
The Impact of Educational Reform on Primary School Teachers: The English Experience

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Abstract

Since coming into power in 1997 the New Labour government in England has introduced diverse reforms in education explicitly linked to the economic and cultural pressures brought about by the processes of globalisation. This article analyses the impact on primary teachers of some key changes resulting from reform in curriculum and pedagogy, assessment and accountability and workforce remodelling. The analysis is informed by policy documents and evidence drawn from a research project involving the collection of qualitative data in fifty English primary schools. It demonstrates how New Labour's change strategy of 'high challenge, high support' was successful in bringing about considerable changes in primary teaching which were viewed by most teachers as improvements on past classroom practice. However, teachers viewed the accompanying national testing regime as stressful for pupils and damaging to their learning. Moreover, the punitive accountability measures that promoted performativity had very negative consequences for schools and individual teachers. Workforce remodelling further changed the nature of teachers' work bringing both benefits and disadvantages. Initial teacher training and teachers' continuing professional development also underwent fundamental change in order to support the reform process. Contrary to the views of education policy analysts, it is argued that the level of central prescription did not result in the deskilling of teachers who viewed the reforms as having enhanced their knowledge, skills and professionalism. However, the lack of government consultation with teachers over the reforms, the pressures created by the mode of implementation and the control exerted by the accountability mechanisms severely damaged teacher confidence, lowered morale and challenged primary teachers' self-identity.

Introduction

Education is regarded as a crucial factor in ensuring economic productivity and global competitiveness. Education policy in countries across the world is strongly influenced by global trends, but as argued by Vulliamy (2010), the cultural contexts and educational traditions and values of individual nation states determine the ways in which these are translated into national policies and practice in schools. While English education policy has been an importer of policies, as ‘a social laboratory of experimentation and reform’ policies like ‘school-based management, parental choice, information and accountability systems and privatisation are now being “exported” around the world by English education businesses and “policy entrepreneurs”’ (Ball, 2008, p.1). This article focuses on the intentions, implementation and impact on primary teachers of some key policies responding to global trends in three broad areas of reform in primary education: curriculum and pedagogy; standards and accountability; and workforce remodelling. It documents the intended and unintended consequences of the reforms on primary teachers’ training and professional development, their classroom practice, self-identity and perceptions of primary teacher professionalism. In so doing, what primary teachers perceive that they have lost and gained from the reforms is identified and the change process undertaken by the New Labour government is evaluated. Before this analysis, first the national policy context will be outlined and details given of the Fifty Schools Revisited (FSR) project, the data from which the experiences and perspectives of primary teachers have been drawn,

The terms English and England are used here because Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have different education systems, priorities, policies and responses to the pressures of globalisation. The primary school age range in England is from five to eleven years with infants (5-7 years) in key stage 1 (KS1) and juniors (7-11 years) in key stage 2 (KS2). The most common pattern of provision is for both key stages to be taught within one primary school. However, there are also separate infant and junior schools and a few Local Authorities (LAs) operate regional exceptions to this pattern by having first schools (5-9 years) and middle schools (9-13 years), although these are generally being phased out. There are approximately 17,200 primary schools in England of which most are medium sized (101-300 pupils). Around 15% of primary schools are classed as small and have less than 100 pupils. Large primary schools (over 301 pupils) make up about a quarter of all primary schools with the largest generally being between 600 and 800 pupils.

Legislating for Change

The 1988 Education Act (ERA) brought in by the Conservative government initiated the series of major reforms resulting in the most profound changes in the English educational system since the 1944 Education Act, which had first established a free national system of primary and secondary schooling. Most of the changes taking place in English primary schools in the 1990s and 2000s have been brought about by legislation seeking to strengthen and build upon the ideas, systems and procedures that the ERA set in motion. As argued by Ball (1990), these reforms had their ideological underpinnings in different, and sometimes conflicting, aspects of 'new right' ideology. On the one hand, the ERA introduced a National Curriculum and its accompanying national assessment at the end of each key stage in response to pressures from the neo-conservatives for centrally prescribed curriculum content. On the other hand, at the same time it introduced two other innovations reflecting the demands of the neo-liberal wing of the 'new right' for increased competition, diversity and choice in education. First Local Management of Schools (LMS) began the process of delegating financial management and associated areas, such as staffing to schools. Second in order to promote competition between schools, Open Enrolment sought to enable parents to choose any school for their children rather than having to send them to their neighbourhood school. However, the freedom of LMS was counterbalanced by schools increasingly being held to account for their pupils' progress in national tests and through school inspection by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) set up in 1992. Financial delegation, the exposure of schools to market mechanisms and the demands of accountability started a continuing process of changing, expanding and diversifying the work of primary headteachers that has moved them away from their traditional role as educative leaders to becoming entrepreneurs and business managers.

