

Constructing cultures of inclusion in schools and classrooms: hearing voices, building communities for learning

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Introduction

To cope with the tensions and the potential social conflicts that occur in school communities leaders need to listen to participants' voices, those of students, staff, parents and school governors in particular, recognise their interests and needs, and allow them to influence the curriculum and organisational decisions that are made. The importance of students as internal actors in the construction of a school and of schooling (Day et al, 2000; Rudduck and Flutter, 2000), and recent central government policy encouraging the development of school councils, points to a re-emerging awareness of the importance of encouraging students to take a responsible part in the government of their schools, an awareness that was largely extinguished in the 1980s and 1990s. School students have considerable impact on the construction of its culture (Marsh, 1997; Busher and Barker, 2003), whether or not they are commonly included in discourses about work-related interactions in schools and whether or not they are conventionally marginalised from discourses about school organisational process. Linstead (1993: 59) describes this as students helping to write the texts of schools, perceiving the construction of organisations as an intertextual process that takes place between the authors and actors of it and in it. It raises questions about how students' acute awareness of the processes of schooling and the many insights they have of them (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004) can be heard and acknowledged by staff at all levels in order to contribute positively to the development of a school.

Another category of people in schools whose voice is often marginalised is that of students' parents. Work by Vincent (2000) among others has underscored the importance of teachers working in partnership with parents to help develop the successful education of students. In a study by Osler et al (2000) it became quite clear that schools which were able to deal successfully with all their students were those that worked closely with their students' parents and carers to help them understand what was involved in schooling and how they could help their children to learn. Such schools were also careful to reflect the heritage cultures of those parents in the organisation of the school and, where possible, in its academic curriculum.

Creating 'good' cultures to promote engaging schooling

Concept and problems

This part of the paper considers what might be the attributes of particular cultures in schools that might be said to foster the engagement of all students (and staff) with learning. It is argued that this is composed of two main parts, that of constructing a

culture that focuses on developing teaching and learning so that the curriculum is accessible to all students in a school, and that of facilitating the inclusion of all students and their parents and carers in a school. It draws on a notion of utopianism (Halpin, 2003) to suggest that what is constructed in these schema for success are as much wish-dreams that people try to work towards as statements of what is actually happening in schools, not least because the applicability of these schema in any school will vary with the quality of practice of the different formal sub-sections or communities of the school. It is possible to have unsuccessful departments in schools that are generally well-managed as it is to have effective departments in schools that are generally poorly managed.

The development of engaging schools takes place in particular socio-political and economic contexts which influence the ways in which schools are permitted to develop by central government in England at present and influence the development of cultures in those schools. Recent legislation points to an agenda of inclusion, for example the Education Acts of 2002 and 2004, the latter focused on a policy of 'Every Child Matters' the former on the importance of developing citizenship with all children in schools. There is a model for improving teaching and learning in schools, often referred to as school improvement, that is sustained by central government through its Standards Unit for education as well as through the Department for Education and Skills.

However some of thrust of national policy is contradictory to this. For example extending the choice of schools available to parents for their children through specialist colleges and academies only gives more choice to those who can take advantage of it, or who live in areas where realistic choice of schools exists. At present there is no firm evidence that such schools raise standards of teaching and learning. The National Curriculum is arguably exclusionary for some students, especially those with learning difficulties (Benjamin, 2002) and fails to make adequate use of examples from the variety of cultural heritages extant in England in the early 21st century to make people from those heritage groups feel that their societal cultures are valued. Inclusion for children and their parents in school seems to be at a price of conformity to particular socially derived norms of behaviour that are put forward with the support of central government, limiting the flexibility with which teachers can respond to the local needs of students in their communities.

There is a shortage of joined up practice between schools and other social agencies generally in England and Wales, particularly for certain groups of children: looked-after; traveller; refugee and displaced children, where social problems are a major cause of problems that students may have with schooling. Benjamin (2002) noted that underlying causes of student exclusion relate strongly to conflicts between students' social backgrounds, and the micro-cultural work they do to position themselves in their communities, and the social expectations of their schools. In the main this leads to a considerable amount of official and unofficial exclusion of students from schools as students struggle to cope with the difficult socio-economic and emotional circumstances in which they sometimes find themselves and schools struggle to cope with them. In addition to official fixed term and permanent exclusions Osler et al (2000) found numerous examples of unofficial exclusions or unspecified absences, which some headteachers justified as creating a cooling off period for the students while alerting the parents that there was a behaviour problem.

These exclusionary cultures are constructed by people reacting to a variety of events linked to student behaviour but often these are trigger events ('headline reasons') not the underlying causes. They reflect what dominant social discourses describe as unacceptable behaviour, illustrating Foucault's view (1977) of how notions of criminality are socially constructed at particular points in time. In one LEA, Osler et al (2000) found these trigger events to be

Verbal abuse on staff (26.8%); Physical attack on staff (6.8%); verbal abuse to other students (7.1%); Physical attack on other students (23.1%); Indecent behaviour (1.5%); damage to property (6.2%); abuse of alcohol (0.4%); abuse of drugs (1.9%); abuse of solvents (0.3%); tobacco smoking (3.5%); theft (2.4%); other reasons (19.4%)

The proportions of exclusions caused by particular events are shown in parentheses. In one urban LEA an Education Officer suggested that physical aggression, much more than drugs was a common reason for exclusion. Indecent behaviour, usually by boys to girls, was an occasional cause. Arson was also cited as a major cause, but this covered everything from starting a major fire to a child being seen playing with matches.

