

# Education Policy

Education policy is high on the agenda of governments across the world. global pressures focus increasing attention on the outcomes of education policy and on their implications for economic prosperity and social citizenship. The experience of each individual learner is therefore decisively shaped by the wider policy environment. However, there is often an underdeveloped understanding of how education policy is formed, what drives it and how it impacts on schools and colleges. This book explicitly makes these connections and links these to the wider challenges of educational leadership in a contemporary context.

*Education Policy: Process, Themes and Impacts* is divided into three sections and explores and links three key aspects of policy:

- ‘Policy and Education’ focuses on the development of policy at the level of both the nation-state and the individual institution.
- ‘Themes in Educational Policy’ explores the forces that shape policy with a particular emphasis on the themes of human capital theory, citizenship and social justice and accountability.
- ‘The Impact of Educational Policy’ illustrates how policy develops in practice through three research-based case studies, which highlight the application of policy in a range of situations from the development of school-based policies in multi-ethnic communities to the formulation and implementation of strategic policy and planning in international contexts.

The book develops a powerful framework for policy analysis and seeks to apply this to the formulation and implementation of policy in a range of international settings. In so doing the authors make an important connection between theoretical frameworks of policy analysis and the need to anchor these within an evidence base that is grounded in empirical research.

*Education Policy: Process, Themes and Impacts* is part of the Leadership for Learning series that addresses contemporary and major themes within educational leadership, including: policy, leadership, human resource management, external relations and marketing, learning and teaching, and accountability and quality. The series aims to provide a valuable resource for students, practitioners, middle managers and educational leaders in all sectors, both in the UK and internationally, who are engaged on masters and doctoral degrees, or undertaking leadership training and preparation programmes

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# Education Policy

## Process, Themes and Impact

Les Bell and Howard Stevenson

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**This book is dedicated to Sue and Kate in appreciation of  
their tolerance and support and to Steven, Georgina and Tom  
with best wishes for their future**



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## Series editors' foreword

Leadership and learning are proving enduringly crucial concepts in contemporary debates on policy and practice regarding improving performance and achievement in education. In this Series, we marry the two. Leadership in education is, after all, about steering educational organizations in ways that improve student learning. In putting this Series 'Leadership for Learning' together, the Editors had a number of aims. First, they saw the need for a collection of books that addressed contemporary and major themes within Educational Leadership and Management. Secondly, the approach to these themes needed to be both scholarly and up to date in engaging contemporary academic debates and practitioner problems and issues. Thirdly, promotion of a scholarly approach in turn meant that we attached considerable importance to coherence of argument in each volume. This was more achievable, we decided, by having a series of authored and co-authored rather than edited books. Fourthly, the series should be research-based, with discussion where possible grounded in empirical evidence and contemporary research. Fifthly, the volumes needed to capture and engage contemporary practical problems and issues experienced by practitioners in all sectors of education – primary, secondary, post-compulsory and even higher education. Since many of these problems and issues cross international boundaries, the series should have an international appeal. Finally, the practical problems and issues were best engaged, we believed, through a rich variety of lenses, including competing and complementary theories and concepts, some of which might be contested. We wanted to capture Educational Leadership and Management as a field riveted with a rich diversity of theory, research evidence, views and interpretations – but above all, a field of great importance to improving the quality of educational organizations and the performance and achievements of students and professionals who work within them.

In achieving the above aims, we have identified six themes, each of which provides the basis for a volume. In part, the conceptualization of the texts and their themes addresses the emerging international agenda for leadership development – both in academic institutions and by national accreditation bodies such as those in the UK, USA and Australasia. The six are: policy, leadership, human resource management, external relations and marketing,

learning and teaching, and accountability and quality. To write the volumes, we have assembled an impressive list of authors with the proven experience, expertise and ability.

The intention underpinning the Series is to provide a valuable learning resource for a wide and diverse set of people. The volumes are directly relevant to students and educational leaders, both in the UK and internationally, many of whom are engaged on masters' and doctoral degrees such as those organized by the University of Leicester's Centre for Educational Leadership and Management (CELM). More widely, they will appeal to academics and researchers in education and to a large practitioner body of teachers, middle and senior managers, including headteachers and principals in primary, secondary, post-compulsory and higher education in many countries. Large numbers of aspiring and experienced leaders undertaking leadership training and preparation programmes, such as those of the National College for School Leadership in the UK, will also find the Series invaluable. We dedicate this Series to all leaders and learners and those willing to lead by learning.

The focus of this the first text in the series is on policy in education. This is a substantial and scholarly analysis of a topic that has been comparatively neglected in recent years. The authors, Les Bell and Howard Stevenson, both of the Centre for Educational Leadership and Management at the University of Leicester, create an impressive conceptual analysis of the topic which, in turn, informs and illuminates an exploration of their own extensive research. The writers argue that it is vitally important to recognize that educational leadership is shaped decisively by the wider social and political environment, and by the power relations within an organization. A key purpose of the volume is, therefore, to explore the relationships between policy development at institutional level, the impact of local context and the influence on these of the macro-policy environment. Those in leadership positions face a particular challenge as they often represent the interface between the organization and the external policy environment. Thus the importance of policy on leadership and the role of leadership in mediating policy is manifest in the whole of this wide-ranging text.

The series editors are delighted that the first text in the series sets out a challenging and articulate analysis of policy issues both nationally and internationally. They are confident that this text will provide a theoretical framework and benchmark for the subsequent texts in the series.

Clive Dimmock, Mark Brundrett and Les Bell

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Much of the material in Chapter 3 was presented at the Athens Institute for Educational Research Conference and was subsequently published as Bell, L. (2004a) 'Throw Physic to the dogs. I'll none of it! Human Capital and Education Policy – An Analysis' in Lazaridou, A. (ed.) *Contemporary Issues on Educational Administration and Policy* Athens Institute for Education and Research, 2004: 187–208. We are grateful for permission to use that material in this volume. An earlier version of Chapter 6 was presented in a paper, 'The role of principals in strategic planning in primary schools in Hong Kong and England: a comparison' at the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management Regional Conference, *Educational Leadership in Pluralistic Societies* Hong Kong and Shanghai, 20–26 October 2004 with Daniel W. K. Chan and was published in *International Studies in Educational Administration* in September 2005. The research on which Chapter 6 is based was partly funded by the National College for

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# Introduction

## Education policy, themes and impact

This book is about educational policy but it is not an educational policy book in the traditional sense. It is recognized that:

There was a time when educational policy as policy was taken for granted ... Clearly that is no longer the case. Today, educational policies are the focus of considerable controversy and public contestation ... Educational policy-making has become highly politicised.

(Olssen *et al.* 2004: 2–3)

Nevertheless, this book does not seek to explore in detail the extensive philosophical and ideological underpinnings that have shaped educational policy over time although it does consider briefly liberalism, neoliberalism and the emergence of the new right. Nor does this book examine in detail governmental policy-making processes. It does not explore the minutiae of the legislative procedures that are used to formulate and implement policy. It does not examine extensively the complex relationships between the state, the local administrative bodies and educational institutions. These matters are not ignored. Indeed, they provide a coherent framework for considering policy at a range of different levels and developing an international perspective, albeit a limited one, on educational policy, its themes and its impact.

This book sets out to examine an important but limited number of interconnected themes that can be identified within educational policy making over the last two decades. Two main themes, human capitalism and citizenship and social justice are linked with a third set of themes, markets, choice and accountability, to provide an analysis of the dominant discourses that have shaped educational policy in many countries across the world. Within this context, aspects of school leadership and management will be considered in order to establish the extent to which the work of school leaders is shaped by such themes and how far school leaders can interpret, modify or create policy at an institutional level.

Policy studies in education have tended to take one of three forms:

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- 1 The development of broad analytical models through which the policy process can be understood and interpreted.
- 2 Analyses of a range of policy issues.
- 3 Critiques of specific policies.

These relatively fragmented approaches often fail to provide a cogent account of the policy process within a clearly articulated framework for analysis. It is often difficult, therefore, for those studying policy and for those working in schools that are subject to educational policies to make sense of the policy contexts within which they have to operate. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that those working in schools are not merely passive receivers and implementers of policy decisions made elsewhere. In many cases, they are able to shape the policy process, especially at institutional level.

The main purpose of this book, therefore, is to analyse such policy issues and policy implementation. It is based on the assumption that the policy process may pass through a variety of stages and can take place at a number of different levels. Policy development therefore is not a simple case of understanding the priorities, or indeed the whims, of governments or individual school leaders. Policy must be seen as a dialectic process in which all those affected by the policy will be involved in shaping its development. Policy development is therefore both a continuous and a contested process in which those with competing values and differential access to power seek to form and shape policy in their own interests. To this end, a model for analysing policy formulation and implementation is established which informs the analysis throughout this book.

This book will also seek to bring a limited but important international dimension to this analysis within the framework of the model. Bottery (1998 and 2000) has sought to define policy in terms of global trends and to explore the impact of those trends on the professional values of educators. In so doing, he is one of the few to try to develop an international perspective on educational policy. Although the importance of globalization is recognized in this book, the intention here is to provide a more detailed analysis of specific trends that appear to have a part to play in shaping education policy in a number of different international contexts. It is not intended to undertake a comprehensive international analysis here. Rather, where relevant international examples are available, they are considered as part of the analysis. This inevitably means that choices have had to be made and that, in some chapters, the international dimension is much more evident than it is in others.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One, *Policy and Education*, explores the nature of policy and begins to identify some macro level issues related to policy formulation and implementation. The first chapter in this section, Chapter 1, poses the question, 'What is educational policy?' and introduces the central argument of the book, that policy is derived from

values that inform the dominant discourses in the *socio-political environment* and the values that are derived from that discourse. Policy trends emerge based on these discourses that establish the *strategic direction* for policy and translate this into broad policy that is then applied to different domains such as health, economy and education. The parameters for policy in any one of these spheres of activity is defined by the *organizational principles* and the *operational practices and procedures* which are the detailed organizational arrangements that are necessary to implement the policy at the regional or even institutional level. The second chapter in the first part, Chapter 2, examines the concept of the state and the relationship between the state and its institutions. It is argued that the nature of educational policy is, to some extent, derived from assumptions about political processes. Policies shaped by pluralism may be significantly different from those determined from a structuralist perspective. The relationship between the educative process and the state and assumptions about the purposes of education all shape the nature of policy.

Part Two, *Themes in Educational Policy*, considers some of the main themes that appear to drive educational policy making in many countries. The opening chapter, Chapter 3, explores one of the most pervasive of these themes, the relationship between education and human capital. It argues that as the emphasis on economic utilitarianism as a rationale for educational policies increases in significance, then equity issues become subservient to the economic imperative. Closely linked to, but different from, arguments about economic utility are concerns for citizenship and social justice. Chapter 4 shows how the contested notions of citizenship and national identity are often informed by both globalization and economic utilitarianism to provide a rationale for a range of educational policies, and considers how this might influence perceptions of equity and social justice. In Chapter 5, a further theme is identified as the trends towards greater accountability, increased choice opportunities and developed autonomy are explored. Accountability, autonomy and choice emerge as themes in educational policy in a number of different forms. Whilst policies to promote accountability have developed differently in different countries, accountability now assumes a dominant position in the global educational agenda. This chapter explores the variety of forms in which accountability is manifested in specific policy contexts, focusing on accountability through the operation of market forces, choice, school-based management and performance appraisal.

Part Three, *The Impact of Educational Policy*, looks at the implementation of specific policies in particular contexts at the local and institutional levels. It is important to recognize, however, that policy responses are shaped by cultural context. Therefore, the themes and specific policies chosen reflect issues that are of international concern and they are illustrated with reference to research drawn from a range of different countries and contexts. The first chapter in this section, Chapter 6, draws on research on strategic leadership and management in primary schools in the UK and Asia. This chapter explores

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the deployment of forms of strategic planning as part of the policy process in Hong Kong and England and shows how the strategic direction of policy can be modified or even challenged through organizational procedures and operational practices adopted at school level. In Chapter 7, the impact of a specific policy introduced in England, Education Action Zones, is explored, showing how a national policy initiative is often largely dependent for its implementation on local decisions and locally determined procedures. Chapter 8 draws on empirical evidence to assess how school leaders develop micro-level policies in response to social and cultural diversity in many communities. The final chapter re-considers the nature of educational policy in the light of the themes and case studies explored above.

The entire book is based on the assumption that education policy making is a dynamic process in which the nation state exerts power and deploys resources in conjunction with regional, local and even institutional agencies. The nature of the relationship between these participating, perhaps competing, agencies may change over time according to the dominant discourses in the socio-political environment and the resultant policy decisions. For example, in England the policy process has passed through at least four stages over the last 40 years (Bell 1999a). The Social Democratic Phase, 1960–73, was typified by a partnership between national and local agencies and relative autonomy over the curriculum at institutional level. The Resource Constrained Phase, 1973–88, saw a breakdown of the relationship between national and local agencies with more control shifting to the centre and more direct relations being established between the state and institutions. The Market Phase, 1988–97, was exemplified by the diminution of the powers and functions of local agencies, devolution of financial autonomy to institutions within a centrally controlled curriculum and rigorous accountability mechanisms. In the Excellence Phase, 1997 to date, the central control of the state and the tightly monitored accountability mechanisms remain but have been extended to include pedagogy and pupil performance. In other countries similar shifts can be found. The pattern in New Zealand and some states in Australia has been similar to that in England (Grace 1997). In Hong Kong, the establishment of a Special Administrative Region has increased devolution to the institutional level and loosened some aspects of central control (see Chapter 6). In France, the state is devolving greater autonomy over pedagogy to the institutions, while in Singapore this is also happening, but within a much more centralized system. Thus, the policy-making process must not be treated as a set of immutable relationships between its constituent parts. Rather, it is an ever-evolving pattern of relationships and it is to closer consideration of these relationships that we now turn in Chapter 1.

## Part I

# Policy and education

The first part of this book considers the nature of policy and the particular nature of education policy within its wider social, political and economic contexts. It considers theories of the state, the levels at which policy is developed and implemented, issues related to power and influence in policy formulation and the importance of values in shaping and implementing policy. An interest in the macro policy environment inevitably focuses attention on the role of the state. Although there is significant variation in state formations between nations, the state almost universally has a key role in the provision and/or regulation of education services. 'State policy', whether national or local (or increasingly supra-national), therefore has a considerable impact on shaping what happens on a daily basis in schools and colleges, and the lived experiences of those who study and work in those establishments. The role and influence of the state in educational policy is explored further in Chapter 2, as is the relationship between the state and individual educational institutions. To what extent do those who work in educational institutions enjoy the latitude to generate and develop institutional policies that may be at odds with state agendas? In this first chapter, it is argued that policy development is not a self-contained, linear or rational process – rather it is likely to occur at a range of levels almost simultaneously. This has implications for the organization of educational institutions and for their leadership and management.



# 1 What is education policy?

## Introduction

In recent years interest in 'leadership' has burgeoned and consequently studies of educational leadership have proliferated. Research around the world is contributing to an increasingly rich understanding of how educational institutions are led and managed. However, it is important to recognize that educational leadership does not exist in a vacuum – it is exercised in a policy context, shaped decisively by its historical and cultural location. It is important, therefore, that studies of leadership adequately reflect this wider policy environment:

it is essential to place the study and analysis of school leadership in its socio-historical context and in the context of the moral and political economy of schooling. We need to have studies of school leadership which are historically located and which are brought into a relationship with wider political, cultural, economic and ideological movements in society

(Grace 1995: 5)

Grace (1995) argues against a reductionist approach to the study of educational leadership, in which quasi-scientific management solutions are developed with little regard for contextual specificity. There is also a tendency to detach studies of leadership from studies of power (Hatcher 2005). Rather, it is important to recognize that educational leadership is shaped decisively by its wider environment, and by the power relations therein. The nature of that environment will be formed by a multiplicity of factors unique to each institution – these may range from local 'market' conditions to the impact of global economic pressures. What is certain is that within education, across phases and across continents, the policy context impacts decisively on shaping the institutional environment. A key purpose of this volume is to explore the relationships between policy development at an institutional level, the impact of local context and the influence on these of the macro-policy environment. An interest in the macro-policy

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environment inevitably focuses attention on the role of the state. Although there is significant variation between nation states in virtually all countries the state has a key role in the provision and/or regulation of education services. 'State policy', whether national or local (or increasingly supra-national), therefore has a considerable impact on shaping what happens on a daily basis in schools and colleges, and the lived experiences of those who study and work in those establishments. The role and influence of the state in educational policy is explored further in Chapter 2.

All those working in schools and colleges must make sense of their policy context. Policy agendas require a response as those in the institution are faced with the task of implementing policy directives. Those in senior leadership positions face a particular challenge as they often represent the interface between the organization and the external policy environment. Key decisions must be made relating to the interpretation and implementation of external policy agendas – those decisions will in turn reflect a complex mix of factors including personal values, available resources and stakeholder power and perceptions. Understanding and anticipating policy therefore becomes a key feature of 'leadership' (Day *et al.* 2000) – understanding where policies come from, what they seek to achieve, how they impact on the learning experience and the consequences of implementation are all essential features of educational leadership. To some extent it may be argued that in recent years studies of 'leadership' have supplanted studies of policy. This in part reflects the emergence of a managerialist agenda in which institutional leadership and management is often reduced to a technical study of the 'one best way' to deliver education policy objectives determined elsewhere within the socio-political environment and legitimated by a dominant discourse which may be located outside the immediate sphere of education (Thrupp and Willmott 2003). Policy is treated uncritically and denuded of its values, neglecting to assess how policy impacts differentially on different social groups. The importance of policy, as distinct from leadership, is recognized in this volume, but a simple dichotomy between leadership *or* policy is avoided – the key issue is to explore the relationship between the interdependent themes of leadership, policy and power. This volume acknowledges the importance of leadership, but seeks to make the case that leadership must be located within a policy context. A failure to fully understand the complex ways in which policy shapes, and is shaped by, leadership fails adequately to explain the actions and practices of leaders at both the organizational and operational levels.

Key practitioners in schools and colleges, rather than being passive implementers of policies determined and decided elsewhere, are able to shape national policy at an early stage, perhaps through their involvement in interest groups, professional associations or their favoured position in government policy forums and think-tanks. In other cases, influence may be exerted at an institutional level as the organizational principles and operational practices through which policy is implemented are formed and

re-formed. Leaders in educational institutions, therefore, are both policy implementers and policy generators.

For these reasons it can be more accurate to describe a process of policy development, rather than use the more traditional, but less helpful, term of policy making. Sharp distinctions between policy generation and implementation can be unhelpful as they fail to account for the way in which policy is formed and re-formed as it is being 'implemented'. The term policy development also more accurately conveys the organic way in which policy emerges. This is not to argue that policies develop in entirely serendipitous ways. On the contrary, an important theme of this book is to argue that policy is decisively shaped by powerful structural forces of an economic, ideological and cultural nature. Nevertheless the crucial role of human agency in the development of policy must be recognized. Furthermore, if institutional leaders do not mechanically implement policy from the state, nor do those studying and working in educational institutions mechanically implement the policies of their institutional leaders. Policy is political: it is about the power to determine what is done. It shapes who benefits, for what purpose and who pays. It goes to the very heart of educational philosophy – what is education for? For whom? Who decides? The point is well made by Apple:

Formal schooling by and large is organized and controlled by the government. This means that by its very nature the entire schooling process – how it is paid for, what goals it seeks to attain and how these goals will be measured, who has power over it, what textbooks are approved, who does well in schools and who does not, who has the right to ask and answer these questions, and so on – is by definition political. Thus, as inherently part of a set of political institutions, the educational system will constantly be in the middle of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy, over definitions of legitimate authority and culture, and over who should benefit the most from government policies and practices.

(Apple 2003: 1)

The questions posed by Apple are steeped in values – the values of individuals and the values embedded in wider societal institutions and structures. It is through these values that policy develops. This conception of policy seeks to reflect the complexity of the policy development process. The argument here is that it is not possible to understand what is happening in our educational institutions without developing an understanding of policy that reflects both its multi-stage and multi-tier character. This process may be considered to have neither a beginning nor an end. Schools and colleges are constantly engaged in developing their own policies as they seek to both pursue their own internal objectives and respond to the external policy environment. Policy making as a process is therefore not something that

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happens exclusively ‘up there’, but is something that happens ‘down here’ too. Those working in schools and colleges are simultaneously engaged in making sense of the policies of others, and forming policies of their own – two processes that in reality are more than interdependent – they are separate elements of a single process. Developing a conceptual understanding of these processes is a pre-requisite for developing a better informed theoretical and empirical understanding of what is happening in our schools and colleges. This provides the basis for the study of policy – policy analysis.

### Policy analysis as the study of policy

The central concern of this volume, policy analysis, can take a number of forms, for example the development of broad analytical models through which the policy process can be understood and interpreted, analyses of a range of policy issues or critiques of specific policies. Gordon *et al.* (1997) identify several types of policy research, each of which falls within a continuum which they characterize as either analysis *for* policy, or analysis *of* policy. This is represented in Table 1.1.

*Policy Advocacy* – refers to research which aims to promote and advance either a single specific policy, or a set of related policies.

In some cases policy advocates argue from their findings toward a particular conclusion, which is offered as a recommendation. In other cases, where a very strong commitment to a particular course of action predates the research, whatever analysis was conducted may have been designed, consciously or unconsciously, to support the case to be argued.

(Gordon *et al.* 1997: 5)

*Information for policy* – this type of research aims to provide policy makers with information and advice. It is premised on the need for action (tackling a commonly perceived problem, for example) and may suggest the introduction of a new policy or the modification of an existing one.

*Policy monitoring and evaluation* – this is a common form of policy research, particularly in the current climate of high level accountability and the need to justify actions undertaken. Gordon *et al.* (1997) point out that public agencies frequently perform monitoring and evaluation functions in

Table 1.1 Analysis *for* policy and analysis *of* policy

<i>Analysis for policy</i>		<i>Analysis of policy</i>		
Policy advocacy	Information for policy	Policy monitoring and evaluation	Analysis of policy determination	Analysis of policy content

Source: Gordon *et al.* 1997: 5

respect of their own activities, although some may be facile and uncritical. Most monitoring and evaluation research is concerned with assessing impact, although it can go beyond this with a deliberate aim of influencing the development of future policy. Evaluative research will often make claims to objectivity, but it is important to recognize that 'evaluation is a motivated behaviour' (House 1973: 6) and the highly politicized environment within which policy evaluation research takes place can present very distinct methodological challenges for researchers of educational policy (Walford 1994 and 2001).

*Analysis of policy determination* – here the emphasis is very much on the policy process – not on the impact of policy, but on how policy developed in the precise way that it did. Such research can give a vital insight into explaining how and why specific policies emerged in the final form they adopted.

*Analysis of policy content* – Gordon *et al.* (1997) argue that this research is conducted more for academic interest rather than public impact and here the emphasis is on understanding the origin, intentions and operation of specific policies. The common approach to this type of research is to utilize a case-study format and this raises important questions about the appropriateness of methods in policy research (Halpin and Troyna 1994).

These distinctions can be helpful in identifying approaches to policy research, but they do not, on their own, shed light on the complexity of policy development processes. Policy analysis within education must be capable of recognizing the many different levels at which policy development takes place, the myriad range of educational institutions involved and the importance of specific cultural contexts. For example, legislation passed by a central state is clearly an example of 'government policy'. A policy developed at an individual state school may fall within a broader heading of public policy, but what of policy developed in a private school, independent from, but regulated by, the central state? A model of policy analysis must be capable of illuminating policy development in all these diverse and various contexts. Taylor *et al.* (1997) suggest that a simple summary of policy analysis is the study of what governments do, why and with what effects. This can be a helpful starting point as long as it is recognized that such analyses must embrace institutions at all levels of the education system and must be capable of including institutions that are effectively part of a public system, even if they are not formally in the public sector. Taylor *et al.* (1997: 37) go on to identify a number of questions that can form the basis of policy analysis, and which are capable of handling the diversity of contexts identified. These are:

- What is the approach to education? What are the values relating to the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy?
- How are the proposals organized? How do they affect resourcing and organizational structures?