The prospect in 1997 of parliamentary elections held the possibility of a change of government and a different direction for educational policies. However, it became increasingly apparent from party manifestos that New Labour would maintain the main thrust of the Conservative government's policies. In May 1997 New Labour was elected with a massive majority. Its education policy of 'high challenge, high support' and 'informed prescription' (Barber, 2001) heralded a dramatic increase in the pace and impact of reform but also considerable additional investment in education. Within two weeks of taking office, the Labour government set ambitious national literacy and numeracy targets for 2002 because of their perception fuelled by Ofsted criticisms and the findings of comparative studies of attainment that there was a crisis in the teaching of basic skills in primary schools and that English pupils were falling behind in reading and number. In the White Paper *Excellence in Schools* the government outlined its intentions to improve standards through a variety of initiatives including the introduction of daily literacy and numeracy hours in primary schools, national guidelines and training for all primary teachers on best practice in the teaching of literacy and numeracy and the introduction of target setting in schools and

LAs tied to meeting government targets. Mechanisms by which individual teachers and schools were held accountable for pupil attainment were increasingly tightened through targets, testing and league tables, the introduction of performance management and Ofsted inspections. As Whitty (2002) argues, in the name of public accountability the controls over the work of schools and their teachers escalated and strengthened, challenging teachers' integrity and promoting 'a low trust relationship' between society and its teachers.

The Fifty Schools Revisited Project

The FSR project (2003-2007) sought to identify the impact on primary teachers and their work of New Labour's educational reforms. Day (2000) has suggested that 'teachers' voices are an important and under-represented part of the macro debate which focuses on whether such reforms in England and elsewhere are resulting in the "deprofessionalization" or "technicization" of teachers' work or whether they result in "reprofessionalization" (pp.110-111). Given this, one of the main aims of the FSR project was to give primacy to teachers' perspectives on the implementation of New Labour's education policies in order to supplement earlier research (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996; Osborn *et al.*, 2000) on the impact of the Conservative government's reforms on primary teachers' work and professionalism in the early 1990s.

The FSR project incorporates a longitudinal dimension through the replication of a previous Association of Teachers and Lecturers-funded research project carried out between 1992 and 1994 (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996). The same qualitative research strategy based on condensed fieldwork was used as in the earlier research. In its first phase (2003-2005), which focused on changes in KS2 classroom practice, the FSR project involved day-long visits to 50 schools in 16 Local Authorities throughout England and comprised 188 tape-recorded in-depth interviews with primary teachers in these schools, supplemented by school documentation and classroom observations of 51 lessons. In its second phase, which examined issues of management and leadership, it incorporated further fieldwork visits and interviews in a 50% sample of the 50 schools. The primary concern in selecting the original 1992 sample of 50 schools had been to ensure that it reflected the full diversity of KS2 provision in terms of size and type of school giving, for example, a mix of inner-city, suburban and rural schools, a multicultural mix (from all-white schools through to one school with 98% ethnic minority pupils) and a mix of religious denominations (including Church of England, Roman Catholic and Methodist). For a full discussion of the criteria for the selection of the 50 schools in the 1992-1994 study and of the manner in which these schools have changed in the intervening years, together with full details of the composition of the teacher interview sample see Webb and Vulliamy (2006). The analysis of the interview transcripts used the process of category generation and saturation, based upon the 'constant comparison' method originally

advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), used in our earlier research. However, unlike the 1992-1994 study, the depth and rigour of the analysis of the teacher interviews were aided by the use of MAXqda software for qualitative data analysis.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies

New Labour's first major education policy and one that was central to the achievement of the government literacy and numeracy targets was the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in September 1998 and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in September 1999. Both these strategies were developed from national literacy and numeracy primary school projects developed by the Conservatives. The strategies were underpinned by a belief that 'the education system will never be world class unless virtually all children learn to read, write and calculate to high standards before they leave primary school' and that 'at the time of the 1997 election the national data showed how far we were from achieving this goal' (Barber, 2001, p.23). Described by Earl *et al.* as the 'most ambitious large-scale educational reform initiative in the world' (2003, p. 11), the Strategies required teachers to make considerable changes not only in the content of their teaching but also to pedagogy. For example, the daily literacy hour and numeracy hours emphasized the importance of interactive whole-class teaching 'which means using lively questioning, explanation and illustration, and expecting pupils to play an active part in lessons by explaining and demonstrating their methods to you and their classmates (NCLN, 1998).

Although not mandatory, the implementation of the Strategies was forcefully recommended. As the DfEE (1997) put it: 'Our presumption will be that the approach to teaching we set out, based on the NLP (National Literacy Project), will be adopted by every school unless a school can demonstrate through its literacy action plan and schemes of work and its performance in NC Key Stage tests, that the approach it has adopted is at least as effective' (p.19). Despite most FSR project teachers' subsequent support for the Strategies because they believed they had improved their teaching, all were highly critical of the government for imposing them 'in a such a way that "You don't have to do it, it is an option, but woe betide anybody who doesn't!"'. The pressure for compliance exerted on schools through Ofsted inspections and the LAs was greatly resented and regarded as a public declaration that teachers lacked expertise in teaching basic subjects. Since the late 1970s public concern over the quality of primary education had grown fuelled by critical research and events, such as the report of educational anarchy in William Tyndale junior school in London. Politicians' and media criticisms mounted becoming what has been termed 'a discourse of derision' (Ball,1990) undermining primary teachers' self confidence and status. Consequently, the Strategies were viewed as yet another expression of the government's lack of trust in the teaching profession, which further lowered morale.

