the provision of goodwill and appear to believe that teachers should not only be subsidising education but sport as well. Ms Hoey, Minister for Sport, suggests that teachers should work extra hours for free in order to improve sports standards. She argues that teachers in state schools should follow the good example set by their colleagues in independent schools who coach sport ‘for the love of it’ (TES 2000:9). By implication the Minister is suggesting that independent school teachers work harder and have greater altruism for their profession. What she does not compare between the two sectors, however, is the number of hours worked by teachers and their relative salaries<sup>85</sup>. The teachers at Parkville already argue that, due to the nature of their pupils, they are unfairly compared with other state schools, let alone independent schools which are often able to completely select their pupil intake.

The debate surrounding ‘goodwill’ begs the question as to what a teacher at Parkville, an inner-city ‘failing’ school with children from disadvantaged backgrounds, might consider to be goodwill. One teacher questioned this herself:

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<sup>85</sup> One indication is class size: on average, independent private schools have 10 pupils per class as compared to 19 in state schools; sport is one area of the curriculum likely to suffer from cut-backs when funds are short with 5,000 state playing fields having been sold since 1981 (the private schools have an average of 18.3 acres of land each) (Davies 2000).

‘what’s goodwill? Is goodwill standing in the dinner hall, is goodwill coming into work? Or are teachers doing goodwill taking football after school, or running clubs? We even have one teacher who goes shopping – she has a girl who because she didn’t have parents to go shopping she takes her out to buy clothes. I mean that to me is goodwill’ (teacher 17)

and no doubt the sports teacher who paid the cost for the hiring of the football pitch (see Chapter Four) would consider that financial payment as goodwill also. The interpretation of goodwill at Parkville is likely to have both similarities and differences to the interpretation put on it by teachers in other schools. As the union representative explains, the Parkville teachers were within their rights to withdraw their goodwill:

‘teachers can choose what they do with their goodwill, you know, if they want to do it they can do, but, as it happens, for a period we withdrew it, collectively as a group ... because of what the Authority and the head were doing’ (teacher 8)

and these teachers saw this as a natural union reaction in support of their colleagues:

‘[the headteacher] had to make some cuts so he announced some compulsory redundancies and the union of course took action to stand up and try and fight for the rights of those teachers and fight any compulsory redundancies. In the end none of them were made compulsory redundant, they all either took voluntary or another offer was made to them, but meanwhile in the process of that staff had withdrawn goodwill ... he wanted control over them and he tried very hard to exert control over them’ (teacher 7)

‘what really did it was around about Easter and he made a teacher, teachers, redundant which is when we withdrew goodwill, erm, and I mean really as a union group we could do no other, make people compulsory redundant then the union group is bound to react ... a lot of words that he said then offended people and then things went rapidly downhill after that. Until then I think the partnership was working OK,



and I think [the headteacher] found it very difficult to go back and make amends with the staff. And I personally always found him very helpful, always friendly, very easy to get on with ... but I know some staff didn't' (teacher 4)

This latter quote is a reminder that, as discussed in the previous chapter, there had initially been accord between the headteacher and the staff and that this deteriorated when he instigated hard managerial decisions such as competency procedures and redundancies.

At least one teacher, however, did not withdraw goodwill. Asked whether she agreed with the withdrawal of goodwill she replied:

‘No. I kept my clubs going’ (teacher 11)

and when questioned as to whether this caused problems with the other staff she commented as follows:

‘I’ve no idea because I’m so isolated anyway and I’m even more isolated now of course [following the resignation of the music teacher (see below)] ... the withdrawal of goodwill ... I didn’t agree with it ... I thought it was quite childish and I thought it was very unfair for the pupils and you know, it’s fine for everybody to withdraw their goodwill but a lot of the arts subjects, I mean my subjects, depend on extra-curricular work. So that’s it, don’t consider the arts yet again!! So we had every area there not considering the arts’ (teacher 11)

The quote perhaps highlights, following the introduction of LMS, the vulnerability, whether actual or perceived, of teachers of non-core subjects such as expressive arts; despite the fact that the teachers had supported the music teacher when he was faced with competency procedures (he resigned), this teacher saw herself as teaching ‘an isolated subject’. Her comments again demonstrate the tension that exists for professional workers between work and union commitment and also the fragmentation of collectivism in practice.

The debate surrounding the withdrawal of goodwill is complex and the effect it had on school activities is unclear; the parties involved expressed different views and placed different weightings on this. For example, the headteacher felt that it had a very negative effect on the school in the eyes of Ofsted and HMI:

‘over the last eighteen months on four separate occasions I’ve asked the union to go back to the union group in the school and reconsider the position, and I asked strategically before Ofsted came in because I thought it would be very poor for our chances of survival if that went on the statute books then but they wouldn’t ... and I asked again before HMI came in the first time, HMI came in the second time, before the public documents came out on the future of the school, and on each occasion I was told that rather than reconsider the position - even though there were different objections now, it was the management style they didn’t like, so it’s still an official motion’ (headteacher)

The teachers, however, had a different view:

‘I mean goodwill was withdrawn to an extent, it was sort of dinner duties, but most teachers – it was very short, it was short lived and teachers did run clubs and teachers did do goodwill and teachers do goodwill all the time here, more goodwill than is recognised. Erm, but because it wasn’t withdrawn, written down, well the headteacher said “well you’re still withholding goodwill”, but actually we hadn’t, it was very short ... but I mean we didn’t turn up for roll-call in the morning, it was very short’ (teacher 17)

Another teacher who joined the school after goodwill had been withdrawn also felt that the action was extremely low key:

‘I think that was misinterpreted a lot ... you know I’m very committed to the union and so on, and if I went to a school and if I was told by somebody in the union “this union has withdrawn goodwill therefore don’t do x, y, z” I would not do x, y, z. But nobody came to me and told me that, so my impression when I arrived was that this was not a school

where goodwill had been withdrawn, you know, erm ... in practice everyone was doing all the things that you would normally do in any other school where, where goodwill exists. You know, there was no practical difference between this and any other school from that point of view' (teacher 12)

There is clearly a difference of opinion as to the duration and extent of the withdrawal of goodwill; a number of issues were involved in the resistance of the teachers to formally re-instate it, despite the fact that informally they considered they had done so. The over-arching issue which has to be taken into consideration, however, is that of power relations within the school.

As discussed previously, power relations are 'complex and fluid' (Bradley 1999:32-33). Through LMS, Parkville's headteacher had access to the 'economic power' (Bradley 1999:34) resources of the school, however, this power was limited giving him only 'regulated autonomy' or 'freedom within boundaries' (Hoggett 1991:251); he did, however, use his 'positional power' (Bradley 1999:34) as manager to pursue the idea of redundancies, a stance which, from his perception of the situation, was not retractable. On the other hand, the teachers, who viewed the situation as untenable, drew on their 'collective power' (Bradley 1999:34) to resist the redundancies; the outcome was a further break down in workplace relations, culminating in a management versus staff stand-off.

This teacher saw the issues surrounding the withdrawal of goodwill as clearly relating to a power struggle:

'people were worried about kind of formally talking about the withdrawal of goodwill because what the headteacher then, at the time, was wanting was a statement of commitment to him, personally which teachers weren't willing to give him because they felt that he wasn't treating them very fairly and he then interpreted that as "the teachers have still not reinstated goodwill" ... But as I said in practice everybody was now, you know, they were doing the break duties and the dinner duties and the after

school stuff and all the things you would normally associate as being goodwill was being done. But he, he wanted a statement of personal commitment to him which people weren't prepared to give and he interpreted that as still withdrawing goodwill' (teacher 12)

whilst another teacher felt that although there was a clearly identifiable rift between the headteacher and staff, poor communications exacerbated the situation:

'it just went on for too long ... we would argue that it should be restored and what happened was that [the headteacher] would do something to annoy the staff again and so it was, we simply said no ... and I had meetings with the chair of the governors at the time and suggested that actually we were in a difficult situation and it just needed talking through and again, nobody came in to help. And so the, the staff and senior management became polarised for no really good reason, actually' (teacher 4)

This governor also saw the prolonged argument about the withdrawal of goodwill partly as a breakdown in communication but also highlights the power tensions within the school and laments the effect that these had:

'the withdrawal of goodwill was more a kind of, a paper exercise, it meant nothing. I mean you can't expect staff – any employees to say "ra, ra, ra, we want redundancies", it's just impossible. And [the headteacher] I think refused to accept that ... he went on and on about this, they refused to withdraw goodwill – or the statement about the withdrawal of goodwill – and at the same time they were actually doing most of the things that was required, so there was a mis-match and I don't think [the headteacher] could see that ... I think [the headteacher's] lack of flexibility was ... I mean perhaps it being his first headship ... and not being able to give way, not being able to take second best, sometimes. Because I think, I think any boss has to be able to say "OK, you win here, let's see what we can do with it" and I think if he'd been able to do that, I

think it, you know, things might have gone forward, but by that time it was too late' (Governor 1)

he is also demonstrating an awareness of the pluralistic nature of the employment relationship.

The debate surrounding the withdrawal of goodwill is, clearly, murky. It appears that, from the teachers' point of view, in reality it was short-lived but, because of the tensions within the school it was difficult to rescind the motion. The headteacher, however, argued that:

'they still have not as a union group said they have withdrawn this motion and although they say it's over, I still don't have anybody on lunch time duty - one, one member of staff I've got at lunch time, for one day, once a week, so read into that what you will' (headteacher)

The following governor on the one hand found the situation confusing whilst on the other felt that the teachers were manipulating the situation to suit their needs:

'It also became very, very difficult to pin down and it was one of these things that would perpetually come up at governors' meetings and people would say well, you know, hang on a minute the teachers have still withdrawn goodwill and the staff governors would say "oh, well yes, but not really, it didn't really mean anything" well OK then, can you withdraw your withdrawal? "well, you know, we'll just have to go through some procedures about it" and ... it was kind of one of those things where again you felt it was something they wanted to keep in place so that they could use it if they wanted to, but they also kind of wanted to try and pull the wool over governors' eyes, effectively, and sort of say, you know, it wasn't really happening (Governor 2)

In contrast, these teachers felt that it was they who were being used and manipulated:

'so ... that was just his interpretation, which is what the media picked up on and it actually wasn't true and we ended up at the union meeting

coming out with some wording to try and clarify that you know, this in fact is a school where goodwill exists but of course, you know, that never got picked up by the press it was just you know “teachers aren’t co-operating” and that wasn’t true’ (teacher 12)

‘the union group here made a mistake, I think, and that was that we had withdrawn goodwill and then it was kept that we’d withdrawn, for some reason, and in fact everybody clearly hadn’t withdrawn it and was running after school clubs and lunchtime activities, and we should have withdrawn it because he [the headteacher] used that and he said - he persistently said - staff have withdrawn their goodwill, blah, blah, knowing that people run after school clubs and activities ... so it was as though he deliberately was wanting to set up, you see, the good and the bad’ (teacher 7)

It is apparent that the issues emanating from the withdrawal of goodwill developed into more than a demonstration of collective support for the teachers who were being made redundant; it became a matter of principle between the teachers, who felt that it was their goodwill to employ or not as they saw fit, and the headteacher who viewed it as a lack of support. It draws into focus what Bradley describes as ‘symbolic power’ resources, i.e., ‘the ability to impose one’s own definitions, meanings, values and rules on a situation’ (1999:34) with the teachers and headteacher in battle over this. It is also perhaps possible to observe it as a no confidence motion by the teachers in their manager.

Yet again it can be seen how the devolvement of management issues to a local level can instigate and prolong union activity in the workplace. Notwithstanding the discourse surrounding the level and extent of the withdrawal of goodwill, the headteacher assumed that it would be reinstated once the teachers whom the action was taken in support of had left the school:

‘when that was all over [redundancies], and the three or four staff had taken voluntary redundancy, I then thought that the unions would rescind the motion. That wasn’t the case’ (Headteacher)

In assuming a ‘let’s get back to normal’ stance the headteacher is speaking from a unitarist approach (Fox 1966) to employee relations as discussed in the previous chapter. Such an approach would promote a sense of togetherness with the headteacher seeing himself as the leader of a team sharing common goals and objectives; opposition to management would appear to be irrational.

The teachers, however, did not have such a unitarist approach to management/staff relations and clearly adopted a pluralist perspective, as is evident in this comment from the union representative:

‘as part of an overall campaign in fighting against redundancies, it was important to, to let the authority and the head know that we weren’t prepared to let him do anything that he thought he could do. It was important for the teachers to speak up for themselves, which I think they did’ (teacher 8)

thus reinforcing Darlington’s view that the power of workplace union organization ‘comes from what workers are prepared to do collectively to set limits to the power of management’ (1994:19). The NUTs area representative also supported the viewpoint that the teachers had to defend their own positions:

‘the issue that really started it off was the way in which the management were attacking the staff prior to the decision to close the school down, er, and, they decided that one of the ways in which they would respond was by the withdrawal of goodwill. And I think it has to be said, for people who don’t understand the way in which schools work, is that goodwill is absolutely vital for the smooth running of the school. But they [the teachers] felt that they should not be taken for granted. That why should they do things, you know, over and above the things they were required to do as part of their contract? ... at the time of that, no goodwill was being

shown towards them - quite the opposite, they were being pilloried by the local council, by employers, by the headteacher and at the same time were expected to continue to carry on as if nothing has happened. So I think that they expressed their anxiety through the withdrawal of goodwill as a gesture, if you like, of frustration and annoyance at the way in which they were being treated ... the honest way of describing it is it was more of a token gesture more than anything else, but it symbolised the way that people felt, you know' (NUT area negotiating secretary<sup>86</sup>)

Further endorsing the suggestion above that there was an underlying battle in the school surrounding the 'symbolic power' resources (Bradley 1999:34). The withdrawal of goodwill was a collective decision made by the teachers in the school, nevertheless, they did have the backing of the union as the area negotiating secretary explains:

'The local union supported them one hundred percent but our local union branch can't take a decision about the withdrawal of goodwill unless the teachers in that particular school genuinely feel that that is what they wish to do' (NUT area negotiating secretary)

The withdrawal of goodwill was a direct response to the headteacher's redundancy proposals, however, the motion was not formally rescinded due to the general deterioration in management staff relations, fuelled by the introduction of competency procedures. The redundancy and competency initiatives, which can be seen as elements of new managerialism in the school, contributed to a growth in unity and collectivism amongst the staff, as this teacher proclaimed:

'we've all been driven together in defence. By doing what he [the headteacher] did helped to create a much stronger union!' (teacher 10)

and the headteacher acknowledged as much when he described the situation thus:

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<sup>86</sup> The NUT area negotiating secretary is the teacher lay-official for all the teachers in the area.



‘the whole thing is predicated on an industrial model of industrial relations of us and them - it’s almost like Fords in Halewood’  
(headteacher)

Considering the argument above that teachers have a notion of dual commitment towards both their union membership and their professionalism, as in ensuring a sound education for the children they teach, the question has to be asked as to why teachers were willing to support ‘incompetent’ colleagues; this has to be put into the context of Johnson’s argument that ‘all teachers resent the truly incompetent colleague, because that person makes the job harder for everyone else in the school’ (1999a:10).

In documenting his experiences as an inner city secondary school teacher Johnson contributes to the competency debate thus:

‘competence is an issue of much greater salience in the underclass school ... ordinary teachers cannot survive there. They come, they see, they leave. Only extraordinary teachers can stay, remain committed, and continue to produce quality performance, and become part of that core staff who are the essential stabilising influence on the school’ (1999a:11).

Despite this being a personal opinion, the teachers at Parkville would almost certainly subscribe to it as they repeatedly commented on the difficulties of working in such a school, particularly for any length of time; the commitment of the teachers to the school is documented in Chapter Four. As discussed in the previous chapter, many did not believe that those against which competency action was taken were indeed incompetent teachers; on the other hand, this teacher, quoted in the previous chapter but worth repeating here, had this to say:

‘even people that were thinking “well, you know I agree, maybe he should try and get rid of them” wouldn’t actually – you’d have to take a position, because as a union member, you know, the job of the union is to protect the jobs of members. Now as I say, I find it hard to protect the job of someone who is incompetent, but on the other hand procedures which

were agreed with the National Union should have been followed you know, it should have been done in a positive way of encouragement and help' (teacher 14)

clearly identifying both the collectivism inherent in trade union membership and a belief in the necessity of following management/union agreed procedures. Salamon defines a procedure as follows:

'an operational mechanism which defines, and may limit, the exercise of managerial authority and power through establishing a formal regulatory framework for handling specified issues' (1998:533)

Whilst being unwilling to support colleagues who are incompetent the teacher quoted above identifies with Salamon's notion that procedures are in place to help regulate the employment relationship in the workplace, and therefore feels it necessary to support colleagues who are not treated fairly and equitably. One teacher was outraged by the headteacher's omission to follow procedures in the competency case and, perhaps inadvertently, blamed new managerialism, of which he was contemptuous:

'as her [teacher under competency procedures] right she selected me as a mentor ... and after the first ... conversation with her, it was very, very clear that the headteacher had not followed any of the formal procedures and was slack in the formal procedures ... she took advice from the union ... and it went on and on. But in the process the head was acting unreasonably, unprofessionally erm, in, in my opinion at times illegally ... there was one point I saw ... the previous headteacher basically cornering this competency teacher in a corner and ... how can I say it, the body language or whatever, and this was after school emptied and it was only the fact that I was in the corridor by chance, and I thought well this is just totally untoward, totally unprofessional and wrong, and that went on. But unfortunately the more I got involved in that the more he then kind of seemed to take it on to me as well and it, it was just a nightmare! And all of the management structure, under the last government, under this government, have all supported that kind of mis-management and I

can't, personally can't see any glimmer of hope because it, it's the same message, you know? "I'm the boss, you do what I tell you to do. Management's not about listening, it's not about talking, it's not about respect, it's not about any of those things, it's about me being in charge". That ... undermines my ability to enjoy the job in the way that I feel I used to' (teacher 3)

The NUT representative also commented on the perceived negligence of the headteacher in following procedures:

'he didn't follow the procedures - something that the union complained about - and when we did what it was our job to do, which was to defend her, he complained that we were obstructing him, which we rightly were but ... not in the sense of erm, protecting someone who is incompetent but defending someone who was competent, who was being unfairly treated by a headteacher ... what the union did on her behalf was continue to represent her' (teacher 8)

again, pointing to fairness and equity as issues important to the teachers in the school. He goes on to describe, and refute, the negative construction put on the willingness of the teachers to defend colleagues who had been described as incompetent:

'the NUT was criticised in a number of local media and elsewhere, for, for defending incompetent teachers. Now that is, is a gross sort of misrepresentation - the union's got responsibility to defend anyone who's been put under competency procedures and it was our claim all along that not only were the procedures not being carried out fairly but they also were being used inappropriately, in my opinion, in the case of one member of the union who was being accused of being incompetent' (teacher 8)

In line with Waddington and Whitson's research which established that the most important reason people give for joining a trade union is 'support if I had a problem at work' (1997:521), Cully *et al.* found that trade union representatives put 'treatment of employees by management' as the most important issue they were involved with in

the workplace (1999:201). Waddington and Whitson's findings are verified in the teaching profession by Healy's survey of NUT members who also cite this 'instrumental collectivist' (1997a) reason as the primary reason for joining the NUT.