The real causes of exclusion, explained several Education Officers in the study by Osler et al (2000), were the various social factors that underlay student misbehaviour and were rarely addressed adequately. These included students in homes suffering family crises or disturbed social circumstances; students who were former refugees; students who lacked sufficient command of English to access adequately the curriculum; students who moved frequently between schools. A particular example of the last was students who were looked-after by local authority social services. In being transferred from one foster home to another their schooling was often disrupted, and if they were in a local authority home it was sometimes difficult for a school to know whom to contact about a particular student's academic achievement or social behaviour (TES, 4 June 2004:4). Gender and race were two further relevant underlying factors. Boys were more likely to be excluded than girls: 10 times more likely in Primary schools and 4 times more likely in Secondary schools. African-Caribbean boys were generally over represented in the numbers of students excluded in proportion to their numbers in the school population, but in some urban communities other ethnic minority male students, notably those of Pakistani origin, were also over represented (OFSTED, 1996).

Developing cultures of inclusion

Developing cultures in schools that foster positive interpersonal relationships based on shared values between people working together helps to construct a sense of community (Sergiovanni 1992, 2001). This is most likely to sustain a critical dialogue about the practices of teaching and learning and the development of those to better meet the needs of all students (Smyth et al, 2000). Hopkins (2001) suggests that particular collegial cultures are most likely to promote improvements in teaching and learning, at least in a western Anglophone society.

Such cultures are likely to have the characteristics of those of improving schools claimed by Stoll and Fink (1998) which also seem to reflect the characteristics of effective schools and departments (Sammons and Mortimore, 1997). This points to synergies between successful learning communities and high achievement, not to a conflict between the two. At the core of both lies the nurturing of others to promote learning which has been put forward as one of the main purposes of schooling (Cooper et al, 2000), especially in Primary schools (Nias, 1999).

Moving towards a more inclusive culture within a school takes time. The policies most likely to support inclusion are those which are developmental, reflect current circumstances of the school, set realistic goals for the future and are constructed round strategic steps for getting from one position to the next. One of the principle tools for this is the school development plan which needs to contain policies for reducing exclusions, developing equal opportunities, especially for children with special educational needs, promoting staff development and strengthening links with parents (Osler et al, 2000). Useful models for the last can be drawn from schools which already seem to be successful in particular contexts. Demie (2004) discuss the impact of good practice on Black Caribbean students' achievement in Lambeth schools, while Driessen et al (2004) show the importance of parental involvement to students' educational achievement but point out that parents from different social backgrounds view involvement with schools differently in the Netherlands. Many from ethnic minority backgrounds, they argue, find schools a foreign place and are unwilling to get involved with them. This in turn raises questions about the nature of the relationships that teachers might have with parents and what relationships of mutual respect and shared interest they may need to build to encourage greater parental involvement. Whatever practices and policies teachers implement in their schools they need to monitor them especially to keep track of their impact on vulnerable students. One school in the study by Osler et al (2000), with a large number of Black and Asian origin students did this and was able to reduce considerably the disproportionate use of punishments, such as fixed term exclusions, with these students.

Central to the efforts of all 24 schools in a study by Osler et al (2000) to develop more inclusive practices was their behaviour policies. They were adamant that such policies needed to be clear, consistent, fair and comprehensive. Policies were clear when they were understood by everybody in a school; when they gave unambiguous guidance to students and staff about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour; when they made clear why particular types of behaviour were important and what punishments would occur if the rules of conduct were transgressed.

Consistent policies were those that are administered even-handedly amongst all those affected. Basic principles of honesty, respect, trust, hard-work, are expected of all staff and students. Behaviour issues are tackled in a simple, quick and efficient manner. So policies in schools are often enshrined in codes of practice and public morality offering institutional rules of action as well as being manifested in other rituals and language used by school members. These codes are often clearly displayed in every classroom and teachers draw students' attention to them to encourage them to work in certain ways and relate to people in certain ways. Marsh (1997) reported how students helped to build such codes of practice with the teachers in her school and how this engaged them with a positive approach to their behaviour that was based on

intrinsic understanding of values rather than extrinsic rewards and punishments. For schools engaged in promoting improvement and inclusion, such codes might enshrine, 'empathy, tolerance for diversity, and commitment to justice' (Ghosn, 1998: 67) in a school or department committed to inclusivity and social justice. In one school the school code was the acronym TRUST, which emphasised 'R'espect for others and 'S'tandards of work as well as 'T'ruthfulness and 'T'rust in each other.

Policies are seen to be fair when they meet the strong sense of justice that children have and schools try to be even-handed in implementing behaviour policies, including students as much as possible in the process and in the solutions to problems. In these cases, schools reported (Osler et al, 2000) students were much more likely to accept whatever judgements staff imposed. So codes of practice have to be applied in such a way as to take account of students' senses of justice / fairness of treatment, and try to reduce confrontations between students and staff. One school, for example found that children were continually being told off on any one day for the same offence of breaking the uniform code, which was causing friction between staff and students. The school solved the problem by getting a student's form tutor to issue a 'uniform pass' for the day if the student arrived incorrectly dressed. Once the pass had been issued the incident was closed – and dealt with by the form tutor – so the student did not have to re-explain the circumstances to other staff (Osler et al, 2000). It also has to address conflict between students and students by introducing a firm anti-bullying policy and using student mentors.