Prior to the ERA 1988 it was the responsibility of headteachers as to whether or not to provide new and/or inexperienced teachers with direction as to curriculum content and/or teaching methods. While the National Curriculum prescribed subject content, it gave little or no guidance on how subjects should be taught which Galton *et al.* (1999) speculate could be largely responsible for the lack of change in classroom practice following National Curriculum implementation. The NLS and the NNS prescribed content, classroom organisation and teaching methods and the FSR data show that the imposition of the strategies has led to widespread changes in primary classroom practice not only in literacy and numeracy but across the curriculum (Webb and Vulliamy, 2006). For teachers trained since the implementation of the NLS and the NNS the teaching approaches advocated through the Strategies were ‘second nature’. However, most teachers trained before the implementation of the Strategies considered that their practice had been strongly influenced by implementing the Strategies and as a result had changed and improved (see, Webb and Vulliamy, 2007). The changes observed and discussed with the FSR teachers include:

- a move from an activity-based topic-centred curriculum to an objectives-led subject-centred one;
- lessons with instructional introductions specifying learning objectives and sharing them with children ;
- a dramatic increase in whole-class teaching at the beginning and end or throughout lessons;
- plenary sessions revisiting learning objectives, bringing the threads of a lesson together, diagnosing pupil understanding and planning the next steps in pupil learning
- teachers maintaining much tighter control over the pace and direction of lessons than previously;
- an increase in the use of ability grouping and setting across classes in literacy and numeracy;
- changes in classroom seating patterns with very much more use of pupils seated in rows rather than grouped around tables; and
- a virtual eradication in our sample of certain practices – such as the integrated day and open-plan classrooms – often associated with the Plowden ‘progressive’ era.

However, the strategies have engendered an enormous amount of criticism and the nature and extent of their impact is contested. They have been criticised for not being adequately research-based (e.g. Brown *et al.*, 1998). Also, while teachers perceived the strategies to have had a positive effect on their teaching promoting the use of higher order questions and more extended and varied responses from

pupils, some published research studies focussing on teacher-pupil interaction argue that the changes in classroom practice are at a relatively superficial level and have failed to effect the intended deeper changes in pedagogy (e.g. Hargreaves *et al.*, 2003). In the early stages of the implementation of the Strategies many educationalists (e.g. Davies and Edwards) expressed fears that centralised prescription of pedagogy would result in deprofessionalisation and deskilling and some regard these fears as having been fully realised (e.g. Wyse *et al.*, 2007). Also, the government's claim that the strategies have been responsible for a dramatic increase in primary school literacy and numeracy standards has been convincingly challenged (e.g. Richards, 2005).

It is perhaps unsurprising that the ambitious aims of the use of 'interactive whole class teaching' in the Strategies to promote higher quality teacher-pupil dialogue and higher levels of pupils' thinking and understanding show little evidence of having been achieved. Such teaching is clearly very difficult particularly in a context where the emphasis is on content coverage and meeting standards of attainment. However, the research studies cited were conducted within the first few years of the implementation of the Strategies and since then teachers have become more confident in their use of whole class teaching and incorporated other aspects of best practice in their teaching. Teachers gave examples of practices, which we also observed, such as oral activities that required all pupils to respond, 'hot-seating' requiring the class to ask questions of those in the 'hot-seat', pupils demonstrating skills in front of the class and explaining their ideas and using these to generate whole class discussion. Also as our observations showed, particularly in the foundation subjects, approaches to curriculum and classroom organisation used prior to the implementation of the Strategies have been subsumed within whole-class teaching patterns to provide opportunities for more varied, demanding and sustained work – for example, in the central part of lessons we observed children working in turn on a carousel of linked practical activities, carrying out co-operative group tasks and researching topics on the school intranet individually and in pairs.

The Standards Agenda and Assessment

Teachers described how the government's standards agenda had intensified their work through generating escalating paperwork in the form of school policies, lesson plans, written responses to national and LA initiatives, analysis of test data, pupil records and reports to parents and governors in order to provide evidence to external bodies that teaching in their schools was effective. This had created a culture whereby: 'The head is constantly under pressure to perform, she puts the pressure on us, we put the pressure on the children and then everyone is just under immense pressure and stress'. However many hours teachers committed to school, they never seemed adequate to meet expectations.