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- Why was this policy adopted?
- On whose terms was the policy adopted? Why?
- On what grounds have these selections been justified? Why?
- In whose interests? How have competing interests been negotiated?
- Why now? Why has the policy emerged at this time?
- What are the consequences? In particular, what are the consequences for both processes (professional practice) and outcomes?

Using these questions as a starting point, Taylor *et al.* (1997) develop a framework for policy analysis. This focuses on three aspects of policy: context, text and consequences.

*Context* – refers to the antecedents and pressures leading to the development of a specific policy. This requires an analysis of the economic, social and political factors that give rise to an issue emerging on the policy agenda. However, it goes beyond this and includes a study of the role played by pressure groups and social movements that may have forced policy makers to respond to the issue in the first place. At this point it is important to understand how the policy may relate to previous policy experience – to what extent does it build on, or break with, previous policy? Clearly, an analysis of context can take place at any level. Policies at the state or institutional level (or indeed anywhere in between), will have their own context and including this within the analysis is vital if the aim is to build up as full a picture as possible of the policy process.

*Text* – broadly refers to the content of the policy itself. How is the policy articulated and framed? What does the policy aim to do? What are the values contained within the policy? Are these explicit, or implicit? Does the policy require action, if so what and by whom? It may be worth highlighting that analysis of the policy text is not a simple and straightforward activity. There is considerable scope for interpretation, even in the most explicit of policies, and it is as important to identify the ‘silences’ (what is not stated) as well as what is clearly and openly articulated.

*Consequences* – if policy texts are open to differing interpretation by practitioners then this is also likely to result in differences in implementation. Such differences will then be magnified, as the unique conditions prevailing in each institution further shape the implementation of the policy. Distortions and gaps appear in the implementation process, resulting in what is best described as ‘policy refraction’.

Taylor *et al.*’s (1997) analytical framework focusing the context, text and consequences of policy offers a model for policy analysis that will be used throughout this volume. However, in order to understand more fully how educational policy shapes and is shaped by the actions of those who have the responsibility for implementing it, further dimensions need to be added to this analytical framework. These take account of both how the content of policy emerges from the economic, social and political factors that give rise

to an issue, explore more fully the consequences of policy and focus in more on the processes of moving from policy formulation to policy in practice.

The proposed addition to this framework has four levels: the *socio-political environment* from which policy, based on the dominant discourse, is derived and within which its overarching guiding principles are formulated; the *strategic direction* which emanates from the socio-political environment and which broadly defines policy and establishes its success criteria as they apply to spheres of activity such as education; *organizational principles* which indicate the parameters within which policy is to be implemented in those spheres of activity; and *operational practices*, based on the organizational principles, which are the detailed organizational arrangements that are necessary to implement the policy at the institutional level and to translate such policy implementation into institutional procedures and specific programmes of action. Thus, in terms of translating policy into practice, the four levels are in a hierarchical relationship, the first two being concerned with policy formulation and the second two with policy implementation. The four levels are nested (Barr and Dreeben 1983) in the sense that educational policy, derived from the wider socio-political discourse, is mediated through the formulation of a strategic direction in the national and regional context which, in turn, generate organizational processes within which schools are located and curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment determined. In this way, policy legitimized and derived from, for example, human capital theory, is translated into activities in the school and classroom.

It can be seen, therefore, that an analysis of the debates within the socio-political environment that give rise to educational policy can facilitate a

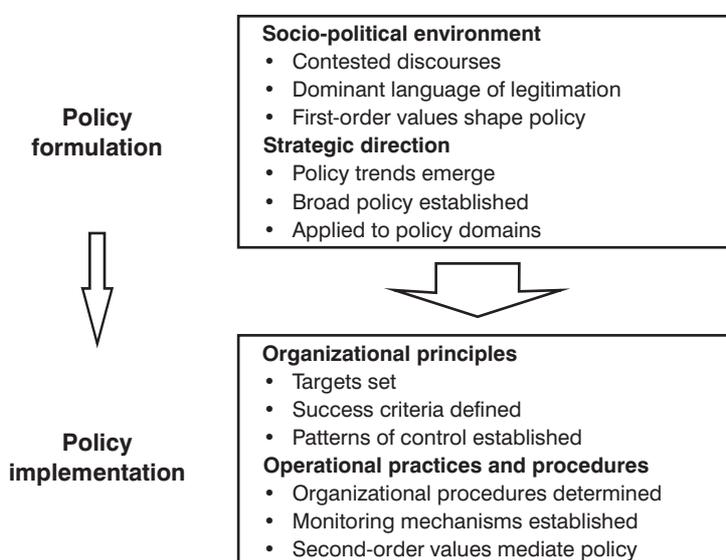


Figure 1.1 Policy into practice: a model

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more detailed understanding of the context element of the Taylor *et al.* (1997) framework. The strategic direction and organizational principles provide further insight into the text of policy, its aims and purposes, while an examination of operational practices will focus attention on the consequences of policy, its interpretation and implementation. Subsequent examples will illustrate these processes at both a macro and micro level and highlight the need to see the boundaries between these analytical descriptors as fluid and porous. The conception of policy developed here is one that rarely lends itself to neat and simple models. However, before engaging in this analysis it is important to clarify more precisely what it is that is being discussed – the question that now needs to be addressed – what is ‘policy’?

#### **Perspectives on education policy**

It may be attractive and convenient to be able to offer short and succinct definitions of the concepts being analysed but this is seldom possible or helpful, and a discussion of policy is no exception. The range of conceptual issues embraced by the term policy are too broad to be confined to a single, pithy definition – rather it is necessary to develop an understanding of policy that reflects the breadth and complexity that the reality of policy analysis entails. One common approach is to conceptualize policy as a programme of action, or a set of guidelines that determine how one should proceed given a particular set of circumstances. Blakemore (2003: 10), for example, presents a definition of policies as ‘. . . aims or goals, or statements of what ought to happen’. This distinction between objectives and ‘statements of what ought to happen’ echoes a similar distinction identified by Harman (1984) between policies as statements of intent, and those that represent plans or programmes of work. Hence, Harman argues policy is:

. . . the implicit or explicit specification of courses of purposive action being followed, or to be followed in dealing with a recognized problem or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals. Policy can also be thought of as a position or stance developed in response to a problem or issue of conflict, and directed towards a particular objective.

(Harman 1984: 13)

For Harman, therefore, it is important to recognize that policy is systematic rather than random. It is goal-oriented and it is complex – it is the co-ordination of several courses of action, and not one discrete activity. However, in both Blakemore’s and Harman’s argument the emphasis is on policy as a product – as an outcome. The limitation of seeing policy only as a product is that it disconnects it from policy as a process – there is a failure to see policy as *both* product *and* process (Taylor *et al.* 1997). Furthermore, this conceptualization of policy is de-coupled from the context from which

it is taken – what is the purpose of the policy? What is it trying to achieve? The notion of policy as the pursuit of fundamentally political objectives is recognized in Kogan’s study of educational policy making in which he refers to policies as the ‘operational statements of values’ – the ‘authoritative allocation of values’ (Kogan 1975: 55) and this helpfully locates policy within a context of wider fundamental questions that have already been identified – what is education for? Who is education for? Who decides?

The service that Kogan provides is to place values at the centre of understanding policy. Kogan identified four key values that underpin and inform educational policy – educational, social, economic and institutional values. In his study he distinguishes between basic and secondary values with educational, social and economic values being considered as instrumental, or basic, and institutional values being considered as consequential or secondary. Kogan asserted that a basic value is one that ‘requires no further defence than that it is held to be right by those who believe it’ (1975: 53). Secondary, or instrumental, values are justified by the extent to which they support, or further, the advancement of basic values. ‘The basic values are self-justificatory “oughts”. The secondary values are concepts that carry the argument into the zone of consequences and instruments and institutions’ (Kogan 1975: 54).

The suggestion of a hierarchy of values is helpful in so far as it can shed light on the relative importance of different factors that drive policy – some of these policy drivers are discussed in more detail in Part 2 of this volume. Kogan’s highly authoritative study of the policy-making process in England and Wales presents a thoroughly researched study of the development of education policy in a period characterized largely by cross-party consensus and a commitment to the expansion of educational provision (Simon 1991). This was a period of social and political consensus in which an accommodation between capital and labour, the emergence of Keynesian economic management and the development of a substantial welfare sector provided the basis for a social democratic settlement. This phase of broad political consensus was therefore effectively a period of values consensus in which it was argued that the development of welfarism had presaged a new era of citizenship based on the developments of new social rights (Marshall 1950). As a result of this consensus, studies of policy such as Kogan’s, viewed the values underpinning policy as largely unproblematic. Policies were presented in terms of achieving objectives, or solving problems – negotiation and compromise through the policy process would result in a coalescing of views and values. The process was both technical and rational. The corollary of this analysis was a largely linear view of policy development whereby problems were identified, solutions developed and strategies and interventions then implemented. Such an approach to policy making is located within the pluralist tradition that sees the role of political institutions as reconciling the competing demands and expectations of different interest groups. Conflict is not denied, but it is not seen as inevitable, and it is

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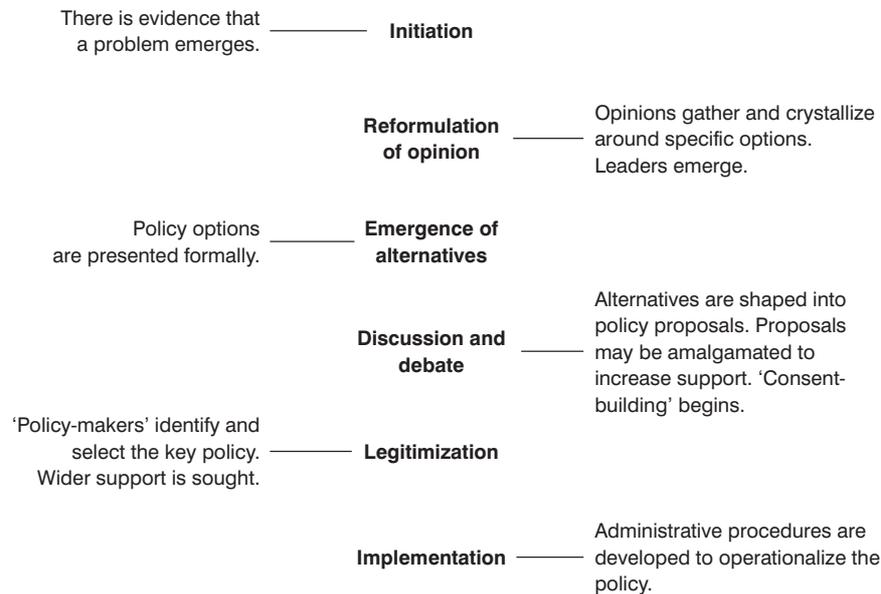


Figure 1.2 A linear model of policy development

certainly seen as manageable. The consequence of this analysis is a logical, sequential approach to policy making typified by Jennings's (1977) model in Figure 1.2.

This view of policy, and the policy process, has several strengths. Its emphasis on the internal workings of policy-making bureaucracies, especially at a governmental level, can provide an important spotlight on the internal workings of public administration. It can also reflect the key influence of important actors in the policy-making process. However, in several respects it provides an inadequate model of what constitutes policy, and how policy is both shaped and experienced by those involved at all stages in the policy process. Policy emerges from political pressures and is contained within a political system whose purpose is to transform 'group conflict over public resources and values into authorized courses of action concerning their allocation' (Harman 1984: 16). Conflict is recognized, but exists within tightly defined parameters. Power is acknowledged, but it is rarely problematized. Sources of power are rarely discussed and little attention is paid to the (unequal) distribution of power. Similarly, the pluralist emphasis on institutional policy processes tends to privilege the generation of policy, but has less to say about implementation.

It may be accurate to characterize the period about which Kogan (1975) was writing as a period of consensus but there can be no such claim made today. Traditional assumptions are challenged by rapid economic and social change. Change brings winners and losers. If policy is to be conceived in terms of the operational statements of values there must be a recognition

that those values are continually being contested, with ensuing conflicts ebbing and flowing. It is important to recognize that policy must be viewed as both product and process (Taylor *et al.* 1997), and that conflicts over values are played out as much, indeed more so, in the processes of policy development as in the policy text itself. Bowe *et al.* (1992) argue that within the traditional pluralist framework the artificial separation of generation from implementation, and the privileging of the former at the expense of the latter, results in an over-simplified model of the policy process that fails to reflect the complexity and ‘messiness’ of policy formulation and implementation. They argue that linear approaches to policy making, such as those presented by Jennings, ‘portray policy generation as remote and detached from implementation. Policy then “gets done” to people by a chain of implementers’ (Bowe *et al.* 1992: 7).

In contrast Bowe *et al.* (1992) argue that policy as both product and process is continuous and that policy is still being made, and re-made, as it is being implemented.

In a very real sense generation and implementation are continuous features of the policy process, with generation of policy . . . still taking place after the legislation has been effected; both within the central state and within the LEAs and the schools.

(Bowe *et al.* 1992: 14)

Bowe *et al.* (1992) assert that as policy is ‘made’ it is constantly being recontextualized and therefore rather than policy development as a linear process it should be seen as a cycle, made up of ‘policy contexts’. This critique points to a wider conceptualization of policy that takes as its starting point the notion of policy as the operationalization of values, but recognizes that there is no automatic consensus around what those values might be. Ball (1994) seeks to conceptualize policy as both text and discourse. Policy as text emphasizes the manner in which policies are presented and interpreted – in literary terms, how the policy is written and read. The literary analogy can be helpful in illustrating how policies may have both multiple authors and multiple readers. Authorship of the text involves encoding policy in complex ways – ‘via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations’ (Ball 1994: 16). However, the de-coding of policy texts by multiple readers ensures a multiplicity of interpretations. Readers have their own contexts – their own histories and values. All of these factors shape how policies may be interpreted by readers:

The physical text that pops through the school letterbox, or wherever, does not arrive ‘out of the blue’ – it has an interpretational and representational history – and neither does it enter a social and institutional vacuum.

(Ball 1994: 17)

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Ball's notion of policy as text emphasizes the capacity of those writing and reading the policy to shape its form at the strategic, organizational and operational levels. This highlights the scope for actors in the policy process to exert some element of agency over the development of policy. In determining actors' responses to policy there is 'creative social action, not robotic reactivity' (Ball 1994: 19). However, whilst acknowledging the scope for individual and collective agency, there is also the need to recognize that policy responses are also shaped by wider structural factors and these powerfully circumscribe the capacity of individual actors to shape policy. This introduces Ball's notion of policy as discourse in which he argues that the way in which policies are framed and the discourses that develop around policies, shape and constrain the scope for individual agency. Ball draws on the work of Foucault and argues that discourses provide a parameter within which notions of truth and knowledge are formed. The actions of actors take place within such parameters. However, the factors that shape such discourses are not value neutral, but reflect the structural balance of power in society: 'Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority' (Ball 1994: 21). Such an approach to policy analysis recognizes the importance of human agency – the capacity of individuals to fashion their own future, but is arguably better placed to reflect powerful structural pressures, such as the economic imperative to develop human capital, that have a decisive influence on driving policy. The chapters in Part 2 of this volume illustrate the importance of these discourses in shaping the socio-political environment within which policy develops.

Ball's two-dimensional approach to policy reinforces the need to see policy as both product and process. Policy can now be seen as not only the statements of strategic, organizational and operational values (product) but also the *capacity* to operationalize values (process). Conceptualizing policy in these twin terms emphasizes the intensely political character of policy. Policy is about *both* the identification of political objectives, *and* the power to transform values into practice through organizational principles and operational practices. This emphasis on policy as process recognizes that values by definition are not neutral. They are contested and often the subject of negotiation, compromise and conflict. In this conception of policy, power, conceived of as largely unproblematic in pluralist analyses, moves centre stage. For these reasons it becomes important both to articulate a conception of power and to offer some insights into the exercise of power.

### **Policy as the operationalization of values – understanding the nature of power**

Understanding the link between educational leaders and the development of policy is a central concern of this volume. It has already been argued that policy development is not a neat process in which educational leaders simply

digest policy from above and translate it into practice in the institution. Rather, policy development is fuzzy, messy and complex. It is the product of compromise, negotiation, dispute and struggle as those with competing, sometimes conflicting, values seek to secure specific objectives. Educational leaders are not simply faced with making sense of policy 'from above', but also the demands and aspirations from those below. Individuals and collectivities within organizations will naturally seek to shape policy and these pressures create a pincer movement in which educational leaders must seek to reconcile both external and internal pressures for, or in opposition to, change. In such circumstances the capacity of organizational leaders to secure policy changes, or resist them, will reflect a complex balance of power between the leader and those from within and outside the organization. It is important therefore to set out a broader conceptualization of power that can be helpful in explaining policy development processes at micro and macro levels.

Pluralist conceptions of power have tended to conceive of power as the ability of an individual to assert their will over the resistance of another. This draws on the Weberian notion that 'power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests' (Weber (1922) quoted in Dahl, 2002: 10).

The political theorist Robert Dahl (1957) has argued therefore that C (the 'controlling unit') can be considered to have power over R (the 'responsive unit') in so far as C can compel R to do something that R would not otherwise do. This conception of power emphasizes the importance of decision-making processes, and accords power to those whose will prevails in these decision-making processes. The corollary of this is the need to establish decision-making structures that accord equal access to policy-making procedures. Such a framework provides a useful entry point to discussions about power, but critics have argued that it provides an over-simplistic analysis of decision-making structures. Bachrach and Baratz (1962) for example argue that the focus on formal decision-making structures neglects the extent to which power is reflected in the selection, or perhaps more importantly the non-selection, of issues about which decisions are being made:

Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's preferences.

(Bachrach and Baratz 1962 in Haugaard 2002: 30-1).

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Bachrach and Baratz's A corresponds to Dahl's C and their B to Dahl's R. Bachrach and Baratz (1962) therefore place considerable emphasis on the capacity of those with power to control the policy agenda by determining precisely what issues are, or are not, opened up for discussion and debate, and ultimately for possible decision making. In such circumstances there may be pressures for change (from within, or without, the organization) that those with power are able to effectively exclude from the agenda. This provides an important example of how those with power are able to begin to shape the socio-political discourse within which policy debates are framed. Such an approach clearly develops the more limited pluralist perspective of power by emphasizing 'two faces' of power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). However, Lukes (1974) is critical of both the pluralists and Bachrach and Baratz for focusing excessively on the observable behaviour of individuals. According to Lukes, power is often more subtle and more elusive than the pluralists and their early critics suggested. First, power is often exercised through collectivities of individuals and not individuals acting independently. Indeed, individuals in such collectivities may not appreciate they are in a position of power at all. This emphasis on collective power can create organizational bias that can shape decision-making spaces, but often in opaque ways. Secondly, Lukes questions whether power is only evident when there is apparent conflict, that is when A is compelling B to do something that B is opposed to doing. Might power be exercised in situations where both A and B appear to pursue the same objectives? These concerns led Lukes to add a third dimension to the developing conception of power in which he argues that A has power over B if A is able to influence B's thinking in such a way that B wants what A wants. This is not a case of crude brainwashing but rather the subtle and largely systemic way in which individuals' views about their interests, and indeed their values, are shaped. It highlights the importance of the socio-political environment within which notions of 'common sense' (Gramsci 1971) are formed and in which policy is subsequently developed. It particularly focuses on the way in which the state, and agencies such as the media, are able to construct the parameters within which policy debate takes place.

Lukes's three dimensions of power provide a useful framework for analysing power at both a state and institutional level and can usefully be applied to the model of policy development presented in this chapter in Figure 1.2. It highlights both the multi-faceted nature of power, and the manner in which power may be exercised collectively and systemically. The emphasis on power as not only an ability to shape the policy agenda, but as the capacity to shape how that agenda is perceived, highlights the centrality of understanding how policy 'problems' are presented and defined. Policy 'solutions' are then shaped decisively by those who are able to define the problem, and set the parameters within which solutions might be considered possible. This provides a broad conceptualization of power that is utilized to support policy analyses throughout this volume. However, such an approach

still suggests a hierarchical down flow of power, and this fails to adequately reflect the way in which policy may be formed and re-formed by challenge from below, as well as by imposition from above. The four-stage model of policy development presented in this chapter points to a policy trajectory that flows downwards from the central state. This reflects the pivotal importance of the state and state power in shaping education policy (discussed more fully in Chapter 2). However, such a policy trajectory is never clear cut. Policy may be contested and challenged as it is developed and will be shaped and re-shaped by pressures from below as well as pressures from above. It is helpful, therefore, further to develop an analysis of power that recognizes that flows of power can be multi-directional, rather than simply and mechanistically flowing from the top-down. Bachrach and Lawler's (1980) differentiation between authority and influence as two distinct forms of power can provide a useful contribution to the analysis at this point. Authority is bounded by bureaucratic rule-making processes with a clear expectation that subordinates will implement the decisions of superiors – willingly or unwillingly. Its power source is invested in the role an individual holds and their location in the hierarchy. A headteacher clearly has a significant level of authority based purely on their role and the commonly shared views about the legitimacy of this role. These perceptions are not static – they are in turn contested – but they exist in some form at some point in time. Authority represents a downward flow of power. In contrast, influence may be considered multi-directional and therefore includes the possibility of those subordinate in the policy-development process being able to shape the decisions of those more senior in the hierarchy. Sources of influence are more diverse and more fluid than sources of authority. Bachrach and Lawler (1980) suggest they may include personal characteristics, expertise (the possession of specialized information) and opportunity (derived from a strategically important location in the structure or organization). Recognising the importance of influence as a form of power allows for a more complete picture of policy making at several levels – one in which decisions are seen as the outcome of continuous interaction between individuals and collectivities:

While authority may be a prime source of social control, influence is the dynamic aspect of power and may be the ultimate source of change. Those in authority typically want to restrict the influence of subordinates; subordinates typically want to use influence to restrict the exercise of authority by superiors ... while authority is inherently an aspect of hierarchy, influence is not. The context of influence need not be superior-subordinate relations; in fact, influence is the mechanism through which divergent subgroups without authority over one another may compete for power within an organization.

(Bachrach and Lawler 1980: 30)

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Bachrach and Lawler's study is concerned with identifying the conditions in which work groups and interest groups in organizations combine together, and from which coalitions emerge. Such groups may be informal and *ad hoc*, or may be more formalized, allowing for example for the possibility of acknowledging trade union influence on policy development at both state (Barber 1992) and institutional levels (Stevenson 2005). The nature of such coalitions will inevitably be bound by context. Workplace trade union organization for instance may be accepted and relatively commonplace in some contexts (Stevenson 2003a), it may be virtually absent in others. All of these differences will influence the extent to which policy may be re-shaped at an institutional level in differing contexts.

Bachrach and Lawler (1980) highlight the dynamic and shifting nature of coalition building. Coalitions emerge, develop and potentially fade in response to shifts in the local context. Principally, coalitions are formed to generate influence either in pursuit of, or opposition to, change. Change is the impulse that drives this dynamic. Change, by definition, undermines the *status quo*. Existing practices are often questioned, traditional assumptions can be threatened and values may be challenged. Change is seldom neutral – there are winners and losers, those who benefit from proposed policy changes and those who pay. It is therefore a process that requires action and will generate reaction. The tensions and conflicts that flow from these responses therefore need to be seen as inevitable and not irrational, as Ball (1987) argues:

... it is not surprising that innovation processes in schools frequently take the form of political conflict between advocacy and opposition groups. Either in public debate or through 'behind the scenes' manoeuvres and lobbying, factional groups will seek to advance or defend their interests, being for or against the change. Negotiations and compromises may produce amendments to initial proposals, certain groups or individuals may be exempted, trade-offs arranged, bargains arrived at.