Behaviour policies are comprehensive when they focus as much attention on managing the more serious types of misbehaviour and successive misbehaviours as on less serious types. Schools often have detailed procedures for the latter but not the former, especially if they have limited experience of challenging and vulnerable students. In some cases this results in schools running out of suitable interventions and strategies or resorting too quickly to the use of fixed-term or permanent exclusions.

A common theme for many schools facing student misbehaviour, especially that of a serious nature, is that it often begins with students' inability to access the curriculum successfully. This is a particular problem for students with learning difficulties and students who are not native speakers of English. In the study of Osler et al (2000) one LEA officer suggested schools need to address this by ensuring that the curriculum is delivered in a modern way, is kept up to date, is exciting, and 'is targeted so that there is an opportunity for students who are experiencing learning difficulties to have the same opportunity of access to the curriculum as the 'high flyers' (Osler et al, 2000: 23). Some LEA officers in the study suggested that school transfer itself caused some students difficulties because of problems they experienced in adapting to the social expectations of their new schools. In one urban LEA Education Officers indicated that there was 38% rise in exclusions in 1997/98 amongst pupils who transferred from inner city Primary schools to suburban Secondary schools – parents often being encouraged to make this transfer because of the performance of the Secondary schools in the local League Tables.

In inclusive schools students are likely to be encouraged to take part in a variety of activities in and out of school, as well as developing their understandings of active citizenship through participating in school decision-making, as much through formal

processes of involvement in a school's council as through learning how to take a responsible part in engaging with school during and outside lessons. However such participation may be predicated on particular underlying cultural norms and precepts that depend on oral articulateness and various modes of interpersonal engagement that privilege some children from certain social backgrounds where such social capital (Bourdieu, 1990) is constructed as a normal part of everyday life. The problem then is how to include those children without such social capital and how to create space for them to develop it.

An important element of a school's system for promoting inclusion is its pastoral education. This needs to focus as much on individual students' needs as on sustaining the systems of a school. It provides a series of arenas where staff can listen to why students choose to act in the way they do and to understand where they are located socially and historically to make sense of the values that they hold. Knowledge of students' academic, personal and domestic circumstances provide pastoral staff with key indicators of problems and enable early intervention. These indicators might be dips in achievement, rise in absenteeism, domestic and family crises, changes in health, uncharacteristic behaviour, and bullying or being bullied. Good pastoral education in the schools in the study by Osler et al (2000) noticeably reduced the number of exclusions given to students, particularly when it was used to identify and support those students who were most at risk of exclusion.

School support staff can be a useful agency for offering counselling or other support to students and parents and have the advantage for this role over teachers that they are not obviously in an authority relationship with students. Contacts between staff and students in normal arena such as classrooms and offices for discussions can be supplemented by withdrawal areas / 'sanctuaries' that are supervised and 'timeout' opportunities for students under stress. There is however a risk that these sites become 'sin-bins' rather than part of a managed process for helping students to cope with school.

Fora have to be constructed where student and parent voices can be heard both formally and informally. The latter might take the form of using governors, perhaps particularly parent / community governors, in informal meetings with students and their parents to diffuse developing conflict situations before formal disciplinary proceedings are undertaken by getting students to explore possible solutions to a problem as well as their own contributions to it. 'Sanctuaries' and pupil referral units (PRUs), especially those on the same site as the school which a student attends, can be used to contain and diffuse students with social and emotional difficulties which can be of significant advantage for the student, the school (some classes are no longer disrupted), and the community at large (students are not truanting and loitering around or getting involved in crime). However these units are contentious for managing students' challenging behaviour and there are problems in sustaining them in terms of their costs and the integration of students' work in them with that of the rest of the school. Such units have to be carefully supervised to avoid them becoming sites where students perceive themselves as rejected from schooling, and so even less willing to engage positively with it, and further detached from the mainstream curriculum with which they may not be engaging successfully in any case.

Senior staff and teachers in schools cannot develop or implement inclusive practices and policies on their own. They need to work together as a community and with school support staff to develop whole-school approaches to inclusion. This is likely to involve them in partnerships with school governors, students, parents, local communities surrounding a school and eventually with a range of local authority services. The Children's Act (2004) in England and Wales helps to facilitate liaison between schools and other local authority agencies, not least by establishing them as part of one umbrella organisation focused on children's welfare. Partnerships also need to extend to working with other schools in an area to track vulnerable students. In the study by Osler et al (2000) several secondary schools relied on information from the Primary schools in their families to transmit information to them about students' behavioural and academic needs, especially when they were 'at risk' children. In some cases at secondary school level schools were collaborating to allow students to have lessons in both schools to reduce tension that they were experiencing in their personal relationships in one of them. It avoided students being excluded and losing contact with the formal academic curriculum.