Unequivocally workers will expect their union to support and represent them if they have a problem. To this end, it was the duty of the NUT to represent and provide support to teachers at Parkville who were facing competency procedures, however, as the representative explains, this does not mean that the union will defend incompetent teachers:

'the NUT has never ever defended incompetent teachers - what the union always does is represent the interests of members ... if someone were weak and the union rep - or anyone - thought they were incompetent then they'd have to go through whatever the procedures are. They have to be gone through fairly so that that person is treated fairly and then at the end of the day colleagues might say they are missing things or not coping and it's better if you do this or you do that, and that's our advice to you. But that isn't a carte blanche for the head coming in and arbitrarily selecting people who he thinks will cave in' (teacher 8)

The reason why the headteacher apparently failed to follow procedures is not clear, (by this stage of the research he had already left the school) however, it could be as Salamon suggests that despite the existence of procedures 'management generally desire to retain a degree of informality and flexibility to treat issues on their merits' (1998:533). Ironside and Seifert appear to agree with this view when they argue that in schools 'most heads wishing to secure change in the behaviour of an individual member of staff will try informal measures first, before invoking formal procedures', that they prefer to 'keep the unions out of school affairs' (1995:206). The authors go on to say that the exclusion of unions may be in order for them 'to exercise unilateral authority' or it may be due to a 'muddled notion that effective managers can modify staff behaviour through leadership, example, exhortation or persuasion' (1995:206). The union representative is adamant that for the headteacher at Parkville it was exhortation and persuasion of the strongest manner:

‘what the union did on her behalf was continue to represent her, against ... the way he was treating her. Now that coincided with her intention and her wish to get early retirement, and he brow beat her and attempted to get her to resign her post before she got ... granted the early retirement. And that way he could claim some kind of victory ... and he threatened her, he said that if she didn’t resign he wouldn’t let her have the early retirement, which was a gross abuse of his power ... he would question her seeking advice from me, as a union person - I wasn’t the rep then’ (teacher 8)

(the latter comment identifying the willingness of this teacher to become involved in issues prior to his taking over the official role as union representative which prompted the headteacher to describe him as ‘the real mover’). It must be made clear that this reality of the situation as presented by teacher 8 was not a view likely to be shared by the headteacher who has not answered these allegations - he had already left the school at this point. Nevertheless, teacher 8 did verify the comments previously made by teacher 9, who had also left the school by this time; it would appear, however, that the headteacher was attempting to by-pass procedures and exclude the union, albeit that this may possibly have been a desire to ‘retain a degree of informality’ (Salamon 1998:533).

If the headteacher was attempting to ‘retain a degree of informality and flexibility’ (Salamon, above) with the teachers at Parkville then it seems that this was misjudged; once again the devolvement of management issues to the local level appears to have backfired<sup>87</sup>. However, it is clear that the perceived mis-handling of the competency procedures, following on from the perceived mis-handling of the redundancy procedures, further inflamed the industrial relations tensions in the school:

‘it created a lot of stress and strain ... and it was all for no good purpose not - certainly not in the interests of the kids in the school. It also served

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<sup>87</sup> It is not known what, if any, training the headteacher received in grievance, discipline and redundancy procedures.

to alienate him further from the staff. So, the competency procedures ... was completely a major, major mistake on his part' (teacher 8)

The use of competency procedures in schools is in line with new managerialism and the emphasis placed on teacher performance. As Sinclair *et al.* state 'school managers must take action to ensure that teacher effort meets management-determined (rather than professionally agreed) objectives', they go on to say that managers must 'ensure that teacher activity is geared towards securing high ratings in the league tables and other performance indicators' (1996:650); hence the headteacher's instigation of competency procedures at Parkville. Once again it seems that in using his 'regulated autonomy' or 'freedom within boundaries' (Hoggett 1991:251), in this case to monitor (and in his belief improve) performance, the headteacher at Parkville further distanced himself from the staff.

### **Conclusion**

The case study of Parkville has provided evidence to support Fairbrother (1994a; 1996), Fosh (1993) and Thornley's (1998) findings that devolved managerialism has increased the nature and level of industrial relations activity in the workplace. In the case of Parkville centralised-decentralisation is of acute relevance as the school was in the spotlight of the government imposed accountability measures of published league tables and 'failing' schools; the headteacher, as the manager, was under intense pressure and scrutiny as he introduced new managerialism into Parkville. The devolvement of management initiatives to the school level resulted in negotiations between the headteacher and staff which would previously have happened outside the school; the consequence was a contestation of power resulting in an increase in school level conflict thus bringing the collectivism and solidarity of the teachers to the forefront.

It can be seen from the evidence presented above that the teachers at Parkville were unhappy with the way in which the headteacher instigated both the redundancy and competency procedures; as Ironside and Seifert suggest, 'there is great potential for disruption within the school if teachers perceive management action to be unjustly

harsh or unreasonable or simply muddled' (1995:206). At Parkville the disruption was fairly innocuous through the withdrawal of goodwill and a general non-compliance, obstruction and apathy with the headteacher's wishes. Perhaps having bigger fish to fry, as in being put into Special Measures and then the forthcoming closure of the school, restrained these teachers because, according to Ironside and Seifert in schools 'there is much evidence of an increase in protest strike activity at local level' (1995:212).

Although the teachers were prepared to act collectively, ultimately they were not able to protect their jobs and the school closed down; it is argued here that this level of collectivism might have been harnessed to a greater advantage both inside and outside Parkville had the regional union acted differently. With the closing of the school and both the threat and the actuality of redundancies, the potential for greater union involvement on a level outside the school existed but was not seized upon by the regional union; this will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

## Chapter Seven

### Leadership, politics and the involvement of the regional union at Parkville

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#### Introduction

The previous chapter illustrated how at Parkville managerialism, in the form of management initiatives devolved to the local level, increased the level and nature of industrial relations activity in the workplace. The case of Parkville has to be situated in the wider context of the centralised government initiative of public accountability, particularly the 'failing' of schools, which further heightened tensions within the school. As a result of both managerialism and accountability, the teachers at Parkville were mobilised to act collectively in order to protect their own jobs, the jobs of their colleagues and the education of the children they teach.

The previous chapter described how Parkville's original union representative kept a low profile and how it was the SWP member, who had previously been, and later regained, the role of representative, became the 'voice' of the staff. Darlington (1994; 1998; 1999) Fosh and Cohen (1990) and Fosh (1993) all identify the importance of the role of local leadership in trade unions; in addition to this there is a suggestion that political activism plays an important role in trade union activism (Calveley and Healy 2000; Darlington 1998; 1999; 2000; Gall 1998a).

This chapter will discuss the importance of local union representation in Parkville. The previous chapter identified that there was a certain perception in, and outside, Parkville of a link between the term 'militant' and the Socialist Workers Party and this will be explored further in relation to union leadership and the influence of politics on union activism at the school.

It was also suggested in the previous chapter that the NUTs' regional strategy, and their officers at a regional level, may have hindered, rather than encouraged, union



renewal. The evidence put forward in this chapter will suggest that union bureaucracy had a negative effect for the members in the school.

### **Local union leadership and politics at Parkville**

Terry states that trade unions 'are structured, organized and resourced ... around and by unpaid volunteer activists' (1995:203); Salamon defines a trade union workplace representative as:

'an employee who is accepted by both management and union as a lay representative of the union and its members with responsibility to act on their behalf in industrial relations matters at the organisational level' (1998:175).

From this it is clear to see that local union representatives have an important role in the dynamics of workplace industrial relations. They represent the interests of both the local members and those of the regional and national union executive which, as will be discussed later in the chapter, do not always concur.

Calveley and Healy (2000), Darlington (1994; 1998; 1999; 2000), Fosh and Cohen (1990) and Fosh (1993) have all identified the importance of trade union leadership at the workplace level. Darlington suggests that arguably 'the best defence of workers' interests is strong workplace union organization which, despite the need for compromise, is both willing and able to engage in militant struggle against management' (1994:290) whilst Fosh suggests that local leaders 'by their ability to lead in a way that encourages members to become involved and to see the collective implications of the issues that arise, can build upon surges of participation and interest, thus increasing the strength of workplace unionism' (1993:589).

The previous chapter identified how, regardless of the fact that the original trade union representative at Parkville assumed a fairly low-key role in the school and could not be described as a strong leader, the union was active and, arguably, militant. This is because leadership in union matters emanated not from the official union

representative but from the political activist in the school; he was seen to have a significant role as ‘opinion-leader’<sup>88</sup> (Batstone *et al.* 1977:xiv). Although it is recognised that care has to be taken with the use of typologies, this can be seen as a fitting analogy of the union representative both prior to and following his taking up the role (for a detailed critique of Batstone *et. al.*'s. typologies see Darlington 1994:14-26).

The role of political activism in trade union leadership is largely neglected in the literature (Darlington 1994:viii; Kelly 1998:54) (however see Calveley and Healy, 2000 and Darlington, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2000). Darlington argues that during the 1960s and 1970s, in an ‘understandable attempt to refute the “agitator theory” of strikes’ (2000:13), industrial relations researchers downplayed the role of left-wing political activists and shop stewards and that this has now been continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s’ (2000:13-14). Clearly, as can be seen in the previous chapters, politics played an important role at Parkville either through the perception of the SWP’s militancy or the actuality of it. This section will investigate the role that politics played in local union leadership at Parkville.

The SWP member, as would be expected of him (Callinicos 1995), took his political ideologies into the workplace, thus influencing his actions as a teacher, a school governor and a union activist. As already stated, he was a strong union activist even prior to his formally taking over the job of union representative; he had a highly visible presence and, as was evident from observed staff meetings and a meeting with the LEA, many of the teachers turned to him to raise issues concerning their working conditions. Nevertheless, bringing his political affiliations and ideologies into the school did not go uncontested.

During the course of the research confrontation took place regarding the displaying on the NUT notice board of a SWP poster, partly due to the nature of the poster but

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<sup>88</sup> To restate Batstone *et. al.*'s. definition: ‘[M]embers, including stewards, who act as informal leaders in relation to their fellows (sic); that is, they have a disproportionate amount of influence over their

also because of its political connotations. As ‘SWP members seek to link day-to-day issues of wages and conditions in the workplace with wider political questions’ (Darlington 2000:24), the displaying of a poster berating Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools would, for the SWP members in the school, be a natural course of action. However, both the acting head and deputy head were of the opinion that as the poster was visible to parents and children from outside the staffroom, and it contained what they viewed to be offensive language, then it should be removed; the acting head circulated a memo to all staff stating this.

In informal conversations with teachers, a number of them privately agreed that the poster was ‘inappropriate’ and should be removed. The teachers, however, did not appear willing to publicly voice their assent to the acting head’s memo. On the one hand this could substantiate the views of one governor and the headteacher, cited in the previous chapter, that the teachers were unwilling to individually challenge the views of the SWP member. On the other hand it could be because as a group collectively fighting the rancour of the LEA and the press, they didn’t want to initiate further conflict in the staffroom, particularly over a matter which, in the great scheme of their everyday working lives, was somewhat trivial. One teacher voiced this latter view as follows:

‘I mean the difficulty with this poster thing. Burn it! what does it matter it’s a poster! I mean it’s got a swear word on it. It has a swear word on it ... I mean does it matter? It’s not worth having an argument about a blinking poster! I mean, OK, he’s greedy but I don’t want year seven to see that word when I’m trying to teach them not to swear. And at the end of the day, as I said, it’s only a poster, a poster. I don’t really like these arguments about stupid things, you know, there’s a lot more to argue about’ (teacher 17)

whilst another had this to say:

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fellows (sic)’ (1977:xiv).

‘this stupid little incident that’s happened recently about the Socialist Worker poster, you know, that started a battle in the school, and I didn’t want anything to do with it’ (teacher 14)

and a deputy head this:

‘I feel it shouldn’t be there ... you could see it from the main gate. And regardless of what you think about the bloke, you know, I don’t want kids seeing the word ‘bastard’ written up. I’d be horrified if I was a parent if I looked through the staffroom window and I saw a) Socialist Worker and b) bastard ... it could have been National Front, as [acting head] made the comment ... it wasn’t as bad as National Front, but ... it’s a political party, and also there’s the argument that it shouldn’t be on the union announcement board – well I was a member of the NUT but I wasn’t a member of the Socialist Workers, do you know what I mean? ... I don’t think that, you know, the poster should have been there’ (deputy head 2)

What appears to be a somewhat trivial incident tested the relationship between the acting head and the union representative as once again power dimensions came into play. Ultimately a compromise was reached whereby the poster remained but the offending word was covered with a label that could be lifted up. This resulted in neither side losing face whilst the amusement caused by this removed any tension from the situation as is evidenced by this deputy head’s comment:

‘so it’s got a little label over it at the moment. I said to [acting head] what else, what should we do now? Maybe we should stick something on it, cotton wool ears or something!’ (laughing) (deputy head 2).

Although the acting head was opposed to the poster, he used his ‘freedom within boundaries’ (Hoggett 1991:251) in a way which diffused the situation; he could not afford to antagonise the teachers he relied on to keep the school running smoothly, but in order to maintain his authority in the school, neither could he be seen to be doing nothing. As happened with the headteacher, there was a battle over the symbolic power resources, albeit of a lesser importance.

Clearly the union representative espoused his politics within the school and in this he was vocally supported by the other SWP member. It is important to note here that although the other SWP member did not overtly espouse her politics, she did vocally support the union representative and most teachers appeared to recognise her political affiliations. The following teacher commented negatively with respect to the SWP members as follows:

‘when a new active head took over they would just try to oppose him ... certain things just, just because they they wouldn’t let – they’re locked into their position’ (teacher 14)

however, he also saw the positive aspect of their presence:

‘I don’t like the SWP per se but you’ve got to appreciate some of the energy that some of the people who are active SWP members have’ (teacher 14)

This comment fits with Darlington’s view that ‘the generally more adversarial approach to management which is adopted by left-wing stewards can fit the needs and aspirations of the members who elect them, sometimes irrespective of the steward’s expressed broader political beliefs and affiliation’ (2000:16). The SWP activists were key actors in maintaining the momentum of action within the school.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the term ‘militant’ can have different connotations for different people. The union representative answered as follows when asked whether he saw himself as being militant:

‘I hope so yes! I mean, if, if I wasn’t perceived as being active in representing the interests of the members then that would be – we would be failing in our roles as union reps and it’s, it’s a label that’s stuck on you, I mean people interpret it in a negative way when it suits them. But if it wasn’t for the activists in the union, individual members would, in countless cases, would have got a raw, a rawer deal than they’ve had over the years when they’ve had to call on the union to, to represent them or fight for them’ (teacher 8)

For him, acting militantly is to challenge management's authority and 'positional power' (Bradley 1999:34-35) in an attempt to establish a degree of worker control in the workplace. It has been discussed previously how militancy and SWP had, for some, become interchangeable terms; for the union representative his union activity went hand-in-hand with his membership of the SWP because:

'well, the members of the SWP have a responsibility to play an active part in their trade union' (teacher 8)

The suggestion that the SWP were influencing events in the school meant that he, as both a political and union activist, was succeeding:

'I hope that we do have an influence, as a political group, amongst staff. But I haven't a clue what the extent of my personal influence is, although ... after, what, eighteen years of working here I, over the years I would imagine that I have influenced people in one way or another and I hope that it's in a positive way – certainly from the union point of view it has' (teacher 8)

although he also felt there was an exaggeration of such influence:

'when people – and it's usually the authority, or certain people of a political persuasion which is different to that of the SWP – when they say that, what they mean is that ordinary people can't think for themselves and that they are somehow manipulated by these activists who are spinning a web of intrigue or whatever, you know' (teacher 8)

This is in accord with Darlington who, commenting on Rosewell's (1982) view that political activists in trade unions only want to 'stir up trouble' suggests that 'emphasis is placed almost entirely on the alleged covert political objectives of strike leaders who appear to have a charismatic appeal capable of inducing blind obedience from otherwise rational workers' (2000:13). Parkville's union representative went on further to suggest:

'Labour politicians don't like the idea of people being collectively organised, they don't like the idea of people thinking for themselves ...

they're happy to, to put the responsibility for actions that take place – whether it's strike action or the refusal to do this – on the, on the shoulders of a couple of individuals, as a way of covering up for their own failures to deal with whatever the problem is. It also reflects on them that they actually don't trust people, individually, they don't trust people to have the confidence to think for themselves and come to a conclusion different to the one that they want them to think' (teacher 8)

again giving credence to Darlington's further comments that 'the implication [by Rosewell] is that if only these "subversives" were not stirring things up workers would establish a harmonious relationship with management from which there would be a mutual advantage' (2000:13), an argument that appears to have been the view of the governor quoted in the previous chapter who suggested that the teachers:

'let those who were [militant], speak for them and on their behalf, and lead them, effectively. I think that was the problem ... that unfortunately, that meant that it was actually very difficult to come to a sort of reasoned and measured agreement on issues in a way that you might otherwise have done' (Governor 2)

The SWP were clearly, as already noted, carrying some of the blame for the school's closure. Darlington argues that 'shop stewards act within the context of the general tensions that characterize workplace unionism, of seeking to organize resistance to exploitation but confined within the limits of capitalist society' (1994:4). By engaging with both his union and political ideologies, Parkville's union representative and political activist was visible in his opposition to management actions which he believed were detrimental to the children and staff in Parkville; these were the characteristics of the workplace unionism at this school. Clearly he was a key motivator in the various modes of industrial action which took place in the school, however, once again it has to be remembered that the other teachers were not simply passive observers, they utilised their own agency as they saw fit. One of the governors had this to say:

‘there was also ... the political argument and [the area] is notorious for being well, you know, being run by the Socialist Workers Party, the [name] brothers rule the roost ... I mean they can be a pain but I don’t think that they are that bad, myself ... I think if they were able to do as much damage as some people believe then something was very fragile in the first instance and it shouldn’t, it shouldn’t have been that fragile ... I think the world should be strong enough to be able to cope with, with what you call small political organisations. So ... they could at times be a bit of a pain, a bit of a nuisance, but I don’t think that they were the dragons and the ‘divils’ that other people saw them as’ (Governor 1)

To blame the closure of the school on (two) political activists would appear extreme for, as Darlington says, ‘agitation is unlikely to fall on receptive ears unless there are genuine widespread grievances and justifiable demands to agitate about’ (2000:13). The NUT full-time Regional Secretary appears to agree with this:

‘[teacher 8] was militant and he - I would put it this way actually ... when you have militants in schools, for most of the time you don’t hear from them. You only hear from them when there are employment problems and in that school there were health and safety problems, there were discipline problems, there was an Ofsted, or HMI, decision to place it in Special Measures, a council decision to close it, it would be inevitable that if there were people who were politically active they would have something to say about all those things. I don’t think it was any more than that, I don’t think the average member was militant there’ (NUT Regional Secretary)

This is further reinforced by this teacher:

‘I think what happens is that when there is something which will effect the school that it [the union] becomes more important. I don’t think that there are a lot of die-hard unionists here as such. A few who will actually - where the union is much more important to them than me, but generally I will support certain things that I feel, er, you know, are important in



education ... I mean in the long run I want to protect my colleagues in terms of being made redundant' (teacher 5)

The last quote demonstrates the collectiveness of the teachers and also how the conditions in the school (viz.: redundancy procedures etc.) meant that a reaction from them was inevitable, regardless of the SWP presence. Nevertheless, the political orientation of teacher 8 ensured that the views within the staffroom were articulated and acted upon, thus illustrating how Layder's (1993:72) 'self' influenced the interaction in the 'situated activity' of the school.

The teachers' area negotiating secretary, also a member of the SWP<sup>89</sup>, suggested that it was 'ludicrous' to blame the closure of the school on the SWP, on the other hand:

'you can take it as a compliment if you like as well because the SWP make sure we have been in the forefront of all the campaigns that we have been involved in and we are honest about our politics, we're open about our politics' (NUT area representative)

The activities of the SWP, both in the school and in the LEA, made them visible to management, LEA and the press. The NUT Regional Secretary commented on militants being blamed for closing the school as follows:

'it is certainly the case that one leading councillor did say something to that effect. But I, I would challenge him beyond, beyond [teacher 8], I would challenge him to say who they were. Because [teacher 8] is a member of the SWP and he's an active erm, active in his political party, he's very active in the union, he certainly is a militant and he would admit that, and I'm sure he has done to you' (NUT Regional Secretary)

whilst a governor had this to say:

'I think there's a lot of perception ... I'm used to the SWP because we have them in the union at [area] and they're a pain and we use them, 'cos

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<sup>89</sup> At this point it is important to point out that the area negotiating secretary was also the brother of teacher 8, the union representative in the school; this, of course, may well influence his views on the situation at the school, however the implications of the fraternal relationship will not be discussed here.

they, they produce a lot of good stuff. They produce a lot of commitment, they produce a lot of energy, they do a lot of work, erm, use them! ... certainly, it's, there's lots of people believe it's – they were one of the reasons why the school closed. I don't. And [headteacher] certainly blamed a bit of it on that as well. I mean he saw them as being militant and ... if [he] had had something better to offer, they'd have gone for it ... And I don't see them being that – I mean people like [teacher 7] and [teacher 5] ... I mean there's strong people in the school, and they're not ultra militant, it's not true!' (Governor 1)

Arguably, therefore, to some extent militancy was as much an image as a reality. Nonetheless, it would appear that although the SWP are a relatively small group of political activists (the area negotiating secretary estimated about ten NUT SWP members within the schools in that, quite large, LEA), they have the power to worry the educationalists in the area, or indeed, perhaps they were useful scapegoats during a difficult time for the LEA.

The union representative was not offered a job in the new school or in any other school within the area, although he was not alone in this. Nevertheless, it could be thought surprising considering these comments from the acting head:

'he's a good teacher and he's good at his job, I mean there's no denying that' (acting head)

According to the area negotiating secretary the problem was that:

'the union rep ... symbolises everything that New Labour detests and who the local Labour councillors wanted to get rid of and it is likely that he is going to be the symbolic sacrificial lamb, if you like, at the end of this, this sorry saga' (NUT area negotiating secretary)

and was absolutely certain as to the reason for his non-appointment to the new school:

'he's a union activist, he's a revolutionary socialist, a member of the Socialist Workers Party, has been for many years ... and this is why I'm

absolutely certain it's political victimisation' (NUT area negotiating secretary)<sup>90</sup>

His willingness to act for both his political and his trade union beliefs certainly made him visible within the LEA area. Whether he was victimised because of his political and/or union activities cannot be judged at this stage, however, the constant reference to the SWP and 'militant' staff in derogatory news articles suggests that this may have played a part in the decision not to employ him; to this end the union took his case to an Employment Tribunal, although it was later dropped (see Chapter Eight). If victimisation had been proven, it would have been evidence of management hostility towards political activists whilst also reiterating the imbalance of power between workers and managers; managers have the greater power resources on which to draw.

In the case of Parkville, the local trade union leadership was clearly heavily influenced by the left-wing political ideology of the Socialist Workers Party. Within unions, such allegiance to a political party can be viewed as factionalism; it was argued in Chapter Two that factionalism within unions is important as it challenges the union hierarchy and thus promotes union democracy. The NUT Regional Secretary had this to say about factionalism:

'I would prefer not to have it. I, I don't think it's particularly helpful to unions generally, but I think that it is a fact of life in unions today ... in my experience factions can be based on different things, they can be based on politics, they can be based on personalities, but they always exist, whether it be in a trade union or a political party of any ... hue, really. I think they exist because inevitably people come together to argue for things that they believe in, and that's the nature of things ... I'd prefer ordinary members to put up for election on the basis of their, their experience and their knowledge, but it doesn't happen anywhere else, I don't suppose it's ever going to happen in the NUT' (NUT Regional Secretary)

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<sup>90</sup> Again, it must be recognised that he is talking about his brother here, as well as a union and SWP

As will be seen in the next section, the local representative at Parkville and the area negotiating secretary, both members of the SWP, were willing to challenge decisions made by the regional officials and national executive of the NUT. As to whether such political factions produce union activists, the NUT Regional Secretary suggested:

‘I think they do and they don’t, I mean some are, some aren’t, and I don’t think that the issue of being in a faction makes you a better or a worse trade union activist ... most union activists are not active in politics. They, they might have strong political beliefs, but for most of us we are too busy to be active in both ... you rarely find people who are very active in both. But people obviously, union members, obviously take their political beliefs into the workplace and use that to try to influence people’  
(NUT Regional Secretary)

Nevertheless, as can be seen from the case study evidence, the political activist at Parkville was also a strong union activist and local leader. As Darlington suggests ‘on the basis that effective trade union organisation depends on its roots in the workplace, the SWP argues that socialists should be at the forefront of those seeking to use workers’ bargaining power to build strong sectional union organisation’ (2000:22); arguably, someone who is willing to promote their political ideologies and trade union beliefs will become a strong leader. It is, however, important to recognise the vulnerability of such leaders; if, as may be the case at Parkville, they are successfully ‘scapegoated’ by management then other union activists may be unwilling to come forward and this could well damage union survival and renewal in the workplace.

The next section will consider the role that the union at the regional level played in the events at Parkville.

### **Union bureaucracy – the NUT failing the ‘failing’ school?**

As mentioned in the previous section, the enthusiasm and commitment of the SWP activist appeared to maintain the motivation of the teachers at Parkville in their resistance to management initiatives. One teacher had this to say about him:

‘I know that if there’s something that affects a colleague, he will help them. He has tried. There’s a lot of people that’s been under attack in this school and from what I understand, he has gone out of his way to help them’ (teacher 2)

and to this end they were happy with the union organisation at the local level. They were, however, less happy with the regional union. This teacher questioned the ability of the union to act over certain issues:

‘from my point of view it’s the NUT - but I’m not maligning them ... maybe they can’t do more than that and that would indicate, I believe, that we should employ employment specialists in the legal profession, that’s what I believe we should do. To look into employment law on our behalf, either negotiate on our behalf with the employer - I don’t actually think the union does that ... what you want is somebody to represent yourself ... I think that some of this harassment, you see, that’s gone on with this person [teacher 9], if we’d had a whip round, which I did suggest, and we’d got a legal specialist in to represent her, it would have all stopped very quickly’ (teacher 7)

Whilst partly suggesting that a trade union should provide services for members (Bassett and Cave 1993), this quote identifies not only union collectiveness, but also collegiality towards a colleague, and once again underlines the prerequisite that members put on help at work for union joining. Notwithstanding this reproach towards their ability, the area negotiating secretary felt that the union had been supportive of the teachers put into competency procedures:

‘the union secretary in [area] was involved in a number of competency procedures in Parkville and the staff were very well supported during

those competency procedures ... I think actually, although a number were muted, I think only one was actually carried through ... the union completely supported the teacher, yes' (NUT area negotiating secretary)

This teacher, whilst recognising the importance of collective action, put a monetary cost on the perceived lack of support from the national union:

'you kind of resign yourself to the fact that they [management/LEA] can do what they want, really ... the union doesn't really back us up much, erm, the national union. We'll never react enough without the support of the union, but I'm a bit disillusioned with it at the moment because you know all, all I hear from the union is when they want to deduct twelve pounds out of my wages every month ... when we need fast actions from them it's like "oh, we'll have a meeting next week" ... you know whilst I do support it, I'm not keen at the moment and I don't see that there's a lot that they can do, I suppose they can negotiate for us' (teacher 14)

This is an example of a union member who joined for solidaristic collective reasons and is looking to the union for that protection; for 'value for money'. Yet another teacher strongly vocalised her frustration at the union's lack of speed and action:

'they're too wishy washy for my liking. There is a real issue – there are real issues in this school – so why do we have to keep having ballots when people's deadlines are so short. They're too wishy washy as far as I'm concerned. Too scared to take action. If they're going to do it, do it. Just get off your backside and do something. And I don't think they've really done anything to show support – we can have as many meetings as we like, but people in this school want action and the union aren't doing anything' (teacher 11)

Clearly, the NUT is legally bound, by legislation governing industrial action introduced throughout the 1980's (primarily the Trade Union Act 1984), to ballot

members prior to taking industrial action<sup>91</sup>. Nevertheless, this comment came from a teacher six months after the announcement of the school's closure but just over a year before Parkville closed:

'the way the unions act, always in my view seem to be a little bit too late, so we get the compulsory redundancy notices and it has to be instant once those are served – "oh, you've got to have an indicative ballot" and "you've got to have this" and "somebody has to talk to so and so", and by the time that is done the date is up and the people have to decide and they've got twenty four hours to think about what to do and the union's still doing the indicative ballot, you know!! It's too late! It's too late, all of that is miles too late. So therefore in relation to our staff now, for this time next year, we need something in place now. They should be talking now to the LEA about how they're going to proceed with staff negotiating. Now!! Otherwise I know, it will get to March, they'll all get their redundancy notices and then somebody will go "Oh, oh dear, we'd better have a meeting and then maybe we'll have an indicative ballot in August when you've all got the push!", know what I mean? All of that is too slow' (teacher 7)

suggesting, perhaps, a greater foresight than the union regarding the need to take action to save the jobs of Parkville's teachers. This is an important assertion by teacher 7 with respect to the perceived bargaining power of the industrial relations parties, particularly in the light of Undy *et al*'s findings that 'the results of several disputes indicate that well-planned action supported by a ballot demonstrating the membership's commitment to action could significantly increase the bargaining power of the union's negotiators' (1996:229). It is evident from the above, that their

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<sup>91</sup> The intention of such legislation was, in rhetoric, to improve union democracy by giving voice to 'the supposed moderate majority and thus reduce industrial and political militancy' whilst the reality was that it was 'aimed at reducing union power' (Undy *et al.* 1996:235-6). Undy *et al.* suggest that one effect of balloting legislation with respect to industrial action was a change in union processes leading to 'a bureaucratization of procedures and increased centralization of power' (1996:229), which in turn has ultimately contributed not to increased union democracy but to 'a shift towards popular autocracy' (1996:261).

members at Parkville felt somewhat neglected by the NUT although according to the union representative, the National Executive did take an interest in the proceedings:

‘the regional officials have been involved from very early on and even the deputy general secretary has been on a visit and spoken to the members erm, the executive of the NUT. They’ve also put the same view to the authority that the way in which the authority has handled the closure of the school and the reopening of the new school has not been in the best interest of the pupils and certainly not in the best interests of the members of the NUT as far as securing employment. And, erm, they’ve put that in writing and in sort of representations when they’ve met people from the authority’ (teacher 8)

Nevertheless, whilst generally supportive of the national union in acknowledging the consultative efforts of the National Executive and recognising the necessity of following procedures, he did agree with the teachers on the question of the NUTs tardiness:

‘I think ... the minute that an authority announces it isn’t going to re-employ staff in Fresh Start situations then the union should ballot straight away ... if the union had of acted a lot earlier - and it’s something I have said whenever I’ve had the opportunity - I don’t think we would be in the position we are in now with regards to ... three individuals who still haven’t got a job. But also ... I think the school itself, this school, would still be in a more stable situation than it is. And if there was a guarantee of employment some of the good teachers that have left might not have left, er, and there would have been more continuity for the kids. As it is they’ve put the kids through quite a lot of disruption, notwithstanding the way in which staff have been treated’ (teacher 8)

Here, as both a union representative and a teacher, the representative endorses Ozga’s views that a distinction cannot be made between unionism and professionalism, they are not essentially divided – one is the expression of the other (1981:120); his concern goes beyond the instrumental issue of teachers’ jobs to the welfare of the pupils.



The area negotiating secretary also felt that the union had acted too late:

‘they [the LEA] are required, by law, to consult and I think that it is the one area where the union failed the school ... I think that when it was clear that the school was going to close ... at that point the national union should have said that we were going to ballot for strike action against redundancy because right from the start the, the local employers, erm, refused to guarantee transfer of the existing staff into the new school ... And instead what happened, we went through a period of protracted negotiations ... the national union said it would support the local union, support the teachers in the school and completely ... agree that the decision to make the teachers redundant was against national union policy and triggered the action guidelines, which is that if any member is threatened with redundancy, there are a whole series of action procedures which the union can then put into place. Er, the trouble is that they didn’t put those action procedures into place until, in my view, it was too late ... the action from the national executive, if you like, was too little too late er ... and the new headteacher and the local authority felt obviously that they could ride it out. Now in the end, no action was taken ... but the national union in my view, should have moved straight away, when the parental campaign was at its height ... when there was tremendous support from the local community - if alongside the big parents’ meetings that we had, we’d also had a ballot for strike action, then I’m pretty confident that it would have been successful’ (NUT area negotiating secretary)

The above quote is interesting as it highlights the interest of parents in the situation and fits with Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie’s (1999:168) point that trade unions are able to form ‘alliances’ with local communities in defending public services; further, it demonstrates the complexities of public sector industrial relations whereby workers are acting both for the protection of jobs and the protection of service provision.

The NUT did, during the early part of 1999 (over twelve months after the announcement of the intended closure of Parkville), conduct two indicative ballots for industrial action by the teachers in the area in support of their Parkville colleagues. Although marred by a low turnout (approximately thirty nine and forty three percent respectively) the ballots were overwhelmingly supportive of action.

The area negotiating secretary suggested two reasons for the low turn-out. Firstly, the discourse surrounding the closure of the school had been in both the public and the trade union domain for a long period of time and consequently, to a certain extent, the issue had become stale in the minds of the members who perhaps began to see the school's closure as a *fait accompli*; the second reason, not unconnected to the first and in line with the feelings of the staff as discussed above, was that the national union had acted too late:

‘I certainly don't blame members ... I think that, you know, the national union should have moved sooner, as in organising action in defence of members there, knowing full well what was likely to happen ... by the time they did do an indicative ballot, several months had passed and the point at which it would have been most effective had slipped by’ (NUT area negotiating secretary)

The local representative also commented on the caution of the union officials towards strike action:

‘[the teachers in the area] voted yes that they would take action if they were called upon to strike through a proper ballot. Erm, the union officials have been keen to go through the proper procedures, as they see it, following, you know, negotiating things right down to the last minute’ (teacher 8)

The full-time Regional Secretary, however, felt that the union did act on behalf of the Parkville teachers, commenting thus on the consultation process:

‘there is a statutory process of consultation involving the community, but also the council chose to consult with the union as well about its proposals.