(Ball 1987: 32)

Policy can therefore be presented in part as the analysis of change and the way in which change is managed. Change may be inevitable – but there is no inevitability about how change is experienced. Those with power are often able to shape the way the 'real world' is perceived – to define the problem, to set the limits within which solutions might be acceptable and even to select and impose specific solutions. The value of the analyses presented above is to link policy and change, but to recognize that change is not neutral. Policy, as one of the ways in which people experience change, will inevitably be contested, and its outcomes shaped by the consequences of macro and micro-political processes in which competing groups seek to shape and influence policy. Empirical studies in Part 3 of this volume provide examples of how policy is shaped by these micro-political manoeuvrings.

## Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the complex nature of policy, and pointed to the inadequacy of overly simple definitions of policy and descriptions of the policy process. What is understood by ‘policy’, how it is conceptualized, requires a broad understanding of a range of inter-related processes. What is often presented as policy is frequently no more than a statement of intent, a plan of action or a set of guidelines. At one level the purpose of such policies may appear clear, but it is important to locate policy within a wider context. Policy is about the power to determine what gets done, or not done. These are profoundly political issues. Those presenting policy will interpret its content differently, and those receiving policy will do similarly – a single ‘policy’ may be better understood therefore as a plurality of policies that emerge and develop as the policy process moves from formulation to implementation. The model presented in this chapter, and applied throughout this volume, identifies a four-stage process that begins by recognizing the importance of the wider socio-political environment in shaping the discourse within which policy debate is conducted. From within this discourse, a strategic direction develops in which specific educational policies become more clearly defined, and success criteria are established. As policy texts emerge with greater clarity this in turn shapes the organizational principles, and ultimately the operational practices, that shape the experience of policy at an institutional level.

In reality this is not a tidy linear process in which policy progresses obediently from one stage to the next. Differences in emphasis, differences in interpretation and differences in attitudes to policy are ever present and will in large part reflect the differences in values that underpin policies – policy being seen, in Kogan’s (1975) terms, as the authoritative allocation of values. Conflicts over policy represent struggles between opposing values sets. This chapter has highlighted the centrality of values to an understanding of policy and the need to see policy as both product and process. Policy therefore can be seen as *both* operational statements of values, *and* as the capacity to operationalize values through the ability to exert influence at key points in the four stages of policy development. Those values are clearly the values of individuals – values are, after all, those beliefs and principles that individuals hold most dear. They provide both a lens through which the world is viewed, and they provide a moral compass that shapes actions and responses to the environment (Begley 2004). However, values do not float free of the environment in which they are enacted. Values are constantly being shaped, formed and re-formed. Pluralist approaches to policy development emphasize the extent to which values are able to shape policy, but it is also important to recognize how policy can shape values (Bottery 2004a). This is an iterative process (Giddens 1984) that raises important questions about where power lies. To what extent are individuals free to shape policy, or to what extent might the influence of individuals be shaped

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by more powerful structural factors? This chapter has identified a number of concepts relating to the nature of power that help develop an understanding of policy as both a product and a process in which access to resources of power can decisively shape the development of policy. The centrality of power in the policy process highlights the need to explore further the sites of policy development – principally the state and the institution. What is the relationship between the two and how does the relative balance of power impact on the development of policy at both state and institutional level? These issues are explored in the following chapter.

## 2 Investigating the sites of policy development

### Introduction

In Chapter 1 it was argued that policy-making processes do not lend themselves to a simple dichotomy between formulation and implementation. It can be helpful to distinguish between the two but is more useful to see both elements as part of a seamless process in which implementation is as important as formulation. Policy development provides a more useful term to describe policy as not only product, but also as a process that rarely has an identifiable beginning or end. However, it is important to understand the context in which policy development takes place – how policies emerge, how they form and take shape, and how they become lived through the actions of those engaged in the policy development process. This chapter focuses on two key sites of policy development – the state, and the individual institution, and seeks to make connections between the two. It introduces the question, addressed in different ways throughout this volume, about the extent to which those working in educational institutions may be considered to enjoy any meaningful autonomy to develop organizational principles and operational practices independent from the state. The state is often represented as the source of educational policy. It is indeed the case that much policy experienced by educational institutions located in both the public and private sectors derives directly from state legislation and directives – a point emphasized by Dye's (1992) description of policy analysis as the study of what governments do, and why. Furthermore, the tendency towards policy centralization (Simon 1988 and 1991), evident in many countries (Smyth 1993), has emphasized the need to reflect the pivotal role of central government in shaping policy. However, the link between state policy and institutional practice remains complex and it is important, therefore, to develop a broader understanding of the state that acknowledges the myriad functions and purposes of state activity.

However, it is also important to focus on the individual educational institution because this is the point that represents the interface between the wider policy environment and the individual learner. Those working in institutions must both make sense of policy from outside, and generate

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policy within. These are of course not disconnected processes. Policy within is shaped decisively by policy from without. But what is the nature of the link between the two? To what extent are those working in institutions able to shape their own policy agendas, or to what extent can institutional policy be considered to be driven by state policy? How are values manifest in state policy and how far are 'state values' reflected in the organizational principles and practices of individual institutions? These questions raise fundamental issues about the nature of power at both state and institutional level. This chapter explores the respective roles of the state and institutions, and the inter-relationships between leadership and power, in the policy-development process.

### **The state and policy development**

The concept of a pluralist approach to policy making introduced in Chapter 1 can be located in a broader theoretical approach to analysing the role and purpose of the state. Pluralist approaches to the state and policy development have tended to represent the dominant discourse within much policy analysis (McNay and Ozga 1985), however the relevance of such analyses are limited by a number of factors, not least the almost exclusive focus on western liberal democratic systems. Pluralist conceptions of the modern state emphasize the role of state institutions in representing and reconciling the competing and sometimes conflicting interests in society. In modern societies where mass participation in democratic institutions is not practical, institutions need to be developed that are able to give voice to diverse interests, and to provide mechanisms for resolving tensions between interest groups. The pluralist model presents the role of government as using democratic processes to ensure that state policies reflect majority views within society. In this sense a key role of the state is to reconcile competing values positions, and to cohere these in to a consensual articulation of communal or societal values. The pluralist perspective therefore place a premium on the capacity of people participating in political processes to shape policy as 'operational statements of values' (Kogan 1975). State decisions derive their legitimacy from the robustness of the democratic processes involved. In this system political parties and pressure groups are crucial to the democratic process. These organizations articulate the collective aspirations of different interest groups and represent these views in governmental institutions. Those who are more effective at securing their objectives may be considered to be more powerful. Power is conceived in relatively limited terms as the capacity for one individual, or group, to compel another individual or group to take action that they otherwise would not have done (Dahl 1957). This has lead some pluralists to argue that a study of policy-making processes, and more specifically the outcomes of these processes, can allow researchers to make judgements about where power lies (Polsby 1963).

Pluralists do not argue that power is equally distributed. For example, Dahl's (1982) later work develops and presents a more sophisticated understanding of the unequal balance of power between different interest groups. However, pluralism emphasizes the importance of having democratic structures that provide access for all social groupings to decision-making bodies and the policy process. These structures allow social groupings to compete for influence in their bid to shape state policy. Political decisions that flow from this competition for influence are then the result of complex bargains and compromises that have been struck in order to gain sufficient support for the policies to be advanced further. This analysis casts the state in the role of rational arbitrator, seeking to accommodate the diverse and competing interests that are articulated by different social groupings. The state is not the representative of any particular interest group, but rather acts to balance interests between groups. Tensions between social groupings are not denied within the pluralist model, on the contrary, the state is seen as having a key role in reconciling conflicting interests. However, conflict is expected to be exercised within the 'rules of the game'. Such rules, effectively the 'rule of law', are considered neutral and not to favour any specific interest group. Before questioning the adequacy of this approach it is important to set out more precisely what is considered as 'the state'.

Thus far the terms 'state' and 'government' have been used interchangeably, but it is important to distinguish between the two and recognize that the activities of the former are far broader, and more significant, than the latter. Dale (1989: 54) refers to 'state apparatuses' and defines these as 'specifiable publicly funded institutions'. This definition of the state generates a list of state institutions that includes government ministries, but goes beyond this to include the military, the police and the judiciary. In the case of some of these institutions, there may appear to be considerable autonomy between the state and government. Governments, largely organized through political parties and coalitions of parties, represent public interests outside the state and may be considered 'to mediate the State and its subjects together' (Dale 1989: 53).

It is also important to recognize that the state can be considered to operate at a number of different levels. Again, traditionally, the 'state' refers to the nation state – those state institutions that function at the level of the whole nation, and in governmental terms are associated with national legislative bodies or parliaments. However, any conceptualization of the state must also embrace those regional and local institutions that are also publicly funded institutions and therefore part of the state apparatus. In many countries this distinction is often at its clearest in the separation between the institutions of central government, and those of regional or local assemblies with the latter often playing a significant role in the development of educational policy in particular.

More recently, it has become clear that the traditional notion of the state that begins by identifying publicly funded national institutions looking

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downwards to the regional and the local is inadequate (Bottery 2000). Global economic and political developments have brought forth supra-national institutions that perform many state functions in terms of policy development, but which function across nation states, rather than within them. In some cases, such as the European Union (EU) these institutions have been established for some time but are increasingly beginning to resemble traditional governmental institutions with developing constitutional arrangements. However, in other cases, institutions with inputs from nation states appear to be more disconnected from traditional state apparatuses, but can have a similar, indeed greater, impact on the development of policy at a national and local level. Perhaps the most significant example of such a body is the World Trade Organization (WTO). Many of these institutions now have the capacity to exert significant influence on education policy in individual nation states (in the case of the WTO this is illustrated by the increasing emphasis on liberalizing trade in services as well as goods). In developing countries the influence of the World Bank on educational policy is equally significant. For the purpose of policy analysis the implications of this more complex conceptualization of the state is important because it implicitly acknowledges the greater potential for tension between, as well as within, different elements of the state.

A focus on state purposes and institutions is clearly important but can provide only a partial picture of what is being studied. It is also important to focus in practical terms on what the state does. How does state policy manifest itself? The tools of policy are of course not value neutral, and the way in which particular policies are enacted in particular contexts are intensely political issues. Policies cannot be disconnected from the socio-political environment within which they are framed. However, before exploring the sharply differing ways in which ideological influences shape the application of policies in specific contexts it is possible to identify a range of state activities that at a basic level are common features of state activity. These can be considered to include the core activities of direction provision, taxation, subsidy and regulation. Although such activities are virtually a universal feature of state activity in any context, their application is not about purely mechanistic means of managing state resources. For example, the direct provision of education services within a system of public ownership has significant implications relating to matters of governance and control, whilst the use of taxation and subsidies not just determines what is provided, but crucially who pays and who benefits.

In an educational context the role of regulation is important because this determines the extent to which public service priorities may be exercised over those parts of the education system that are not formally within the public sector. In countries where education services are predominantly provided by non-state bodies, such as trusts, commercial organizations or religious bodies, the role of regulation becomes correspondingly more important and, although private ownership may give an appearance of greater institutional

autonomy, the use and application of regulatory frameworks can ensure an extremely tight coupling between the public state and private institutions. Precisely how these policy approaches manifest themselves in practice in differing contexts highlights the need to develop models of policy analysis capable of reflecting cultural and historical contexts.

Studies of the state's role in shaping policy development must be capable of reflecting co-existing, but opposing pressures. In the first instance it is important to recognize the crucial role played by societal culture in shaping state policy. These are the pressures that account for important policy differences between nation states as factors specific to local contexts exert a decisive influence on policy. However, whilst cultural influences will shape policy in distinct and unique ways there are simultaneous pressures towards policy uniformity as global economic pressures in particular appear to drive common policies in differing cultural contexts. It is important, therefore, to explore in more detail what at first sight appear to be contradictory tendencies towards policy diversity and uniformity.

#### *Recognizing the importance of cultural difference*

Research and literature on the state is dominated by the influence of western scholars and as a consequence models capable of reflecting, for example, the experience of African and Asian contexts are limited (Apple 2003). At its worst, the conclusions of Anglo-US studies are simply extrapolated across diverse cultural contexts and their conclusions generalized with little qualification:

Anglo-American scholars continue to exert a disproportionate influence on theory, policy and practice. Thus a relatively small number of scholars and policy makers representing less than 8% of the world's population purport to speak for the rest.

(Walker and Dimmock 2002: 15)

Such a situation provides a wholly inadequate basis for analysis. Rather, what is required are analyses of the state, and models of policy development, that recognize difference and are capable of reflecting cultural context. Such analyses also need to take account of the dynamic nature of state formations and the manner in which these shift and change over time – at times variously converging and diverging with state formations in other contexts. Walker and Dimmock (2002) distinguish between a range of societal cultures. These distinctions can form the basis of an analysis of differing state formations. For example, one distinction is between 'power distributed' and 'power concentrated' societies. In the latter, state formations are likely to be more centralized, with an expectation that policy at institutional level will very closely represent the expectations of policy makers at the centre. One indication of the extent to which power is distributed is the extent to which

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local and regional government might be involved in the development of policy. Generally, the more 'loosely-coupled' state structures are, the more opportunity there is for policy variation at a local level. Walker and Dimmock (2002) make a case for power distributed societal cultures to tend towards greater egalitarianism, with an often correspondingly stronger commitment to redistributive state policies. This provides a link to another distinction that can be helpful in analysing state structures and their associated policy priorities – that between 'group oriented' and 'self-oriented' societal cultures. Group oriented cultures are more collectivist in nature – 'ties between people are tight, relationships are firmly structured, and individual needs are subservient to collective needs' (Walker and Dimmock 2002: 25). It can be tempting to see the state as the obvious manifestation of a more group-oriented culture and therefore group-oriented cultures being more likely to see a significant role for the state; however, there is not necessarily a neat correspondence. For example, Nordic countries arguably tend to a group oriented culture, and these countries have traditionally sought to provide comprehensive welfare services through the state (Rasmussen 2002, Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002). However, in contrast, there are examples of Eastern cultures, such as in Japan, that may be described as group-oriented, but where there is little tradition of state provision of welfare. Collective provision of welfare emerges in familial and occupational forms, rather than through the state.

This brief discussion of state formations in different cultural contexts does not seek to provide a comprehensive typology of state formations across a range of different contexts. Rather it highlights the need to eschew simple, one-size-fits-all approaches to analysing the state and models of policy development. There is considerable variation between cultural contexts and models of policy development must be able to take account of this diversity and complexity. However, whilst it is essential to recognize cultural difference and the way in which policy in individual nation states is mediated by cultural context, it is also important to recognize where there is similarity, and, over time, convergence. Analysing the elements of this convergence, and the global factors driving it, is as important as identifying sources of difference.

### *Globalization and the pressures for global uniformity*

Although literature on the state and policy development is dominated by Western sources, it is arguably the economic challenge from the East that accounts for the key shifts in state formation, particularly in Western societies, in recent years and the tendency for common state policies to emerge. Therefore, whilst recognizing the distinctive nature of cultural context, and the degree of difference between countries, it is equally important to discern a number of key trends that have an element of global commonality. That there is commonality reflects a number of interdependent phenomena, faced

particularly, but not exclusively, by Western economies. These pressures can be traced to a number of sources:

- The emergence of much broader international competition, and in particular the rise of economies in South East Asia with a comparative advantage in many of the manufacturing industries traditionally dominated by the West (Hay, 1985).
- The increasing mobility of capital, facilitated by technological advances in communications and transport that has intensified global competition (Strange 1997).
- The dominance of a neo-liberal hegemony that has successfully promoted a free trade agenda based on economic imperatives, not social objectives (Costello *et al.* 1989).
- Demographic changes, including an ageing population, that have increased pressure on state resources and particularly the demands on pensions and health care (Bottery, 2004a).

Taken together these phenomena have driven widespread economic restructuring around the world, and in turn this has driven state restructuring (Jessop, 1994). Central to state restructuring has been a challenge to the welfarist principles that underpinned state policy in many Western countries in the years after the Second World War. During this period welfare systems based on principles of universalism and an explicit, if sometimes modest, commitment to redistribution had emerged and expanded. Keynesian economic policies appeared to guarantee full employment and this provided labour with the bargaining power, and the state with the resources, to confidently expand welfare provision. However, at the time critics from both the right (Bacon and Eltis 1976) and left (O'Connor 1973) questioned the long-term sustainability of this post-war welfarism in the west. Bacon and Eltis (1976) argued that the inexorably expanding state would absorb ever-increasing resources and 'crowd out' private sector investment. From a Marxist perspective, O'Connor (1973) had arrived at similar conclusions, arguing that capital required the welfare state to create the conditions for capital accumulation (notably a workforce developed by the education system with appropriate skills and attitudes), but that the rising cost of welfare provision would ultimately reduce profitability. The ensuing fiscal crisis was caused by simultaneous pressures to increase spending on welfare services such as education, whilst decreasing tax and public borrowing in order to maintain private sector profitability. In their different ways, and from quite different perspectives, a discourse developed that questioned the sustained affordability of welfare in an age of global capitalism. The discourse of 'affordability' continues to dominate welfare debates, and at least in part accounts for the increasing emphasis placed on education as investment in human capital (see Chapter 3), hence locating educational policy as supply-side driven economic policy, rather than as social, or 'welfare' policy.

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Such an approach to education policy highlights a key contradiction in public policy: capital requires a labour force with appropriate skills, qualification and attitudes if it is to be competitive. There is no discernible evidence that a free market in educational services will meet this need (Bottery 2004a). However, state provision is expensive and requires public funding in a way that is characterized as creating disincentives to capital. The result is a 'funding gap' between what is required to meet capital's needs and what capital appears able to 'afford'. Efforts to square this circle have generated a kind of global economic orthodoxy in which a number of common policy trends emerge. Taken together these amount to a restructuring of state policy and state institutions with significant implications for the funding and provision of education services. Key features of state restructuring include:

- A restructuring of public services through the use of devolved management and quasi-markets, thereby securing improved 'value for money' (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5).
- Opening up areas of public sector activity to private enterprise. In some cases this represents the abandonment of public sector provision to the private sector, in many cases it takes the form of complex public/private partnerships in which private capital is used alongside public investment (Whitfield 2000), an issue explored further in Chapter 7.
- A shift in the burden of cost from the collective to the individual whereby users of educational services are increasingly expected to purchase, or at least contribute to, what they consume (illustrated by the introduction of tuition fees for higher education by the UK government).
- The formation of powerful centralized inspectorates that have a role in monitoring contracts and the meeting of performance standards (Pollitt 1992) and discussed further in Chapter 5.

Although these policies have been particularly prevalent in the Western economies, and most common amongst the Anglophone nations (Smyth 1993), it is also possible to discern the themes of privatization, de-regulation and an increased emphasis on markets in African, Asian and Latin and South American education policy (Burbules and Torres *et al.* 2000, Torres 2002), partly because all countries are responding to the similar global pressures, and partly because of the power of international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that often drive these policies. Moreover, it is important to recognize that such 'policy cloning' (Dimmock 1998) is not simply a case of western orthodoxies being imposed on economies elsewhere, but that the new neo-liberal orthodoxy is in part a response, through imitation, to the emergence of powerful Asian economies. Furthermore, Jacques (2005: 17) has argued that as global pressures develop 'cultural traffic will no longer be one way'. He rejects the orthodox view of globalization as one that 'is overwhelmingly one of westernization' and asserts

that western cultural values in particular will become increasingly contested as Asian economies grow and Asian nations become correspondingly more confident.

It is clear that the powerful structural forces that are associated with globalization exert a significant influence on state policies in general, and on education policies in particular. These themes are developed further in the chapters in Part 2 of this volume. However, it is important to recognize the complexity of the globalization process in which global orthodoxies are not solely the product of a western hegemony but are also, and increasingly, part of a complex mix of global influences. Furthermore, despite the emergence of clear global orthodoxies it is important to recognize the enduring influence of specific cultural contexts and the extent to which cultural factors will always mediate and shape policy at a regional and local level – the result is a rather more complex picture than is often suggested:

. . . rather than a full-scale globalization of education, the evidence suggests a partial internationalization of education systems which falls far short of an end to national education *per se*. National education systems have become more porous in recent years. They have been partially internationalized through increased staff and student mobility, through widespread policy borrowing and through attempts to enhance the international dimension of curricula at secondary and higher levels. They have also grown more like each in other in certain important ways. However, there is little evidence that national systems as such are disappearing or that national states have ceased to control them. They may seem less distinctive and their roles are changing but they still undoubtedly attempt to serve national ends.

(Green 1997: 171)

### **State restructuring and institutional policy development**

Whilst it is essential to recognize significant differences between cultural contexts, it is also important to identify that way in which global pressures have driven state restructuring in the way described previously, and the particular way in which restructuring at a micro-level shapes policy development at an institutional level. Gewirtz (2002) has argued that in the UK the restructuring of education represents a shift from welfarism to ‘post-welfarism’ with a corresponding shift in institutional values. Within a welfarist regime state education was developed to shield individuals from the vagaries, and the inequities, of market forces (Marshall, 1981). Within a post-welfarist regime market forces become the driving force of the system – simultaneously intended to drive up ‘standards’ and ensure ‘accountability’ (Tomlinson, 2001). Hence educational leaders’ actions are determined first and foremost by what is required to ensure organizational survival in a competitive and unforgiving market. However, it cannot be assumed

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that as policy develops it is implemented uncritically by those working in educational institutions. In Chapter 1 it was argued that as policy develops it is interpreted, re-interpreted and often challenged as the strategic direction of policy develops into organizational principles and operational practices. Such conflicts are more likely where the dominant values expressed within the socio-political environment are out of kilter with the values of those actors involved in implementation. Wherever there is a values dissonance there is likely to be increased conflict over policy development. However, to what extent is it possible for those working in educational institutions to challenge the values base of policy of state policy? Just as the state may be ascribed some degree of autonomy whereby state policy does not correspond exactly to economic conditions so too might it be argued that individual educational institutions enjoy a degree of autonomy from the central state?

Gewirtz and Ball (2000) have argued that the restructuring of education has created a new managerialism in which those leading educational institutions have been compelled to forego a 'welfarist' approach to management. The pressure to perform in a market, or quasi-market (LeGrand 1990, Bartlett 1992) compels the manager to focus on performance and productivity. Educational values are forfeited as the priority is to maximize added-value. For example, according to Ironside and Seifert (1995) the public sector manager is faced with the same challenge as a commercial employer – to get 'more for less' from employees as market, not educational, priorities prevail. However, the collision of values ensures that the outcomes are neither clear, nor certain – but are often the subject of negotiation, compromise and struggle:

The shift in values and language associated with marketization – and the construction of the post-welfarist settlement more generally – is contested and struggled over. In trying to respond to pressures created by the market, headteachers and teachers find themselves enmeshed in value conflicts and ethical dilemmas, as they are forced to rethink long held commitments.

(Gewirtz 2002: 49)

How then is this tension between values resolved when the personal priorities of individuals are at odds with the dominant values expressed in the socio-political environment within which they function? Empirical studies provide a range of different scenarios in which the scope for individual agency varies considerably. Commentators who see little opportunity for those at an institutional level to shape their own policy agendas emphasize the power of external structures. They argue that those working within educational organizations have no more than the most limited capacity to develop internal policy agendas that challenge external influences – quite simply they are overwhelmed by the power of external structures whether it be the inspectorate, the local market context, or more likely, a confluence of

the two. One of the clearest exponents of this perspective is Wright (2001) who argues:

Leadership as the moral and value underpinning for the direction of schools is being removed from those who work there. It is now very substantially located at the political level where it is not available for contestation, modification or adjustment to local variations.