Constructing an accessible formal curriculum

Schools make a difference by addressing social inequalities through providing a 'supportive, caring school environment that focuses on students ...[so that] all students can learn under appropriate circumstances... [that] emphasize individual effort for all students ... to ensure that each achieves the highest standards possible ..., facilitates adaptive patterns of cognition, affect and behaviour ..., [makes sure] students are engaged ... [and] teachers are effective,' (Raham, 2003: 6). Her study looked at 12 urban schools in low income districts in Canada which all served multi-cultural populations and were required to give priority of access to students living in their catchment areas, although she notes they were in competition with other public and private schools in their areas. Slee (1991:57) suggests that schools that successfully promote children's engagement have:

- A clearly articulated philosophy or statement of goals
- Clear patterns of formal and informal communications
- Democratic decision-making processes
- Systematic attention to student records (to enhance performance rather than as a surveillance mechanism)
- Parents involved as helpers, teachers and in decision-making, and students working in projects outside of the school
- School resources were available and used
- Students and teachers worked together to improve the school environment
- Senior staff took responsibility for ensuring that teachers' morale was high

Riley (2004) indicates that a school's philosophy may be secular – contained in its vision and mission statement, perhaps – or indicated by its faith traditions where it is a faith-based school. The importance of the last was indicated at Guru Nanak Secondary school in west London which received an excellent report from OFSTED in 2003 and was complemented on how its faith based philosophy of serving others had percolated the ways in which students and teacher worked with each other in

school and addressed issues of gender discrimination in local communities out of school (Shaw, 2003).

Schools and classrooms are sites for debating and developing particular values as well as particular constructions of knowledge and also act as conduits through which some values and knowledge, rather than others, are transmitted. Teachers are responsible for enacting this with their students in moral ways. Moral ways are those norms and values that are sanctioned by society and frame the way in which teachers are expected by national and local society with students. Fullan (2003) sees moral imperatives operating at every level within a school because the intention of schooling is to benefit students in terms of desirable identifiable goals and particular cultures of social and economic relationships in which are embedded certain values, whether or not these are clearly articulated. Unfortunately the assumption of homogeneity of morality between national society and its multiplicity of local communities cannot be sustained, since each community develops its own culture encapsulating norms and beliefs that reflect its core values and identity as well as national cultural values to some extent. Consequently teachers are left facing a multiplicity of demands on how they construct the curriculum with their students that reflect the multiplicity of views from the different communities that their school serves.

The scope of this problem directly translates into how teachers manage the curriculum. As one LEA officer highlighted there is a need for teachers, 'ensuring that how the curriculum is delivered is modern, is kept up to date, is vibrant and is targeted so that there is an opportunity for students who are experiencing learning difficulties ... have the same opportunity to access that curriculum as the 'high flyers' (Osler et al, 2000). In schools where teachers have overtly discussed with students various teaching models and strategies students are able to understand the appropriateness of the use of different approaches to pedagogy (Beresford, 2003). He found that such discussions helped students and teachers to develop a shared culture in which they were not afraid to ask for help and to ask for help appropriately not only about how to learn but how well they were learning (p.4). Such a culture it seemed helped students to hone their own assessment of their performance, helping them to develop their autonomy as learners. It was helped by the availability of mentors for students and of teachers willing to see students privately after classes to discuss work. Providing time for such tutorial work has implications for the organisation of a school as well as for teachers' workloads.

However to ensure a school's curriculum meets the criteria claimed by the LEA Officer above requires more than staff just talking and working with their students – and their students' parents and carers – it also needs staff in schools to acknowledge the cultural heritages of the students in their schools however these are shaped by SES, gender or ethnicity. Coles and Chilvers (2005) point out that the DfES consultation document *Aiming High* (2003) was concerned that students from Black and Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds were performing less well at GCSE than students from other ethnic groups, a view borne out by Kazmi and Hallan (2005), and that LEAs were required to address this problem in the construction of the Educational Development Plans. One cause of this may be that the content of the National Curriculum of England and Wales contains insufficient culturally relevant examples for many students from ethnic minority and faith groups. Another is that students in school often lack the opportunity to use their heritage languages as part of

the curriculum or for students from various cultural heritages to learn at least some of each other's languages. Both aspects show a lack of recognition of and valuing of students' cultural heritages, discouraging students from identifying positively with schools as a central part of their social lives. This in turn is likely to inhibit their learning, as Willis (1977) demonstrated in his study many years ago.

To address this issue of the importance of student's cultural heritages being acknowledged in the formal academic and informal social curricula of schools, Coles and Chilvers (2005) argue that school staff need to develop a culturally inclusive curriculum. This will help students of all ethnic and faith backgrounds develop an affinity with their schools, so building a sense of engagement with schooling because it helps students to that their own cultural perspectives are valued and not merely being subsumed under a centralising educational discourse that privileges particular values and discourses. Such an approach allows students to sustain legitimately a multiplicity of identities and build bridges between those, e.g. British (born in Britain) of parents born in Britain); of Indian heritage; of Muslim faith, rather than forcing them to choose between their identities. The latter generates considerable conflict in students, encouraging them to act in socially unacceptable ways when they are not sure how to meet the contradictory expectations on them (Benjamin, 2000). This also points to the need for schools to create the time and space for students of different faiths to engage in their religious practices and for other students in a school to understand what these are and why they are considered important by members of that faith. Donnelly (2004) discusses the importance and processes of constructing such a tolerant approach in multi-faith schools in Northern Ireland.

The development of such aspects of a school's curriculum, however, take time and other resources to construct them. Teachers need time to research the materials that are suitable as well as to discuss with parents and leaders of the communities which a school serves what aspects of their cultures they wanted enacted. The way that time is used by those people able to define how it should be used indicates the values they hold and makes that time not available for other activities. Constructing a timetable for a school places senior staff in a powerful position to shape the curriculum. Within its matrix of time and space teachers and students have to work. Students access to particular slots in time and space in the school day not only shaped their interactions with teachers but with other students, too. Ireson and Hallam (200x) point out that how students are allocated to classes whether through setting or streaming by academic ability gives them an indication of how valued they are by teachers, since it establishes a hierarchy of expected performance however carefully teachers disguise this. Whether or not such discrimination really improves performance seems questionable, but there is a real risk that students will perform to the level apparently expected of them by the teaching groups to which they are allocated.