In common with other studies (Osborn *et al.*, 2000; Jeffrey and Woods, 1998), the FSR project

findings strongly reflect the ‘performativity discourse of assessment’ dominating current educational policy-making (Broadfoot, 2001). As found by Hall and Özerk (2008) in their review of the primary curriculum and assessment in England and other countries, assessment in England is all-pervasive as primary children in England are subject to more external standard testing in more subject areas than elsewhere and this testing occurs more frequently and begins at a younger age. National testing is used not only for assessing individual pupils’ performance but also through the publication of test data for 11 year-olds in league tables of school performance to evaluate schools and LAs. Also, in the FSR project schools test data were used increasingly to evaluate the performance of individual teachers and to set the attainment targets to be achieved by each pupil in their class. As a consequence, statutory tests, optional tests for other year groups and test preparation increasingly dominated teaching and learning, especially at KS2.

Teachers in the FSR project complained that test preparation narrowed the curriculum throughout KS2 and completely distorted provision for Year 6 (see, also, Galton and MacBeath, 2002). Although all the headteachers were highly critical of league tables and of the technical problems associated with the value-added version of these (criticisms substantiated by Easen and Bolden, 2005) they attached considerable importance to moving up the league tables in order to maintain parental support and pupil numbers. As documented in earlier research (see, for example, Osborn *et al.*, 2000), teachers continued to hold an overwhelmingly negative view of the KS2 national tests and would like to see them abolished. For them ‘testing has gone far too far’ resulting in primary schools being ‘over tested, scrutinised and squeezed’ with ‘no allowance for your professional judgement’. Such high stakes testing, which holds schools and teachers accountable for pupil attainment in literacy and numeracy, diminished opportunities for teachers to develop the whole child, caused considerable stress for many children and changed the basis of teacher-pupil relationships. While the detrimental effects of the national testing regime have been argued by teachers, researchers and were the subject of a critical House of Commons Select Committee report (2008), the government intends that ‘testing, tables and targets are here to stay’ (p.20). It claims an overall improvement in primary pupils performance as measured by the tests since 1997 but such claims are viewed as overstated and in any case refer only to measurable outcomes in numeracy and literacy.

Under New Labour Ofsted inspections, introduced by the Conservative government in 1992, have been used to exert pressure on schools and teachers to comply with government policy and to maintain an emphasis on meeting attainment targets in literacy and numeracy. For example, given the unconditional support of Ofsted for the Strategies, few schools felt able to test the policy rhetoric that, providing their literacy and numeracy programmes met the strategies’ detailed requirements, they could opt out of teaching them. From the outset Ofsted inspections have acted as a powerful and punitive

accountability mechanism which causes teachers to feel anxious and stressed, lose self confidence and can have an extremely negative impact on their work, health and professional identity (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998). According to the FSR project teachers, even when inspection outcomes were positive the process proved exhausting and demoralising sometimes leading to temporary or long term ill-health. As demonstrated by the experience of some of the fifty schools, the effects of a less than wholly positive outcome from an Ofsted inspection could seriously damage a school's ethos and its relationships with parents and the community. As with all government initiatives the system and focus of Ofsted inspections have undergone changes with accompanying advantages and disadvantages for schools. For example, initially the introduction in 2005 of shorter 'light touch' OFSTED inspections that were conducted at short notice were generally welcomed by FSR project headteachers. However, owing to lack of first-hand information gathering inspectors' judgements have been too reliant on test data. Also, schools feel the need to continually update their documents and Ofsted preparations to be in a continual state of readiness. Nevertheless, there were encouraging signs that the strong emphasis on school self-evaluation introduced into the inspection process in 2005 and strengthened in the new 2009 inspection framework might enable inspections to be perceived and experienced differently by enabling schools to feel more in control of inspection outcomes.

Excellence and Enjoyment

Although primary teachers lacked confidence in their knowledge of, and ability to teach, many of the subject elements within the National Curriculum (Bennett *et al.*, 1994), its introduction was broadly welcomed as an entitlement for children to a broad and balanced curriculum. When first introduced the National Curriculum consisted of the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science and six other foundation subjects (history, geography, design and technology, art, music and physical education, each of which had lengthy and complex programmes of study. These were implemented in stages for different age levels, a process that was not completed until 1992. However, it soon became apparent that the National Curriculum was considerably overloaded, especially for the KS2 age range (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996) leading to the first of several reviews resulting in revised slimmed down versions of specific subjects or the National Curriculum as a whole. In 1998 to further encourage schools to focus on the Strategies the government removed primary schools' statutory obligation to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study apart from those for the three core and tested subjects of English, mathematics and science which unsurprisingly further contributed to an increasingly narrow and distorted curriculum, especially for pupils at KS2. At the time of writing this, following the recommendations of the review by Sir Jim Rose (DCSF, 2009), the National Curriculum is being reshaped with subjects incorporated into six broad areas of learning to make it less prescriptive, more flexible and to encourage cross-curricular studies. The intention is that it will be introduced into schools in September 2011. In each case the process of revising the National Curriculum has been mainly a

technical one of achieving greater manageability of implementation and structural consistency between subjects.