(Wright 2001: 280)

Wright (2003) asserts that school leaders may have 'second order' values (such as a commitment to team working or involving staff in decision making) that can stand in contrast to the dominance of the culture of performance, but that they are unable to challenge the first order values. First order values, in the form of system aims and outcomes, are determined elsewhere and reinforced by powerful control mechanisms that render them effectively unchallengeable. Second order values may result in internal policy agendas that appear more acceptable, but this is no more than a discussion about means rather than ends – the ends remain beyond debate. More recently Wright has argued:

principals are [not] necessarily unprincipled people, far from it, but . . . the system in which they have to operate stipulates the overall framework, values direction and often the detail of what they have to do.

(Wright 2004: 1–2)

Such an argument points to the importance of the second and third dimensions of power presented by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and Lukes (1974) and discussed in Chapter 1. In such a scenario school leaders at best have no scope to question fundamental objectives (Bachrach and Baratz 1962), and at worst the structures of the system result in them simply internalizing the logic of the market (Lukes 1974). Wright's views are echoed by others such as Hatcher (2005) and, perhaps more guardedly, by Thrupp (2004), who both highlight the difficulties of school leaders being able to develop internal policy agendas that may be at odds with central priorities. Thrupp (2004: 8) suggests that school leaders' capacity to 'mediate' the external policy agenda is very limited, but that there may be potential for what he described as 'passive resistance' or 'unofficial responses'.

The arguments presented by Wright (2001, 2003 and 2004), Thrupp (2004) and Hatcher (2005) were in part a specific response to work by others (Day *et al.* 2000, Moore *et al.* 2002 and Gold *et al.* 2003) who have offered a more optimistic view of school leaders and argued that effective leaders can create spaces within which progressive and distinctive internal policy agendas might be developed, even when these are at odds with the demands of external structures. These contributions may perhaps be described as 'critical optimists'. They are critical because in their studies the

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school leaders in question were sometimes going against the grain of state policy – in summary, there was a ‘values clash’ between the priorities of individual school leaders and the demands of the external agenda. However, these studies suggest that school leaders were in some way able to achieve a reconciliation between their values and those of the external policy environment. This was not a simple case of lowest common denominator compromise, but a creative response to retain clear personal principles in a hostile environment.

Day *et al.* (2000) identify in their study school leaders who are either ‘subcontractors’ or ‘subversives’. The former might be presented as the passive implementers of external agendas with internal policy agendas being entirely aligned with those generated externally. In such cases the authority of the leader is challenged by a perceived lack of independence. On the other hand ‘subversives’ may be equally problematic. These leaders seek to challenge external policies by deliberately undermining them. It is Day *et al.*’s (2000) contention that the subterfuge and duplicity involved in this process may similarly undermine the moral authority of the leader. Day *et al.* (2000) argue that in their study effective leaders were those who were able to ‘mediate’ the external policy agenda so that it aligned with the values and vision of the school. In their view it was not inevitable that this was done in an underhand manner, but rather it was capable of being achieved with transparency and integrity. These views are echoed by Gold *et al.* (2003) whose study of ten ‘outstanding’ school leaders highlighted an ability not simply to retain values in the face of contrary pressures from elsewhere, but to ensure that these values provided the moral compass required to guide school development:

The school leaders in our case studies remained committed to a set of strongly held values and a simple shift from ‘welfarism’ to the ‘new managerialism’ (Gewirtz and Ball, 2000) was not apparent. This is not to say that school leaders were unaware of the need to manage resources effectively, including human resources, and of the significance of parental choice and market forces, but that they were not fundamental. They were driven by a different set of values and these . . . were based on intrinsic values and not those imposed by others, including governments. Of importance was the wider educational, social and personal development of all pupils and staff. Effective or ‘outstanding’ school leaders are those who are able to articulate their strongly held personal, moral and educational values which may, at times, not be synonymous or in sympathy with government initiatives or policies.

(Gold *et al.* 2003: 136)

The debate about the relationship between external and institutional policy agendas, and the extent to which those at an institutional level have meaningful control over policy highlights the central issues with which this

volume is concerned. In an age where the strategic direction of state policy is often becoming increasingly centralized the prospects for those working at an institutional level to shape policy in innovative and distinctive ways may look limited. However, the manner in which the strategic direction of state policy emerges in the organizational principles and practices of individual institutions is clearly complex, and this is illustrated further through the chapters in Part 3.

## **Conclusion**

In Chapter 1 it was argued that policy needs to be seen as an expression of values, but it is important to recognize that values are operationalized in specific contexts – they are both a product of that context, and they create it (Giddens 1984). How policies manifest themselves in different contexts requires a broader understanding of the sites of policy development. Those locations, not always physical, are the spaces where actors in the policy development process engage in the discussions, the negotiations and, sometimes, the struggles that forge policy. There are inevitably struggles, because these are disputes about values in all their shapes and forms. It is important therefore to develop an understanding of the sites of policy development that emphasizes the interdependent links between them and that highlights the importance of power in the policy development process.

The significance of the state in the development of educational policy cannot be overstated. The influence of the state, and state institutions, in shaping the socio-political environment is profound. Voices from within the state are powerful and have the capacity to shape decisively the dominant discourses within which policy is framed and from which strategic direction emerges. One can argue that these discourses reflect the function of the state in securing economic, social and ideological objectives, and the role of the state in articulating these objectives is explored in more detail in part 2. In particular, the dominance in recent years of economic interests has had a significant impact on how education policy has been aligned with the need to develop human capital. However, the state is not simply the expression of a monolithic set of social or economic interests, formulating policy solely in the interests of a narrow elite. Consent is far more important than coercion (Gramsci 1971) and it is important to see state policy, and the discourses it develops, as sites of contestation in which different interest groups seek to assert their value positions. Understanding who has power in this process and how this power is exercised, becomes central to understanding the development of state policy and how it emerges in the form of organizational principles and practices.

Of course educational institutions come in a variety of forms, not only between countries but within countries. Different forms of ownership, governance and accountability all contribute to shaping quite distinct relationships between different institutions and the state. Policy analysis must

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be capable of reflecting the complexities of these cultural and institutional differences. Nevertheless educational institutions function in a context that is very largely framed by the state. Even where institutions are nominally independent of the state they operate in a context where state regulation is substantial, where state funding decisions are often crucial and where the social and political discourses that are shaped by the state have a profound influence on the policies of individual institutions. However, just as the state can be considered to have a degree of autonomy from the powerful structural forces that shape state policy, so too do individual educational institutions have relative autonomy from the influence of the state. Therefore the struggles over the shaping of policy that take place at the socio-political level do not disappear as policy filters down to the organizational and operational levels. Indeed, conflicts may increase as the values underpinning state policies and discourses may be challenged by those working at an institutional level. However, there is no more likely to be a unified homogenous response to policy within institutions than there is within the state policy development process. As external policies are implemented in institutions, and as institutions develop their own organizational policies, actors in the process will seek to shape, and sometimes challenge, policy. Value conflicts at the socio-political level will be mirrored at the operational level, with the precise nature of these conflicts reflecting the particular configurations of power, structure and influence in each institution. Beginning to understand these processes becomes crucial to understanding how policy develops at an institutional level and provides the immediate framework within which learning takes place.

## Part II

# Themes in educational policy

Part II examines in detail some of the main themes that appear to shape educational policy in many countries. Almost inevitably, the themes are interconnected and often overlap but, for the purposes of clarity and relative brevity, three such themes have been identified, separated and treated as if they are relatively discrete. What might be thought of as sub-sets of themes economic utility and citizenship for example, are considered separately within the context of the wider analysis. This part of the book concentrates on the socio-political environment and the policy context from which these themes emerge and shows how these contextual socio-political factors shape the text of policy and its strategic direction. In Chapter 3, the first, and perhaps the most dominant of the current global themes that shape educational policy is analysed, that of economic utility and human capital. It is argued that although the organizational principles and operational practices that are derived from human capital theory make take a variety of forms, the language of legitimation that emanate for human capital theory shapes educational policy in many different countries. In Chapter 4 the theme of citizenship and social justice is explored. It is argued that in many countries education is perceived by policy makers to be a major factor in determining and sustaining national identity. Education is used to foster desired images of both the nation state and the nation's citizens. The sub-theme that emerges here is that of social justice and cultural diversity. How can the fostering of a national identity be reconciled with cultural diversity in a socially just manner? In Chapter 5 the themes of accountability, autonomy and choice, often interconnected in many policy arenas, are drawn together. Accountability is linked both to pupil performance and economic utility. The devolution of choice to parents and autonomy to educational institutions is used by many policy makers to hold to account those responsible for the work of those institutions.



### 3 Educational policy and human capital

#### Introduction

In Chapter 1 it has been argued that with globalization and the associated breakdown of the ability of nation states to sustain economic nationalism, it has become widely recognized that the future prosperity of nations will depend on their ability to be internationally competitive (Brown *et al.* 1997). Bottery (2004a) has noted that globalization is not a unified and coherent movement but consists of a number of loosely interconnected global trends that appear to have a significant influence on the shaping of educational policy in many countries. The most important of these is what Bottery calls 'economic globalization' which: 'not only sets the context for other forms of globalization. Its language is also increasingly used to describe their activities – it "captures their discourses"' (Bottery 2004b: 7)

Economic globalization has a profound effect on many countries, in part, because no other global system appears to exist which allows alternative forms of activity and organization. It also leads to an increasing emphasis on economic growth by both multi-national companies and nation states. Consequently, on the part of both private and public sector organizations, there is an increasing concern with economic efficiency and effectiveness coupled with an emphasis on the individual as consumer. This contrasts with traditional public sector values of care, trust and equity. As Bottery argues, this has a direct impact on much social policy:

Ultimately, the dominance of this agenda leads to an emphasis on economic functionality rather than to the pursuit of things in their own right, and in so doing, undermines the intrinsic value of other pursuits.  
(Bottery 2004b: 7)

In this context, a set of implicit, explicit and systematic courses of action are established based on a human capital approach to education. The growing impact of globalization has forced nation states to enhance the skill levels of their labour force. In turn, this has produced comprehensive reviews of their

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education systems (Mok 2003). This form of globalization has important effects on education for a number of reasons:

First, the economic imperative dominates much thinking and ... becomes a form of 'discourse capture' where radically different conceptual agendas such as those of education are reinterpreted through its language and values. Second, it affects the financial probity of nation-states and their ability to maintain adequate provision of welfare services, including that of education.

(Bottery, 2000: 8)

This 'discourse capture' legitimates the social and economic values to which Kogan (1975) refers and from which the educational and institutional values and concomitant actions are derived. Increasingly, these values and actions are derived more from the economic imperative than from educational principles and procedures. This, as Kogan (1975) notes, represents a significant re-ordering of the values hierarchy on which education policy is based with those values derived from human capital theory becoming first order values while educational and personal values are relegated to the level of second order.

#### **Human capital: an overview**

Capital in all its forms is generally seen by economists as the resources available through marketized networks to individuals, groups, firms and communities, within which people are believed to act rationally and function as equals (McClenaghan 2003). Thus, if physical capital is the product of making changes to raw materials then human capital is created by changing people to give them some desired skills and/or knowledge (Ream 2003). As Schultz puts it, human capital consists of: 'skill, knowledge, and similar attributes that affect particular human capabilities to do productive work' (Schultz 1997: 317).

Human capital is the sum of education and skill that can be used to produce wealth. It helps to determine the earning capacity of individuals and their contribution to the economic performance of the state in which they work. It is usually measured by examining the level of skills and knowledge of the recipients such as members of a firm or a cohort of school pupils.

At the centre of the policy discourse that links human capital and education is the belief that there is a paradigm shift out of Fordism towards a post-Fordist, high-skill, or knowledge-driven economy whereby investment in human capital ... constitutes 'the key' to national competitiveness.

(Lloyd and Payne 2003: 85)

As Schultz (1997) argues, economists have long known that people are an important part of the wealth of nations. If this is the case, it follows that for individuals seeking access to sought-after employment opportunities, their self-interest will be served by personal investment in the acquisition of qualifications and relevant experience (Rees *et al.* 1996).

At the level of the individual, therefore, an approach to education based on human capital would indicate that:

People invest the level of time and effort ... in education and training that their individual utility functions suggest they should ... individuals can have more than their future earning potential in mind and their utility function can be made to incorporate all conceivable benefits which could possibly be derived from investment in human capital including the achievements of particular accomplishments ... or the assimilation of particular values.

(Fevre *et al.* 1999: 118)

At the national level it has been argued that educational policies developed on the basis of human capital theory may produce a greater cohesion and reduce inefficiency in the use of scarce resources (Mace 1987). The human capital approach to educational policy also works on the assumption that there is a national economic benefit to be gained from education and from having an educated and skilled work force. As Leadbetter (1999) argues, the generation, application and exploitation of knowledge is driving modern economic growth so it is necessary to release potential for creativity and to spread knowledge throughout the population. In many social systems education is regarded as the main process by which such transformations might take place, although the issues surrounding which skills and knowledge are to be acquired, by whom and who makes those decisions often lack clarification. Little wonder, therefore, that:

Economists and other social scientists have long viewed education as the solution to many social challenges including productivity [and] economic growth ... Education is viewed as an investment in human capital that has both direct payoffs to the educated individual as well as external benefits for society as a whole.

(Levin and Kelly 1997: 240)

How then, does human capital theory inform educational policy?

### **Human capital and education: an analysis**

The impact of human capital theory on educational policy can best be identified by examining the socio-political environment which provides the impetus for policy making and from which, in most instances, the legitimation for that policy stems. The languages of legitimation used to present and

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justify educational policy (Bell 1989), reflect the dominant discourses within the socio-political environment. Thus, in the last two decades of the twentieth century in most pluralistic societies the discourse within the socio-political environment has been dominated by the struggle between economic individualism and social collectivism as preordinate determinants of social organization. Hence, educational policy is shaped by and located within what Taylor *et al.* (1997) term the context of the outcomes of debates in the wider socio-political environment and the language in which that policy is expressed is derived directly from its dominant discourse. Within this context, a range of social and political influences have combined to establish economic functionality as the dominant discourse. Policy text is supported by reference to individualistic languages of legitimation that underpin a belief in the efficacy of market forces as a mechanism for social organization and in the capacity of education to supply appropriately skilled labour for employment. The outcome of this, as far as education is concerned, is exemplified by the use of principles derived from economics generally and from human capital theory in particular, to legitimize educational policy and, in many countries, to underpin the use of elements of the market place to structure decision making and resource allocation.

The text of such education policy, its overall content and the strategic direction that defines the shape of policy is also derived from that wider environment. This provides part of the text for this particular education policy. It is widely recognized, for example, that in most countries where education is subject in any way to market forces, then those forces do not constitute a 'free market' in the sense that total de-regulation applies. Rather, the education market is an internal or quasi market one in which: 'The market functions within an overall system in which the State or government retains an important role' (Tooley 1994: 156).

Where the operation of the education market is informed by human capital theory this role is to determine the nature and mix of skills and knowledge that the system is required to produce while still retaining elements of market forces such as a mechanism for resource allocation, competition between institutions and the ability of parents to exercise choice. Reliance is placed largely, although not exclusively, on the language of economics to formulate success criteria. Reference is frequently made to efficiency, effectiveness, quality, value for money, choice and economic development. Human capital theory produces, in particular, an emphasis on the inter-relationship between individual choices, the demands of the labour market for specific skills and economic growth.

Organizational principles define, for example, the limits of autonomy, the patterns of accountability and the procedures for assessment and quality control. Educational institutions must respond to the specific demands from the centre to produce particular forms of outputs in terms of students with predetermined skills and knowledge that will sustain and enhance economic development in their particular country. In order to achieve this, some form of

central control over educational provision will operate. This might be based on tightly defined and rigidly assessed curriculum content and/or pedagogy, through an extensive inspection process, or a combination of both. They must also be able to demonstrate that this is what they are doing and that they are implementing national policy in such a way as to contribute to the human capital outcomes required from the education system. Here the text and the consequences of the policy overlap because pedagogy, curriculum content and forms of assessment must be appropriate for the production of these outcomes.

Linked to these organizational principles which are largely centrally determined, are the operational practices. These are the activities which contribute to the formulation of internal policies that will enable the institution to deliver an appropriately skilled and trained set of students, the day-to-day organization of schools, the specifics of decision making and the nature and extent of delegation of responsibilities. Thus, within schools the key factors in determining the nature of the operational practices and the structuring of responsibilities are the principal/teacher relationships and the arrangements for decision making in the school. Once these are established, the nature of the curriculum and its content, pedagogy and assessment, the roles of individual teachers, the mechanisms for reporting to and involving parents, the internal management of the school and mechanisms for establishing relationships with the external environment can be established (see Figure 3.1)



Figure 3.1 Policy into practice: human capital

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There are main institutional consequences of all this. As McNamara *et al.* (2000) note:

The ideological move to construct education as a market place holds ... economic implications for schools, teachers, children and parents ... Significant ... is the necessity for schools to promote a positive image ... in terms of performance indicators of product/output.

(MacNamara *et al.* 2000: 475)

The implication of this is that both students and parents are partners in the educational enterprise. As a result, parents who were once regarded, at best, as passive supporters have changed into active participants. They have now been further re-positioned as informed consumers in the educational market place. Education has become a commodity with both the individual and the state as consumer, the individual seeking to maximize personal benefit and the state seeking to maximize economic growth and development. Agbo (2004) argues that the implication of this is that the most effective route to economic well-being for any society is through the development of the skills of its population, its human capital. Consequently, education is to be regarded as a productive investment rather than merely a form of consumption or something intrinsically valuable in its own right.

#### **The application of human capital theory to educational policy**

The application of human capital theory to educational policy must be seen in the context of economic globalization to which reference was made earlier in this chapter. One consequence of the impact of economic globalization is that many nation states attempt to maximize the economic benefits that can be accrued from a system of educational provision planned to meet specific economic and business needs. Although it may not be universal in shaping the context of education policy, human capital theory is certainly extremely common as a socio-political rationale. This does not necessarily mean that it is the most appropriate such rationale or that the text of policy produced will achieve its stated outcomes. Nevertheless, the impact of human capital theory can be identified in many countries. In the USA, for example, Elmore (1988), in calling for major reforms to the American schooling system, argues that in order to sustain the present standard of living and regain its competitive position in the world economy the USA will need a better educated work force. This implies significant changes in the relationship between schools and their wider environments, in the management and organization of schooling and the nature of teaching and learning (Murphy 1991). It also makes explicit the relationship between education and economic performance.

Similarly, in Australia, it has been seen that students' mathematical capability must be improved to enable the economy to grow and be

competitive (Kemp 2000). Here it has been argued that economic rationalism based on human capital has infiltrated educational policy making to such an extent that the models and formulae of economics have replaced the values of a just, creative and humane society (Ogilvie and Crowther 1992). In New Zealand, a similar situation pertains. Here the tertiary and higher education systems must contribute to economic development by providing more graduates for science-based occupations (Gould 2001), based on a very explicit link between education and the market place: 'The value of educational qualifications does, at least in part, lie in their scarcity. Hence, education shares the main characteristics of other commodities traded in the market place' (New Zealand Treasury 1987: 33).

Here, the language of economics is used as a rationale for educational provision. In Greece the introduction of a range of new scientific programmes and new technologies is intended to contribute to the economic development of the country (Saiti 2003). Much of this provision is located within the new public technical and vocational lyceums that are intended to facilitate:

The development of the necessary skills and abilities in order for the graduates of such institutions, through their own initiative, to properly identify and exploit the available opportunities among the technical professions in the labour market.

(Saiti 2003: 35)

The basis of this approach to education is that technical education can increase the flow of skills and, by assisting people to acquire new technologies, it can enable them to adapt to new working environments. Furthermore, investment in technical education is seen to increase a recipient's contribution to the workforce and, in so doing, expand productive capacity and improve economic performance (Saitis, 1999). This is an interestingly explicit formulation of the human capital approach to Greek educational provision that finds resonance in Germany, where the emphasis is also on the link between the knowledge-based economy and the central importance of education to economic development (Bulmahn 2000).

In England, it was argued by the then Conservative Government that: 'Our future prosperity as a nation depends on how well our schools, in partnership with parents, prepare young people for work' (Department for Education 1994: 25).

Here is seen a perspective based on the minimizing of state intervention which is derived from the ideas of Friedman and Friedman (1980), albeit within a very tight accountability framework. This view developed into a more explicit and increasingly interventionist articulation of the link between human capital and education after New Labour came to power in 1997. The incoming Secretary of State for Education argued that investment in human capital is essential for success in the economic future of the country and that learning throughout life will build human capital by encouraging

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the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasizing creativity and imagination (DfEE 1998a). In particular he stated that:

Learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals as well as for the nation as a whole. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy. We need a well-educated, well-equipped labour force. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community. It strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation.

(DfEE 1998a: 7)

At the level of higher education, a similar trend can also be found in the Dearing Report (1997) that argued for:

Higher education driven by (cost-bearing) student and employer demand ... better adapted to the needs of industry, and hence the labour market. In essence this means that market mechanisms should ... tend to ensure that individuals will follow the *kinds* of courses that raise productivity

(Killeen *et al.* 1999: 100)

It is in Asia, however, where the links with human capital has shaped educational policy most obviously and where the relationship between economic performance and education often find its clearest articulation. In many parts of the Asia-Pacific region the close connection between education and economic development is widely recognized and a significant number of improvement initiatives have been introduced to strengthen the contribution of education to economic growth. In Singapore, for example, the government deliberately adopted a policy of avoiding the low labour cost economy common to several of its neighbours. Instead, a policy of developing a highly educated work force was pursued:

The political leaders saw it as their task to ensure that, as industry developed, the human capital was in place to make effective use of the physical capital. The result was a very close relationship between educative and productive systems.

(Ashton and Sung 1997: 209)

Significant education reforms were introduced after the Report of the Economic Planning Committee (Ministry of Trade and Industry 1991) demanded substantial educational expansion and improvement to meet the needs of Singapore's economic development in a very competitive environment (Ashton and Sung 1997). These focused on three areas: the identification of those basic skills necessary for people effectively to contribute to an advanced industrial society; the development of intermediate-level technological skills; and the expansion of higher education. The specific

aim of these reforms was to use a more educated labour force to establish Singapore as an economically developed nation. This policy produced a very close relationship between the government and the education system in which considerable control was exercised from the Ministry of Education over what was taught, how it was taught and how it was assessed in schools. Singapore Teachers' Union (STU) put it thus: 'The main focus of our education system was on meeting manpower needs. At the same time we had to teach values of good citizenship' (Singapore Teachers' Union 2000: 1).

Here the labour market needs are presented as being value neutral, although this is far from the case, while citizenship is seen to be rooted in explicit and shared values.