Other resources teachers are likely to need in a multi-cultural school are cultural or linguistic resources, which teachers in a school may not have, to help staff use culturally appropriate material successfully. It points to the importance of schools bringing in local community members to help with these aspects, perhaps involving parents in such matters. Vincent (2000) argues that involving members of a school's local community in these ways helps to improve their engagement with schooling and raise the quality of learning undertaken by their children.

Another means by which students' heritage backgrounds can be addressed educationally is through formal schools working closely with any complementary schools that might be providing aspects of the curriculum that a mainstream school cannot provide because it does not have the resources available (Coles and Chilvers, 2005; Martin et al, 2004). Complementary schools, sometimes called supplementary schools, are voluntary schools that are usually set up by a local community to meet the educational needs of its children in its particular culture, whether this focuses on learning knowledge about its cultural heritage, its faith heritage or its linguistic heritage. The research by Martin et al (2004) found that such schools were soundly run and expected their students to take seriously their work often expecting them, where appropriate, to work towards public examinations in the knowledge taught and achieve results at as high a standard as possible. They noted, as did Coles and Chilvers (2005), that such schools seemed to build up students' self-confidence as learners because they could relate their learning to their social lives and were given parental support and public recognition for their attendance, performance and achievement in them. However, there can be conflicting demands on students time if complementary schools and mainstream schools are both expecting them to contribute an amount of study time outside the hours of schooling.

Students who struggle to access the curriculum successfully may do so for several reasons. This paper does not have the space to discuss such a topic in detail but sketches in some of the main points here of students' struggles to assert their agency when school systems may be particularly unaccommodating. It raises questions about how teachers can avert these conflicts through the ways in which they construct the curriculum with their students. The hostility and frustration such conflict generates can be a major cause of students underachieving in schools in various ways and of social and behavioural confrontations with teachers that prevent students engaging positively with schooling.

One of the causes of students gaining inadequate access to the curriculum is the result of language difficulties – having insufficient command of English, particularly if they are relatively newly arrived in Britain. The provision of learning support staff who are bi-lingual in the relevant languages along with English languages classes for the students can ameliorate this. Another cause is the variety of learning difficulties that some students may have or experience at least for a while. Central government policy tried to address this in schools in England and Wales by creating a framework for the provision of a range of special educational needs support in the education act of 1993 and the Special Educational Needs code of practice that was promulgated in 1994. For some students at Key Stage 4 with some emotional and behavioural difficulties and in some local government authorities there is provision for some students, in certain circumstances, to attend technical colleges or schools in addition to their own school to take courses that are specifically relevant to their needs or intended career plans (Osler et al, 2000).

Yet other reasons why students struggle to access the curriculum can be various emotional and social traumas that they are experiencing at some point in time as a result of any number of possible life experiences. Osler et al (2000) argue that the development of Pupil Referral Units (PRU), especially where they are on the same site as the school that the student attended normally help to give students a place

where they can temporarily escape from the tensions they are experiencing but remain in contact with the curriculum.

Constructing the social curriculum

If teachers construction of the academic curriculum with students is heavily constrained in state schools in England and Wales by the National Curriculum and the other aspects of central government education policy, they have far more freedom to construct a social curriculum with their students. However this curriculum is bounded by the cultural norms and beliefs of the macro-society and the local communities in which teachers' schools are embedded.

Whatever is done to make more accessible the academic, physical and aesthetic aspects of the curriculum to students its is unlikely to be successful if it merely addresses instrumental matters of time, space and resources and does not consider the quality of relationships developed between staff and students. Although teachers are of major importance in this process as well as in the provision of engaging pedagogy so, too, are the midday supervisors and other support staff who regularly interact with students and sometimes their parents. The quality of staff relationships with students that seem to be successful in helping students to have a positive attitude to schooling are said by Hopkins et al (1997: 10) to have the following qualities:

- Authentic relationships – the quality openness and congruence of relationships existing in the classroom
- Boundaries and expectations – the pattern of expectations set by the teacher and the school of student performance and behaviour within the classroom
- Planning for teaching – the access of teachers to a range of pertinent teaching materials and the ability to plan and differentiate these materials for a range of students
- Teaching repertoire – the range of teaching styles and models available for use by a teacher, dependent on student, context curriculum and desired outcome
- Pedagogic partnerships – the ability of teacher to form professional relationships within and outside the classroom that focus on the study and improvement of practice
- Reflection on teaching – the capacity of the individual teacher to reflect on his or her own practice, and to put to the test of practice specifications of teaching from other sources

These qualities generate mutual respect between staff and students and a willingness for staff to listen carefully to students' voices, however uncomfortable may be some of the things that they say, and work with students to implement an agreed culture. This culture is based on justice and equity – codes that bind student behaviour being equally applicable to staff - and an agreed agenda of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Many disaffected students find school a sad and worrying experience. Some are worried about doing badly in class or in examinations and then getting into trouble from teachers and parents for it. Others find school a tedious experience with school work being perceived as boring or incomprehensible Riley and Rustique-Forrester

(2002). The main importance for some of these students in coming to school was to be with their friends, regardless of what they achieved academically. And many of them as both Benjamin (2002) and Riley and Rustique-Forrester (2002) report did not expect to achieve much at school because of the way they had been marginalised either from the main processes of schooling by setting or streaming, or being placed in special classes or units, or because they had no hope of achieving those benchmarks which the school set as targets for students to gain positive recognition.