As outlined by Brehony (2005), pressure on the government for a new policy direction was coming from a broad coalition that was against the emphasis on testing and qualifications, seeing this as detrimental to the development of the creativity and innovation required of a globalised knowledge-based economy. In response in 2003 the government published *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES, 2003) to introduce the Primary National Strategy (PNS) with its intention ‘to encourage schools to take control of their curriculum, and to be innovative’ (para 2.4). However, exhortations to be creative generally went unheeded by schools because much of the text of *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES, 2003) is devoted to reiterating the familiar messages of the standards agenda. As a consequence, headteachers in the FSR project were reluctant to reduce time spent on literacy and numeracy in order to devote more time to the rest of the curriculum. Nevertheless, the PNS was interpreted by teachers as ‘giving them permission’ to exercise some professional judgement about ways of teaching that supported the children’s ‘best interests’ and reintroduce elements – such as cross-curricular work and creative arts subjects – that had been lost in the focus on the ‘effective’ at the expense of the ‘affective’ (McNess *et al.*, 2003). Also, with the emphasis of the PNS on ‘personalisation’, another global education trend, schools already involved in their own or LA teaching and learning initiatives - such as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning, accelerated learning and thinking skills programmes - viewed these as ways of personalising learning encouraged by the PNS.

Information and Communication Technology

The New Labour government subscribes to the global vision of a learning society underpinned by ever more powerful and innovative information communication technologies providing lifelong learning opportunities. Schools are crucial to this vision and to promote their use of ICT since 1997 the government has launched a number of major initiatives working closely with LAs, the Teacher Training Agency, the British Educational and Communications Technology Agency (Becta), the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and ICT commercial companies. Training in the use of ICT in teaching and learning was provided for all teachers and school librarians by the National Lottery’s New Opportunities Fund (NOF) from April 1999 until December 2003. In 2003 the combined initiatives were relaunched as the *ICT in Schools* programme with continued earmarked funding for schools to purchase ICT hardware and laptops for teachers. In the FSR schools the provision of laptops for teachers played a key role in boosting teacher confidence and competence in ICT knowledge and skills and encouraging them to experiment.

The fifty FSR schools were at different stages in the development of ICT provision and use and this was reflected in their ICT priorities:

- install or update computer suites;
- purchase mobile trolley systems with laptops;
- increase the number of PCs in classrooms;
- install interactive whiteboards in classrooms;

- network all the computers together;
- provide internet access;
- move to wireless-based systems;
- develop a school website
- purchase digital cameras;
- set up virtual learning environments.

ICT has caused major changes in teachers' classroom practice. While, as found by Smith *et al.* (2006), interactive whiteboards are not having the fundamental impact on pedagogy envisaged by their advocates, they are promoting more whole class teaching, the use of more open-ended questions by teachers and a faster lesson pace. Also, our observations suggest that the increased use of ICT can generally improve the extent and quality of teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interaction. For example, in a combined ICT and History lesson in a computer suite we observed children devising PowerPoint presentations on Victorian inventions which they then showed to their peers who questioned them about their presentations and offered evaluative comments. We also saw the level of pupil questioning and discussion enhanced, particularly in history and geography, through the teacher accessing novel and stimulating resources on the internet and showing them to children on the interactive whiteboard.

A 'New Professionalism' and a Remodelled Workforce

The Prime Minister Tony Blair, addressing a teacher union conference in 1999 declared that the government's objective was to 'restore teaching to its rightful place as one of Britain's foremost professions ... recognising the need for a step change in the reputation, rewards and image of teaching, raising it to the status of other professions such as medicine and law' (Blair 1999). The mechanisms for doing this were laid out in the policy document *Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change* (DfEE 1998) and a subsequent paper *Professionalism and Trust: the future of teachers and teaching* (DfES 2001) with proposals to 'modernise' the profession and embrace a 'new professionalism'. Key elements of this modernising agenda were the adoption of a new performance management system within schools linked to the introduction of performance-related pay. As noted by Mahony and Hextall (2000), the importation of such principles from the private sector of industry and business formed part of a 'New Public Management' strategy that has been widely adopted internationally as a response to global pressures that reinforce competition and the need for low-tax economies.

By the late 1990s there were increasing government concerns about teacher retention and recruitment. In *Time for Standards: Reforming the School Workforce* (DfES, 2002) the government set out its intention to transform teachers' working practices by removing from them a range of administrative tasks while simultaneously developing the roles and career possibilities of administrators and teaching assistants (TAs) including the introduction of additionally qualified higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs). The main reasons given for these reforms were to take the pressure off teachers by reducing their workload and so improve their work/life balance and increase teacher retention. Also, it was considered that enabling teachers to concentrate on teaching would further contribute to raising standards of pupil attainment. The *National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*

was signed by most public sector unions with members in education, employers and the government in 2003. In 2003 24 administrative tasks were identified to be carried out by TAs and administrative staff and from 2005 10% of teachers' time was to be allocated for preparation, planning and pupil assessment (PPA time). It was envisaged that lesson cover to create PPA time would be provided by HLTAs.