And we, we objected to the proposal to close Parkville school and we believed that ... the resources that were becoming - clearly going to become available for the new school should be used to support Parkville school ... once the decision had been made to close, there is a statutory duty on the part of the council to consult with trade unions about potential redundancy' (NUT Regional Secretary)

as to whether the LEA listened to the union's objections:

'it wouldn't be fair to say they didn't listen, I think they did listen and they did erm, join in the discussion about the various options. And so there was a genuine consultation' (NUT Regional Secretary)

so how effective was the consultation process?:

'I'm quite sure that right from the outset their preferred option was to close Parkville school and re-open a new school on the site and it being the strongly preferred option, that is what happened. I'm quite sure that there was a Labour group decision behind closed doors to support that option and in the end ... they had a big majority at the time and they drove it through. But ... I attended the education committee and they did listen to representations made by the union and parents and others' (NUT Regional Secretary)

which, fits with Ironside and Seifert's description of consultation as 'the seeking out of opinion without any obligation to act on the views of others' (1995:9) as discussed in the previous chapter. The LEA Official also commented on the consultation and negotiation process:

'the governing body of the new school has complete appointment powers ... they needed to make sure that the staff that they appointed were the very best available, and therefore every job should be publicly advertised ... the union fought vehemently over that issue ... and the governors agreed that they would short list, for posts, staff who applied from Parkville ... and that, that they would consider them alongside the field

from the advert and no more than that. And you know, they were effectively guaranteed interviews ... at the end of the day the decision is the governors, erm, the union made lots of representations to us and we neither have the power to impose on the governing body, our view and we made it quite clear ... to the unions that would be the situation. All we did was to transmit messages from the trade unions to them, we weren't in the position to insist on any particular structures' (LEA Official)

so it can perhaps be argued that the union did have some success, although it fell short of retention of jobs for the Parkville teachers. From the comments made above by the teachers and their representatives, it is clear that they felt the union should have instigated industrial action to support them. In the following quote, the Regional Secretary commented on the lack of industrial action whilst identifying the bureaucratic constraints of union balloting as discussed above:

'well, the union has a policy of, in support of taking industrial action where members are being made redundant. But we're talking here about a school that was closing anyway. I don't think we could have taken industrial action within that school ... erm, and that it would have been effective. I think if we'd just gone on strike in that school, they, they'd have just moved the children out to other schools or something ... I don't think that they were going to withdraw, withdraw the er, notion of closure because the union went out on strike in that school. So we then had to look *broader* and that would have been, what we wished to do would have been to have taken action across the LEA but quite frankly our members wouldn't support it in sufficient numbers. In fact, you know, we weren't opposed to it. We would, we would have supported across the whole [area] action but our members just didn't vote for it ... in our, like any union, sensible union, it doesn't go into a fully postal ballot through the electoral reform society informing the employer and all the rest of it unless you've got a pretty good idea you're going to have a yes vote. Our intelligence was that it wouldn't be a yes vote – which I can understand, because other people weren't directly affected, although we tried to point

out that they could be in the future, by a similar exercise, I don't think they believed that they would be. So we couldn't basically get the majority, it's as simple as that' (NUT Regional Secretary)

But what if, as the teachers, the local representative and the area representative had wanted, the ballot had taken place earlier in the process, would the outcome have been different?:

'it's not my experience ... on an issue of redundancy you don't usually get a yes vote until people are facing redundancy ... if it's in the future and it's hypothetical you'll find that members ... won't tend to vote yes ... our best ballot results come when you can say "these people are going to be made redundant". But I think the answer is no. I know it would be widely said so, by others, but these are the people who couldn't get a yes vote in the indicative ballot ... the idea is if you'd done it six month's earlier ... you'd have got a yes vote, but I, I don't buy it, I think it would have been a worse vote ... But none of us can prove it because we didn't do it. And that's my strong belief and that of the executive as well' (NUT Regional Secretary)

Again, it is important here to relate back to the findings of Undy *et al.* (1996), as discussed above, with respect to the positive effect that a well structured and well supported ballot can have on the imbalance of worker/management power relations.

At Parkville, there was clearly a disparity of opinion between the regional union and the rank and file members, including their workplace representatives, with regard to action that could, or should, have been taken. This raises the question as to why this might be so. Arguably, the teacher quoted above who believed the union were 'too *scared* to take action' may not be far from the truth. Like the local NUT representative, the area negotiating secretary was positive about the achievements of the union, nevertheless he thought that their motives for delaying action may be political:

‘I think that the, the national union is desperate not to upset New Labour ... the national union did not want to get involved in confrontation with New Labour, therefore, whilst it had to abide by union policy, or genuflect in the direction of action to support for members ... there was no sense of urgency about it ... so they were anxious not to embarrass New Labour or blame the DFE’ (NUT area negotiating secretary)

A view that was borne out by the experiences of a teacher not offered a job in the new school, who appeared to be pressurised into accepting a short-term job in another school:

‘I felt like I was being manipulated because they wanted to place me before this meeting [between the union and the LEA] and I felt like I was in the middle – I was a pawn, I really did ... we’re getting feedback from the union saying that they want us to be slotted into jobs. They don’t want trouble, they don’t want strike. They don’t want trouble [the] council ... it’s going to be scrutinised by the Labour Government’ (teacher 18)

(Again, it is important to note here that senior members of the new government were taking a personal interest in this particular school.) The area negotiating secretary, whilst again stressing the positive actions the union had taken, confirmed what the teacher felt:

‘there is no doubt whatsoever that he [full-time union official] wanted people to take what offers were available to them, so that there would then cease to be a problem for the union to resolve’(NUT area negotiating secretary)

Clearly, from the following comments, the Regional Secretary felt that he had fulfilled his duty towards the teacher:

‘I think that she was offered a post which in my view was a sufficiently reasonable alternative for her, for me to feel ... I could fully understand her not accepting it, but I personally feel that it was a good enough offer for me to be able to say “well she was made an offer of alternative

employment” ... I mean once somebody had made a reasonable offer of a post then the union can, I think, say the job is done, whether the person takes it or not. But I just thought it was in her interest to take it, and I still do think it was in her interest and that she should have done’ (NUT Regional Secretary)

He was not of the opinion that he had coerced the teacher in any way:

‘an experienced union official like myself ... sometimes you can, you believe that something is in somebody’s best interest, maybe I ... well I was perhaps encouraging her to take it because I thought it was in her best interest yes. But I wouldn’t have said I pressurised her she - because after all she didn’t take it. So, so she couldn’t have been so pressurised that it was a problem, she didn’t take the job. But I did try to explain to her why I thought this job was in her best interests to take. Because she wasn’t going to get a very good redundancy package ... when you’ve only got a small redundancy package, which I tried to explain to her, you’re not losing a lot by taking this job ... I thought, and I still believe, it would have become a permanent job. So that’s why I mean, maybe I did pressurise her a bit, but...’ (NUT Regional Secretary)

The arguments posed above question the extent to which the NUT in this area was protecting the interests of its members. It is evident that the Regional Secretary thought that it was, however, the decision to delay balloting for strike action in a LEA where the teachers are known to have a strong commitment to solidarity and are willing to take strike action to support colleagues has to be questioned. It is certainly possible that these decisions were influenced by the wider political spectrum; possibly the NUT did not wish to be the first public sector union to cause New Labour problems following their recent election.

The evidence suggests that the aims and objectives of the regional union were at odds with those of the rank and file members in Parkville. Despite their collective solidarity the teachers were unable to combat the hard-line management strategies of

firstly, the LEA who closed the school, and secondly the governors of the new school who refused to guarantee them jobs; the help that they needed from the regional union was not forthcoming.

### **Not only the teachers – the union and the support staff at Parkville**

Although the case study focuses primarily on the management and teaching staff within Parkville, it is worth noting here that support staff were also adversely affected by the school's closure, they too were being made redundant. Unlike the NUT, however, the support staff's union, UNISON, failed to negotiate enhanced redundancy payments for them as this school administrator explains:

'we're getting the basic redundancy and it's not negotiable ... they [the union] asked, because that was one of the questions that we put to them at the one union meeting we did have, and apparently he [union representative] went to personnel and he was told that for support staff, the contracts were different to teaching staff, and it was basically done and that was what we were going to get and it wasn't negotiable. That was what the union was told' (support staff 1)

Having tried, and failed, to contact the union on a number of occasions, she had become somewhat disillusioned with UNISON and, similarly to the teacher above, considered the cost/benefit analysis of trade union membership:

'I mean I've been paying – you know since I've been here five, five and a half years, this is the first time I've ever looked to the union for anything ... we don't have much faith in them' (support staff 1)

She went on to suggest why there was such lack of support:

'there's just too few of us, only six of us in here, there's not enough of us to sort of make a big thing ... which shouldn't make a difference but ... they know we're getting a raw deal but they're not prepared to do anything about it' (support staff 1)



thus feeling somewhat alienated from the union as a whole. Another administrator in the school had this to say:

‘I don’t think they’re bothered, that’s my personal opinion. I would never join a union again’ (support staff 2)

At a time when trade unions are attempting to regain the mass membership losses since 1979, this is a sorry statement but nonetheless in line with Waddington and Kerr’s findings that every year ‘more than 40,000 members’ leave UNISON due to ‘dissatisfaction with some aspect of structure, organisation or policy’ (1999b:184); Cully *et al.* suggest that, in relation to the effectiveness of unions in the workplace, ‘some ex-members have a residue of cynicism about their experience’ (1999:212) and the experiences of Parkville’s support staff do, to some extent, echo those of the teachers.

### **The NUT’s ‘successes’ at Parkville**

The level and extent to which the NUT, and indeed UNISON, can be seen to have been successful in protecting the interests of their members is debatable as ultimately the school did close down. For various reasons, including an indication that they would not be successful, a number of teachers chose not to apply for positions in the new school; two of those who did were unsuccessful and were made redundant.

At the local level, the teachers’ representative felt that there had indeed been some success:

‘from our point of view it was a success that none of the people, erm, against whom the head began those competency procedures ... were not dismissed for being incompetent so we managed to secure the interests of the individual teachers ... we also opposed all the sort of negative moves that the previous head made and brought that to the attention of the authority through negotiations ... through our regional officials and through our own action within the school and I think our opposition to

what he was doing, er, probably played a factor in him deciding to resign'<sup>92</sup> (teacher 8)

The NUT Regional Secretary thought that the union were successful on two counts, firstly:

‘we took the health and safety issues and some improvements were made’  
(NUT Regional Secretary)

It must be remembered, however, that the Parkville teachers had been working, and the students learning, in appalling conditions for many years without the health and safety issues being dealt with. The Regional Secretary was aware of the limitation of this particular achievement:

‘but of course they knew [the LEA] that they were going to have to make improvements, they couldn’t possibly open the new school in the state that it was in. So in a sense, one was knocking for the first time on a more open door. Once the decision had been made to close it then they were willing to start to address some of the, the problems. But only some because others, they didn’t, they wanted to do in the Summer holiday before the new school, they didn’t want to touch it beforehand, so, we started to get some improvements to the building ... So we, we got somewhere on the health and safety’ (NUT Regional Secretary)

Arguably, then, the improvements were for the new staff and pupils of the new school. To attract the ‘middle class’ pupil intake the LEA were aware that they had to make the buildings somewhat more habitable, thus one questions the extent of this union ‘achievement’.

The second way in which the Regional Secretary felt the union had been successful was through the enhanced redundancy package for the staff:

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<sup>92</sup> This last point is interesting in that it reflects the views of Goodrich who suggests that collective action by union members in the workplace (in response to the perceived autocratic behaviour of foremen or supervisors), may lead to the dismissal or resignation of the latter (1977:229).

‘we also got a pretty reasonable redundancy package agreed. Now the council was keen to, I think, have as many volunteers for redundancy as possible, to reduce the level of potential militancy, I, I’ll just say that ... so we did get a pretty good redundancy package and quite a significant number of teachers accepted the voluntary redundancy because of it. Agreed to stay on until the end, that was the deal, you stayed on until the end, saw the school through and then you would get an enhanced redundancy package’ (NUT Regional Secretary)

The area negotiating secretary also pointed to this as an achievement:

‘what we successfully negotiated, albeit over a long period of time, was that those who wished to stay would get enhanced redundancy, in other words they would get double the basic, erm minimum’ (NUT area negotiating secretary)

Like the Regional Secretary, he also highlighted the ‘deal’ agreed between the negotiating parties:

‘that aspect of the negotiations, whilst not ideally resolved, was a big result in that there was an acknowledgement that enhanced redundancy should be offered to staff because they were ready to demonstrate loyalty to the continuation of Parkville as a school, er, until the point at which it closed, they would commit themselves to staying at that school over a period of eighteen months that these negotiations and discussions were taking place. So from the point of the announcement of the closure to the actual closure, the interim period meant that there was stability of staff and people wouldn’t bail out and then they would if they wished take the enhanced redundancy and stay until the school closed and then move on’ (NUT area negotiating secretary)

Considering the points raised in the previous chapter with respect to the teachers’ commitment to their profession and their belief in continuity in the school for the sake of the children, it could be questioned whether enhanced redundancy played a part in their decisions to stay at the school until it closed. Salamon suggests that in the

negotiation process the parties involved are 'seeking to maximise the advantage to be gained for their interest group' (1998:491). For once, with the LEA relying on the teachers to stay in the school, the union were in a strong bargaining position and this might have been the stage at which to threaten industrial action against redundancies. Certainly, as far as the enhanced redundancy package went the acting head felt that, in his opinion, the LEA would have 'gone higher' with the payments. On this occasion the LEA, out to minimise disruption in the last months of the school, might well be viewed as the victors.

With respect to union failures, not surprisingly following the discussion above, both the local representative and the area negotiating secretary were willing to vocalise this with regard to redundancy:

'well we, we've failed, we've failed to guarantee a job for everyone in the new school who wanted one so that, that is not erm ... not the desired result. Certainly not from our own point of view' (teacher 8)

'the other strand was to try to get jobs for the existing members of staff in the new school and in that we have been singularly unsuccessful ... the only concession we won was that all our staff who wanted a job in the new school would be given an interview, but even then, the procedures by which those offers were made left an awful lot to be desired ... basically the staff had to compete er, on a national basis for their own jobs' (area negotiating secretary)

From the Regional Secretary's point of view, however, two redundant teachers could not be seen as a failure:

'I don't see it as a failure for the union in, in the context of nearly all the teachers being in membership, some forty-odd teachers, most of whom erm, were re-deployed or took voluntary packages ... I mean in terms of unions – if, if, if you put it into the context of something else, I mean a factory closing and you had fifty members in there, if ultimately only two

were made compulsorily redundant you wouldn't see that as a failure. So I don't see it as a failure' (NUT Regional Secretary)

This does not take account of the fact that some teachers left for other jobs before the school closed, whilst others chose to take either early retirement or voluntary redundancy as a direct result of the 'naming and shaming' of the school. Not only were they disillusioned with the LEA as to the way they had been treated, they were also opposed to the way in which the new school was being developed and had no wish to work there. However, the NUT, as mentioned above, did support one teacher at the employment tribunal in his attempt to claim unfair dismissal on the grounds of trade union membership.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter has investigated the importance of local union leadership for union activism and put this into the context of the political activities of the union representatives. The SWP member in the school who voiced the concerns of the teachers emerged as the local leader, both prior to and after becoming the active NUT representative. It is clear from the case that his political ideology shaped his union activities and his enthusiasm maintained the motivation in the school of a union membership who felt, perhaps, somewhat let down by the tardiness of the regional union.

This provides further evidence to Darlington (1994; 1998; 1999; 2000) Fosh and Cohen (1990) and Fosh's (1993) findings regarding the importance of the role of local leadership in trade unions and to Darlington's suggestion that union activism can be at least partly attributed to the influence of socialist politics (1998:69; 1999:1; 2000).

Notwithstanding the effort of the local union representative, many of the teachers of Parkville were dis-satisfied with the actions of the regional union whom they felt had not supported them at a crucial time. This gives an interesting insight into the bureaucratic nature of a union as an organisation; it was the NUT regional officials

who decided the strategy of when to ballot the members and what action should be taken as a result of those ballots. Despite the challenges made to the regional officials by the SWP faction in that area of the NUT, the rank and file members at Parkville appeared not to be listened to with regard the timing and taking of industrial action, thus questioning the representative democracy of the union with regards to the members; the teachers, the local and the area representatives all felt that the union had acted over-cautiously, perceiving this to be largely due to outside political influences and the fear of offending New Labour.

Nevertheless, union activity at Parkville did not lose its momentum, even in the face of total adversity. Whilst this can partly be attributed to the role of the local activist, it must also be recognised that the teachers were willing to fight collectively for their beliefs, whether these be with respect to the correct use of formal procedures, the fairness of the treatment of colleagues, or their belief in the education of the children they teach; in the face of the power resources stacked in favour of the government, they were unable to prevent the closure of the school.

It is argued here that had the teachers received more collective support from outside the school then the case may have had a different outcome. Rather than promoting union renewal and resilience, the action, or perhaps inaction, of the union at the national level, had an adverse effect; this was also the case with the support staff in the school. Although it is clear that the situation at Parkville meant that in a numerical sense union renewal was not possible, the conditions in the school promoted a sense of collectivism and an awareness of the importance of the trade union role at the local level; the union may well have capitalised on this. If, as argued by the teachers and union representatives at the local and district level, the regional and national union were putting political objectives before those of their members then they have failed not only these teachers but the strive for union renewal as a whole in that the mutual support identified by Fairbrother (2000a:73; 2000b:17-22) was not perceived to be forthcoming. Both teachers and support staff left the school with a feeling of having

been let down by the union and this perception will possibly remain with them as they move on to other workplaces. Perhaps high union density can lead to complacency.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusions

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Ironside and Seifert argue that '[W]hile there is a huge volume of literature on education, there is almost total neglect of industrial relations in schools' (1995:xi); this thesis contributes significantly to this neglected area of debate. Indeed, it goes a stage further; the case study, being the first industrial relations research to be undertaken in a 'failing' school, provides a unique insight into the dynamics of workplace industrial relations in that context. By considering government imposed, policy driven, devolved management initiatives in education, the research has investigated the impact of 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18) on industrial relations in one particular public sector workplace, Parkville.