If students have a clear view of what is poor quality teaching and schooling they also seem to have a clear view of what is good quality. An example of their views on this are set out in the Figure below. However they also have broader understanding of what constitutes successful schooling. As part of a research project on schooling in disadvantaged areas Grace et al (1996) reported on a school in Cleveland that was considered to be effective by OFSTED. They found students welcomed being in a school with strong support in the local community from parents and other community based organisations. They welcomed being in a caring and ordered community. In this the emphasis on care derived from Roman Catholic and Christian values, although the school was a state comprehensive school. This manifested itself in part in the quality of the buildings and work environment on which students commented enthusiastically.

Students' perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' teachers

'Good' teachers	'bad' teachers
Helpful and supportive	Mean and unfair
Taking the time to explain material in depth	Unwilling to help or explain material and ideas beyond instruction
Friendly and personable	Judgemental of pupils' [sic] parents and siblings
Understandings and know the subject well	Routine and unchanging in their teaching styles and methods
Using a variety of teaching styles and innovative approaches	Inflexible and disrespectful of pupils[sic]
Fair and having equal standards and expectations of pupils, regardless of their test scores	Unaware of and unsympathetic to pupils' personal problems
Willing to regard pupils for progress	Physically intimidating and verbally abusive

Riley and Rustique-Forrester (2002: 30)

It also manifests itself in the way in which teachers are willing to become involved with students in a variety of activities outside those formally conducted in the classroom. Students welcome this and the way that the pastoral care system and organisation of student groups academically acknowledged the dignity of the individual. The discipline system was perceived by students as strict but fair but Grace et al (1996) claimed it worked in a low-key manner: Students approved of the way in which the school was led, perceiving the teachers and headteacher working

collaboratively together, and the headteacher being clearly visible both in the school and as a teacher. They remarked favourably on his enthusiasm for supporting them and their concerns, and for promoting a positive public image of their school. They were proud to be part of a school that was successful academically and sportingly and that advertised this to the local community. This is in sharp contrast to the views of students in schools said to be failing by OFSTED, who thought they were of little worth because the school had failed its inspection (Benjamin, 2002; Busher and Barker, 2003).

Part of this social curriculum is helping students to develop as autonomous learners who spend sometime working in groups and problem solving or in independent activities during formal lessons. According to Beresford (2003) students welcome this sense of independence since it helps to give them a sense of ownership of their work. However this requires teachers to move from delivering knowledge to students to becoming expert in guiding students to build up their conceptual understanding of a subject. This, in turn, gives students the tools to make choices and decisions about what constitutes successful learning and how to evaluate that. Teachers also have to give students training in how to learn successfully in different ways, for example developing an appreciation of what are more and less successful modes of group work, and how those ways can be monitored effectively. Beresford (2003) points out that if students are not helped to acquire the learning skills needed for independent learning they can waste a lot of time and generate a lot of disruptive behaviour. Joyce et al (1997) point out that different people have different preferred approaches to learning and so will learn more effectively if they are using these.

Another part is the quality of relationships that teachers develop with their students. Students are especially appreciative of teachers who take a personal interest in them and their development (Busher, 2002; Beresford, 2003). They seem to develop stronger collaborative working relationships with such teachers, at least in England and Wales. What would constitute appropriate teacher – student relationships in other and non-Anglophone cultures needs to be researched carefully. These positive relationships are especially important for allowing teachers to develop trust with students and build up their positive views of whatever subject it is on which they are working. This allows teachers and students to develop a clear perspective on students' competence at particular subjects or topics within subjects unclouded by distractions about the quality of relationship between teacher and student.

Such relationships seem to be powerfully constructed when students claim to experience a sense of justice in the moral codes and practices of a school and in the way its lessons are managed and its corridors policed. Marsh (1997) suggested that one way to help generate this was for teachers to negotiate the rules of behaviour for their classes with their students. Having been involved in developing such rules, she claimed students were much more willing to accept such rules and to enforce them. Consequently the behaviours and interpersonal relationships that teachers model not only with students but also with their colleagues, especially in public arenas such as corridors, is important form helping to form such a culture in school. Day et al (2000) suggested that the interpersonal skills of senior staff as well as teaching and support staff were an important element in helping shape students' views of schooling.

Yet another part of this social curriculum is empowering students' voices. Since 2002 central government in England and Wales has required schools to set up school councils to provide a forum where students can express their views on how their school is managed and make suggestions about how its social structures might be modified. This is projected as part of central government policy to teach citizenship in schools, giving students the opportunity to experience engaging in some of the consultative processes that they are likely to experience in the macro-society as adults. It is supposed to allow students to help shape the policies of a school but in view of the pressures on schools to meet targets of performativity and the tight constraints that schools face from central government on the construction of the curriculum and on pedagogy, it is possible that it will only serve to make more visible to students the limits of their and their teachers' influence over the curriculum and other aspects of school policy and so engender more rapidly the cynicism about consultative processes that many of their adult colleagues have already acquired when schools are managed in certain ways (Busher and Saran, 1992).