In South Korea, the Presidential Council planned to introduce educational reforms with the specific intention of addressing the new challenges by manpower planning (Cheng 1999). In Malaysia the entire education system is being reviewed in order to meet the manpower requirements of the knowledge-based economy and a system of lifelong learning is being promoted to ensure that workers can continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge (*Third Outline Perspective* 2001). A similar restructuring has taken place in Israel while in the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong Education Department issued a booklet in 1997 entitled, *Medium of Instruction: Guidance for Secondary Schools*. This stipulated that most schools must, from the following September, adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction while giving significant exemption for a minority of schools (Education Department 1997). Although the rationale for this appeared to be that Chinese, the mother tongue, was most appropriate for educational instruction, in fact this policy had its origins in a strongly human capital approach to education based on a utilitarian discourse about the centrality of the English language for the economic survival of Hong Kong (Choi 2003). These recent educational developments in Asia provide strong evidence to support the assertion that educational reform is the most important means of supporting the economic development of many societies (Cheng 1999). Indeed, effective schooling is often defined as that which facilitates the maximum contribution to the economy (Bell 1999a). In order to achieve this, however, educational provision, particularly in relation to curriculum content and its assessment has to be tightly controlled and carefully planned if human capital outcomes are to be achieved.

In some countries, England for example, this control largely takes place at school level within a framework of national policy. The national curriculum, its assessment and patterns of accountability based on national inspection, publication of examinations results and the management of teacher performance provide a tight national framework within which school-level decisions are taken. In others, such as Greece, planning takes place largely at the national level but is relatively loosely controlled at the local level while in Singapore, for example, control is facilitated by the relative smallness of the country and the extent to which the government has retained central control.

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It tends, for schools, to take place at the level of the Ministry of Education. It is here that the curriculum, testing, admissions and staff appointments are controlled and guidance provided on pedagogy and curriculum materials, although there have been recent attempts to devolve autonomy to schools or clusters of schools. In these examples, the strategic direction is determined nationally based on a broad policy thrust in order to maximize the benefits that may accrue from such a strategically planned system. Thus, planning based on sets of policies derived from human capital theory is used in order to try to produce relatively high-level economic benefits from the educative process, benefits that may accrue at a regional and national as well as at school and individual level.

### **The limitations of human capital theory**

As Bowles and Gintis (1976) have argued, education policy based on human capital closely reflects the needs of industrial society for workers with particular skills and, at the same time, illustrates the role of the state in ensuring that such a work force is available. This interconnection between human capital and educational policy, however, has its limitations. These can be found at each of the four levels of the analytical model and are sufficient to cast doubt on the efficacy of the human capital approach to education as a sufficient legitimization for the structuring of the educative process in most societies. At the level of the socio-political environment the extent to which the fundamental tenets of human capital theory pertain to the educative process is open to question. It is far from certain that there is an economic benefit to be gained from additional or specific forms of educational investment or that education does make a significant contribution to economic growth and development. As Killeen *et al.* (1999) argue, the relationship between expenditure on education and the economic performance of any particular country is largely one of correlation rather than one of cause and effect: there may well be intervening variables at work here such as investment in infrastructure or in research and development. The connections between schooling, training and economic performance are complex and by no means clear:

Relatively successful economies may make greater investment in the education of their populations, measured by the duration and level of schooling and training but ... [this] may, at least in part, be a result, rather than a cause, of economic success.

(Killeen *et al.* 1999: 99)

It is particularly difficult to establish the precise nature and value of such investments in human capital (OECD 1996a). The OECD Report argues that while educational investment does constitute the formation of capital, its value is hard to establish:

Though its [human capital] value may be appraised by the individual in whom it is embodied, it may also be appraised by others, including the policy-making members of society. Such appraisal, however, is arbitrary and subjective.

(Machlup 1984: 424 quoted in OECD 1996a: 46)

Monteils (2004) goes even further. Using data from a survey of 10 countries over a two-year period, she failed to find any positive correlations between investment in education and economic growth. Thus, at the societal level questions can be raised about the context from which such policies emerge and the extent to which education grounded in human capital theory can achieve its stated outcomes.

Similar questions can also be raised about the impact of the text of these policies. How far, for example, can and does education increase the productive capacity of individuals? Rather than generate such an increase, education may merely act as a selection device that enables employers to identify those potential workers with particular abilities or personal characteristics that make them more productive (Woodhall 1997). Even if this is not the case, education systems may not successfully produce the skilled labour force required by employers. Choice mechanisms militate against this to the extent that individual choice may be constrained by limited knowledge and resources, or available options restricted by an imperfect understanding of future skill requirements. The structuring of choice and opportunity within any society is such that a large number of factors will influence the extent to which such personal investments might take place. Individuals may choose to undertake education and training only to the degree that they are aware of both educational and employment opportunities available to them and can establish what are the required types and levels of knowledge and skills. At the same time, family support and pressure, financial resources and the limitations of realistic aspirations all operate to limit the extent to which free choice can be used by any individual to gain the maximum benefit from education (Hodkinson *et al.* 1996). However, it is not only the specific and finite access to resources that are important. The relative levels of inequality will impact on family well-being and influence the choices that are made (Wilkinson 1996). As Psacharopoulos (1986) notes, such limitations on choice mechanisms may produce results contrary to those expected by policy makers – more social science students rather than more engineers. The capacity of any society to match the human resources produced by its education systems to the demands of the labour market is, at best, imperfect and, at worst, potentially damaging to the very economies that should be sustained. As Bulmahn (2000) argues, those who deploy human capital theory as the sole or predominant legitimation for educational provision at the socio-political level, and who thus consider education from the perspective purely of national economic self-interest, will be unable to develop long-

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term policies for the future. In short, the free market itself may not meet the human capital needs of either developed or developing nations.

At the strategic level, economic utilitarianism based on human capital theory may not only be short-sighted, it may prove entirely counter-productive since, as Agbo (2004) argues in the case of some African countries, it can facilitate the establishment of an educated elite who are socially mobile to the disadvantage of the society as a whole or cause a society to lose touch with its cultural roots in response to a search for technology which is globally accepted. It can also have an adverse effect on the ability of nation states to compete in the global economy because it may leave a large majority of the future working population without the human resources to flourish in a global economy.

The risks are twofold: firstly, given the time lag between entering a training programme and completing it, market demand for a particular type of training may have changed with a resulting lack of jobs. In the competitive global market, such an outcome is all too likely. Secondly, industries of today are likely to be tomorrow's dinosaurs. As a result, employer-led training schemes may not contain the vision ... required in order to maintain the high skill base necessary.

(Brown and Lauder 1997: 178)

Thus, the consequences of such policies may be counter-productive. Attempts to establish too tight a focus for education or to exercise too much control of curriculum, content and pedagogy will lead to a trained incapacity to think openly and critically about problems that will confront us in 10 or 20 years time (Lauder *et al.* 1998). At the strategic level, therefore, it is doubtful if an educative process legitimated purely on the basis of human capital theory will have the capacity to produce an appropriately skilled labour force.

The organizational principles on which the relationship between human capital and education rest tend to be based on a technical-rationalist approach to education generally and to the organization of schools as institutions in particular. This gives little consideration to the benefits of education other than economic utility. As Marginson (1993) has maintained, this emphasis on economic rationalism has meant that education values have become marginalized, thus distancing education from both the social and the cultural. The application of human capital limits, therefore, the wider benefits that may be gained from a more liberally based education and marginalizes the ethical dimensions of education that might shape both the nature of educational institutions and the totality of the educational enterprise. In fact, matters related to schools as social and moral organizations, living with others in a diverse community and wider issues of social justice may be ignored in the quest for a narrowly defined form of academic attainment. Thus the social and the moral are subordinate to the economic and the utilitarian.

This failure fully to consider the wider purposes and benefits of education has allowed researchers, and more especially, politicians to deduce simplistic solutions to complex problems and to develop approaches that serve very narrow purposes based on limited and restrictive policy objectives linked specifically to economic utilitarianism and human capital outcomes.

Furthermore, the organizational principles on which the relationship between human capital theory and educational institutions is predicated – that the skills and knowledge that are required to initiate and sustain economic development are identifiable either by governments or employers, and will be delivered by educational institutions – can be challenged. It is assumed that teachers will respond to the rewards and sanctions within the organization to ensure that an appropriate curriculum is delivered and that children are either sufficiently malleable to respond to a school's organizational structure and processes, or that they understand their own self-interests sufficiently to follow the incentives created by the school (Lauder *et al.* 1998). This ignores the very tension that is at the centre of this type of education policy, between what the state might regard as economically desirable and what the individual might regard as appropriate personal development. As Entwistle (1977) has pointed out, it is doubtful if people are equipped to grapple with life's changing challenges by focusing entirely on meeting the immediate instrumental needs of the state.

A similar tension exists within many educational institutions that derive their operational procedures from organizational principles that emanate from human capital theory. These operational practices tend to be based on certainty, predictability and the operation of rules. They are often inflexible, impersonal, heavily bureaucratic, rule-bound and based on a rigid separation of responsibilities within the organization, an hierarchical arrangement of those responsibilities, and on exclusivity rather than inclusivity:

The assumption ... is that the organization consists of separate parts bound together insofar as is necessary ... through universal rules or centralised control. Information flow and learning ... is mediated through the negotiated, rule-bound structures that make up the organisation's internal and external contracts.

(Zohar 1997: 105)

Such organizations are efficient and reliable. They are ideal for a relatively stable, predictable, if competitive, environment. As long as rules and procedures are followed they operate with apparent smoothness and can give the impression of orderliness and of having an impressive ability to plan for and cope with the future. Many important processes, however, are marginalized in organizational forms based on order, simplicity and conformity where everything operates according to specific, knowable and predetermined rules and where actions are supposed to be rational, predictable and controllable (Chong and Boon 1997). Learning, therefore, is rooted in the Newtonian

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scientific paradigm of analysis through dissection, so that the parts can be isolated and understood. That which should be learned becomes the same as that which is instrumental. It is an individualistic process that proceeds in a linear way through analysis and the construction of generalizations based on empirical evidence. It inhibits the development of the very creativity, imaginative thinking and entrepreneurship that is often required to sustain economic development.

Where there is a high degree of standardization and inflexibility in educational systems or the institutions within them, these very systems and institutions become singularly less well equipped to prepare their students to face demands for greater flexibility and creativity (Bottery 2004b). Thus, schools cannot readily take account of forces emanating from the external environment in a period of rapid and extensive change and cannot generate the creativity and flexibility necessary to cope with such forces. Yet, it is widely acknowledged that the knowledge and skills that schools must seek to develop have to be based on creativity and innovation. Already there is a major concern in Pacific Rim countries about the lack of critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills amongst students. The lack of such skills is widely regarded as one of the contributing factors to the recent decline in the Tiger Economies (OECD 1996a). As both Ball (1999) and Bassey (2001) recognize, the over-riding emphasis of human capital theory on the role of education in contributing to economic competitiveness results in a set of pedagogical strategies linked to a narrow conceptualization of school improvement and effectiveness that ultimately are antithetical to the demands of a high skills economy. In other words, human capital, when applied to education, contains the seeds of its own failure. Thus, from a human capital perspective the management of learning becomes problematic in itself since effective learning in any school is the product of many factors. Thus Beare can argue that:

Reductionism ... is why the curriculum is structured in the way that it is, cut up into key learning areas ... Positivism ... is why science and maths are pre-eminent in the curriculum ... Rationality ... [is why] values formation has always been an incidental rather than a central part of the curriculum ... Quantitative analysis ... The measurable is safer to handle than the intangible ... As a result the intuitive, the expressive, the unmeasurable, the subjective and the intensely personal have never found a satisfactory place in the curriculum.

(Beare 2001: 39–40)

Learning is, therefore, based on reductionism, positivism, rationality and quantitative analysis. Thus, the processes of managing teaching and learning created by an emphasis on the human capital approach to education fail to acknowledge the complexity of school organization and the development of effective teaching and learning. This reductionist view of education is

rooted in human capital justifications for the entire educational enterprise and focuses on improving national economies by tightening the connection between schooling, employment and productivity and by enhancing student outcomes, employment-related skills and competencies (Carter and O'Neil 1995).

The links made between educational, human and economic development, therefore, produce an excessively utilitarian approach to schooling that can lead to an inappropriate narrowing of educational objectives and processes because of the emphasis on national economic competitiveness (Kam and Gopinathan 1999). The human capital justification for the structuring of educational provision has produced an excessive instrumentalism in the curriculum:

Instrumentalism has produced the competencies movement; it has affected the curriculum, producing concepts like 'key learning areas', as though learning is not legitimate unless it is information-driven and packaged into traditional subjects ... It has driven the outcomes approach to schooling, a concentration on tests, the publication of school-by-school results and 'league tables'.

(Beare 2001: 18)

These operational practices are all control devices to compel schools and colleges to concentrate on utilitarian outcomes linked to economic productivity and the demands of the labour market. Consequently younger children must become proficient in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy while their older siblings need to enhance their skills through an emphasis on information technology, science and mathematics. In tertiary colleges and universities the focus shifts to that of the knowledge-based economy and lifelong learning to respond to the changing demands of the work place (Bassey 2001). It is evident that the narrowing of the focus of education in Singapore, for example, has helped to create an education system that produces students who are excellent at passing examinations but very limited when it comes to creative thinking and the development of enterprise (Ng 1999). The STU noted that, in Singaporean education: 'The emphasis was on results. We bred a generation of Singaporeans who were examination smart ... but we killed the joy of learning' (Singapore Teachers Union 2000: 1).

Not only has the joy of learning been destroyed but here, as in other places, the sole emphasis on producing a workforce to sustain economic development is likely to lead to a trained incapacity to think differently (Lauder *et al.* 1998).

The present global emphasis on developing human capital within a market or economic development paradigm, therefore, is based on a model of education policy that is deeply flawed in a number of ways. At the socio-political level, the human capital discourse of legitimation is both confused

about the extent to which individuals can and do make educational choices based on human capital criteria and unconvincing about the degree to which investment in human capital does contribute to economic development. At the strategic level, the concentration on economic utility of education at the expense of its many other contributions may have adverse consequences for both society and the individuals within it. The organizational principles that shape the relationship between human capital and education produce organizational structures that mitigate against the development of the very skills that may be required to meet future economic challenges while the related operational practices lead to inappropriate forms of leadership and a reductionist approach to teaching and learning to the ethical dimensions of leadership and the wider issues of morality and social justice at a school level. Thus, human capital as the sole legitimation for the educative process in any society has severe limitations and may be counter-productive.

### **Conclusion**

It can be seen, therefore, that human capital theory when applied to the educative process leads to education being treated as a private consumable, a commodity or a positional good in the market place at both individual and state level (Bottery 2004b). The rationale for change and re-structuring in education is largely cast in economic terms, especially in relation to the preparation of the workforce and repositioning national economies to face international competition (Levin 2003). The impact has been significant: 'leading to changes in management processes and organization, institutional cultures (at all levels) and in perspectives on a wide range of dimensions of education from teaching and learning, to resource management and external relations' (Foskett 2003: 180).

Nevertheless, as has been argued above, human capital theory as the sole legitimation for educational policy has severe limitations such that its outcomes may be counter-productive. It has produced a situation in which education has become merely a way of increasing the value of human labour. This fails to recognize that both education and labour are more than commodities, they are value-driven social processes. The human capital discourse, therefore, requires either to be replaced by an alternative form of legitimation or a significant leavening by the incorporating key aspects of an alternative legitimation.

Education is more than the production of human capital. It is about values and beliefs, ethics, social justice and the very nature of society both now and in the future. As Hills has argued, the basis for education in the future is not:

Facts and figures ... the explicit knowledge of the internet, the textbook or the lecture theatre because much of this is quickly obsolete and is often an obstacle to new ideas. It is the implicit knowledge gained from

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experience, or ... case studies, because ... these are the bases of values, morals and character. They prepare a person for the unexpected and the difficult decision.

(Hills 2004: 27)

As will be seen in the next chapter, education also has an important part to play in developing concepts of citizenship and social justice, especially in culturally diverse societies. The relationship between economically driven educational provision, the meaning of social justice and the nature of citizenship is both complex and contested.

## 4 Education policy, citizenship and social justice

### Introduction

In Chapter 3 the links between education policy and the economy were analysed. The global shift to supply-side economics has effectively elevated education policy to a pivotal element of economic policy with the development of human capital being perceived as central to the creation of economic growth. However, education policy has always been about much more than economic policy, it is social policy too. Perhaps, more precisely, it can be argued to have a social function – concerned not solely with matters of welfare, but with matters of ideology too. This delineation between the provision of education as economic and as social policy is not neat and tidy – the relationship is often one of interdependence. However, the focus in this chapter is on the extent to which a wide range of social values shape education policy and how education policy reflects the diverse, and sometimes contradictory, social functions associated with it.

The social functions of education policy reflect tensions and contradictions in the wider role of the state and state policy. Education has a crucial role in promoting a sense of individual and collective welfare and through this a sense of social cohesion. It also has a similarly ideological role in developing what are considered to be appropriate values in society and in establishing a sense of national identity. In short, education plays a pivotal role in developing a sense of citizenship whereby individuals take their place in their communities be that at a local, national or even a global level. However, notions of citizenship are both complex and contested (Plant 1991). They change over time and vary between cultures (Jenson and Phillips 2001). Education for citizenship focuses attention on central questions that are a recurring theme in this volume – what is education for? Who receives what, and who decides? Similarly, what does it mean to be a ‘citizen’, and who decides? Such questions are inextricably linked to notions of ‘fairness’ and, therefore, to concepts of social justice. But what is social justice, and how can the development of education policy contribute to the pursuit of a social justice agenda? This chapter explores ways in which education policy is shaped by the related notions of citizenship and social justice and the role

that education plays in legitimating notions of a 'fair' society. It highlights the need to explore the philosophical and ideological arguments within the socio-political environment that influence education policy, give it a strategic direction and produce its organizational principles and operational practices and procedures. It makes the case for a multi-dimensional approach to citizenship capable of reflecting contemporary conditions and differing cultural contexts. The manner in which these shifting notions of citizenship can then shape educational policy are briefly illustrated by three international examples of policy development; the implementation of education reform in Rwanda following the 1994 genocide, the introduction of citizenship education into UK schools following publication of the Crick Report (QCA 1998), and the emergence of system-wide restructuring in Israel following publication of the Report of the National Task Force for the Advancement of Education (NTFAE 2004).

### **State Policy and Citizenship – shaping the discourse**

In straightforward legalistic terms, being a citizen implies being a native or naturalized member of a nation state. However, the concept is broader than this and may be considered both philosophically (linked to concepts of justice) and socio-politically (Faulks 1998). These broader definitions of citizenship offer the following conceptualization:

Citizenship is a status that mediates the relationship between an individual and a political community. It is characterised by a set of reciprocal rights, the extent and nature of which are defined through a complex set of social and political processes including: the struggle between opposing social forces, political compromise, and historical and economic circumstance.

(Faulks 1998: 4)

The notion of citizenship as a series of reciprocal rights and responsibilities was central to the concept of citizenship developed by T.H. Marshall in his highly influential volume, *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950). Marshall's study of citizenship in post-war Britain argued that citizenship rights had developed in three distinct phases. First was the development of civil citizenship by which individual freedoms emerged such as freedom of speech and the right to own property. Secondly was the development of political rights whereby the right to stand and vote in elections provided 'the right to participate in the exercise of political power' (Marshall 1950: 11). Finally, a third element of citizenship developed, based on the belief that citizens had an entitlement to an element of social security, broadly defined – referred to by Marshall as social citizenship. Social security, in its broadest sense, was fundamental to citizenship and therefore required the provision of a range of basic social services (education and health for example). Furthermore,

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Marshall argued that just as political entitlements were not the product of market exchanges (the right to vote is not purchased in a market transaction) so too should citizenship services be removed from the process of commodity exchange. Basic rights to social security should be no more dependent on wealth and individuals' market values than equivalent rights to political freedom:

In contrast to the economic process, it is a fundamental principle of the welfare state that the market value of an individual cannot be the measure of his right to welfare. The central function of welfare, in fact, is to supersede the market by taking goods and services out of it, or in some way to control and modify its operations so as to produce a result that it could not have produced itself.

(Marshall 1981: 107)

Marshall's case for social citizenship was not explicitly a theory of social justice. However, it was strongly rooted in notions of 'fairness'. Marshall was certainly not an opponent of capitalism, or the market. He accepted that the market had an important role to play in providing incentives and allocating resources, but his concern was that its inevitable inequalities might be 'excessive'. The state therefore had a legitimate role to play in both tackling unacceptable inequalities and putting in place a floor of basic rights to welfare provision that existed regardless of personal wealth. Subsequent attempts to theorize what this 'fairness' might look like are most commonly associated with the work of Rawls, whose *A Theory of Justice* (1972) sought to make an intellectual case for the 'fair' distribution of resources. Rawls' theory of social justice has had considerable influence on the development of welfare policy, particularly in the West (Angelo Corlett 1991) and may be seen as an attempt to reconcile a liberal commitment to the freedom of individuals with egalitarian commitments to a more equal distribution of resources. His approach rests on two principles; first, that each individual should have access to the most extensive range of basic liberties compatible with similar liberties for all. Secondly, that social and economic inequalities can be justified only in so far as they provide the greatest benefit to the least advantaged, and that they are linked to offices and positions that are open to all on the basis of open and fair competition. It is the first element of the second principle that is reflected in social welfare programmes that involve the state undertaking a significant element of redistribution and which has significant implications for the role of education policy in creating a more egalitarian society.

Marshallian concepts of citizenship, informed by Rawlsian principles of social justice, certainly achieved a significant degree of influence over the development of welfare policy in many western countries in the third quarter of the twentieth century. However, the extent of this influence was never global and nor has it been enduring. For example, critics from the right

have challenged the notion of social citizenship and its concomitant link to policies of collective provision and universalism. More fundamentally, it has been argued that the concept of universal provision is not compatible with notions of fairness and social justice, a view most clearly expressed by Nozick's (1974) assertion that market solutions represent the only just way to allocate resources. For Nozick (1974) the market offered an objective valuation of resources and an individual's capacity to acquire resources should be linked to effort. The market was the means by which the value of resources and the value of effort were brought into alignment. Hence the state had no role to play in securing social justice, indeed attempts to do so constituted an injustice as individual liberty was violated by use of the state's coercive apparatus (Nozick 1974). From the left critics have focused on the failure of universal provision to fundamentally challenge social inequalities (Halsey *et al.* 1980, LeGrand 1982), and also the tendency to treat the notion of access to universal services unproblematically – failing to take sufficient account of how service users may be marginalized from active participation in service delivery (Coote. 2000). Moreover, in recent years there has been a growing recognition of the inadequacy of Marshall's claim that the expansion of universal services would lead inevitably to a 'great extension of common culture and common experiences' (Marshall 1950: 75). Whilst this argument is understandable within the historical and geographical context within which he was writing, it has limited application for societies that were, or have become, culturally diverse and multi-ethnic (Giroux 1992). In these contexts, Marshall's dominant view of citizenship has proven inadequate in a contemporary context, unable to reconcile notions of equality and universalism with difference and diversity (Osler 2000; Olssen 2004). It also fails to reflect the growing importance of citizenship and national identity at a time when increasing cultural diversity and population movement raises fundamental questions about what it means to belong to a 'nation state'.

Marshall's contribution to the debate on citizenship was focused on Britain in the period following the Second World War. It is a product of its time and place. However, the challenges it poses, and the critical perspectives it has generated, continue to exert significant influence on the discourse within which policies relating to citizenship and equality agendas are framed, not just in the UK, or indeed the West, but globally. What does it mean to be a citizen in a particular country and how does education policy both shape and affirm a sense of citizenship?

### **Citizenship and education policy**

Defining the relationship between educational policy and the wider citizenship agenda is particularly complex. Education is distinct from other forms of social provision because of the unique way in which it represents not only a key citizenship entitlement, but also has a hegemonic influence (Apple 2004) and its unique capacity to shape the discourse relating to how

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individuals define themselves as citizens. In short, education services are not only a material form of citizenship, but ideologically they help shape our conception of ourselves as citizens. Education policy therefore is both shaped by, and shapes, our sense of citizenship. Here there is a powerful duality of structure (Giddens 1984) in which education has an often explicit role in ‘creating citizens’. During times of social turbulence or uncertainty, when accepted notions of citizenship are being more obviously challenged, this ideological function of education can become correspondingly more important, and this is illustrated by the three examples later in this chapter. In each of these cases, significant education policy developments arise from particular perceptions of a ‘problem’. How problems are defined, and who has the power to define problems and present solutions (Lukes 1974) has important implications for policy development.