In taking a qualitative research approach, it has explored the complex inter-relationship between the various levels of social organisation, viz.: the 'self', 'situated activity', 'setting' and 'context' (Layder 1993:72), thus allowing for a consideration of both the macro and the micro factors impacting on relationships and actions in the school; the approach allows for a greater appreciation of the inter-action of structure and agency. The research has identified how the many and complex workplace relationships are impacted by factors both inside and outside the organisation, whether these relationships are between employee and employee; employee and manager; manager and union; or rank and file member and union official - not to mention the relationship all of these parties have with the government, particularly as public sector workers.

Fairbrother suggests that there has 'been little recent research which focuses directly on the social processes underpinning the relationship between management and unions, particularly at a plant or workplace level' (2000b:13), whilst McCarthy suggests that the study of industrial relations 'cries out for a case study approach' (1994:321); this thesis, in taking a case study approach, has focussed on the social



processes underpinning the relationships between management and union in Parkville.

Following a review of the published literature, a number of key themes associated with industrial relations in the public sector, trade union organisation and trade union leadership were identified and these informed the collection of the primary data; by exploring these concepts in the environment of Parkville, a 'failing' school, the empirical research contributes to a greater understanding of workplace industrial relations in that setting, as discussed below.

### *New Managerialism and industrial relations in Parkville*

The literature on public sector management has clearly identified that the drive for 'economy', 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' (Ferlie *et al.* 1996; Pollitt 1993; Pollitt *et al.* 1998; Stewart and Ranson 1988), commercialisation and marketisation (Colling and Ferner 1995) and the creation of 'quasi-markets' (Bartlett 1993; Bartlett *et al.* 1994; Ferlie *et al.* 1996; Le Grand 1991; Le Grand and Bartlett 1993) has instigated 'new managerialism' (Farnham 1993; Pollitt 1993; Winchester and Bach 1995) in public sector workplaces. Public sector managers have become more financially and publicly accountable, whilst the government have maintained stringent central control. Such 'centralized-decentralization' (Hoggett 1996:18) has meant that public sector managers act 'within clearly defined and prescribed parameters' (Fairbrother 1996:116); they have 'regulated autonomy', 'freedom within boundaries' (Hoggett 1991:251) or 'tight-loose control' (Rainnie 1994:19). The literature also identified that the devolvement of management initiatives to the local level instigated an increase in trade union activity in the workplace (Fairbrother 1994a; 1996; 2000a; Fosh 1993).

The case study provides an in-depth exploration of the concepts identified above in a workplace setting, giving valuable insight into the impact of new managerialism on workplace industrial relations. Parkville not only contributes to the public sector

literature but its unique 'failing school' setting adds a new dimension to this area of academic research, thus furthering the debate.

Parkville was acutely affected by the macro policies of marketisation, commercialisation and accountability, a combination of which secured the school a place at the 'bottom' of the school league tables, thus characterising it as 'failing'. The inappropriateness of these measures as performance indicators is identified for a school where environmental factors are not taken into account; a school with a high proportion of children with English as a second language and who come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, being measured against affluent middle class schools is clearly misleading. Nevertheless, the case identifies how the headteacher, in line with government policies, introduced new managerial initiatives in an attempt to remedy Parkville's 'shortcomings'.

The suggestion of Fairbrother (1994a; 1996; 2000a) and Fosh (1993) that devolved management initiatives to the local level may result in an increase in trade union activity in the workplace is clearly supported by the case study findings. Initially, the teachers at Parkville, by acting collectively, resisted statutory imposed Performance Appraisal; as the headteacher instigated redundancy and competency procedures the teachers, perceiving inequity and unfairness in both the procedures themselves and the way in which these were instigated, again demonstrated their solidaristic collectivism through the withdrawal of goodwill. Prior to the 1988 ERA, such management initiatives would have been dealt with outside the school, thus maintaining a fairly stable industrial relations climate within; issues of trade union unrest were more likely to have been directed at the LEA, as the immediate employers, and the government as the employer of public sector workers. Thus, as the case study shows, there is a direct link between devolved management initiatives and an increase in trade union activity.

Fairbrother states that it is important to note 'that managerial initiatives on worker-management relations is critical for understanding the dynamic of trade unionism'

(2000b:142); in the case of Parkville, 'managerial initiatives' are critical in understanding the dynamics of workplace industrial relations. This study contributes further to the debate on devolved management initiatives and workplace union activity by identifying the importance of the type of management style employed by local managers and how they utilise their 'regulated autonomy', (Hoggett 1991:251). By taking a unitarist management approach, Parkville's headteacher failed to consider the pluralist nature of the employment relationship; hence a power struggle developed between the teachers and the headteacher as both parties contested the economic and symbolic power resources (Bradley 1999:34) in the school. The headteacher endeavoured to utilise his positional power (Bradley 1999:34) in implementing his management decisions, however, the teachers attempted to counteract this through their collective power (1999:34) and a breakdown in industrial relations ensued.

In contrast, Parkville's acting head, by combining both unitarist and pluralist approaches to management, was able to harness the support of the teachers during the closing phase of the school. Clearly, and importantly, the two managers were working within both similar and different structural constraints; what actions the acting head might have taken if faced with the budget problems and pressures of the headteacher is not possible to ascertain. Nevertheless, the case clearly identifies that new managerialism can take different forms, depending on the way in which the devolved management initiatives are implemented; the way in which managers utilise their 'regulated autonomy' (Hoggett 1991:251). The case study ascertains a connection between the new managerial style employed by public sector managers and the level and nature of industrial relations activity at the local workplace level.

#### *Trade union organisation and Parkville*

A review of the published literature also identified the important role played by local trade union activists in sustaining collective action in the workplace (Calveley and Healy 2000; Darlington 1994; 1998; 1999; Fosh and Cohen 1990; Fosh 1993); further, there is an apparent neglect of studies considering the influence that political factions have in trade unions and the ability of the former to question trade union

bureaucracy. The case study of Parkville makes a significant contribution to both these areas of debate.

It was apparent from the case study that although the official local union representative was not particularly active in the school, the collective resistance of the teachers to the management initiatives of appraisal, redundancy and competency procedures was sustained; this was partly due to the motivation of one particular teacher who, as an 'opinion-leader' (Batstone *et al.* 1977:xiv), was willing to openly vocalise his views and support other members of staff in opposition to management. In this respect the teacher became the local leader in the school, eventually regaining the mantle of union representative; Parkville provides strong evidence of the importance of local leadership in maintaining union interest and sustaining collective action in the workplace.

Unequivocally, this teacher took his politics into the workplace. A major influence on his union activity was, as a member of the SWP, his left-wing political ideology; not only would solidaristic collectivism be of paramount importance, the education of working class children would also be at the forefront of his trade union agenda. As a revolutionary socialist, he unionises not only to advance the fight against capitalism through the building of networks at the workplace level (Gall 1998a) but to ensure an input by teachers to the educational policy of governments; to this end he is willing to openly vocalise his views and resist government and management strategies which would inhibit either of these aims.

Not only was the local union representative a SWP member, so too was the union's area negotiating secretary; both were resolute in their opinion that their political activism influenced their trade union activism. This was also perceived to be the case by the teachers, headteacher, governors, LEA and full-time union official, all of whom were of the opinion that politics influenced the actions of the local trade union representatives. Negotiations between the local representatives and the headteacher, governors and LEA with regard to the closing of the school and redundancy

procedures took place within the structures of a political ideology which views these issues as a capitalist attack on labour - and in the case of Parkville, on working class children. Whilst not all the teachers agreed with the politics of the local union representative, they recognised the importance of his willingness to voice their concerns during the struggle with management, especially during the latter period of the school when they were particularly insecure and vulnerable.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that although the motivations of the political activist were based on his left-wing ideologies, the key areas of concern for him and the other teachers, were mainstream industrial relations issues associated with the conventional struggle for control which characterises workplace industrial relations, as discussed in the introduction to the thesis.

The case study makes a considerable contribution to the debate surrounding political and trade union activism; the nature of the research was such that the notion of a link between political and trade union activism was not simply an impression gained by the researcher, it was manifest throughout the study. Both local union representatives willingly discussed their political beliefs and confirmed the inter-relationship between these and their trade union activities.

The case study clearly shows how a perception can develop of a link between politics, collective action and militancy. Whilst the SWP members in the school were not averse to being linked with the term 'militant' (as this conforms to their revolutionary socialism), many of the teachers were. By acting collectively in defence of their colleagues and their school, Parkville teachers earned a reputation for being militant; the case study demonstrates how acting collectively can be incorrectly perceived as having political connotations. Parkville also identifies how 'militancy' can be exaggerated and used - in this case by the headteacher and the LEA - to justify actions and to influence parties external to the workplace. The headteacher blamed the 'militant' teachers for the discordance within the school, whilst the LEA promoted the notion of 'militancy' when justifying Parkville's closure to the parents, press and,

possibly, the government; thus, the 'agitator theory' (Darlington 2000) was utilised as a scapegoat for management decisions.

The empirical research also contributes to the debate surrounding the notion of trade unionism being at odds with professionalism. The teachers at Parkville acted collectively not only for instrumental collective reasons but also in an attempt to maintain the provision of education for the children they taught - they unionised to *be* professional. This is reinforced by the fact that the teachers - even those who were resolute in refuting the term 'militant' - saw the need for collective action both as a means of combating what they saw as an unfounded attack on them as professionals, and in an attempt to close down a school which they felt was serving that particular community; the idea of trade union membership was not at odds with their professionalism, thus helping to explain why the teacher unions prepared to utilise industrial action are also the more popular with teachers.

The case study highlights the bureaucratic nature of trade union organisation and the complex and dynamic relationship that exists between trade unions and their members. The teachers at Parkville believed that the regional and national union, being influenced by the political climate at the time, had done too little too late to save their school and their jobs and had not listened to the rank and file membership; views supported by the local and area representatives. Hyman suggests that '[I]f unions fail to articulate seriously their members' grievances and aspirations the eventual response is either the development of internal challenges to the leadership, membership apathy and organisational disintegration, or the emergence of rival channels for the expression of workers' discontents' (1975:200); at Parkville, the local representatives and rank and file members challenged the actions of the union officials.

The published literature suggests that challenging union officials is important in the interests of trade union democracy as there may be a disparity of interests between union officials and union members (Heery and Fosh 1990:20; McIlroy 1995:158);

although the rank and file members in Parkville expressed their dissatisfaction with the regional and national union, it was their local union representatives who vocalised these concerns. In line with Marxist tradition (Kelly 1988:147), these SWP members were prepared to question the union leaders, thus demonstrating the importance of political factions to trade union organisation. Irrespective of the representations made by the teachers and the local and area union representatives, however, the evidence from the case points to a tardiness on behalf of the union in instigating an indicative ballot for industrial action; had regional union support been more forthcoming then the case may have had a different outcome, Parkville teachers may not have been made redundant.

The situation at Parkville highlights the complex inter-relationship between representative democracy and union bureaucracy; it demonstrates how procedural practices instigated within the union organisation (in this case ballots for industrial action) can place limits on the representative democracy of the union. The teachers at Parkville (and their local representatives) firmly believed that teachers in the area would have supported them had the union expedited action. The case of Parkville questions whether the teachers were viewed by the regional, and ultimately the national union officials as a minority group for which full blown industrial action would have been too costly to sanction - both financially and politically.

Whilst the case study demonstrates how a major contributing condition for union renewal, i.e., devolved management to the local level, was in place in Parkville and that, as Fairbrother (1994a; 1996; 2000a) and Fosh (1993) argue, this increased workplace industrial relations activity in the school, the contribution made by this thesis to the union renewal debate is limited. Clearly, as permanent staff in Parkville were gradually replaced by supply teachers, many of whom were non-unionised, and union density at Parkville declined, renewal in a numerical sense was not possible. Notwithstanding this, the case study shows how the regional union failed to capitalise on conditions in the school which may have promoted renewal both in that school.

and indeed other schools in that area; the actions, or perceived lack of action, by the unions at regional level arguably plays an important part in union renewal.

Although it is unlikely that, in the highly unionised teaching profession, the actions of the NUT officials would affect the propensity of the teachers to unionise generally, it is possible that some would consider leaving the NUT to join one of the other teaching unions.

### *Policy implications*

Although it is clearly difficult to make generalisations with respect to Parkville, and indeed the thesis does not claim to attempt this, the thesis has identified a number of policy implications arising from the case study, both for the government and trade unions.

Undoubtedly, the marketisation and commercialisation of schooling has to be questioned. By labelling Parkville a ‘failing’ school, existing problems became both amplified and entrenched; a number of children and teachers left the school. As the school roll decreased, places were filled by transient pupils and those excluded from other schools; Parkville’s lowly position in the league tables and pupil behavioural problems were exacerbated, thus turning it into a school seen by parents to be undesirable. Both pupils and staff were stigmatised by the ‘failing’ classification; situations arose where children resorted to violence to ‘protect’ the name of their school and staff were blamed for its problems. Although the Secretary of State for Education has since revoked his policy of ‘naming and shaming’ schools, the system of identifying ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools, and by association ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teachers, should also be revisited. The case of Parkville clearly demonstrates that the welfare and education of children goes far beyond national examination results and that parental ‘choice’ is limited to parents both able and willing to exercise it.

Linked to this is the government’s ‘Fresh Start’ initiative; as discussed in the Postscript (following), the principal of the new school resigned his position within a



year of his appointment; he was not alone in taking such action - three headteachers of 'Fresh Start' schools resigned in quick succession. The need for an injection of cash into schools such as Parkville cannot be questioned, however, the processes involved in the 'Fresh Start' initiative can be, particularly in this case where, despite the massive injection of capital and appointment of a 'Superhead', the new school was also labelled as 'failing' (see Postscript).

Cost cutting was a major factor contributing to the inability of Parkville's headteacher to 'turn around' the sinking school; had he the financial and political resources of the new principal he may have succeeded, and therefore a complete 'Fresh Start' as in the closing and re-opening of the school was, perhaps, a somewhat over reaction. The redundancy procedures, introduced in direct response to budget limitations and LEA and centralised government pressures, contributed significantly to the breakdown in management/staff relations; the research suggests that an injection of cash into Parkville, similar to that given to the new school, would have resulted in a greater chance of success for the headteacher and more harmonious industrial relations in the school.

It is also highly possible that the new school would have had a greater chance of immediate success had there been greater foresight and planning; children were 'sold' the apparition of a 'new' school which would differ considerably from their old one. When the promise of the new school which, due to the tight timing of the project was by no means finished, failed to meet the expectations of the pupils, their response was negative and unruliness ensued (see Postscript).

The policy of not guaranteeing Parkville teachers employment in the new school succeeded in alienating a number of experienced staff who refrained from applying for jobs, therefore reducing continuity for the pupils. Arguably, a less painful and more peaceful transition for the children, combined with the experience that Parkville staff could bring to such a school, would have reduced some of the problems since experienced by management, staff and pupils in the new school.

There are clear policy issues here for the government. For the Parkville pupils and staff a large injection of cash to pay for more teachers and building repairs would have been a positive step; a better working and learning environment could have been achieved without the uncertainty, lack of continuity and stress that the 'Fresh Start' initiative promoted. By implication, 'Fresh Start' suggests that the teachers and pupils in the old school have 'failed'; by not considering the ramifications of such emotive actions, the government not only fails teachers as their employees, but, more importantly, they fail the children whose education suffers as a direct result of the policies. The 'Fresh Start' policy should be re-considered in the light of the experiences of those involved in the closing of Parkville.

From a trade union point of view, there are also policy issues. Parkville demonstrates the important role of local union leaders in workplace activity; union officials must recognise and utilise this activism to the advantage of the union. In order to retain the support and activity of local leaders, it is necessary for union officials to avoid an appearance of elitism and listen to the rank and file members. In this case, clearly the union officials felt that earlier action against redundancies was inappropriate; the research suggests that threat of action may have been enough to influence decisions made with respect to redundancies in the school. Notwithstanding this, the union officials failed to convey their reasons for the delay in balloting members, or to convince the members that their actions were just, thus alienating the rank and file members in the school and leaving the representative democracy of the union to be challenged. The cavalier approach adopted by the union may well have lost it members to other teaching unions; the NUT executive should revisit their approach to consulting with their members and local union activists who have a feel for the situation in the workplace.

The National Executives of trade unions should not shy away from the idea of political factions within their organisation; in Parkville's case, the NUT Regional Secretary saw these as having a negative, rather than positive, effect in the union. A

union executive committee confident that they are representing the views of the majority of their members has nothing to fear from factions; challenges should be welcomed as they allow the union officials to both reflect upon and justify their actions and therefore policies designed to alienate factions are negative.

Importantly, the case of Parkville clearly identifies how political activists are able - and willing - to vocalise the concern of the local rank and file members; they are not averse to being seen to challenge management decisions, regardless of whether this may place them, personally, in a vulnerable position (as was the case with Parkville's representative when he was not offered a job in the new school). These activists, through their enthusiasm, are able to harness the discontent of the workforce to a common cause and are arguably, therefore, an important factor in sustaining union resilience, or indeed renewal. Union officials should recognise the importance of political activism to trade union activism. Hyman suggests 'there is some basis for the minority of workers who *do* possess such a consciousness [of common working-class interests] to influence their fellows, for the revolutionary organisation to interact with rank-and-file militancy' (1975:202 author's own emphasis) and to this end, trade unions should have policies not of alienating and criticising political factions but of harnessing their enthusiasm.

### *Concluding comments*

The 'story' of Parkville has been a fruitful and interesting research journey. It gave insight into the challenges of gaining access to the research subject, but also identified how the very nature of access is complex and complicated. Accessing the school via the headteacher had an initial limiting effect on the willingness of the teachers to discuss their experiences, thus highlighting the dangers of, particularly for industrial relations research, the researcher being perceived as having a management 'agenda'. Nevertheless, this helped to identify the tensions that existed in the school between the headteacher and the staff; also, once the teachers' trust was gained, they were possibly willing to discuss their feelings more openly with someone whom they perhaps felt 'knew what the headteacher was like'.