Ranson (2000) discusses the importance of listening to students' voices, the social construction of students' views by students, if students, especially those already marginalised by various social processes, are to avoid being further excluded and disadvantaged socially through their engagement or, more accurately, lack of engagement with the school system. Ranson (2000) argues that exclusion from school and from the curriculum at whatever level is a denial of citizenship. It is for schools, he argues, to help students develop a critical voice so they can make the most of the opportunities schools offer. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) take the argument a step further, pointing out that this level of engagement in schools is essential if students are to experience schools as democratic institutions reflecting the wider democratic structures and processes of society in England and Wales, i.e. for the rhetoric of citizenship in the curriculum to be enacted and learnt by students through their experiences. However, Fielding (2004) acknowledges that developing the practice of hearing student voices is problematic because it challenges current distributions of power in schools if it is to be introduced effectively rather than cosmetically. It raises questions about how people are able to present themselves in what arenas they are able to speak for themselves (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2003) and which policies and practices existing organisational and social power structures permit them to discuss and influence. Allowing student voices to be heard successfully means they have to speak directly in the dialogues, normally dominated by staff, and powerful members of staff at that, about the construction of the school as a community (Fielding, 2004).

Building partnerships with parents

A key aspect of developing the social curriculum is for staff in a school to build positive and mutually supportive partnerships with parents. Closer relationships between parents and schools seem to raise the quality of work in the classroom (Carney, 2004). In part this may be because of parental acceptance of a school's philosophy as manifested in its codes of practice and vision of what is involved in being a member of the school community (Shaw, 2003). In part it may be because schools are able to find a variety of ways of involving parents working in schools voluntarily or in a paid capacity, either in the classroom, directly supporting learning, or in a work room preparing resources, or in a clerical capacity – or using other skills

which they possess. It can also involve schools finding space for parents to use rooms for meetings and social intercourse during the school day or using other school facilities such as accessing the internet (Nesbitt, 2004) when these are not needed by students. It encourages parents to develop a sense of ownership of a school.

Helping parents to engage with schools to support the development of their children is a much broader perspective than encouraging them to support a school's homework policy or to support school's behaviour policies under the Home School Agreements Guidance (DfEE, 1998). Agreements set up under this scheme to date seem only to be bland monitoring devices (Ouston and Hood, 2000) which have tended to be gender and race blind. Crozier (2000) complains that the model put forward by this guidance assumes that all parents have the same needs when working with schools and their children can be treated in the same ways. The problem is greater for those children who do not have parents but are reliant on carers, and often a shifting collection of carers, to look after their interests with schools.

Helping parents to engage with schools, then, has to take account of the diversity of their backgrounds, ethnically, linguistically, culturally, socially and educationally. Osler et al (2000) found that the parents of school in a very disadvantaged urban area, many of whom were recently arrived in England, had little idea of what was involved in schooling in England, a weak grasp of English, and a limited understanding of various aspects of the curriculum or of central government policy on that curriculum. As a result they were not able to give guidance to their children on how to engage successfully with school. Faced with the problem, the school ran a series of classes for parents, either as informal seminars or as one on one discussions, so that they could understand what schooling in England involved, and so required of and offered to them and their children.