The government also wanted to move away from the traditional pay structure - whereby teachers could only earn higher salaries by promotion away from classroom teaching to managerial posts - towards a pay structure in which teachers, who were regarded as especially competent practitioners, could be awarded a higher salary. All schools were required to review and rethink their staffing structures by the end of 2005 in order to replace existing management allowances with teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) payments to be implemented by the end of 2008. Also, emphasis was given to posts such as that of Advanced Skills Teacher and Leading Teacher that were awarded to teachers who were thought to be particularly good at their job and who were willing to advise and support other teachers in the same or a different school.

Implication for the Training and Professional Development of Teachers

In England there are now 32 different routes into becoming a teacher as New Labour has sought to greatly expand training options in order to recruit more able graduates, mature entrants and those seeking a change in career. For primary teachers these include the well-established four-year undergraduate programmes, one-year postgraduate programmes and minority routes such as SCITT (School-Centred Initial Training) run by schools. Over the last two decades teacher trainers like their colleagues in schools have experienced education reform on an unprecedented scale. The most radical change in teacher training was the introduction in 1998 of a National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) which prescribed requirements for courses including length, school partnership arrangements, selection of trainees, quality assurance and assessment procedures and for the first time regulated training content. These requirements for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) detailed around 100 standards relating to all aspects of trainees' knowledge and practice that unsurprisingly incurred much criticism (eg. Richards *et al.*, 1998). Intending primary teachers were subjected to training courses heavily dominated by preparation to teach literacy and numeracy in accordance with the Strategies with scant attention paid to the other foundation subjects and little time to engage in wider professional debates.

Just as Ofsted was used as a mechanism for compliance in schools, from 1994 the introduction of Ofsted inspections of teacher training institutions ensured trainers conformed to government requirements. In 2002 a new slimline version of QTS standards, which abandoned the attempt to prescribe pedagogy and detail subject knowledge was introduced and further refined in 2007. Its explicit focus on professional values and practice and reduction in the number of standards to 33 meant that it was regarded more positively by teacher trainers (Simco and Wilson, 2002). It also placed the QTS

standards within a framework setting standards at five career points for the whole teaching workforce. While analysing and differentiating stages of professional development is viewed as essential for understanding and promoting teacher expertise, arguably the ways in which the standards are decided and expressed mean that they serve as ‘a framework for codifying not levels of development but degrees of compliance’ (Alexander, 2010).

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has the potential not only to develop teachers’ skills and knowledge but also to boost morale, enthusiasm and commitment. While the government rhetoric on teachers’ CPD has become more expansive with seeming opportunities for diverse forms of professional learning, the reality of the experience of the majority of FSR teachers was that it has become narrowed down to ‘one size fits all’ training courses in government initiatives to meet national needs and school-based training to determine a school response to these needs. In the current climate there appear few funds or opportunities and little time for teachers to develop additional more personal professional interests. The DfEE (2000, para.8) states that existing practice in many schools demonstrates that individual, school and national needs ‘reinforce rather than conflict with each other’. This is hardly surprising because school and individual needs are both determined and subsumed by national needs. The government intention to focus on more closely integrating CPD, performance management and school improvement as key components of effective whole school policies on teaching and learning seems likely to exacerbate the situation.

Primary Teachers’ Perspectives on their Professionalism

In response to the New Labour government’s agenda, notions of primary teacher professionalism are undergoing review and reconstruction by primary teachers (see also Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). Traditional hallmarks of a profession, such as autonomy, become severely constrained when teachers are increasingly accountable to mandated change from the government. However, the view that such government reforms ‘instantly took autonomy away from teachers, together with the right to call oneself a “professional” in terms of autonomous practice’ (Bryan, 2004, p.142) was not one generally shared by the teachers in the FSR sample. Contrary to the expressed fears of many educationalists (e.g., Davies and Edwards, 2001) that centralised prescription of pedagogy would result in deprofessionalisation and deskilling, as is argued below this is not generally the way in which teachers perceived it.

A persistent theme through the FSR teacher interview data was the manner in which teachers viewed the core of their professionalism as their ability to motivate and develop children’s learning and to boost their confidence and self-image. As one deputy head put it: ‘teachers have a definite sense of being a professional and a caring professional because at the heart of it all is the child and doing the best

for the child and moving that child on'. However, the discourse of teacher professionalism as a result of New Labour's policy reforms reflected some profound shifts in interpretation. For example, a holistic child-centred concern to benefit children's lives shifts in the 'new professionalism' discourse to a 'making a difference' that is viewed in terms of raising standards, measured by test results, of all children and closing the gap between high and low achievers (see, for example, Hopkins, 2003, p.60). These shifts created tensions for teachers by challenging their beliefs and attitudes to their work as is illustrated in teachers' varied reactions to the imposition of a new prescribed curriculum. On the one hand, a common response was to regret the loss of teachers' flexibility and creativity with, for example, a head commenting that: 'the reason why most people come into primary teaching is because they want to make a difference to children's lives and they are creative about the way they want to do it and I do think that most of the initiatives have stifled creativity'. On the other hand, there was a very widespread perception that the introduction of a prescribed curriculum, backed by resources, had led both to a more professional approach to teaching and to improvements in children's learning.