Although Parkville has closed, there is scope for further research as the new school also has industrial relations problems (see Postscript); it would be interesting, and useful, to investigate the various concepts identified above in this 'Fresh Start' school.

The research could be built upon by conducting a similar study in another 'failing' school; a further dimension would be added to the findings if research was undertaken in a 'good' or 'average' school, thus allowing for a consideration of the effect of new managerialism on workplace industrial relations in a perhaps less politically (small 'p') emotive context.

The case of Parkville cannot be taken as a generalisation of workplace industrial relations in schools, or indeed in 'failing' schools. What it has done, however, is given an important insight into the working lives and conditions of teachers and managers within this context. It clearly identifies inherent tensions between centralised government control and decentralised management autonomy; how, in the search for the rhetorical economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the commercialisation and marketisation of the education sector can, and does, negatively effect both the education of children and the employment relationships within schools. In short, Parkville has provided a profound observation into workplace industrial relations in this 'failing' school.

# Postscript

**£70,000  
on offer  
to heads**

**A TOMORROW'S  
WORLD SCHOOL**

**'We'll hold maths lessons  
in Turkish if we need to'**

**The superhead tackles  
his toughest mission**

**Schools fresh start goes stale**

**How £70,000 superhead's  
school dream turned sour**

## **Parkville: the postscript**

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Although the research case study, as an investigation of workplace industrial relations in that particular setting, ends with the closing of Parkville, it is not possible to simply divorce the old school from the new 'Parkville Specialist School'<sup>93</sup>; as the foregoing chapters have shown, many of the developments in Parkville were shaped by the LEA's decision to open the new school. This chapter will, by drawing on both primary and secondary research, conclude the story of Parkville and describe 'what happened next'<sup>94</sup>.

### **Parkville becomes Parkville Specialist School (PSS)**

As stated earlier, the collective resistance of the Parkville teachers did not prevent the school from closing at the end of the Summer term 1999; it was re-opened the following term as a new 'specialist' school. The principal of the new school was recruited amidst media hype surrounding the appointment of 'superheads' (Rafferty 1998), headteachers being paid a salary of £70,000 in order to improve 'failing' schools; the new principal fell into this category.

The idea of recruiting 'superheads' is at the centre of New Labour's plans to 'transform the teaching profession' (Bright 1998:9) and to 'strengthen school leadership' (Blunkett 1998:5) and embodies the culture of new managerialism in the world of education. In accordance with this, the chair of education from one LEA which advertised two 'superhead' posts, argued that 'offering good money is a good way to get quality candidates. Islington has found itself at the bottom of the league tables, but once we have recruited in these schools, we are confident that we will have

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<sup>93</sup> A pseudonym

<sup>94</sup> As stated in the Methodology Chapter, in order to put the new school into context, the Principal was interviewed during the course of the case study; the teachers, senior management and governors were also asked about (or in some cases commented upon un-asked) the new school, as was the LEA; their views have all been drawn upon in this chapter. However, the fieldwork as such ceased with the closing of Parkville (although dialogue has been maintained with the acting head) and therefore the

good heads in all of them and will begin to move up the tables' (Rafferty 1998), thus conflating the skills of a good headteacher with a high salary. The extra money for the Superheads' salaries was expected to come from school budgets; this is of ironic import to Parkville, a school where industrial relations problems emanated from the need to cut staff to reduce teacher salary costs.

The advertisement for the post of Principal for PSS sought a person with 'entrepreneurial' skills whilst the selection criteria cited a need for 'successful leadership and management experience, commitment to excellence, strong consultative and negotiating skills, ability to plan strategically, motivate and develop the effectiveness of staff, and the ability to deploy human, financial and material resources'. Such language distances headteachers even further from their traditional role of 'first amongst equals' than Ironside and Seifert suggest when they describe them as 'human resource managers and budget resource allocators' (1995:244) and clearly identifies them as strategic managers not unlike managing directors of business enterprises.

This was reinforced by the principal of PSS who clearly related to the notion of being a business manager:

'I wouldn't regard myself as a teacher, no. I'm a manager running a business which has probably a turnover of two and a half, three million pounds a year. The business is education. The business is motivation, erm, the business is creating a working environment for my employees, teachers, which gets the best out of them because the best out of them means an improvement in the service to the clients, to the people who use the service, students, parents etc.' (principal)

He believed that entrepreneurial skills were essential in managing a school.

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data informing developments in the new school is secondary, drawn from media reports (television, radio and press) and conversations with ex-Parkville management and staff.



Also of ironic relevance to Parkville is the injection of cash given to Fresh Start schools, PSS included. The teachers at Parkville had long argued that cost cutting was not the answer to the school's problems and that it needed more, rather than fewer, resources. With the help of the local LEA, the Government and money raised through private enterprise, there was to be, over the next five years, approximately £12m<sup>95</sup> invested in the school. The school was also to become a part of an Education Action Zone.

Although the new school was opening on the site of the old one, unlike the building work that had taken place at Parkville over the years, alterations to the school were more than cosmetic. As Parkville closed, much of the furniture was discarded with new furniture installed in its stead. The new school was to be greatly refurbished with money spent on a new entrance area, kitchen and canteen which was to be opened to the public during the day;<sup>96</sup> there was also an estimated spend of £75,000 on upgraded toilets (one teacher had said that the condition of these facilities would prohibit her from having her child attend Parkville - fieldnotes).

As a community school, PSS was to be open from 7.30 a.m. until 9.00 p.m. during the week (with lessons finishing at 1.30 PM on Fridays for staff training) and also open at weekends. Such flexible schooling, however, requires a flexible teaching staff and this was emphasised in the advertisements for teachers which also specified that they would be required to work a 40-week academic year.

The idea of an 'open all hours' culture was to encourage parents, as well as their children, to become a part of the school, as the principal explains:

'my vision for the school is a learning centre which is open and accessible to all learners irrespective of age erm, it provides opportunities, it

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<sup>95</sup> This is an approximate figure provided by the acting head of Parkville. The exact breakdown of this figure was difficult to ascertain as it was to be partly raised by the principal through private finance, although he too suggested figures accumulating to circa £12m; it was also a figure popularly quoted in the press.

<sup>96</sup> One of the aims for PSS was that it should be an all-inclusive community school.

encourages, it enables people to step further than they thought ever possible ... This school is successful if the parents of the kids come here and learn because when kids see them learning, they will learn. Kids are members of society, of community. And if the parents respect education then the kids will do the same. If the kids find that parents read at home etceteras, etceteras, then the kids will do the same. It is just a mirror' (principal)

Like the former headteacher of Parkville, his vision for working class children was also strong and clear:

'I do not believe that kids in [this LEA] are not as bright as other kids, I do not believe that kids from working class or refugee families are less bright than other kids. It just isn't true! ... I would actually argue that refugee children have a much broader and wider experience than most of our kids who haven't had that experience ... Our way of assessing suitability is based on very functional defined ways of reading scores and things like that. If I went to a foreign country and was asked to do a reading test, I wouldn't do very well and I know I'm very bright and should do better, so why do it with these kids who also have English as a foreign language, with the same tests we give our kids in assessing their ability? A silly idea!' (principal)

These views, which the teachers of Parkville are likely to have adhered to, identify a major flaw in school league tables constructed from examination results which help create 'quasi markets' in education (Bartlett 1993). The principal, however, was not against league tables *per se*:

'I think with the league tables the government's got the right intentions ... I think the problem ... is the way teachers use league tables ... it isn't actually about them being published, it's about our attitudes to them. I think what these teachers should say ... is that league tables are interesting, and it's worthwhile to compare, but they don't tell the whole story. The whole story is much more about where do the kids come from,

how far have they moved already over a period of time? Let's keep moving them and get a valid indicator from that, and then you can say yes, in terms of the educational achievement of kids in the school – not the academic achievement, the educational achievement – we actually have made a hell of a difference to these kids. That's what counts' (principal)

Yet again, a view that the teachers of Parkville, working with disadvantaged children and situated at the 'bottom' of the league table would probably agree with.

For the principal of PSS, the success of the school lay in the quality of the teaching provided and he expressed this in strong HRM terms:

'it doesn't matter if you are in need of money or have loads of money. The most, most important thing is having motivated people to motivate kids. It's my job to create a working environment for teachers where they are motivated, where they are positive, where they are feeling really good about what they're doing. To have a team who are working together. So that is my job' (principal)

There was much interest in the new school and the principal was interviewed by the national press and radio. The management and teachers at Parkville had been intensely scrutinised due to the 'failing' of their school; the management and teachers of PSS were to be intensely scrutinised in search of 'success'.

### **Parkville Specialist School - in search of success**

The principal of PSS was enthusiastic about the new school and, as identified above, apparently committed to the education of the children in that area. He was also well aware of his need to deliver the results required to make the school into a 'good' school, to move it up the league table. Although he suggested above that exam results were not the most important results by which children should be measured, he intended to use these to measure the success of himself and his staff in the school:

‘I’ve given myself kind of targets for years and stuff like that ... sort of how many A\* to Cs we will have, things like that’ (principal)

clearly identifying with the notion that accountability is a main facet of new managerialism in the public sector. The principal was well aware that the school would be publicly scrutinised; again, there was press speculation that Downing Street would be monitoring the progress of this school. When asked whether such scrutiny increased pressure on him, however, the principal categorically denied this, seeing it in a more positive light:

‘no, not at all, it’s actually positive, it’s just the opposite, it’s an enabling sort of thing, because I don’t think they can afford to let it fail. And that is true I think for the press ... we have had very positive press coverage in terms of local papers, who’ve always been against Parkville, but also in terms of national coverage’ (principal)

A similar comment with regard to press coverage was also made by a teacher in a newspaper article about the school; the report suggested that the teacher ‘suspected a high level of conspiracy’<sup>97</sup> with regards to the positive press reports. This again has ironic connotations for Parkville where the teachers also complained of publicity overload, however, in their case it was all bad. (It is interesting to note here that any mention of the old school in articles describing the new school tended to be of a negative nature.)

The LEA had identified a time-scale for the success of the school as this official demonstrates:

‘he’s got targets and he’s going to be monitored there ... I’ll be taking two measures in three years time, if that school is, has got, a reputation as somewhere people would like to go to in three years time, and the results are up around the targets we have set him, then we will continue with the school’ (LEA Official)

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<sup>97</sup> Again, in the interest of confidentiality, press articles and official documents will not be referenced.

He also voiced his opinion on the principal's position in no uncertain terms:

'we have high expectations of the head in all senses of the word ... he's put his neck on the chopping block, but he needs to. That's why he's getting paid a lot of money, at the end of the day he's got to engineer a transformation in that time ... otherwise, I mean the parents will go away'  
(LEA Official)

further identifying how the development of marketisation within the education sector can have a precarious effect on those that work in it.

The principal was also aware that he would be personally measured for success:

'I'm paid according to success ... I think they will be looking at outcomes, looking at attitudes, erm, looking at incidents throughout the school, on-site, off-site. It will be looking at actually raising funds for the school, it's all of those. Basically, the things that you would expect from a manager, erm, so the balance must be positive and you must achieve a financial stability for as long as possible ... raise more funds, and try to have a happy and satisfied workforce and a happy and satisfied client body' (principal)

again, using highly charged management language.

The principal and some of his management team were in situ in the school several months before the closing of Parkville and the opening of the new school; in effect there were two headteachers in Parkville at the same time and although the new principal was not involved with the old school, the children knew who he was and some of them found this confusing. The PSS team were provided with an office in the school which had been redecorated and re-furnished. The teachers of the old school scathingly referred to this as 'the yellow room'<sup>98</sup> and bemoaned the fact that when

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<sup>98</sup> The office was painted bright yellow; the principal believed that children respond positively to bright colours.

they wanted any improvements to the school there was never any money available, as this teacher who left the school before it closed commented:

‘... and then all of a sudden the paint’s coming out! All the repairs that we complained about for such a long time, all the dangers around the school, they’ve now been done! You know, it’s like the kids that were here before, nothing was done for them. I mean I just think it’s all unfair!’  
(teacher 17)

The resentment of Parkville staff went even deeper; when they were requested to discuss their lessons with the teachers from PSS who would be taking their jobs, the majority of them refused. They were ill-disposed to help other teachers who were basically ousting them from their jobs.

### **Parkville staff and the new school**

Of the staff from Parkville, eventually five teachers and one deputy head were employed; two were appointed to lesser positions than they had applied for (and one of these left in the following Spring); one was a very late appointment, having been rejected initially. As discussed in earlier chapters, an art teacher failed to secure a place (she was told she came second at the interview) as did the union representative.

A number of Parkville’s teachers did not apply to the new school and there were various reasons for this. Firstly some chose to take early retirement because they felt drained by working in such a school:

‘I’ve been told that I’m going to be made redundant ... I’ve got a feeling now that I’ve had enough of it. If I get made redundant, if I get a retirement deal ... that’s the last time you’ll see me in a classroom’  
(teacher 5)

Whilst others saw the issue as a fundamental miscarriage of justice, as this teacher explained when asked whether he would apply to the new school:

‘no definitely, very definitely not. Why should I, why should I? I’ve had enough ... I’ve got to teach, I’ve got to work, it’s the only way to live, isn’t it. No, no it’s nothing to do with teaching ... What have I got to do? Apply for my own job? Apply for some other job in the new school? Go crawling and begging to people. Would you give me a job in the situation that I have failed it? Of course you wouldn’t! ... I’ve been here a long time so the redundancy would be, you know, useful to me in that sense and ... I am a good teacher and I don’t think I’ll have much of a difficulty getting another job and if I can get a job in a school ... where they value classroom teachers who are committed to that and support them ... then that sounds like the kind of job that I want’ (teacher 3)

Whilst this teacher’s comment was commonly felt amongst the staff:

‘I think it’s been done very unfairly and I don’t think they’ve got any intention of giving anyone a job in the new school ... if they wanted to keep people then they would try and be, kind of, nicer, supportive – but it’s like we’ll get rid of this rubbish and just treat us the way that they want to’ (teacher 17)

This also fits with the media speculations, referred to in the earlier chapters, that the school was being closed in order to remove the left-wing, militant teachers in the school. The Chair of Governors of the new school had apparently also made it clear that he wanted none of the staff from Parkville in the new school, although this has not been verified with him. One newspaper article suggested that the principal of PSS ‘benefited from new personnel’.

The acting head did not apply for a job in the new school because:

‘I was given, as [the headteacher] was, the clear impression that they wanted someone new, a Fresh Start school, a new pair of people, a new senior management team ... I think the job, even at seventy thousand a year, looked pretty impossible, erm, they wanted someone who could go into the City of London and get money, great entrepreneurial skills ...

they wanted someone who would have this new and dynamic curriculum which has this [specialism] focus and they wanted someone who would go out to primary schools and sell it to get thousands of kids to come in – all at the same time! I just didn't fancy it – it wouldn't have been me anyway' (acting head)

again identifying the emphasis being placed on hard managerial skills. With respect to the appointment of the new principal, however, the acting head thought:

'they might have found the right man, because he is pretty good but he's going to find it really difficult' (acting head)

Both of these comments, as will be discussed further below, showed a great deal of foresight.

The children from Parkville entered the new school with few of the teachers from the old school. As noted above, it is speculation as to whether this was a management strategy employed by the principal and governors of the new school, although the union representative clearly felt this to be the case:

'if there was a guarantee of employment some of the good teachers that have left might not have left, er, and there would have been more continuity for the kids. As it is they've put the kids through quite a lot of disruption ... I think they had a political point to prove ... by not employing the teachers [they] were implicating that the fault of what was wrong with Parkville lay on the shoulders of the staff in the school, some of the staff, rather than themselves' (teacher 8)

Nevertheless, whether it was intentional or not, lack of continuity was likely to be a major issue in the new school. The acting head of Parkville suggested that 'what our kids need ... is the basic stability of people'. It was clear that behaviour management of the children would be of primary significance for the teachers of the new school.



## **Parkville Specialist School – what price success?**

Despite the success in recruiting new pupils to the school (year seven intake was over-subscribed for the first time in many years) and the high profile of some of the members of the governing body (the Chairman was closely connected to the Prime Minister) PSS, which was formerly opened by the Secretary of State for Education was beset with problems from the start<sup>99</sup>.

To begin with, it opened late and the building work and classroom refurbishment was unfinished. Some classrooms had no white boards and the science laboratory's were not completed. Children arrived to find their expectation of an exciting new school in tatters as the vision which had been put forward was unfulfilled. During the 'closing phase' of Parkville, the management and staff had repeatedly warned that this would be the case; they had endeavoured to play down to the pupils the vision of 'millions' of pounds being spent on the school.

Apart from the late start, the school's electronic registering equipment failed to work and when this was remedied some of the equipment was stolen; it was not possible to monitor the coming and going of children (Parkville had suffered from high truancy and poor punctuality rates). The new furniture bought for the classrooms was unsuitable and had to be replaced.

Many of the new teachers were young and inexperienced and unlike the teachers from the old school had not had the time to build up a rapport with the students. As had been warned by the management and staff of Parkville, lack of continuity was a problem; the acting head commented that the staff from Parkville knew the 'troublemakers' and had therefore been able to spot trouble brewing and stop it before it got out of hand. Unfortunately the new staff were unable to do this; an argument in

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<sup>99</sup> It is important to note here that Parkville Specialist School was not part of the remit of the researcher and all information in this section is, therefore, not primary research. Information has been obtained from either press reports or subsequent conversations with ex-Parkville staff and management.

the school playground turned into a riot. Security guards were posted at the school entrance.

Plans to sell part of the school grounds (a large concrete playground behind the school) came to nothing when local residents objected, resulting in one source of money being cut off. When the principal excluded unruly pupils his decision was over-ruled by the governing body, thus undermining his authority.