In Marshallian terms, education was a crucial component of social citizenship – universal provision of schooling represented an important citizenship entitlement, available apparently, if not in reality, to all citizens equally, regardless of their market power and material resources. Such a position reflects the period of welfare consensus in the post-war years, but which has progressively fragmented in the period since the mid-1970s. The emergence of a neo-liberal orthodoxy has posed fundamental questions about the purposes of education, and the form in which it is provided. These growing tensions about the nature and purpose of education policy reflect the values tensions that underpin policy and that shape the socio-political discourses within which contemporary education policy debates are fashioned and from which organizational principles and operational practices emerge. Within these discourses it is possible to identify four key themes that highlight the polarized nature of the values that underpin citizenship education policy and how conflicts over values shape the socio-political environment.

*Citizenship and access* – entitlement notions of citizenship place considerable emphasis on individuals’ ability to access education services – but what can citizens expect as a right? What should the balance be between collective provision at no direct cost to the student and more privatized forms of provision and consumption in which the student pays? Marshall argued that basic rights should be removed from market exchange – to what extent is social citizenship compromised by an increasing emphasis on private sector provision, the use of market solutions and the tendency towards shifting costs to the student? Crouch (2001 and 2003), for example, argues that the drift towards privatized provision of education is likely to undermine the commitment to universal provision that is a feature of public service values. Citizenship entitlements are undermined as market-driven solutions reduce public education to a residual service for the poor ‘residual public services become services of poor quality, because only the poor and politically ineffective have to make use of them’ (Crouch 2003: 11). Such

possibilities raise fundamental issues relating to social justice – namely, who receives what and who pays?

*Citizenship as participation* – traditional views of citizenship have placed little emphasis on user engagement in the provision of services. How should users be engaged in determining policy within educational institutions? Are democratic schools based on collective participation a realistic possibility (Apple and Beane 1999), or is user engagement more effectively achieved by increasing consumer power through market solutions?

*Citizenship development* – education has a distinctive role in developing individuals for participation in all aspects of society as active citizens. In essence, this is about preparing learners with the knowledge and skills to be engaged members of their community, with the capacity to exert influence and agency. But these are not value neutral aspirations. What type of society are students being prepared for? What is their role within it? Who decides? Such questions highlight a tension between education for reproduction (Apple 2004) and a more radical conception of citizenship education that seeks to promote the knowledge and skills that enable students to understand, analyse and criticise, and if appropriate to challenge, society's underlying dynamics and values. These questions also raise fundamental issues relating to the curriculum – not only with regard to purpose and content, but involving wider questions about who has the authority to determine purpose and content.

- *Citizenship and social justice* – citizenship concerns are inextricably linked to wider questions of social justice and specifically the *distribution* of rights and entitlements. To what extent are rights collective as well as individual? To what extent do rights embrace access to resources as much as more traditionally defined civic and legal rights? Liberal perspectives assert that it is for the market to allocate resources and that the role of education is to support the effective functioning of a free market. Critical theorists reject such market-driven approaches and assert that education has a key role in promoting an equitable society where equality is not conceived in narrow political terms, but in terms that embrace economic and cultural considerations as well as those relating to the distribution of power and political rights. Such approaches explicitly acknowledge the need to address structural inequalities, for example those based on class, gender and ethnicity. Equity concerns extend beyond issues of access and opportunity and are more concerned with equality of outcomes. In this world view, education has a direct role to play in not only reducing inequalities, but in tackling the sources of inequality. Here the illusion of education's ideological neutrality is expressly rejected and explicit values positions emerge more clearly. Within this approach to social justice, and drawing on the work of Gewirtz (1998) and Cribb and Gewirtz (2003) it is possible to distinguish between three different approaches to social

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justice each of which impinge on educational policy at both a state and institutional level.

- Associational justice – the extent to which individuals and groups are able to participate in policy-making processes. The social justice dimension places a particular emphasis on the involvement of social groups traditionally under-represented in decision-making structures such as the poor (Lister 2003) and those who have often been marginalized in traditional institutional hierarchies (within educational institutions students provide an obvious example here).
- Distributive justice – influenced by Rawlsian principles (Rawls 1972), distributive justice is concerned with the allocation primarily of economic resources across social groups, but this may be considered more widely to include various forms of capital (Cribb and Gewirtz 2003) – economic, social and cultural (Bourdieu 1997). This raises fundamental questions about the role of education as a redistributor of resources and the extent to which an explicit function of education policy is to challenge inequalities.
- Cultural justice – the extent to which all cultures within society are recognized and valued. This dimension of social justice addresses the issue arguably found most wanting as a result of recent developments in contemporary society. Again, the emphasis on social justice imputes a responsibility to challenge inequalities and to prevent the marginalization of minority cultural groups through policies and practices that privilege the majority and deny the minority. Cultural justice may be considered to require a specific commitment to challenge racism, and within the field of public policy, to challenge institutionalized racism. The implications of this for institutional policy development are explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

The tensions highlighted in the discussion of these four themes points to the contested nature of the citizenship concept, and this is often reflected in the experience of policy development in this field. Figure 4.1 provides an illustration of how citizenship policy as it is experienced in individual institutions flows from the dominant discourses relating to citizenship issues and what it means to be a citizen. However, this is not a neutral agenda and debates about issues as fundamental as this are inevitably the subject of dispute and struggle. There are tensions between social cohesion, social justice and a strategic direction that encompasses access and entitlement based on differentiation. Here the potential for policy refraction becomes clear as the consequences of the multiple interpretations of texts emerges in the form of increasingly diverse organizational principles and operational practices. These issues are pursued further in Chapters 7 and 8 which illustrate how those responsible for developing policy at an institutional level have sought to operationalize policies based on a commitment to promoting active citizenship and social justice. The remainder of this chapter is devoted

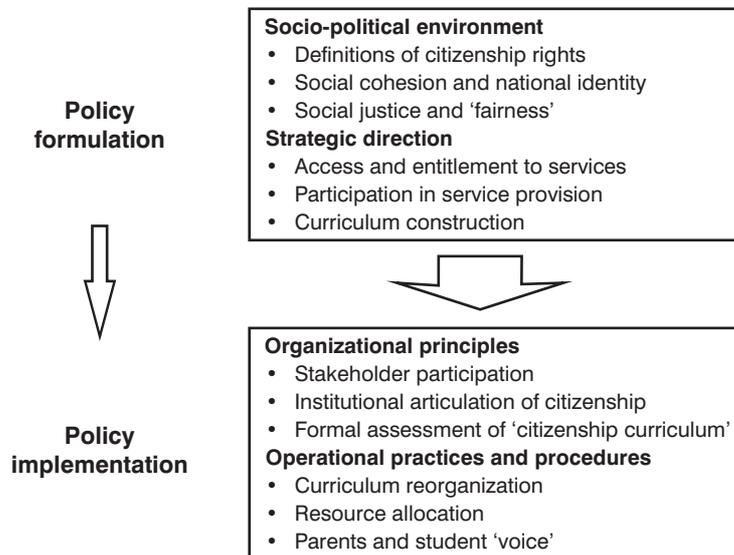


Figure 4.1 Policy into practice: citizenship and social justice

to three policy vignettes that illustrate how in very diverse contexts issues of citizenship and social justice have driven important educational policy initiatives.

### Citizenship and social justice – policy vignettes

The following examples provide brief illustrations of how concerns with citizenship issues have exerted significant influence on shaping the formulation of education policy. There is no attempt to analyse consequences, but at this stage the aim is to provide examples drawn from diverse international contexts that highlight the links between the emergence of a socio-political discourse and the subsequent development of state policy in the form of strategic direction. In each case policy develops from the perception of a problem. In the first example, Rwanda, the nature of that problem was stark – genocide. In the example from the UK the problem is presented as one of political disengagement (QCA 1998) and is much less clear cut. In Israel there is a perception of an education service in ‘crisis’ (NTFAE 2004) that has failed to provide either economic success or social cohesion. Despite these different contexts, in all the cases problems emerge and are articulated by those with the power to shape and influence the socio-political discourse (Lukes 1974). Policy responses flow from the perception and presentation of these problems, and in each of these cases they draw on different dimensions of citizenship. In each of the examples the importance of cultural citizenship is apparent, and this serves to highlight the need to develop a broader model of citizenship that reflects the importance of cultural diversity. More detailed

studies of policy development that explore consequences as well as context and text are presented in Part 3.

*Education, citizenship and reconciliation – the case of Rwanda*

Education policy in Rwanda, as in virtually all aspects of Rwandan life, is decisively shaped by events in 1994 – the year of the genocide. In 1994 nearly one million Rwandans were killed, with as many more displaced to neighbouring countries. The state-sponsored genocide by extremist Hutus was driven by ethnic divisions that were largely socially constructed during the years of Belgian colonial rule (Sibomana 1997). These divisions had been continually reinforced in the colonial and post-colonial eras by the education system, through for example the use of ethnic quotas (Shyaka 2005). In the years since 1994 the Rwandan education system has therefore confronted major challenges. The foremost priority has been to develop a sense of national unity in a country that had literally torn itself apart, and in which victims still live cheek by jowl with transgressors. Tackling such problems has taken place alongside the need to re-integrate those who had been refugees during the immediate post-colonial period, and who have been able to return to Rwanda in large numbers since 1994. All these challenges must be set within the context of Rwanda as a sub-Saharan African country beset by the chronic problems characteristic of the region – primarily dealing with the effects of poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Given the very specific challenges facing Rwanda the priority for government has been not just to develop education to promote reconstruction, but to make education central to promoting reconciliation. Indeed, given this context, education for national unity and cohesion is seen as central to reconstruction and economic growth – ‘Without reconciliation there can be no reconstruction. Reconciliation must come before anything else, because without it, nothing else is possible’ (John Rutayisire, Director Rwandan National Curriculum Development Council – personal correspondence).

Since 1994, therefore, Rwanda has embarked on an ambitious programme of educational reform. This has been difficult, as any expansion in real terms has had to exceed that necessary simply to absorb refugees returning from neighbouring countries. Priority areas have been to increase participation in both primary and secondary education, with a particular focus on increasing participation rates in rural areas and amongst girls (Gahima 2005). A key challenge has been to achieve these objectives by developing teacher capacity after the genocide denied Rwanda of many of its qualified teachers. This commitment to secure expansion within the resource constraints available has been accompanied by a programme of substantial curriculum reform focused on reconciliation and driven by a number of institutions established following the genocide, notably the National Curriculum Development Centre, the National Examinations Council and the General Inspectorate (Rutayisire *et al.* 2004).

Curriculum reforms to support reconciliation in Rwanda have focused on creating and resourcing a curriculum that confronts the issues raised by the genocide and helps young people formulate for themselves their attitudes to those events and their consequences. At the centre of this initiative is the development of a new history curriculum, which it is acknowledged has a key role to play in developing a sense of national unity.

This is important because education is seen as a major tool for transmission of values and socialization towards national identity. Education is vital in social and political reconstruction in that schools can also be arenas in which children learn to think critically about a range of view points. Primary and secondary education in war-torn countries has the potential to be an important resource, not only for economic development, but also for the pursuit of conflict resolution and social reconstruction. It is for this reason that the government of Rwanda has recognised that schools help shape the collective memory of the nation, remould social identity, and can encourage cross-ethnic affiliation.

(Rutayisire 2004: 12)

A complementary approach has been to place a high priority on a skills-based programme of civic education in addition to curriculum reforms described above. It is argued that only by actively engaging citizens in political processes designed to tackle the problems confronting all Rwandans will a sense of social unity emerge. However, this must mean developing policies appropriate and relevant for Rwanda's unique context.

Civic education strengthens democratic political culture to promote acceptance by both citizens and political elites of a shared system of democratic norms and values, and to encourage citizens to obtain knowledge about their system of government and act upon their values by participating in the political and policy process, with a potential to shape the democratic skills, values and behaviours of ordinary citizens. This leads to political tolerance or willingness to extend procedural liberties such as free speech and association to popular or disliked individuals or groups. This has long been viewed as essential for a stable and effective democratic system.

(Rutayisire, 2004: 10)

This initiative seeks to develop the civic-political dimensions of citizenship through providing the skills for citizens to engage in local political processes; in so doing it draws on both associational and cultural forms of social justice.

*Education for democracy – the case of the UK*

What might broadly be called ‘citizenship’ education first formally appeared in the curriculum in England and Wales following the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the implementation of the National Curriculum. Prior to that, teachers enjoyed significant teacher autonomy in relation to curriculum matters (Lawton 1980) and although citizenship-related issues were often covered within the curriculum, this was often in diverse, and sometimes serendipitous ways (QCA 1998). The National Curriculum introduced the notion of ‘cross-curricular’ themes, including citizenship, health education and economic awareness, that were intended to permeate the curriculum, rather than be taught as discrete subjects. In National Curriculum terms the cross-curricular themes were non-statutory – this immediately presented problems. The 1988 Act introduced a ‘league table’ driven accountability model, based on pupil performance in statutory subjects. In such circumstances schools inevitably focused on what their organizational success depended on, and paid only lip-service to those aspects of the curriculum considered to be non-essential.

The commitment to citizenship education grew in large part in response to concerns that ‘citizens’ in general, and young people in particular, were disengaging from formal political processes and institutions (QCA 1998). Although there was evidence of interest in ‘public issues’, activity in these areas was often being conducted through non-mainstream channels – with young people in particular appearing to be more comfortable operating within less formal organizations in wider civil society, rather than within state institutions (Beck 1992). The concern was that a sense of alienation from formal political processes may in turn threaten more fundamental aspects of the body politic. This was the articulation of the problem that formed the backdrop to subsequent policy development, and is exemplified by the following assertion: ‘We should not, must not, dare not, be complacent about the health and future of British democracy. Unless we become a nation of engaged citizens our democracy is not secure’ (Lord Chancellor, quoted in QCA 1998: 7).

These concerns reflect the discourse from which the Crick Report (significantly titled *Education for Citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools*) was published in 1998. Following publication of Crick, citizenship has become more established within schools, partly because it is now a statutory order and partly because its delivery by schools has come under greater scrutiny from the Inspectorate. In the Report it is argued that education for citizenship and democracy is so central:

that there must be a statutory requirement on schools to ensure it is part of the entitlement for all pupils. It can no longer sensibly be left as uncoordinated local initiatives that vary greatly in number, content and

method. This is an inadequate idea for animating the idea of a common citizenship with democratic values.

(QCA 1998: 7)

Reflecting the nature of some of the issues identified above, Crick argued that traditional conceptions of education in political literacy were inadequate – rather citizenship education needed to be conceived of more widely. Hence its proposals focused on promoting citizenship through encouraging social and moral responsibility, and community involvement, as well as political literacy. However, the more complex challenge for Crick was to tease out the implications of a ‘common citizenship with democratic values’. Marshall’s notion of citizenship was predicated on a perception of a largely homogenous nation, with social divisions dominated by class (Marshall 1950). As indicated, there was clearly an expectation that those divisions would diminish as the provision of social entitlements reduced inequalities and contributed to more common experiences and common culture. However, twenty-first century Britain looks very different to post-war twentieth-century society. Most significant is the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity, particularly in urban areas. How far is it practicable, or desirable, to define citizenship in terms of a ‘common citizenship’? Crick’s approach was to not only recognize the diverse nature of contemporary British society, but to seek to weld this, in part through citizenship education, into a unified national identity.

A main aim for the whole community should be to find or restore a sense of common citizenship, including a national identity that is secure enough to find a place for the plurality of nations, cultures, ethnic identities and religions long found in the United Kingdom. Citizenship education creates common ground between different ethnic and religious identities.

(QCA, 1998: 17)

The publication and subsequent implementation of the Crick Report illustrates how a discourse emerges based on a perceived need to restore, or re-articulate, a sense of Citizenship for ‘New Times’ (Andrews 1991). However, the difficulties inherent in this task soon become clear because these are highly contentious issues. Crick recognizes diversity, but seeks to mould this into a sense of shared national identity. Such an integrationist approach (Parekh, 1991) does not pass without challenge. One response is to reject any notion of multi-culturalism and to see education as a means of re-asserting traditional mono-cultural values (Hall 2004). An alternative approach questions the extent to which Crick’s aspiration is feasible, or desirable. Olssen (2004), for example, argues that Crick pays insufficient attention to cultural diversity and in trying to forge a shared identity is largely concerned with trying to ‘fit’ minority communities into a common, majority culture. Such issues highlight the tension between universalist conceptions of

citizenship in an age of multi-cultural diversity, tensions which are illustrated in different ways in the next example.

*Developing citizenship and national identity through education  
– the case of Israel*

Israel is a modern nation state, formed in 1948 following the re-drawing of the world map after the Second World War. It has always been a country of diverse ethnic groups, containing not just differences between Jews and Arabs for example, but significant differences *within* the Jewish population, for example between Sepharadi (Eastern-origin) and Ashkenazi (Western origin) Jews, and between immigrant Jews (for example, those from the former Soviet Union) and native Israelis. These ethnic differences are overlaid by significant differences based on social class. Not only does Israel lack the historical roots of a common culture, but it continues to evolve rapidly due to continued immigration on a significant scale. Even its borders are not clearly defined with obvious conflicts over the status of the Occupied Territories. For Israel there is a perception that fundamental issues of national security depend on developing a strong sense of national identity, within the context of a highly heterogeneous society. Israel aspires to a strong unified sense of national identity in a society that is not only culturally and ethnically diverse, but in some senses deeply polarized. This desire for national unity has traditionally been reflected in a highly centralized education system that has placed a premium on seeking to transmit a powerful sense of nationhood through schooling.

However, despite the appearance of centralization, the reality has often been very different. A feature of the Israeli school system is the high number of parochial schools that receive large sums of public money, but have little accountability to the public system (Gibton 2004). There is often a failure to comply with government regulations, including those relating to the curriculum. Hence a system that presents as centralized is often in reality highly fragmented, with religious groups exploiting the fragile nature of Israeli coalition politics to assert their independence regarding school governance and accountability.

The outcome of this state of affairs has contributed to a sense of crisis in the Israeli education system with a concern that Israel's economic prosperity, its national security and its very sense of nationhood are all threatened by an education system that fails to achieve its aims. In particular, there is a concern that the prevalence of huge social inequalities, that are also reflected in the education system, threaten to undermine the prospects for promoting national identity and social cohesion. The National Task Force for the Advancement of Education (NTFAE) (commonly known as the 'Dovrat Report') refers to the 'largest socio-economic disparities in the world' (NTFAE 2004: 2) and highlights the significant differences in educational outcomes based on the ethnic and social class divisions identified above. There is a clear recognition

that within the school system the Arab population suffers ‘considerable discrimination’ (NTFAE 2004: 4). The Report argues that the scale of the crisis requires a root and branch reform of the education system, in order to ensure that education continues to be ‘the cornerstone of society, the basis for culture and national unity’ (NTFAE 2004: 1). It goes on to highlight the central role of education in securing important social objectives:

In its goals and actions, the education system should reflect the essence of the general and national culture for which the society strives, so that the citizens of the future will have both cultural depth as individuals and a shared intellectual world. Education is the basis for molding citizens and imparting humanistic and democratic values: cooperation and social solidarity, consideration for others and contribution to others, justice, and equal rights

(NTFAE 2004: 1–2)

The key recommendations set out in the report largely mimic the educational restructuring that has dominated countries like the UK for many years (Gibton 2004). It highlights the global spread of educational policies (Green 1997), but raises important questions about the efficacy of policy-importation (Dimmock 2000). The NTFAE recommendations focus on extending the very modest policies of site-based management that Israel had already established. However, these are to be developed with much more apparent autonomy for schools, coupled with increasing accountability based on bench-marked performance data. The reforms are overwhelmingly managerialist in their perspective (Gibton 2004). It is striking that a report that proposes root and branch reform of the education system in order to improve its performance and effectiveness has almost nothing to say about the curriculum and pedagogical matters, but is focused almost exclusively on accountability structures.

A key concern of the Report is to improve the performance of the education system, and it is considered that this is fundamental in order to secure economic competitiveness. The development of human capital is seen as central in an economy with limited natural resources. However, citizenship issues also drive the reforms as there is an explicit recognition of the need for the education system to:

deepen its students Jewish identity – to consolidate the conceptual core that constitutes the underpinning of the nation’s presence in its land, the national home of the Jewish people, which is a Jewish center and a focal point for identification for all of world Jewry.

(NTFAE 2004: 5)

The desire to promote a sense of national identity of the type described above, whilst for example, supporting the right of the Arab population ‘to

preserve its cultural and social identity' (NTFAE 2004: 6) raises important questions about the report's recommendations. For example, the drive to 'improve performance' leads the Report to recommend decentralizing structures and placing more emphasis on individual school and headteacher accountability. Yet in important respects this undermines the desire for coherence. Will a more fragmented system make it more or less difficult to promote the national values identified above? The Report refers to strengthening the role of the Core Curriculum across all schools – introducing both centralizing and decentralizing pressures. Similarly, the Report identifies inequalities in society as a major threat to national unity, and yet proposes to reduce gaps by creating a more decentralized and differentiated system. The intention is to link funding of public schools more explicitly to compliance with state regulations. However, this may simply propel some schools into the private sector, creating a more hierarchical system. Tensions therefore emerge between the desire to decentralize accountability and the need to take actions that can reduce, not increase, inequalities. As the case studies in Part 3 reveal, reconciling these tensions may not always be easy.

## **Conclusion**

It is important to recognize that education policy has many important functions and is driven by many pressures. Globalization and the increasing demands of international competition, have emphasized the central link between educational policy and economic considerations. However, this is never a crude relationship. Not only are economic pressures complex and sometimes contradictory, but so too are the social functions of education. Education systems have never developed purely in response to the needs of capital and economic considerations, but are rather the product of struggles in which wider social forces have asserted their rights to welfare as an important citizenship entitlement (Gough 1979). Hence social pressures in education policy can be both progressive and reactionary – challenging, or reinforcing, the *status quo*.

It is important to recognize the link therefore between education policy and differing, and shifting, conceptions of citizenship. Such a connection is always likely to be complex. Sharp ideological differences relating to the nature of citizenship and the linked theme of social justice ensure that such conflict is an ever-present feature at all levels of the policy development process. Education policy on citizenship goes to the heart of core values relating to the nature and purpose of education. Contestation at the level of the socio-political environment therefore becomes mirrored at the strategic, organizational and operational levels as policy progresses from formulation to implementation. These tensions become more significant in an age of rapid technological and social change which challenge commonly held assumptions about existing notions of citizenship and what it means to be a citizen. Economic pressures have challenged the concept of universal

welfare provision, and have increasingly privileged privatized solutions to welfare problems. It remains to be seen whether education provision based on principles of choice and diversity can be reconciled with the citizenship concept of entitlement and equity of access. Universalism in its wider sense has in turn been challenged by the increasingly diverse nature of contemporary societies, particularly in terms of culture and ethnicity. Within such a context, tensions emerge between universalist, and uniform, provision and the need to respond to the differing demands and aspirations of diverse communities. Questions are also posed by the changing expectations of citizens regarding issues of access, participation and accountability. Conceptions of citizenship that emphasize access to education services but fail to address issues of participation and accountability provide only a partial picture of citizenship. The citizenship agenda is about developing individuals as active agents of change, not simply assuming that the users of services are passive recipients of producer determined product. Accountability issues are therefore inextricably linked to issues of citizenship and these themes are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## 5 Accountability, autonomy and choice

### Introduction

In previous chapters the inter-related themes of economic utility, citizenship and social justice have been examined. Educational institutions are now, more than ever before, required to produce students with the appropriate skills and capabilities to match national priorities. Education also is now seen to be important in developing national identity, citizenship, social cohesion and social justice. As Scott (1989) has pointed out, many governments across the world are now increasingly exercising their right to determine the broad character of the schools and colleges that it supports so that they contribute fully to the goals that have been established. This right on the part of government derives from the extent to which, because the system is largely supported by public funds, education must be accountable for the use of those funds.