Whether or not the changes in classroom practice resulting from government policy met with teachers' approval was determined by their perceived beneficial or detrimental impact on children's learning and well-being. Consequently, as is illustrated below by a headteacher's comments on the NNS those changes introduced by the Strategies, which through experience and critical reflection became viewed by teachers as improving pupil learning, were adopted even when doing so involved revising previously held beliefs:

At first I thought no way is this going to work because with the poorer children ...I said a week visiting multiplication and division is no good and then going back a term later and doing it. And I was totally wrong because it, it is absolutely fantastic and it does keep some rolling ...instead of doing like two, three or four weeks on one topic they can switch and move on and our standards have definitely risen. (Headteacher, June 2004)

Also, prior to the curriculum and pedagogy reforms, there was little attempt in teacher training to give specific guidance on primary teaching pedagogy. A consequence of this was that many older teachers' reflections on changes in their teaching contain accounts of how as a beginning teacher they were left to their own devices to work out how to teach in what has been called an era of 'uninformed professionalism'(Barber, 2001). Given this context, most of FSR interviewees thought that the curriculum and pedagogic guidance that they had received had made them better teachers and given them the confidence and awareness to explain precisely what they were doing and why. Moreover, many also freely admitted that major deficiencies in their prior teaching had been remedied by such guidance.

However, the introduction of the PNS (DfES, 2003) was viewed by many as a welcome return to a middle path between too much teacher freedom on the one hand and too much prescription on the other. It was seen as giving teachers the opportunity to take a more flexible approach to the curriculum that for one head explicitly meant ‘allowing us our professionalism back!’

In relation to assessment, we found much evidence that teachers had developed more confidence and increased skills in the ways in which they assessed pupils. Also, their greater knowledge of individual children’s attainment derived from more formal and focused teacher assessment contributed to better planning and helped children’s learning. However, teachers considered that the potential benefits in teacher assessment were more than offset by the highly detrimental effects of national testing on the curriculum, the school ethos and, especially upon children and over which they had no opportunity to use professional judgement. Teaching to the tests deemed necessary in order to reduce the stress involved for the children by thorough preparation and to enable them to do as well as possible also went against teachers’ sense of professionalism.

The government’s large investment in ICT in primary schools proved a major challenge for teachers. However, when commenting on such changes in relation to teachers’ perceptions of their professionalism, there was general agreement that, despite the difficulties that some teachers experienced in coming to terms with ICT innovations, the new skills required by them, together with their potential for improving children’s motivation and learning experiences, were contributing to an enhancement of teachers’ professionalism. Similarly, because of its positive impact on classroom practice, the large increase in the number of TAs was strongly welcomed by almost all the FSR project interviewees. It promoted professional teamwork that markedly improved the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of an extra adult to help pupils with group and individual work. However, teachers generally, with only a few exceptions, drew upon their conceptions of teacher professionalism to resist strongly the notion that teaching assistants should teach whole classes to release PPA time. While teachers acknowledged the expertise of HLTAs and the contribution to curriculum breadth that they could make, many teachers felt that their own professionalism was being compromised by HLTAs’ lack of teaching qualifications. The move to the deployment of HLTAs for PPA cover was encouraged by the increasing number of TAs getting HLTA status, their commitment to their teaching role and the fact that they were a cheaper option to provide cover than teachers or external experts.

Teacher Morale and Identity

Hargreaves *et al.* (2006) found that ‘a major source of dissatisfaction discussed among teachers was the burdensome load of the job’ as teachers reported ‘working ridiculously long hours and having little work/life balance to speak of’ (p.76). This was also a negative factor in the lives of primary teachers in the VITAE project (Day *et al.*, 2006) where heavy workloads prevented them from having a social or a personal life during the week and meant that work had to be completed at the weekend. Teachers in the FSR project schools similarly struggled with the workload and during term time the majority were unable to maintain a work/life balance. There was evidence that for some teachers PPA time was making a noticeable reduction to the amount of work that they took home and was contributing to their motivation and self-worth. However, as PPA time becomes established and routine, it is possible that headteachers’ expectations of teachers and their over-conscientiousness fuelled by a personal and moral sense of obligation to spend too much of their own time on work (Campbell and Neill, 1994) could make potential benefits short-lived.

In their review of the literature on teacher identities Day *et al.* (2006) suggest that ‘identities are a shifting amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstance’ (p.613). Over twenty years ago Nias (1989) found that the personal and occupational self of teachers in England became so closely related that they fused to form one self-identity. At that time the ideals and values based on holistic child-centred principles and vocationalism espoused in the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967) were strongly endorsed by the government of the day, informed the rhetoric if not the practice of primary schools and generated a uniform, coherent, relatively stable self-identity for the majority of primary teachers. Increasingly since the ERA (1988), government ideology has been in opposition to that of many teachers for, as argued by Woods and Jeffrey (2002), teachers have been expected to relinquish the Plowden self-identity and adopt a new assigned social identity emphasising teacher competences rather than personal qualities, consumerism to replace care, and accountability instead of autonomy.