As the academic year progressed teachers and pupils alike left the school; even the Chair of Governors resigned his post. There was dis-harmony within the staffroom and between the principal and one of his senior members of staff. Another headteacher was appointed as a 'trouble-shooter' to help sort out the school's problems. The vision that the principal so clearly had when he took on the task of re-inventing Parkville was failing to come into fruition and before the end of the academic year he resigned his post. This time, the 'militant left-wing teachers' could not be blamed.

Following his resignation, the Secretary of State for Education promised even more money for the school; it was evident that as the principal had commented (above) the school would not be allowed to fail. Unlike the headteacher of Parkville, the principal of PSS had access to enormous financial and political resources but was also unable to turn the school into a success. Perhaps it was this thirst for success that became a pressure too great to bear as his resignation came only days after the Secretary of State for Education warned that schools failing to achieve government set targets would be closed (Carvel 2000). Sadly, only weeks following the principal's resignation, PSS also failed its Ofsted inspection.

### **Why did Parkville close?**

If, as it appears from the above, staff continuity was an important issue within the school, and as it was clearly recognised that the school needed a vast injection of cash

then the question has to be asked why the resources were not put into Parkville in order to save the old school from closing. This teacher was very angry about it all:

‘all the things they’ve decided to do now, put all this money in, they could do that and keep the school as it is. You know, change the name, get a new head, why did they need to do that? Why did they need to do all that and make all the teachers redundant? ... we get money for, you know, painting the school and doing it up, new technology and things like that. The money’s there they should give us it anyway. So it’s just – you know it’s caused distress, it’s causing distress to a lot of teachers and it’s also going to destabilise the kids, you know, especially the ones that are in year ten in the middle of GCSE years, I think it’s terrible for them’  
(teacher 11)

The question constantly asked by the teachers throughout the time of the research was why was Parkville the school chosen for closure?; as discussed in earlier chapters, many staff felt that it was a political decision to close the school down.

The LEA official answered the question thus:

‘there are actually surplus places in the area of Parkville but we had to look at the question of the impact of closing the school as a means of getting out of special measures, erm, and the question ... is now asked ... by the Secretary of State who wants to know if you’re not going to close it why not? Which kind of gives you the lead as to which way you’re supposed to be going, really’ (laughs) (LEA Official)

to some extent compounding the political conspiracy theory. Nevertheless he also suggested that the management and staff were to take some of the blame:

‘we were looking very hard at the school itself, we had our inspectorate all over the school, erm, working, sitting in meetings, listening to what staff were saying, listening to what management in the school were saying and trying to see what we thought the prospects were of the school to, you know, turn itself round, with outside help. And we came pretty.

erm, quickly, to the conclusion that we didn't think that was a, a serious prospect, we couldn't seriously see there was enough of a, a common alliance ... we couldn't see that the people were really singing from the same hymn sheet and it's a mighty task if you're not all pulling in the same direction ... so we came to the conclusion that there weren't many ways forward with the existing school' (LEA Official)

When asked whether the LEA had expected the school to fail the HMI inspection (many teachers felt that they had influenced the school's failure) one governor had this to say:

'Yes, yes, I do, yes. Erm, I think that some people within it did [want the school to fail] yes, yes. Erm ... I mean particularly my dealings with the erm, former Chief Education Officer, where I felt, I often felt I was playing some kind of guessing game, effectively, where she would say "oh we're very keen to do whatever we can to help" and I would say "well what about such and such" – "oh well, no, that's not appropriate for the authority to do, that's up to the school to do, but we're happy to do anything we can to help"- "erm, OK, so what would you suggest?" – "Oh well I don't know, you tell us" and it was just kind of everything you came up with was not something they could do and there was a level of stone walling. That said, you know, I don't think there was ever a conscious decision, you know, that, that they wanted it to fail and be closed ... but I also think they weren't particularly surprised, weren't particularly disappointed and weren't particularly going to pull their finger out' (Governor 2)

This also raises the question as to whether, without additional resources, the original headteacher of Parkville had realistically been in a position to improve the standards in the school to a level which would have been termed 'acceptable' by the government and the LEA. One member of staff thought not:

'I think they [the LEA] could have made more of an effort. I think they probably decided that they would give it another chance with another

head, erm, but not make much effort, so sink or swim. But they weren't going to chuck money, good money after bad' (teacher 4)

as did one of the governors:

'[he] worked very hard. He did the best he could in the circumstances, but he was on a no-hoper, he must have known that' (Governor 1)

whilst the LEA Official commented thus:

'it was always a mighty task ... I think, in retrospect, and I think probably [he] wouldn't disagree with this, erm ... at this, this difficult point, I think to take a school in as parlous a state as Parkville, no matter how talented a human being you are, and turn it round when it's your first experience of headship is a very tall order. I, I think one lesson this authority's learned, the hard way, is that it would be an exceptionally unusual headteacher, who, who hadn't got the experience of a successful headship who can take on a Special Measures school and turn it round ... and in fact all the heads of Special Measures schools are experienced headteachers, they haven't got any deputies who have been promoted to their first position. So I think that's a lesson that we learnt and the fact of the matter is it was always going to be an exceptionally difficult task. I mean, he did come before it was in Special Measures, but it was always going to be exceptionally hard, I mean, it had the deadly combination, low esteem, low popularity, low achievement, poor behaviour' (LEA Official)

The LEA may have learned by the mistake of appointing an inexperienced headteacher, however as is evidenced by the resignation of the principal of the new school, the appointment of an experienced individual was no more successful. It appears that the government's strive for 'success' within schools carries great personal cost to those who work in these schools.

## **Post-postscript**

Although in its final year Parkville was able to boast of an increase in A\*-C GCSE results from 10% to 17%, this did not show in the published league tables as the school 'disappeared' with PSS showing as 'not applicable'. The acting head suggested that the school would have no longer been bottom of the tables for that LEA.

The LEA itself received a very poor Ofsted report in the year that Parkville closed. It was particularly criticised for its level of support to 'schools in special measures or with seriousness weaknesses' which was seen to be 'almost the lowest level for any LEA surveyed'. The report also identified that the LEA was 'generally unable to identify schools which are likely to run into difficulties' and that when they did the help provided was 'late and inadequate'. The authority itself is, therefore, not without blame for the 'failure' of the school.

A few weeks following the resignation of the principal of Parkville Specialist School the school remained closed for a further two weeks following the end of a school holiday. This was in order for 'essential staff retraining' as the governors were 'concerned about an alleged breakdown of management systems' following problems with 'timetabling, curriculum, disciplinary systems and attendance-monitoring procedures' under the previous principal (newspaper report); it did not take long for 'blame' to begin to be apportioned. The Chair of Governors appealed for more financial help because the school had 'run up a six-figure budget deficit'.

The NUT had established a presence in Parkville Specialist School and was actively recruiting. When the Chairman of the Board of Governors resigned, his replacement was an ex-NUT official and SWP member.

The final irony is that the teacher (the local union representative) taking his case to the Employment Tribunal was requested by the LEA to drop his case; he agreed to do this on the understanding that he was given a job in the new school. This request was

adhered to and consequently the two SWP members in Parkville - the 'villains of the piece' - both had jobs in the new school.

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# Appendices

### Schools in 'Special Measures'

In deciding whether a school requires 'special measures' and is therefore a 'failing school', the Ofsted inspectors consider:

- Whether or not a school is failing, or likely to fail, to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and thus requires special measures;
- Whether or not the school, although providing an acceptable standard of education, nevertheless has serious weakness, in one or more areas of its work;
- Whether or not the school, although not identified as having serious weaknesses, is judged to be underachieving;

A school found to be underperforming or underachieving is put under special measures and the management of the school are required to produce an action plan for improvement. The school is continuously monitored by HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) until it either attains a satisfactory standard or the Secretary of State for Education and Employment decides it should close (source: Ofsted 2000).

## Teacher Organisations

The following is a brief analysis of the five teacher organisations other than the NUT.

### 1. *The Secondary Heads Association (SHA) and The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)*

Ironside and Seifert report that 99% of head teachers are unionised making them ‘the most highly organised employees in Britain’ (Ironside and Seifert 1995:219). Due to the high union density of the teaching profession and the fact that head teachers are promoted from classroom teachers, most head teachers have a history of trade union membership. As a consequence, head teacher unions have to balance the incorporation of managerialist policies with their ideological beliefs of the teaching profession. Of unionised headteachers NAHT is the predominant union with 76 percent of total membership, mostly in the primary sector (85 percent, compared to 30 percent of secondary headteachers). SHA has a much smaller overall membership of 9 percent of total union membership, concentrated in secondary schools (59 percent); a ‘significant minority’ (12 percent) of headteachers have remained in the NUT (8 percent) or NASUWT (3 percent) (Ironside and Seifert 1995:219).

SHA represents head teachers and deputy head teachers in secondary schools and was created when the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act made it illegal to exclude members on the basis of gender. The union is a merger of the Association of Head Mistresses, founded in 1874 and the Incorporated Association of Head Masters (IAHM), founded in 1891 (Ironside and Seifert 1995:97); it has grown over the last decade due to the number of deputy heads joining (Ironside and Seifert 1995:114).

Interestingly, this is the only teacher union which recruits only within the state sector and has ‘grown steadily’ over the last decade; 30 percent of the members are women (Ironside and Seifert 1995:114-115). It retains a ‘formal commitment to trade unionism’ (Ironside and Seifert 1995:114-115), with the members’ yearbook advising that they should accept industrial action by their staff and that they ‘should take no action which will have the effect of mitigating the action of the other association’ (SHA Members’ Yearbook 1993-4, quoted in (Ironside and Seifert 1995:115); in this way, SHA displays some of Blackburn’s elements of unionateness.

NAHT formed in 1897, represents mainly primary head teachers, along with deputy head teachers and teachers paid on deputies salaries (Ironside and Seifert 1995:89); membership is equally divided between men and women, although women constitute only six of the thirty-three National Council members (Ironside and Seifert 1995:112-113). Ironside and Seifert suggest that due to its position of representing the majority of headteachers ‘upon whom has fallen the main responsibility of making LMS work’ this union has ‘a high profile in the education world’ (1995:113); they also suggest that NAHT, made up from members promoted from classroom teacher ‘have some difficulty with its role as a union for managers’ and that the ‘managerial mantle is

worn with some misgivings'. To this end, the union attempts to 'be the voice of reason and experienced leadership' whilst considering the problems facing head teachers as employees (1995:113).

## 2. *The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)*

This union was previously the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, formed from an amalgamation of the Association of Assistant Mistresses (AAM), established in 1884 and the Assistant Masters Association (AMA) founded in 1891. Like SHA, the merger was expedited due to the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act; it became the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) in 1993.

ATL recruits purely from classroom teachers (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:89) and is the only teacher union to exclude head teachers and deputy head teachers. It is described as a 'moderate' union which assumes an 'identity of interest between employer and employee' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:97), giving it a 'managerial-professional orientation' (1995:109) or a 'business' union appearance (1997:123).

ATL scores lowly on Blackburn's unionateness scale as it is not affiliated to the TUC, does not have a strong belief in collective bargaining and believes that its members have the right to distance themselves from industrial action should this ever be called for, although this is unlikely as they actively avoid taking part in disputes. As it does not act in the ways of traditional trade unions, Ironsides and Seifert class ATL as a 'company union' (1995:88), a union which 'abandons the use of militant strike tactics and radical policies' and which 'cooperates' with management (Carlson 1987:298). ATL gains membership from its reluctance to take industrial action, teachers who do not agree with the 'left leanings' of other unions and the fact that it is seen to be 'deeply concerned with professional matters' (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:110). This again highlights the tension that exists amongst teachers with respect to unionism and professionalism.

## 3. *The Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)*

This is a relatively new union, founded in 1970 and open to all teachers across all grades. Its most defining feature is its total opposition to industrial action in any form (Aldrich 1996:71) and this accounted for its accelerated growth from 13,000 in 1979 to 40,000 in 1985 (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:98), at the start of 'the longest and most damaging confrontation between teachers and the state ever yet experienced' (Simon 1991:511). PAT was, unsurprisingly, endorsed by the Conservative government in 1981 by being given a seat on Burnham (Winchester 1983). However, despite Beaumont arguing that public sector management has 'accorded increased representation and status to "non-militant" unions' (and in this they liken PAT to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers) (1992:81), Ironsides and Seifert suggest that its recognition by LEAs is not universal (1995:98), perhaps emphasising how a union can be negated by the unwillingness of its members to act collectively.

Ironsides and Seifert describe PAT as an 'extreme version of company unionism' having a 'pro-managerial stance' and taking a 'moral high ground' with regards to the



education of children (1995:111); PAT would, under no circumstances, be classified as a union under Blackburn's model.

#### 4. *The National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)*

NASUWT is the closest rival to the NUT in terms of size and political influence. Another union formed as a result of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, it is an amalgamation of the National Association of Schoolmasters (NAS) founded in 1922 and the Union of Women Teachers (UWT) founded in 1964 (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:104). The history of NASUWT lies in the origins and growth of NAS.

NAS, a splinter group of the NUT, was an influential organisation even prior to its merger with the UWT. The break with the NUT came over the equality strategies of the NUT which a faction group of all male members opposed, thus forming the NAS (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:95; Oram 1989:26). NAS prides itself on having the 'best record for militancy' and this is a bone of contention with the NUT who have counter-argued this claim (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:96), evidencing the sectionalism and rivalry in teacher organisations.

NAS does have a history of industrial action; its members were willing to take strike action in 1961 in order to gain representation on Burnham which they achieved in 1962 (Coates 1972b:64; Winchester 1983:162). The result was a 40 percent increase in their membership (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:96) and a reputation for militancy (Coates 1972b:64).

The original intention of NAS was to 'safeguard the interests of the male career teacher' (Aldrich 1996:71) and this almost cost it affiliation with the TUC. The union argued, however, that they were not against equal pay as the UWT was supported by their legal and professional services (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:97). This spurious proof of equality was accepted by the TUC and they were granted affiliation in 1968 (Beaumont 1992:54), two years prior to the NUT; conversely, the UWT was refused affiliation in 1974 (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:97). These two instances highlight the patriarchal issues that women, as trade unionists, have faced over the decades (for a discussion on women in trade unions see Colgan and Ledwith 1996).

The Sex Discrimination Act in 1975 may have forced the hand of NAS to combine with the UWT, however, although NASUWT now has more women members than men, women are still under represented at both national executive and regional officer level (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:106). NASUWT's main policies of acting for 'career teachers' in the secondary sector and promoting pay differentials based on job descriptions (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:107) could be argued to alienate a large proportion of the female teaching population – not only those who work in the primary sector but also those with 'dual careers'<sup>100</sup> (Healy and Kraithman 1996:186),

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<sup>100</sup> See Healy and Kraithman's commentary on the different career patterns of women teachers (1996).

making it unclear why women have reportedly joined in greater numbers (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:106).

NASUWT, the second largest teacher union after the NUT (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:107), has continued along the lines of NAS (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:107) as an active union. Interestingly, whilst trade unions in general suffered membership losses during the period 1979-1996, NASUWT is one of the few whose membership levels have actually increased (Kelly 1998:41); also, it is the only teacher union which makes a political contribution (Certification 2000:Appendix 8), although it is not affiliated to the Labour party (McIlroy 1995:276). NASUWT has been described as a 'craft-professional' union (Ironsides and Seifert 1995:104) or a 'craft closed union' (Ironsides *et al.* 1997:123), i.e., a union which 'is concerned with broadening the job-control rights of individual practitioners and the occupational group as a whole' (Carlson 1987:297). NASUWT scores highly on Blackburn's scale of unionateness.

A Resource Map for Research  
(Layder, 1993:72)

Research element	Research focus
CONTEXT	<i>Macro social organization</i> Values, traditions, forms of social and economic organization and power relations. For example, legally sanctioned forms of ownership, control and distribution; interlocking directorships, state intervention. As they are implicated in the sector below.
SETTING	<i>Intermediate social organization</i> Work: Industrial, military and state bureaucracies; labour markets; hospitals; social work agencies, domestic labour; penal and mental institutions. Non-work: Social organization of leisure activities, sports and social clubs; religious and spiritual organizations.
SITUATED ACTIVITY	<i>Social activity</i> Face-to-face activity involving symbolic communication by skilled, intentional participants implicated in the above contexts and settings. Focus on emergent meanings, understandings and definitions of the situation as these affect and are affected by contexts and settings (above) and subjective dispositions of individuals (below).
SELF	<i>Self-identity and individual's social experience</i> As these are influenced by the above sectors and as they interact with the unique psychobiography of the individual. Focus on the life-career.

HISTORY

**Intensive and Extensive Research – A Summary**  
(Sayer, 1992:243)

*Problems of explanation and the aims of social science*

	INTENSIVE	EXTENSIVE
Research question	How does a process work in a particular case or small number of cases? What produces a certain change? What did the agents actually do?	What are the regularities, common patterns, distinguishing features of a population? How widely are certain characteristics or processes distributed or represented?
Relations	Substantial relations of connection	Formal relations of similarity
Type of groups studied	Causal groups	Taxonomic groups
Type of account produced	Causal explanation of the production of certain objects or events, though not necessarily representative ones	Descriptive, representative generalizations, lacking in explanatory penetration
Typical methods	Study of individual agents in their causal contexts, interactive interviews, ethnography Qualitative analysis	Large-scale survey of population or representative sample, formal questionnaires, standardized interviews Statistical analysis
Limitations	Actual concrete patterns and contingent relations are unlikely to be 'representative', 'average' or generalizable. Necessary relations discovered will exist wherever their relata are present, e.g. causal powers of objects are generalizable to other contexts as they are necessary features of these objects	Although representative of a whole population, they are unlikely to be generalizable to other populations at different times and places. Problem of ecological fallacy in making inferences about individuals. Limited explanatory power
Appropriate tests	Corroboration	Replication

Intensive and extensive research: a summary

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### Interviewed teachers

The table on the following pages provides a brief profile of those teachers interviewed, built up from the information they provided of their career histories (some teachers were more forthcoming than others); the teachers will be referred to by their related number throughout the thesis. Where possible, the length of time teaching and/or tenure at Parkville is stated. The teachers were not asked their age, however, to give the reader an indication of this an attempt has been made to put each teacher into an approximate age bracket. Clearly, teachers identified by subject and position become identifiable and this would be removed prior to any form of publication of this thesis outside of the University.