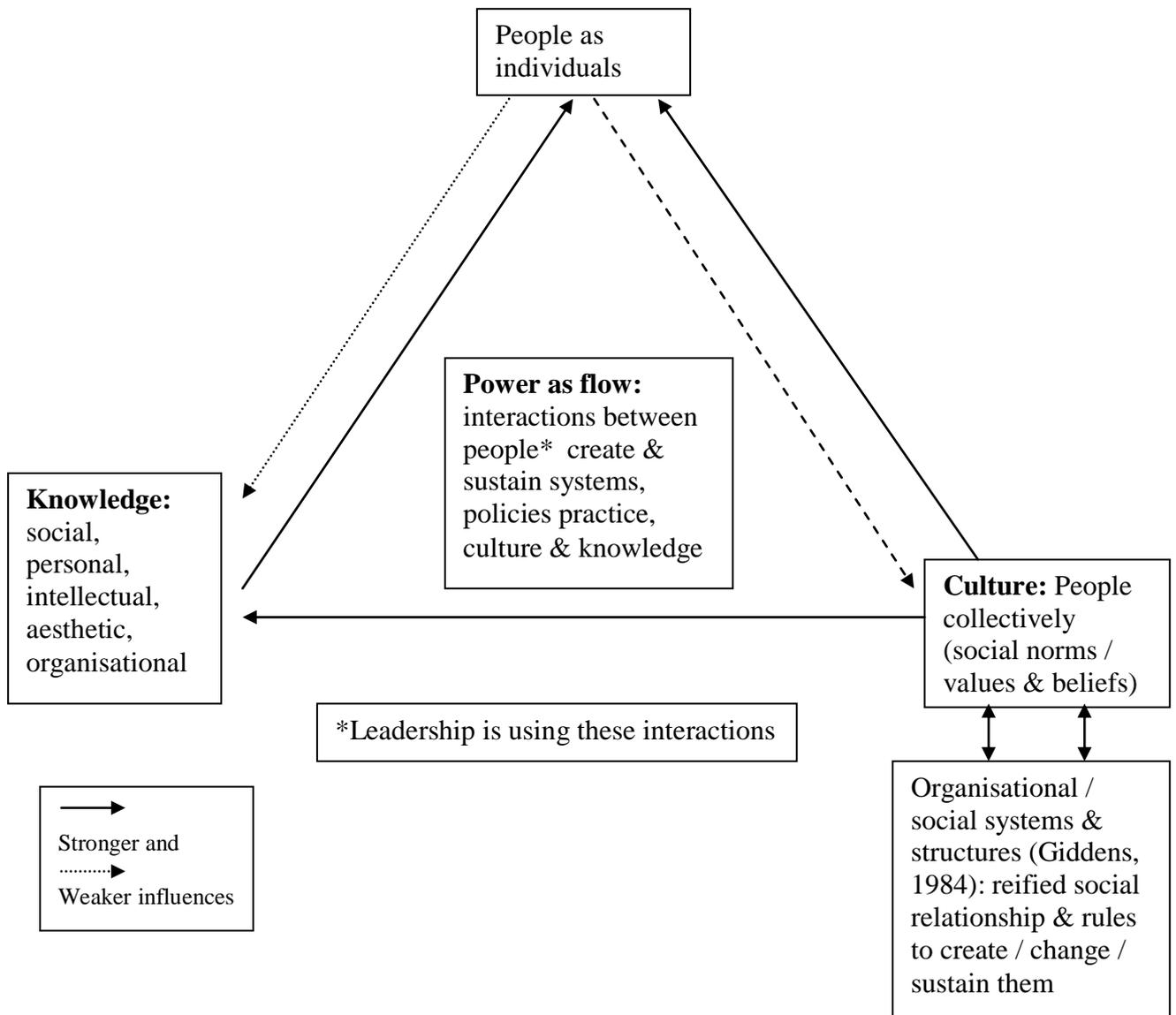
However as Crozier (2000) points out, parental participation can be potentially threatening to professional control of a school, especially when parental views are at odds with the manifested values and cultures of a school or when there are a diversity of values and views in the parent body. This may explain why schools try to engage with parents in a variety of different ways (Vincent, 2000), some of which may appear to be tokenism or simply supporting school policies, such as homework, and only some of which might be construed as a genuine partnership of teachers and parents. The last model overlooks the range of social and cultural capital which different parents have and raises questions about how far it potentially discriminates against those who lack the capital to engage fully in such deliberative and democratic approaches to running schools. Unless handled sensitively, the risk is that a school promoting this model will make parents not able to subscribe to it feel inadequate. So teachers need to find ways in accepting and welcoming parents to join in with school that recognises the differences that parents bring to that task and helps them to understand more clearly how they and their children can engage successfully with it.

Making sense of complex social processes: linking systems and post-structural / critical thinking to explain leadership in educational organisations

If the foregoing discussion shows the complexity involved in making sense of social processes in schools that are central to helping students to engage successfully with

schooling and become effective learners, the following diagram attempts to extract the essence of that complexity to indicate what forces are interacting dynamically through the agency of people in schools, be they teachers, support staff, students, parents or governors, and whether or not they hold formal posts and have differential access to formal power (authority) within those hierarchical institutions.

Making sense of complex social processes:



This argues that although individuals help to construct cultures and sub-cultures in schools and departments and groups of people (communities), individuals are themselves shaped in their choice of action and expressed values and beliefs by the communities of which they have membership – if they wish to retain memberships of those communities. Cultures and subcultures are part of organisations, but can also be synonymous with organisations and their departments since both are constructed by their members present and historic in particular socio-economic and political contexts.

For schools, members are all those who have agency including staff, students and parents – and some other stakeholders, too, who are wholly or partially of a school and interact with it through their roles in the local communities that a school serves. Not every body has equal influence, however over the construction of these cultures, some people being more influential in this, whether because of their formal authority in a school or department or because of their access to other sources of power (Busher, 2001).

The construction of cultures and sub-cultures is shaped by the asymmetrical power relationships that pertain at any one time in a school, as well as by the historic and contextual influences on that school or department or group of people in a school. Power then is a flow (Foucault, 1986) that emerges through the variety of interactions in which people engage. These cultures and the relationships between members of the communities of which they are an expression are dynamic, not static, changing through time as circumstances and membership change. How people construe the values and beliefs that they want to create in their communities depends on the knowledge and social capital they hold (Bourdieu, 1990) and have constructed through their formal and informal learning processes in a wide variety of contexts, including their homes, schools and local communities through their developing histories and biographies. However as Foucault (1963) points out what counts as knowledge is shaped by powerful forces and people in society choosing to define it in particular ways at particular points in time. So knowledge and what counts as socially acceptable knowledge, for example those subjects in which public examinations are held or what craft knowledge is described in national discourses as socially useful, is culturally constructed: what should be taught to children of certain ages in schools and to some extent how it may be taught and learnt – what constitute appropriate pedagogies for certain students – is culturally and socially defined.

Some ethnic, social class and faith groups in society have greater influence over this construction than others. Where students have not been part of this construction either formally or implicitly through the communities of which they have membership, they are likely to feel alienated from the processes of knowledge construction as well as from the prescribed knowledge itself, wondering what is its relevance to them, their values or their anticipated future lives. The processes of constructing inclusion in schools help students to gain some ownership of the processes of knowledge production by allowing them to shape its relevance to their lives. In so doing it is argued they are likely to become less disaffected from schools and schooling and more engaged as citizens both in school and in the local communities of which they are part.

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