For the FSR teachers, where government prescription and aspects of their changing role prevented them from giving children the time, attention, care and experiences that they felt ought to be given, their professional identity was at odds with their self-concept. For teachers, particularly in the early 1990s who considered that their time and energy was being squandered by bureaucratic and accountability demands and diverted away from children they experienced ‘change without commitment’ (Webb and Vulliamy, 1999). Woods and Jeffrey (2002) recount how for the mid and late career teachers involved in their research on the impact of school inspections ‘their personal identities within teaching have become more “situational”, constructed to meet different situations and purposes with which they might be presented, but in which they feel they cannot invest their full selves’ (p.101). As revealed in our data, teachers

putting on a performance for accountability purposes during classroom observations by headteachers, visits by LA inspectors/advisers and Ofsted inspectors is now routine, although it continues to be stressful. Emphasising fragmentation, adaptation and change in the role of professionals in the public services, Stronach *et al.*'s (2002) research with nurses and teachers found them 'mobilising a complex of occasional identities in response to shifting contexts' (p.117). This characterises the ways teachers approached the many and varied demands of their role and the ways in which the values and processes associated with these were presented to diverse audiences of colleagues, parents, governors, and Ofsted inspectors.

Conclusion

Michael Barber who directed the DfES's Standards and Effectiveness Unit before moving on to be Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit argues that 'all evidence suggests that successful reform requires a combination of top down and bottom up change' (2001, p.37). However, he acknowledges that the initial stages of such government-imposed top down change might need to eschew the need for teacher ownership of such change:

Winning hearts and minds is not the best first step in any process of urgent change ... Sometimes it is necessary to mandate the change, implement it well, consciously challenge the prevailing culture and have the courage to sustain it until beliefs shift. The driving force at this critical juncture is leadership ... it is the vocation of leaders to take people where they have never been before and to show them a new world from which they do not want to return. (quoted in Mahony et al., 2004, p.452)

As has been shown, New Labour's approach to reform was successful in bringing about changes in teaching and learning which, with the exception of the extremely negative effects of national testing, teachers perceived had improved their classroom practice and enhanced their skills. This demonstrated that, contrary to earlier work on the implementation of educational change, teacher ownership from the outset of that change is not a prerequisite for teachers changing their practices and their beliefs. Also, in so doing, contrary to the claims of some education analysts, teachers considered that they had become more professional rather than less so. However, owing to the 'discourse of derision' and the manner in which the government implemented its reforms, many claimed that they were not unfortunately being perceived by the general public as more professional. As one teacher put it: 'I have to be far more professional [now] ... however I don't feel that I am recognised and treated as a professional'. Thus the changes were achieved at very considerable cost to the morale and public perception of the teaching force. The FSR project suggested that teacher confidence was beginning to return owing to the PNS, a relaxation of

pressures to implement the NLS and NNS as initially prescribed, and changes to Ofsted inspections. However, teacher confidence will be constrained and creativity and innovation stifled until teachers are released from the straitjacket of testing, school performance tables and punitive accountability measures.

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教育改革對小學教師的影響：英格蘭經驗

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摘 要

新工黨自 1997 年在英格蘭執政以來已引入許多不同教育上的改革，其中又與全球化過程所造成的經濟上與文化上的壓力明顯相關。本文旨在於分析課程及教育、評估與責任 (accountability) 勞動力重組 (workforce remodelling) 等某些關鍵性的改變對小學教師所造成的衝擊。本文中的分析主要取自於政策文件，以及一項質性研究計畫的實證，該項研究蒐集自英格蘭五十所小學的質性研究結果。以上文獻資料均可證明新工黨「高挑展、高支持」的改變策略如何顯著的改變小學教學，並為多數的小學教師視為改進過去教室練習的成功實例。然而，同時老師們也看到隨之而來的全國測驗制度 (national testing regime) 帶給學童的壓力，並對學童的學習造成傷害。此外，懲罰責任基準 (punitive accountability measures) 及晉級的學習表現成就對學校及教師本身都有其負面的影響。勞動力重組更進一步改變了教師工作的本質，有正面的幫助，但也有其缺點。為了支持教育改革的過程，原先的教師訓練及教師專業繼續 (教育) 發展也經歷本質上的改變。與教育政策分析觀點相反的是，一般所爭議的論點是中央的指導層級 (level of central prescriptions) 並未導致教師們的非技能化 (deskilling)，特別是這一批教師視教育改革主要為加強教師的知識、技能及專業性。然而，教育改革過程中政府未提供教師相關意見的諮詢服務，實踐方式所產生的壓力及責任機制的掌控運用等都嚴重地打擊教師的信心、降低教師教學的士氣並挑戰小學教師的自我認同 (self-identity)。