The teachers have been differentiated between different 'groups' as perceived by the researcher:

- 'core' group: these teachers sat together in the staffroom, were more willing to voice their opinions, and (most) had achieved a certain 'status' in both the staffroom and school 'hierarchy';
- 'peripheral' group: these were teachers who, although sometimes long-serving members of staff, did not appear as part of the core group; these teachers also held strong views as to what was happening in the school but tended to leave the vocalisation of such matters to the 'core' members;
- 'outsiders' group: these teachers were not part of the other groups; they were mainly the newer, part-time and temporary staff, or those who didn't agree with the attitudes of some of the 'core' members; this group included all the black teachers in the school during the research; these teachers also tended to sit together.

These typologies are purely the impression gained from the participative observation and are, therefore, by no means irrefutable; some teachers overlapped more than one group.

Teacher Number	Teacher Profile	Group
1.	Female: SPEAL (English as an Additional Language) Team Leader; teaching at Parkville for approximately three years; left at the end of the Summer 1998 term; qualified twelve years; age: 44;	Peripheral
2.	Female: French teacher; teaching four years (plus one year teaching in a school in France); joined Parkville in 1996 as a supply teacher; currently on a one-year contract; age: late twenties;	Outsider
3.	Male: Geography teacher; recently resigned from position as Head of Faculty, Humanities; teaching for nineteen years; at Parkville for eighteen years; previously trained as a psychiatric nurse (left because he had a young family and did not want to continue with shift work); age: approximately mid/late 40s;	Core / Peripheral
4.	Male, Head of Faculty, Science; teaches science; teaching twenty-four years; previously worked in research (left because the pay was poor!); joined Parkville in 1990; has a son at the school; age: approximately late 40s;	Core / Peripheral
5.	Male, Head of years 7 and 8; Science teacher; teaching twenty-eight years at Parkville; married to teacher 7; age: 50;	Core
6.	Male, Head of year 8 (jointly with teacher 7); PE teacher; awaiting early retirement at the time of the interview (left before the school closed); teaching at Parkville for seven years (left previous school because it closed down); number of teaching years unknown; age: 50;	Core
7.	Female, PE teacher and in charge of careers and work experience; teaching twenty-eight years (in the same borough) and seventeen years at Parkville; married to teacher 5; working part-time because she has been 'medically retired' due to back problems which prohibit her from teaching PE; age approximately 50;	Core
8.	Male, Head of year 11 and History teacher; teaching twenty-two years; seventeen years at Parkville (prior to that two and a half years in Manchester and two and a half years in Africa); this teacher is the union representative and a member of the SWP; age: approximately mid-40s;	Core

Teacher Number	Teacher Profile	Group
9.	Female, Head of Faculty, modern languages; Teaches (and is) Spanish; teaching for twenty-six years; (exact number of years at Parkville not known, but more than ten); this teacher was put into competency procedures and was awaiting early retirement at the time of the interview (retired at the end of the Autumn term, 1998); age: 49	Core
10.	Male, English and PE teacher; this teacher refused to be taped; (also form the same Northern city as the headteacher and deputy head); teaching for twenty-five years and at Parkville for sixteen of these; age: approximately late 40s;	Core / Peripheral
11.	Female, Head of Faculty, Expressive Arts and drama teacher; (another teacher also form the same Northern city as the headteacher and deputy head); teaching three years, all at Parkville; worked in 'the arts' previously and left to take up teaching because she was a single parent and the position was too precarious; took maternity leave during the period of the fieldwork; age: approximately late 20s/early 30s;	Outsider
12.	Female, maths teacher; teaching for four years, two of them at Parkville; another SWP member; age: approximately mid-30s;	Core
13.	Female, Head of Maths; interview un-taped (conducted during a lesson whilst the children were working); took maternity leave during the period of the fieldwork; age: 36;	Peripheral
14.	Male, Technology teacher; teaching for eight years; number of years at Parkville unknown; age: approximately mid-30s;	Peripheral
15.	Female, part-time Art teacher; began teaching in the 1960s, taught for three years and then worked for the Cambridge examination board for twenty years in Uganda and Kenya; at Parkville for seven years; this is the only teacher interviewed not in a teaching union (she is a member of an Art union); age: early 60s;	Peripheral
16.	Female, long-term supply teacher (i.e. two terms); Canadian; newly qualified (May 1998) as a History and French teacher but working as a Special Needs teacher (teaching children with learning difficulties) at Parkville from January 1999; age: approximately 23;	Outsider



Teacher Number	Teacher Profile	Group
17.	Female, Technology teacher; teaching for approximately four and a half years following the completion of an engineering course; left at the end of the Autumn 1998 term; number of years at Parkville unknown; age: approximately late 20s;	Peripheral / Outsider
18.	Female, Art teacher; teaching for three years, all at Parkville (also did teacher training at the school); age: mid-20s;	Peripheral
19.	Male, replaced teacher 1 as SPEAL Team Leader in September 1998; teaching for twenty-three years; worked 'overseas' (undefined) for twelve years; age: approximately mid/late 40s;	Peripheral / Outsider
20.	Male, part-time Music teacher, appointed in September 1998; Australian, teaching in the UK since 1984 (some prior part-time teaching in Australia); teaching two days a week at Parkville and three days at another school (where he had been put into competency procedures); became full-time at Parkville during the period of the fieldwork; age: approximately late 40s/early 50s;	Outsider
21.	Female, short-term contract teacher; former pupil of Parkville; started as a part-time supply teacher and then became full-time teacher of Religious Education in January 1999; teaching for six years; age: 39;	Outsider
22.	Male, long-term supply teacher (one year) teaching Science; Portuguese; teaching thirteen years, four in the UK; studying part-time for a Ph.D.; age: approximately late 30s;	Outsider
23.	Male, Technology teacher; at least five years teaching at Parkville; length of time in teaching not known; age: approximately early 50s;	Peripheral / Core?
24.	Female, SPEAL member; teaching for six years and at Parkville since September 1998; worked on a number of fixed-term contracts since then; age: approximately mid-20s;	Outsider

**Summary of typologies:**

Core group: teachers 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12 (3, 10)  
 Peripheral group: teachers 1, 4, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 23 (3, 10)  
 Outsider group: teachers 2, 11, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24

### Interview questions for teachers

	Questions	Prompts	Reason for question
1.	How long have you been teaching?		Background information; Identify early / late entrants;
2.	What made you decide to become a teacher?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influences?</li> </ul>	Background information; 'Significant others'; Class / gender structures;
3.	And what about your current job? Would you tell me something about it, for example what do you teach? how long have you been teaching it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you like about it?</li> <li>• Is there anything you dislike about it?</li> <li>• Why did you choose to work in this particular school?</li> </ul>	To identify experience levels; Background to reason for working in this type of school; Networks; Dual career / family constraints; Structure / agency;
4.	What do you feel that you get out of teaching?		Motivations; Career patterns – altruism etc;
5.	What is important to you in the way of job development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion?</li> <li>• Work?</li> <li>• Hours?</li> <li>• Money?</li> </ul>	What they are looking for out of their job;

6.	How did you feel when you were told that the school was to be closed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you expect it?</li> <li>• Do you agree with it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why / why not?</li> <li>- Environmental factors?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How did it make you feel as a teacher?</li> <li>• De-motivating?</li> </ul>	<p>To ascertain underlying feelings associated with being 'classified';</p> <p>To identify what affects Ofsted classification can have on a teacher's morale;</p>
7.	How has it affected your job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More difficult / more work / longer hours?</li> <li>• Loss of enthusiasm?</li> <li>• More determination?</li> </ul>	To ascertain the affects of classification on a teacher's actual job.
8.	What did you think about the action plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why?</li> <li>• How did it affect you?</li> </ul>	To identify compliance / resistance with regards to competency measures;
9.	Did you agree with how the measures were drawn up?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not, why not?</li> </ul> <p>Were you consulted about them?</p> <p>Do you think they are not necessary?</p> <p>Are they unreasonable?</p> <p>Targets too demanding / tight?</p>	<p>To understand why teachers agree or do not agree with the measures;</p> <p>Why they may not see them as appropriate;</p>

10.	Tell me about the withdrawal of goodwill. Did you agree with it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why / why not?</li> <li>• What do you think it achieved?</li> </ul>	
11.	What do you feel about the introduction of appraisal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why?</li> <li>• What about identifying career development issues?</li> </ul>	To identify whether performance measures create tensions between staff and management; if so, why they exist;
12.	Do you think that teacher performance should be monitored?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What about 'under-performers'?</li> <li>• What about rewarding 'high- achievers'?</li> </ul>	As above.
13.	Are you a member of a trade union?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes – which one? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you attend meetings?</li> <li>- If not, why not?</li> <li>- Is the rep active?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If not a member – why not?</li> <li>• How have the union responded to the action plan?</li> <li>• What do you think about their response?</li> </ul>	To gauge TU reactions and whether these are in line with what the members expect.
14.	Have you seen the new Government's White Paper, Excellence in Schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes – what do you think about their proposals regarding employment practices, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compulsory appraisal;</li> <li>- Quick dismissal procedures;</li> <li>- Advanced Skills Teachers;</li> <li>- Fast track route to headship;</li> <li>- Professional headship qualification;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Gauge teachers' reactions to New Labour proposals;
15.	Where do you see you career going from here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will you stay at the school if it remains open?</li> </ul>	To identify structural constraints / use of agency;

## Example of Field-notes

(All names have been deleted for anonymity purposes)

1st May 1998: 3rd visit to Parkville

Arrived at 8.20am (for 8.30 meeting) and met a member of staff who turned out to be (deputy head).

I arrived shortly after & took me through to his meeting room for his briefing session with and . Discussions took place re staffing shortages & late arrivals. I was warned that it was a 'bad day' as there were a number of people away ill (but then again, every day is a bad day they felt!).

told me that is away with severe arthritis & that she has been told it is aggravated by stress and over-work.

As they were talking about staff shortages I asked if I would mind teaching a class. They then went on to say that there was a severe staff shortage to-day in expressive arts & this was particularly bad as they were having an

'African Caribbean day' & had to decorate the dining room. I said that I could not teach anything but that I would be more than willing to help put up balloons. I thought that I was joking but I said that as long as they were happy for me to be there, then I would help. I explained that it would give me a 'flavour' of the school. So it was agreed that I would help and then have some of the special lunch.

We then went across to the staff room which is in another building to the senior mgmt. I walked across with and she asked me about my research. I told her what I was doing & why & she said it sounded really interesting. I asked her what she liked to see, particularly as the hierarchy of schools tend to be made. She said yes she would and that she will make a time to speak to me on my next visit.

We then reached the staffroom which is 'protected

by a heavy metal door and which is very coded.

What a dive! The room is lull. dull, very miserable, no warmth - terrible seats! what a mess - I would like to have to wear it!

The staff kicked in, about twenty or so of them, & brought them up to date on staff absence etc. They didn't seem to be very interested & those with their backs to him didn't bother to turn around.

They are a very mixed bunch both sexes and various races. Most were very casually dressed - some in jeans (although both wear suits well).

It appeared to me - and of course my feelings may have been influenced by having already spoken to *huica*; that the atmosphere was a little hostile (see comment above); it certainly had a feeling of cynicism.

then introduced me and I felt like a Christian being fed to the lions! Again, I may have imagined it, but I felt that they didn't want to know - probably understand it so many people are currently pking around the school - some of them probably see themselves as 'de-gooders' and have war & another war!

Anyway, I made my pitch. I thanked them for letting me be there & then told them why I am interested in this research. I told them about my MA & that it looked at how LMS & the National Curriculum had affected the working lives of teachers. I explained how I had interviewed teachers & how they had been open & frank with me so I felt that I 'owed' it to them to make the research further. I told them that prior to my research I had had no idea what was going on in education & that my eyes had been opened; my aim was not to look at the context of what was being taught - educational researchers can do that - my

aim in to look at how education reforms have affected the working lives of teachers, how it has affected their jobs, especially since the New Labour premises.

I said that little research had been done in this area and that I wanted to develop this further with the hope of eventually getting the findings published. I mentioned that Goodwin had been involved in a large-scale survey & that she had given evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body.

I finished with telling them that obviously the school was a unique case and I wanted to give teachers a voice in order to tell what is going on.

I hoped that, although they are obviously very busy, they would find the time to talk to me, either by day or at any time convenient to them.

said he hoped that the researcher would value the findings to the extent in the hope that they would listen. (He had been sitting with his colleagues at one end of the room & smiling cynically throughout).

I had said that everything was anonymous & said 'if you report what hell, you it won't need to be anonymous'. He retorted that he didn't care if he was quoted. The teacher appeared to be fairly 'friendly'.

I then hung around the staffroom and generally 'smiled' at people. I was talking with some other staff so I waited & then asked if I could speak with him. He said he had tried to get in touch & I acknowledged this & explained my problems with getting through to staff at school. He said yes, he would talk to me 'at some time'.

(I had told the teacher that although I had only written to some of them, I hoped to

Speak to all of them.)

Then said he could come & see me for the next period i.e. 2.40 p.m.

I then returned to the Senior Mgmt block to talk to

[It is now 10.30 - off to help with the Afro-Caribbean day, ~~at 11.30~~].

Spoke about the with ... chatting over coffee. He said that he was expecting some union involvement over the next few weeks. I thought that we were only having a brief chat but then realised that he was prepared to spend some time so I asked him if I could tape the conversation. He pulled a face at first & then said O.K. - so refer to tape for details.

When we had finished he gave me the key to records (he had told the staff I

would be there at the meeting) and so this has become my base for the day.

One teacher came to see me but he only had about 10 mins during break-time ( ) The interview is taped.

Whilst I was writing all of this popped in to talk to me but as I would soon be going for the Afro-Caribbean day so we will chat later.

However, he said the NUT must be careful in trying to set hours in stone. He also explained about the problems he had over Easter because the HTS had said a section of building had to be closed. The problem of no fire-escape had been dealt to the press so therefore had to be dealt with.

had come in on a number of days to meet records & then the teacher had warned. He said that, understandably, they were conscious of



their own workload but didn't realize what other pressures might were under. He said he was in the 'strange' position of acting as deputy head & teacher.

later he said that he would worry about moving to a 'nice' 'normal' school in the leafy suburbs as that would be a culture shock. Most of the time they had to practice 'crisis avert' which was a long-term strategic avert difficult - but 'never mind, it keeps us busy'.

He also said that he tells teachers to get a life outside school - but I haven't. I'm here at 7 o'clock in the morning & I'm often still here at 10 o'clock at night!

I was also interrupted by together who came in to open the safe in the room.

look out an 18" long 2" wide (guess?)

Shirley & said that it was confiscated from a student. I thought he was joking & that it had been brought in to eat a birthday cake or something! He said 'this is one of the smaller ones! The police have taken most of the other away; they come periodically & chase us out!' He also showed me two long files 'no it's not that bad really, we're painting a poor picture!'

I asked them did they tell their wives about these things & said 'very little, I'd rather she didn't know'.

11.20 going to blow-up balloons!

Phos. 4 1/2 hours, 2 interviews + 1 Afro-Griham lunch Ruter & I'm exhausted!!

went to help set-up the dining room for the special dinner. Supervised the children decorating the hall & then stayed on to do

dinner-duty = i.e. make sure that they  
dined up and didn't jump the queue. Most  
of the children called me 'miss' & quite a few  
asked me if I was an inspector.

Spike to <sup>at lunch</sup> he was  
saying that the problem with the national  
curriculum is that they have so many  
children who cannot speak English & yet  
they still have to learn another language  
e.g. Spanish, because they have to speak  
a modern language. English doesn't count.  
Therefore, children are sitting in a class where  
Spanish is being taught in English. He thought  
it was unfair that African dialects were  
written off by people who saw them as 'nigger'  
languages - he was very annoyed about this.

One child was particularly unruly & kept  
jumping on the table & chair.

The lunch was good & on the whole the  
children were polite but very noisy.

I spend some time speaking to <sup>a special</sup>  
police officer who's job is to educate children  
re crime & drugs.

<sup>joined me for lunch &</sup>  
Then I went back to the night site with  
John to <sup>interview</sup> him.

interrupted during my interviews with  
& then again when I was talking  
to <sup>the</sup> - went out of this night  
site!

<sup>asked me to join them for coffee</sup>  
before I left & asked me my impressions of  
the school. I said I found the pupils were  
polite than I had expected and, on the whole,  
generally well behaved - they did as I said  
e.g. some had left the dining room to hang  
outlets in reception. I went & 'rounded' them  
up & told them either to go back upstairs  
(dining room) or off to lunch. They said  
'OK miss' & went back upstairs!

of mentioned to the request team about the particularly unruly pupil + they said he had been with them for less than 1 yr + that when he started he didn't even know how to sit at a desk, he had never been to school before, so they were pleased with his progress!!

Left at about 4.30 p.m. - exhausted!

**Abstract from Parkville's Ofsted Report**

'The inspection team comprised 13 inspectors, who spent a combined total of 45 days in the school. During the week of the inspection, 141 lessons or part-lessons were inspected, covering all subjects, year groups, and all teaching staff. Registrations and assemblies were inspected as were extracurricular activities at lunchtimes and after school. Observations were made of pupils' arrival at and departure from school, and of their activities at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The helpful documentation provided by the school was read and analyzed before and during the inspection, and the supplementary information was readily provided by the school during the week of the inspection. All available written work of a sample of three pupils from every year group representing different ranges of ability was scrutinised and the pupils themselves were later interviewed. Many *ad hoc* interviews and conversations with both pupils and staff took place. Over 40 planned interviews were held with members of staff. The Reporting Inspector and lay inspector held a pre-inspection meeting for parents, which five parents attended. Previously, 500 questionnaires had been sent to all parents; seven were returned. Members of the governing body were interviewed both before and during the inspection.' (Ofsted January 1997)