In order to meet these demanding challenges, significant changes have taken place in many education systems, not the least of which has been the introduction of a range of measures designed to hold those institutions to account for the contribution that they make towards meeting national priorities through the performance of their students. The third main theme that will be considered, therefore, is that of accountability.

In this chapter an examination of market accountability will be followed by a consideration of choice as a mechanism for holding schools to account. The involvement of parents and other stakeholders is such a significant element in establishing accountability within the sphere of educational policy that it is treated separately from the more general discussion of choice and market accountability. This is followed by an analysis of accountability through performance management, while accountability through decentralization and site-based management will be discussed in the penultimate section.

Both the concepts and the mechanisms for accountability as they relate to education have moved a considerable distance from that posited by Sockett (1980) who argued that that accountability had both a simple and a complex meaning. At its most basic, it implies being obliged to deliver an account as well as being able to do so. In its more complex form, accountability can

mean responsibility for adherence to codes of practice rather than outcome. Following the emergence of alternative discourses in the socio-political environment based on neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism, the nature of accountability has changed (see Olssen *et al.* 2004). Now teachers and schools can be held to account both through the control mechanisms of the state such as inspection processes and the procedures within the school such as performance appraisal. Both teachers and schools are accountable to parents and to the state, although in the case of tertiary institutions the accountability is more likely to be to the state and, perhaps, to the students. The educational institutions and the individuals working within them are now held accountable for student performance and for the contribution to national priorities or performance targets. Thus, accountability is: 'the submission of the institution or individual to a form of external audit [and] its capacity to account for its or their performance ... accountability is imposed from outside' (Scott 1989: 17).

This change in the strategic direction of education policy has thus brought about radical revisions in both the organizational principles on which accountability is based and the operational procedures through which accountability is delivered.

There is, however, a contradiction here for teachers who have to operate as professionals within an organizational framework. A measure of autonomy is required for practitioners to be effective while the school remains accountable for their performance. Is it possible to establish a balance that ensures that guidelines concerning performance can be applied while a degree of professional autonomy is retained? Edwards (1991) notes that that accountability leads to control while autonomy and choice foster the release of human potential. This is a dilemma already encountered in the discussion of the human capital approach to educational policy in Chapter 3. This is not to say that all modes of accountability are linked to or derived from the direct link between education and the need for nation states to further develop their economic capacity, but, within the prevailing discourses, the economic imperative does exercise a very powerful influence over the requirement to hold educational institutions to account. The issue here is about organizational principles that shape the forms that the accountability mechanisms take and the impact of the application of their concomitant operational procedures.

Leithwood *et al.* (2002) suggest that there are four different approaches to accountability that have been adopted by New Right governments. These are market approaches, management approaches, decentralization and professional control through site-based management. The common thread that binds these together is: 'A belief that schools are unresponsive, bureaucratic, and monopolist ... Such organizations are assumed ... to have little need to be responsive to pressure from their clients because they are not likely to lose them' (Leithwood 2001: 47).

It was as a direct result of this perceived unresponsiveness that attention turned to the creation of the use of market forces for holding educational institutions to account for their performance: 'Educational markets operate within an institutional framework and the government's job is to design the framework ... If this framework is designed with care and concern markets can be allowed to work their wonders with it' (Chubb and Moe 1992: 10–11).

### **Market accountability**

It been argued in earlier chapters that globalization has had a significant impact on the formulation and implementation of the education policies of many nation states and has often resulted in a shift in emphasis from policy related to provision, to policy concerned with regulation. The economic challenges posed by the weakening of national boundaries have made it more difficult for any nation state to sustain the high cost of welfare provision, including that of education. Consequently, it has been argued that the most effective mechanism to match the state's capacity to provide welfare services with the requirements of the economy was through the operation of a market within which individuals can exercise choice by acting as rational consumers in pursuit of their own economic interests. The socio-political philosophy for this approach to policy was based on the work of right-wing political economists such as Friedman and Friedman (1980) and Hayek (1973). Their argument, that market forces were the most appropriate way of allocating resources and structuring choices in all aspects of human endeavour including social and educational policy, provides the context within which the text of policies on accountability and their strategic direction have been established in many countries. Such policies are often interpreted as enabling the state to restrict its role to that of that of a regulator of the market place by identifying the strategic direction in which provision should be focused. As Ball (1993) observed, the intended consequence of such policies is that collective, bureaucratic controls, structures and relationships will be replaced by market forces, performance management and with individualistic and competitive relationships.

The market driven approach to accountability in education policy found one of its most coherent forms in England and Wales in the 1990s. It was translated into a strategic direction and a set of organizational principles and operational procedures for public sector institutions by Joseph (1976) and Scruton (1984), the main tenets on which this legitimation was based were:

- the absolute liberty of individuals to make choices based on their own self-interest;
- the freedom of individuals to exercise such choices without being subject to coercion from others;

- the freedom to choose being exercised daily through spending choices rather than every 5 years through the ballot box.

Competition becomes the motive force for policy implementation and through it improvement in the nature and quality of service was to be brought about as the family becomes a unit of economic consumption, its members making choices about products and public sector institutions behaving as firms seeking to maximize both profits and market share. This was articulated in a government document, *Choice and Diversity* (Department for Education and Science (DfES) 1992). *Choice* was to be exercised most fundamentally by parents over where and how children were to be educated within a policy framework based on the provision of a range of different types of schools to which parents might choose to send their children. Parents who sought to transfer their children from one school to another had the ability to influence school budgets since funding follows pupils. Thus, it was in the interests of all schools to compete against other schools to recruit and retain as many children as is possible. The assumption was that the more successful schools would attract more pupils. Those schools that did not reach an acceptable standard and were therefore deemed by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) to be 'at risk', were liable to be closed if significant specific improvements were not made within one year. The mechanisms for holding schools to account: inspections, publishing results, annual reports and meetings, were all determined by national policy but were operationalized at a local level.

While the text and context of educational policy is derived from the language of the market place, choice provides the organizational principle that underpins the operational procedures. When associated with a pluralist schools sector, choice provides a range of different opportunities for parents to act as consumers of education. Some of those opportunities involve working within the public, state-provided system of education, others depend on private sector funding while yet others may be a combination of public and private sector initiatives. At the same time, mechanisms for facilitating choice have placed an emphasis on decentralization in countries as diverse as Sweden and China while in other countries, New Zealand for example, choice is located within a framework of a centralized curriculum and state inspection and accountability processes. The operation of the voucher schemes in parts of the USA is underpinned by the view that teachers alone should not determine the goals of education:

Teachers will indeed become accountable but not to publicly appointed bodies or other professionals in public authorities. The head and staff will have their behaviour conditioned by the degree of success that they achieve in attracting pupils.

(Kogan 1986: 53)

Similarly, the School Management Initiative (SMI) in Hong Kong also reinforces the market accountability model, although to a lesser extent than in the UK. According to Wong (1995), the recommended introduction of an annual School Plan and School Profile was to enable consumers to exercise their choice in deciding which schools would best satisfy their needs. The *Hong Kong Education Commission Report of 1997* (ECR7) emphasized the link between accountability and school autonomy. One of the recommendations involves 'allowing school management greater autonomy in general administration, finance and personnel matters but at the same time requiring a higher degree of accountability for school performance' (Education Commission Report Number 7 1997: xii).

As Apple (2000) has argued, accountability through choice in this context requires that all people should act in ways that maximize their own personal benefits and thus, for neo-liberals, consumer choice becomes the guarantor that education will become self-regulating. In some countries, the USA for example, this can lead to an emphasis on standardized testing and in others to a national census-based student assessment system such as that in Uganda (Riley 2004). In other states, Singapore and England for example, it leads to league table ranking of schools on the basis of which those parents with the resources to exercise choice are able to select schools for their children. In Singapore the emphasis is on achievement rather than choice, on standards rather than autonomy but accountability remains important (Kwong 1997). Here accountability is expressed both through the implementation of system-wide educational reforms and through the part played by education in forming, maintaining and improving the economic infrastructure of Singapore. Yip *et al.* (1997) highlighted this when referring to 'the pivotal role of education in the task of nation building and in fashioning the vibrant Singapore economy with a competitive edge in the world market' (Yip *et al.* 1997: 4).

Bush and Chew (1999) also recognized the tight coupling of economic development and education that is a feature of Singapore. They note that over the last three decades of rapid economic growth school and tertiary education has frequently been restructured and expanded in response to the changing human resource requirements of an increasingly diverse economy. The education system has been harnessed to achieve national development goals. This is both a highly developed form of accountability and a recognition of the importance of educational standards that goes beyond narrow market perspectives.

Such accountability mechanisms are based on a policy text that treats policy-making as uni-linear whereas it is far more complex and is subject, in a pluralist society, to diversity, influence and re-interpretation at every level. Consequently the organizational principles produce specific policies that are difficult to operationalize because they are based on a central control model that is inappropriate for educational institutions in many societies.

The implications for education are considerable. As McNamara *et al.* (2000) note:

the ideological move to construct education as a market place holds both systemic and economic implications for schools, teachers, children and parents and may involve policies ... based on 'educational' values being marginalized in favour of those lodged in market imperatives. Significant amongst them is the necessity for schools to promote a positive image of themselves in terms of performance indicators of product/output.

(McNamara *et al.* 2000: 475)

Furthermore, there are four important limitations to the market model of accountability and choice. First, how far is it appropriate to identify the parent as the sole customer of the education service, especially as education is largely funded from tax revenue, is largely state provided and the provision exists within the context of a national framework of priorities? Secondly, in spite of attempts to develop choice within the system, the education system's position as a near-monopoly supplier is maintained by a range of regulations, including compulsory attendance at school, the qualification and registration of teachers and, in many countries, a national curriculum. A free market would require all these controls to be lifted. Thirdly, the option of establishing co-operation and collaboration that could achieve similar ends is often ignored, although this is being re-established as part of the policy agenda in English schools. Schools are now encouraged 'to choose to establish new partnerships with other successful schools, the voluntary sector, faith groups or the private sector' (DfES 2001a: 44).

Even where such collaboration is attempted, such as in the case of schools involved in Education Action Zones discussed in Chapter 8 for example, residual competition between institutions makes collaboration difficult. While the curriculum may be national, the localization of accountability is such that the onus is on individual schools to achieve successful implementation and to accept the consequences if they fail. These reforms in most countries are introduced on the grounds of quality and efficiency, improving pupils' learning while both obtaining a better return on money spent and ensuring that national labour requirements are met.

Fourthly, accountability based on choice emphasizes the role of the parent as customer choosing between service providers. Both accountability and choice will be maximized without the need for political interventions. The argument is that if the customer can be placed in a direct relationship with the supplier of the services they seek, then a self-regulatory market can be allowed to operate. As Gewirtz *et al.* (1995) warn, however, the limited capacity of many parents to avail themselves of the opportunity to send their children to any but the nearest school could mean that exercising such choices could become a middle-class form of engagement with the mechanisms of

choice and accountability. This gives rise to what Stoll and Fink call the quality-equity paradox:

The reforms ... have been made in the name of quality and efficiency. They provide the rhetoric of equity but fail to accommodate the changing nature of society. Indeed many changes tend to be ways for the 'haves' to escape from the 'have nots' ... various choice and voucher initiatives ... gain favour with the affluent but ignore the impact of post-modernity on the least empowered elements of society.

(Stoll and Fink 1996: 7)

This unequal distribution of resources within most societies means that the opportunity to make such choices is also unequally distributed. As Davies (1990) warns, parental choice through the direct application of market principles is an uncertain avenue to equality of provision since the ghettoization of schools could be reinforced where choice is exercised on grounds of social and racial prejudice. Accountability based on choice may, therefore, have adverse effects: 'There is growing evidence that the quasi-market in education is leading to greater inequality between schools and greater polarization between various social and ethnic groups' (Walford 1996: 14).

This resonates with the argument developed in Chapter 4 about citizenship and social justice involving both contributing to society and benefiting from being a citizen in equitable ways. Such choice mechanisms may jeopardize the ability of public schooling to provide equal opportunity for all students since unequal resources produce situations in which good schools attract the advantaged students while other schools are left with rejected students and thus result in socially unjust provision (Gaskell 2002).

The role of parents is central to this policy mechanism. Sallis (1988) argues that schools and parents must be accountable to each other for their contributions to a shared task 'true accountability can only exist in an acceptance of shared responsibility for success at the level of the child, the school and the service' (Sallis 1988: 10).

### **Parents and accountability**

The development of an accountable relationship between schools and parents as individual family units representing their child or children at a particular school represent a complex and sometimes controversial aspect of state intervention in education. In 1994 a survey of teachers and school principals in Hong Kong conducted by the Education Department indicated a positive belief in the desirability of having effective home-school cooperation. There was far less agreement about the nature of that partnership or about empowering parents to hold teachers to account. The Hong Kong School Management Initiative, introduced in 1991, encouraged

schools to adopt new management practices in order to improve the quality of school education (Cheng 1999). Teacher and parent members were added to School Management Committees in Hong Kong (Wong 1995). Ng (1999) noted that the intention of the policy change was for parents to play a much more proactive role in supporting learning and in facilitating the attainment of a much higher level of academic performance by their children. However, only a few schools in Hong Kong permitted parents to become partners in the process of determining school policies (Ng 1999). Nevertheless, the Hong Kong Government remains committed to the promotion and strengthening of this form of accountability and has recently produced the School-based Management Consultative Document to pursue this further. Part of the title of the document indicates the strategic direction in which the policy is intended to move: *Transforming schools into dynamic and accountable professional learning communities* (Education Department 2000). This links initiatives to involve parents and teachers jointly in school management closely to the improvement of pupil performance and the development of high-quality school education.

Parent-school relationships in Hong Kong are similar to those in many other countries although as Cheng (2002) points out, in many Asian countries parental involvement in schools is a difficult issue because many of those countries lack a culture to support such involvement. There has developed a growing awareness of the importance of involving parents, not least because they can share the management responsibility, monitor teachers and monitor school operations (Cheung *et al.* 1995). A similar awareness has recently emerged in Israel where there is a highly centralized education system with limited private school alternatives. Here there is a move towards local school autonomy in an attempt to meet the diverse needs of parents (Goldring 1997). Furthermore: 'Parental and community involvement is often perceived as distrust of teachers and principals. To involve parents can be perceived as a loss of face among professionals' (Cheng 2002: 110).

The most radical forms of parental partnership in education can be found in charter schools in the USA. Here parents are able to found or co-found schools that are governed by boards of directors composed primarily of parents (Yancey 2000). These were not to be independent schools in that they charged fees but they were to be free from regulations that governed other schools. They were, in effect, mini school districts (Amsler 1992). By the early 1990s more than 20 states had introduced or were introducing legislation to establish charter schools (Sautter 1993). In New Zealand the Picot Review (1988) required every school to produce a charter while in Australia, reforms in Victoria and New South Wales introduced similar changes. Increasingly these agendas are driven, not by parental interests, but by a focus on accountability through pupil achievement.

The importance of parents in the education of children has long been recognized in England. The 1986 Education Act (DES 1986) increased parental representation on governing bodies and required the governing body

of each school to deliver an Annual Report for parents and to hold an Annual Meeting of parents to discuss that report. By implementing such operational procedures the education system in England may have moved further than in many other countries to establish mechanisms through which parents can hold the school to account and, conversely, can be held to account by the school. This relationship has now been formulated into a formal agreement. All schools are required to prepare a written home-school agreement and associated parental declaration (DfEE 1998b). These agreements must contain a statement of the school's aims and values, a definition of the responsibilities of both the parents and the school together with a statement of the school's expectations of its pupils. Once the agreement is finalized, schools 'invited' parents to sign it. The rationale for this development is children are more successful when schools and parents work together and this can happen most effectively if parents know what the school is trying to achieve and, therefore, can hold the school to account.

Within this context, however, contradictions are inevitable. For example, many parents focus on what is best for their own children. What matters is what their children are doing as individuals. Teachers, on the other hand, are more concerned with aggregate notions of school performance and improvement and attempt to involve parents in the quest to achieve improved aggregate goals. Accountability mechanisms that such impact generates, accountability through parent involvement is largely based on individual self-interest, on ensuring that cost is minimized and benefit is maximized from the services available. As was seen in Chapter 4, this interaction between accountability and benefit is often expressed at a societal rather than an individual level. In many nation states the close connection between education and economic development is widely recognized and a significant number of improvement initiatives have been introduced to strengthen the ways in which educational institutions are more accountable for their role in meeting economic priorities. School-parent accountability, therefore, is grounded in relatively high level benefits, benefits that may accrue at a societal, regional, local community or even school level. Most parents, however, are concerned about the benefits that pertain to their own children as individuals within the education process. It is for this that they wish to hold schools to account rather than for their more general performance and the achievement of targets. Such different perceptions of accountability lead to significant tension.

The implication of the operational procedures that produce these accountability mechanisms is that both students and parents are partners in the educational enterprise. As result, parents have been re-positioned as informed consumers in the educational market place. Thus, the nature of this accountability relationship has now shifted from parents as passive or active consumers to one in which the total mobilization of resources in support of the educative process has sought to transform parents into productive partners who accept a responsibility for the success or failure of

the educational enterprise. This involves the sharing of both responsibility and risk. The responsibility for the attainment of pupils in any school, both collectively and as individuals, has now been broadened to include parents. This, of course, shifts some of the burden of responsibility away from teachers. Nevertheless, the extent to which schools succeed is determined by measures of pupil performance and it is against such measures that schools will be held to account. As Crozier (1998) says of the relationship between parents and schools:

part of this process of accountability is a device for surveillance. However, this surveillance is not one-way: as well as the accountability of teachers through surveillance, school relationships have been underpinned ... by some form of surveillance and social control of pupils ... and parents.

(Crozier 1998: 126)

Such accountability requires teachers to persuade parents to adopt the school's definition of what it means to be a 'good' parent and a 'good' pupil. Thus, while parents and external educational agencies may monitor the work of teachers, teachers are using home-school partnerships to monitor parents who monitor pupils. This can often mean the imposition of an entire value system on parents for, as Crozier (1998) notes, this accountability procedure is carried out through a process of teacher domination and on the basis of the teachers' agenda.

Perhaps to counteract this domination of the agenda by educational professionals, more recent British government publications such as *Schools Achieving Success* (Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2001a) have re-defined accountability in a number of ways to further facilitate consumer choice. In New Zealand, similar partnerships are envisaged between schools, colleges, stakeholders and local communities to reinforce existing accountability mechanisms (Government of New Zealand 1998). The extent to which such partnerships are beneficial and sustainable will be considered further in Chapter 8. Linked with this process of establishing such operational procedures for accountability are the organizational principles of modernization through deregulation such that central to achieving both a more accountable school system and the improvement of educational standards is: 'The confident school, well-managed school running its own budget, setting its own targets and accountable for its performance' (DfES 2001a: 63).

### **Accountability and school-based management**

School-based management is closely linked, through the language of markets and choice to organizational principles grounded in notions of autonomy. The argument here is that institutional accountability can be strengthened if decisions are made by those inside schools and colleges rather than by

national or regional officials because those on the ground are best able to make decisions about appropriate provision of education and the allocation of resources. They can then be held to account for those decisions and greater effectiveness through greater flexibility and more efficient deployment of resources achieved (Caldwell and Spinks 1998; Bush 2002).

In Hong Kong the introduction of school-based management was legitimized by rhetoric of raising standards:

The School Management Initiative (SMI), embarked upon in Hong Kong in March 1991, is a major restructuring of the operations of secondary and primary schools, with the belief that greater self-management can enhance school performance. With self-management, schools are more free to address their own problems, and ... manage changes and routines in a controlled manner.

(Wong *et al.* 1998: 67)

Similarly, the Schools Excellence Model (SEM) in Singapore is based on devolving power over some aspects of resourcing and pedagogy to the institutional level, but within a framework of competition between schools. SEM was specifically intended to improve student performance 'once people in the school setting are motivated and sensitized to the drive for excellence ... then organisational excellence will be eventually achieved, thereby schools will become agents for continuous improvement and innovation' (Mok 2003: 357).

This model is based on the development of internal accountability mechanisms that can enable the school to respond to the national quality framework. The SEM schools do have powers devolved to them, but they are not, in any way, autonomous.

As Caldwell (2002) points out, self-managing schools may not necessarily be autonomous, since autonomy implies a degree of independence that is not provided within education systems in which central control is exercised over curriculum content, pedagogy and outcomes. Schools can be considered self-managed when 'there has been decentralized a significant amount of authority and responsibility to make decisions related to the allocation of resources within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, standards and accountabilities' (Caldwell 2002: 35).

Karstanje (1999) warns, however, that while decentralization may shorten the distance between the policy makers (government) and the policy implementers in the schools and colleges, it may not mean that the institutions gain more autonomy. Such autonomy may shift to the regional level and make little difference to schools. Deregulation, however, does lead to an increase in institutional autonomy if the effect of the deregulatory process is to shift the locus of decision making to the institution. The effect of both deregulation and decentralization is often to shift the financial responsibility and risk away from governments and towards the institutions

that, through deregulation, become accountable for managing their own resources (Karstanje 1999). This can be seen as 'a deliberate process of subterfuge, distortion, concealment and wilful neglect as the state seeks to retreat ... from its historical responsibilities for providing quality public education' (Smyth 1993: 2).

Alternatively, deregulation can be interpreted in a more limited way as a selective withdrawal on the part of the state from areas in which it has had difficulty succeeding such as providing equality of opportunity through education (Nash 1989). It may also be an example of the way in which the state seeks to cut expenditure on public services during a period of economic stringency induced by global pressures. Whatever the interpretation adopted, school-based management can be seen as a technique for shifting accountability away from government to individual institutions, especially as the failure of individual schools and colleges can then be attributed to poor leadership and resource management at local level. Deregulation 'will give ... schools greater freedom and less central control. New freedoms ... will enable them to meet the needs of pupils and parents more effectively' (Blair 2001: 44 quoted in Caldwell 2002: 36).

With freedom comes responsibility because self-managed schools, while able to set their own targets, will be accountable for their own performance within an established national accountability framework (DfES 2001a). As Bullock and Thomas (1997) point out, the main thrust of deregulation in England is to give schools control over spending priorities while, at the same time, autonomy over what is taught has been severely reduced:

The autonomy of schools has been enhanced in the area of control over human and physical resources but control over deciding what is taught has been reduced by the national curriculum. Accountability has been altered and the role of the professional challenged.

(Bullock and Thomas 1997: 52)

They note that a similar pattern can be found in Chile, China, Poland, Uganda, the USA and in most countries where resource management has been devolved to schools. In Australia, many schools have had devolved to them the responsibility for utilities, buildings, flexible staff establishments and appointments but this has been associated with greater centralization of both curriculum and assessment while in New Zealand:

Accountability has been strengthened by performance monitoring against ... objectives established by the school and the government. The efficiency of the change depends on the 'market' benefits being generated. The impact of the reforms may threaten equity.

(Bullock and Thomas 1997: 54)

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The autonomy of schools has increased over the management of the operational grant at the expense of greater central control over the curriculum. There is a paradox here, because:

The decentralization of control over resources can be viewed as consistent with the 'market' principles ... Yet the centralization of control over the curriculum would appear to be ... more consistent with the principles underlying planned economies.

(Bullock and Thomas 1997: 211)

The link between these two apparently contradictory sets of policies lies in the need to challenge the autonomy of the educational professionals and to link the outputs of schools more closely with the perceived needs of the economy. The centralized elements of educational policy in most countries serves to enable the mechanisms of choice to operate and to allow government agencies to hold schools to account for their outputs. At the same time, those within the schools are accountable to government and stakeholders for the management of resources to achieve those outputs: 'Under a system of school-based management, accountability for student achievement rests squarely with the individual school' (Carlson 1989: 2 quoted in Murphy 1991: 5).

Accountability in self-managing schools, therefore, is concerned both with student performance and with institutional efficiency:

creating more efficient and cost effective school administrative structures is a ... central goal for devolution. Typically, this goal is pursued through the implementation of an *administrative control* form of site-based management that increases school-site managers' accountability ... for the efficient expenditure of resources.

(Leithwood 2001: 49 original emphasis)

Although the idea that locally managed schools could be run more economically is critical to this approach to accountability, there is no evidence that this is the case (Gaskell 2002). The nature of the work carried out by headteachers and their staff, however, will change.

Fergusson (1994) has identified the extent to which the accountability for resource management can result in headteachers becoming embroiled in administration and performance management at the expense of educational matters. Heads no longer have the responsibility for formulating broad educational policy within their schools. Instead, they are responsible for implementing a set of policies the strategic direction, organizational principles and operational procedures of which have been externally imposed. Their role is restricted to achieving the outputs determined by those policies. Consequently, unless resources are diverted away from teaching and learning

and into administrative structures, there is, on the part of heads and senior staff in schools:

a radically increased emphasis on budgetary considerations ... and less attention to providing leadership about curriculum and instruction ... As an approach to accountability, site-based management is wide spread ... Considerable evidence suggests, however, that by itself it has made a disappointing contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning.

(Leithwood *et al.* 2002: 858–9)

Here the operational procedures are producing outcomes that are contrary to both the articulated strategic direction for these policies and to the very language of legitimation of the policies themselves.

The contradictions here are obvious. The administrative demands of site-based management take senior staff away from the arena of professional practice while the requirements of performance management, as will be shown in the next section, are predicated on authority and hierarchy. Little wonder then, there is an increased emphasis on leadership training, the creation of national standards for school leaders and even pre-appointment certification such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship in England and Wales. A common theme in such training is that leadership and accountability should be dispersed throughout the organization. This, of course, means that if accountability as well as leadership is so distributed, then performance management within the organization becomes a key element in the accountability process. Thus, as Ball (1994) argues, the doctrine of site-based management can be seen as one in which surveillance of school work and holding staff to account is conducted by heads and other senior staff as part of a process of carrying out the intentions of central government. Self-managing schools, like all other modern organizations, can be seen to be concerned with regulation and surveillance, either explicitly or implicitly (Foucault 1997).

### **Accountability and performance management**

The most significant distinction between accountability through market forces, parental choice as an accountability mechanism and accountability through performance management is that market forces and parental choice focus largely on external accountability while performance management is concerned with the internal processes of the school. Accountability based on control at school level through performance management focuses on the extent to which teacher and pupil performance can be managed, progress towards relevant targets can be observed and reported upon and on the extent to which progress towards specified outcomes can be measured. Thus, the main formal characteristic of accountability through performance management is

that of a managerial hierarchy is concerned with organizational effectiveness and efficiency in terms of achieving targets that are institutionally driven by appraisal and improvement planning. This goes beyond accountability by a public comparison of performance through league tables and published inspection reports that underpin market accountability and accountability by parental choice. For example, teachers are required by contract to perform tasks set by the headteachers and determined by national targets, and subject to review. Teachers are held accountable by the headteacher for their work. This is supported by a technical-rational view of both the curriculum and the nature of teachers' work. It assumes that the curriculum consists of a series of specific outcomes and the pedagogy to achieve them: 'Outcomes remain the focus, but they are now constituted as targets and benchmarks, rather than just comparisons with other institutions' (Fergusson 2000: 208).

Once this framework of targets is established, it then becomes the function of the teacher to use the prescribed pedagogy to ensure that the outcomes are achieved. Accountability thus becomes a matter of assessing how successfully teachers have deployed the relevant pedagogy based on the testing of pupil performance. This, in turn, is based on performance management: 'It is necessary to establish clear organizational goals, agree to the means of achieving them, monitor progress and then support the whole process by a suitable system of incentives' (Normore 2004: 64).

The framework for such performance management in schools in Britain is enshrined in legislation that requires headteachers to ensure that all teachers are appraised on a regular basis (DfEE 2000). This performance review, must take place annually and must result in the setting of at least three targets, one of which must relate to pupil performance. Typically the other targets are linked to professional development and management responsibilities. The performance targets are, in Britain at least, part of a wider agenda of target setting that culminates in the school development or improvement plan that sets targets for pupil performance within the school – based on nationally determined priorities and standards. Lay governors are responsible for ensuring that these targets are achieved but it is the headteachers and subject leaders who are directly accountable for the performance of teachers and pupils.

In parallel with this emphasis on managing the performance of teachers is the requirement to set standards of performance targets both for individuals and schools. One of the main management functions of senior staff becomes the monitoring of performance towards achieving both individual and school targets. *The Teaching Standards Framework* (DfES 2001b) states that subject leaders must provide management to secure high-quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of pupil learning, a clear indication that middle managers are now responsible and accountable for performance management. This has implications for workloads, professional relationships and for the training of middle managers. Although in Britain promotion to senior management positions in schools is now subject to more

specific criteria and certification, the current level of provision for middle managers in Britain, at least, is regarded as wholly inadequate (Busher and Harris 2000). In the further education sector in Britain, Gleeson and Shain (2003) note that performance management has substantially redrawn the lines of responsibility and accountability which have led to greatly increased regulation of professional workers and intensification of work loads.

Similar performance management measures can be found elsewhere. Tomlinson (2000) identifies a number of performance management mechanisms in the USA, many of which link pay to the appraisal of performance, although these tend to be whole school rather than individually-based rewards packages. In Hong Kong schools, there is what Wong (1995: 521) describes as 'a bureaucratic system of staff appraisal based on a managerial model'. Here the principal is accountable for the work of the school and has authority to discharge that accountability. In New Zealand, a rigorous performance management system based on teacher appraisal has been in place since 1997. This is predicated on the view, expressed by the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) that:

Performance appraisal ... is a tool by which the board can measure whether the objectives set for the school are being met. Through performance appraisal, the board and the principal can ascertain whether the elements of the job description, the performance objectives, and the outcomes ... take both the individual and the organisation forward.

(NZSTA 1999: 7)

Concerns have been expressed about the extent to which this process has been used to implement accountability mechanisms: 'What has happened in New Zealand is that the accountability edge and thus the organisational demands of performance appraisal have insidiously been increased' (Middlewood and Cardno 2001: 12).

In countries such as Israel, Japan and USA the process of assessment before moving on to the next career stage is well established (Middlewood 2002) while appraisal for school principals in Singapore focuses largely on their accountability for school improvement (Chew 2001). As Beare argues: 'Assessing performance is normal practice these days ... for accountability purposes, for efficiency, and for explaining and keeping track of how resources are used' (Beare 2001: 170).

For the first time middle managers in schools are involved in the process as appraisers, thus reinforcing the hierarchical management emphasis of the process. Information from the performance review statement can be used to inform decisions about pay and promotion to the extent that up to the normal pay threshold teachers can expect an annual increment if they are performing satisfactorily. Double increments for excellent performance would need to be justified by review outcomes. Performance review is used inform applications by teachers for promotion to the upper pay spine while

it also forms part of the evidence which can be used to inform decisions about awarding performance pay points to eligible teachers (DfES 2001c).

In some places, Connecticut and Queensland for example, this extension of the responsibilities of middle managers into the realm of performance management has been accompanied by a more rigorous control over criteria for entry into teaching and the extension of provision for teacher professional development (Leithwood *et al.* 2002). In Germany, a similar extension of performance management can be found in some universities. Here attempts are being made to strengthen central control within institutions by introducing accountability through contracts (Kreysing 2002). In one university this is based on a process of contract management between the central board and the faculties as operative units based on negotiated objectives which the heads of faculty or of the units within the faculty are responsible for achieving within a specified budget over a pre-determined time period, after which progress is reviewed. This is having a significant impact on the lines of accountability within the university.

The impact of such performance management mechanisms on the leadership role of the headteacher is extremely significant. In essence, headteachers are in danger of ceasing to be senior peers located within professional groups and are becoming distinctive actors in a managerialist system, in which the pursuit of objectives and methods which are increasingly centrally determined is their main responsibility. They must account for the deployment of those methods and the achievement of those objectives and, at the same time, ensure the compliance of their teaching staff (Fergusson 1994). Such accountability mechanisms must establish clear aims and acceptable criteria that are relevant and can be applied in educational institutions. At the very least, it is necessary to establish a balance between performativity and the legitimate professional concerns of teachers. There is evidence that this is not the case. Performance management as a form of accountability is widely seen as disempowering the professional domain within educational institutions at the expense of a strengthened management domain (Normore 2004). As Simkins (1997) argues, such accountability cannot be achieved through professional collaboration and accountability and will, therefore, generate tensions between heads and staff. In the USA, performance management schemes have been abandoned and, in Britain, the recently introduced appraisal process linked to performance related pay has not been successful:

Not only did the scheme ... fail to meet its own aims, but it has a number of shortcomings ... Respondents are unclear about targets and standards and are unclear about the extent to which performance can be measured on an individual basis. Moreover, there clear concerns about the equity of such a system.

(Farrell and Morris 2004: 101)

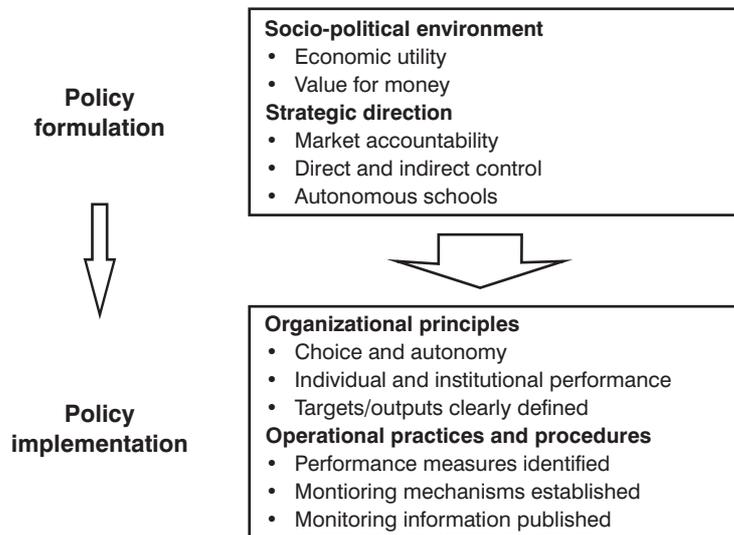


Figure 5.1 Policy into practice: accountability

Furthermore, even where additional payments are made through the award of performance-related pay, there is significant evidence that such awards made a difference to what teachers do (Wragg *et al.* 2005)

### Conclusion

It has been argued in this chapter that the imperative for a skilled work force and a competitive economy that has emerged from the socio-political environment over the last two decades has provided the context for the development of rigorous accountability mechanisms within education systems across the world. This movement has been reinforced by an emphasis on individual and institutional performance and the need for financial stringency in the public sector in many countries. These factors have combined to provide a strategic direction that can lead to the integration of accountability into the organizational principles and establish a range of operational mechanisms for holding educational institutions to account (see Figure 5.1).

Green (1999) notes, however, that while there is clear evidence of the impact of common global forces on education systems in Asia, Australasia, Europe and North America and convergence around broad policy themes such as decentralization and accountability: ‘This does not appear to have led to any marked convergence in structures and processes’ (Green 1999: 6).

Nevertheless, there is a discernible shift towards establishing and maintaining accountability procedures in many countries (Glatter 2003).

Consequently, those within education in many states operate with multiple levels and senses of accountability that often co-exist in a confusing manner (Ferlie *et al.* 1996). Market accountability has been reinforced by the ability of parents to make choices and to determine where their children shall be educated. Schools have to be responsive to client needs if they are to thrive in this new market-led climate. In other words, schools will only provide the outcomes and services and meet the standards required of them when they are directly accountable to their clients, in the form of parents, through choice mechanisms and to the state through specified performance targets. Although the strategic direction of many of the accountability processes considered here is relatively uniform, it is evident that the organizational principles and the operational practices may differ widely. As Sui-Chu has recognized, if it is to form a significant element in accountability, parental choice and involvement in Asia generally and Hong Kong in particular:

should take a broader view of parental involvement, to encompass both home-based and school-based activities. It appears to be more feasible, under Asian culture, to move parental involvement ... from the traditional home-based form to less rational school-based form according to teachers' attitudes and zones of acceptance.

(Sui-Chu 2003: 72)

Thus, while public accountability remains powerful, its nature is influenced by local policies and practices such as the extent to which teachers can influence and re-shape policy implementation and the locating of additional powers at school level.

Some argue that one of the consequences of the emergence of these forms of accountability is that professional accountability, where it existed, has reduced in importance because of government imperatives for higher standards and parental demands for greater responsiveness (O'Neill 1997). Professional norms often have to be subjugated to these public and market pressures, not least through processes of performance management although, as Middlewood (2002) argues, this has also produced an increased emphasis on and extended opportunities for continued professional development. Such opportunities, however, are often closely linked to the achievement of overall national priorities (Bolam 2002). Perhaps the issue here, however, goes beyond the specific nature of teaching as a profession and the nature of professional values and services. Given that the main features of professionalism are not immutable, it is evident that the nature of teacher professionalism, in the UK at least, has been transformed in conjunction with a growing emphasis on economic performance.

There is also evidence of growing central control over both processes and outcomes in schools and colleges. Much depends on where the balance lies between achieving outcomes through specific processes and the wider continued professional development of teachers and lecturers. How

far, for example, does appraisal focus on targets and outcomes and how much attention is given to professional development? If the emphasis is on outcomes, then accountability and performance management are providing the organizational principles for control through accountability. This is less likely to be the case if the operational practices focus on professional development. Much of the evidence in this chapter suggests that the greater concern is with targets and outcomes. Consequently, questions are raised about the nature of teacher autonomy, responsibility and accountability (Hoyle and John 1995). It would be a mistake not to recognize that:

The more complex a professional activity becomes, the more policy interventions have to take into account the views of practitioners and leave space for local adaptations ... practical problems cannot be solved for the institutions by central regulations.

(OECD 1996b: 11)

A further consequence of such accountability rooted in the legitimation of economics and the market place, has been the diminution of the weight attached to concerns for equality of opportunity, equity and social justice. The operation of market forces through competition and choice may lead to some schools being over subscribed and others having rapidly declining enrolments, resulting in a climate that is not conducive to setting and achieving reasonable educational standards for those students that remain. The use of raw measures of pupil achievement as the sole or even the major criterion for making judgments about the efficacy of the performance of schools may also result in discrimination against certain groups of pupils, those with special needs or whose first language is not the language of instruction in the school, for example. The exercise of parental choice may exacerbate these inequities. As Goldring (1997) notes in the cases of both Israel and the USA, one effect of parental choice mechanisms is that students from more affluent families are more likely to leave their neighbourhood schools in favour of magnet schools that cater for students with special skills. In Britain, Gewirtz (2002) has pointed out that one of the most significant weaknesses of accountability based on market forces, choice and performance management is that such mechanisms merely tend to produce a redistribution of students amongst schools and colleges without addressing the root causes of educational under-attainment and issues of equality of opportunity and social justice. There is evidence from both Australia and France that professional families are far more active in exercising choice than are those of manual workers (Hirsch 1997). How to address such issues at institutional level is often left to individuals within schools and colleges who have to implement and often mediate the impact of educational policy on both teachers and students. The three chapters in the next part of this book each explore different aspects of local interpretation and implementation of policy.



## Part III

# The impact of educational policy

It was argued in earlier chapters that much educational policy can be seen as a response to the impact of globalization, human capital theory, concerns about citizenship and mechanisms for holding to account the leaders and managers of educational institutions. These themes, together with advances in information technology typify the wider socio-political environment and provide the context within which the text and strategic direction of much educational policy is located. In this third part of the book, the impact of some of these themes is explored at the local and institutional level. Here the strategic direction, the implementation of the text of policies and organizational principles and operational practices on which policy implementation depends will be explored. In Chapter 6 the implementation of school-based strategic planning in two policy contexts is discussed. There is a particular focus on how leaders at an institutional level seek to mediate national policy agendas in order to develop institutional policies relevant and appropriate to their specific context. In Chapter 7 there is an analysis of the impact of a particular policy, that of Educational Action Zones (EAZs), which links the themes of economic utility citizenship and social justice. In this instance a high-profile national policy was introduced in order to tackle perceived problems of educational underachievement in socially disadvantaged areas. The chapter explores how a policy principally concerned with issues of social justice is legitimated within a discourse dominated by economic considerations and the need to develop human capital. In Chapter 8, citizenship, cultural diversity and social justice are explored in the context of multi-ethnic school leadership. Here there is a particular focus on how school leaders have sought to develop institutional policy agendas that reflect the diverse nature, and needs, of their school communities. Research in this chapter illustrates how institutional policy agendas could be both supported and constrained by policy discourses emanating from the state and how leadership often involved simultaneously maximizing the opportunities, and minimizing the threats, presented by state policies.



## 6 Policy, strategy and leadership

*(with Daniel Chan)*

### Introduction

The strategic direction of much of education policy is frequently justified not as an end in itself, but as a means to enhanced economic development leading to a more competitive economy, greater productivity and increased wealth. The essence of such a policy, as far as it impacts on schools is that:

The effectiveness and efficiency of schools will be improved ... as they become more strategic in their choice of goals, and more ... data-driven about the means used to accomplish those goals. The approach encompasses a variety of procedures for 'strategic planning' ...

(Leithwood et al. 2002: 861–2)

More broadly, investment in education and training is believed to provide the key both to national competitiveness and social cohesion, often by seeking to improve the performance of schools through setting targets for pupil achievement and requiring schools to develop improvement plans to meet those targets. These targets are intended to provide both the organizational principles and to inform operational practices in schools. Frequently, however, the setting of such targets does not take into account contextual features such as the socio-economic mix of the school, its funding or teachers' skills and experience (2004). It is claimed, however, that: 'Even schools suffering from high levels of deprivation can achieve genuine improvements through careful rational planning' (Hargreaves and Hopkins 1994: ix).

This implies that school context is irrelevant and that if development planning is pursued vigorously, then school improvement will be the inevitable consequence. The strategic direction that emanates from such a discourse is based, as was seen in Chapter 5, on accountability and target setting linked to a rational planning process. Such organizational principles and operational practices are not confined to secondary schools and tertiary institutions which tend to have a direct link to the labour market. They also impact directly on schools in the primary sector. The emphasis here is on primary schools because there is a dearth of research evidence on similar

processes in secondary education. What work there is tends to be largely descriptive and prescriptive (Jayne 1998; Davies and Davies 2005). This chapter explores the consequences of such policies on primary schools and examines the role of school leaders in implementing and mediating such policies. It is based on an analysis of how far primary school headteachers in England and Hong Kong adopt rational planning and to what extent they seek to modify both the process and the outcomes. These two countries are chosen partly because they represent different policy contexts. Each of these education systems has also been subject to significant changes in its wider socio-political environment over a similar time period, resulting in a shift of strategic direction and changes in organizational principles and operational practices.

### **Educational policy and schools in Hong Kong**

The Hong Kong education system has its origins in British colonial rule and, therefore, shares some features with its English counterpart. The differentiation between primary and secondary schooling in Hong Kong is broadly similar to that in England although English children begin and end their primary education a year earlier than their Hong Kong counterparts. Both education systems have been subject to significant reform in recent years. In each country, 1997 proved to be a watershed for changes in the socio-political environment and, therefore, for educational policy. In Hong Kong what has been termed 'The First Wave' of educational change (Cheng 2000) had its roots in the Llewellyn Report (Llewellyn et al. 1982) and the subsequent establishment of the Education Commission that produced six reports between 1984 and 1996. The strategic directions articulated in these reports:

had their roots in the assumption that policy makers could establish best practices to enhance effectiveness ... to solve major problems for all schools ... they were generally characterised by a top-down approach with an emphasis on external intervention.

(Cheng 2000: 23)

These changes focused on more effective teacher training, the use of new technology, revisions to the curriculum (Education Commission 1984) and improving language teaching (Education Commission 1996). Measures were also introduced to enhance teacher quality (Education Commission 1992). A major policy thrust revolved around curriculum development through establishing a Curriculum Development Institute and the refinement of assessment by introducing a set of attainment targets at key stages in children's education (Education Commission 1990). In 1991 the School Management Initiative (SMI) was announced.

In 1997 Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR). New sets of policies followed. Although this was a significant change in the socio-political environment, the strategic direction of educational policy remained largely the same, at least for the time being, as did the organizational principles. These included developing school-based management as the major approach to enhancing effectiveness and quality assurance in education. Operational procedures were based on upgrading primary teachers to graduates, implementing a long-term information technology strategy and working towards the target of whole-day schooling for all primary students (Education and Manpower Bureau 1997). The link between the two policy phases was provided by the SMI that established a school-based approach to school management (Cheng and Cheung 1999):

The School Management Initiative ... is a major restructuring of the operations of secondary and primary schools with the belief that greater self-management can improve school performance ... Consequently, the development of an annual school plan is one of the changes required under SMI.

(Wong et al. 1998: 67)

By 1999 a new vision had been established for Hong Kong education which was intended to cultivate good learning habits in children, lay the foundations for lifelong learning of students and prepare them for the building of a civilized society based on learning, a sense of social responsibility and a global outlook (Education Commission 1999).

There was a distinct paradigm shift, not in strategic direction but in organizational principles, between the first and the second waves of reform. The first wave depended on a resource-based top-down approach which largely ignored school needs, while the second wave put a strong emphasis on a school-based approach that recognizes the importance of institutional level planning and management (Cheng 2000). While school-improvement planning became an important operational practice in the implementation of education policy in Hong Kong, the central organizational principle was the devolution of responsibility to schools. It was strongly promoted through the SMI and, more recently, through school-based management (Advisory Committee on School-Based Management 2000) which is integral to the reforms included in the Education Commission Report Number 7 (Education Commission 1997). At the same time, the importance of the role of the headteacher in the planning process and in establishing the organizational conditions within which effective planning can occur has been recognized. Teachers and members of the school community are now also expected to be actively involved in both planning and school-level decision-making:

Each school needs the capacity to manage its own affairs. Local governance gives a school direct access to the expertise of its key

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stakeholders – the sponsoring body, the head teacher, teachers, parents, alumni and members of the community. Above all, it empowers the stakeholders themselves to work effectively for the educational welfare of the students under their care.

(Advisory Committee on School-Based Management, 2000: 1)

The School Development Plan (SDP) was introduced in September 2000. Every new school was required to produce a plan that:

set out specific targets for implementation, school budgets, performance indicators and means of evaluating progress during the school year. The planning on various school programmes should reflect the development priorities of the school. The Plan should be endorsed by the SMC, signed by the school head and sent to the School Senior Development Officer (SSDO) by October every year. The school should also make the Plan available for the perusal of parents, teachers and members of the public.

(Education Department, 2000: 1)

Thus strategic planning for school improvement has become the linchpin of education policy in Hong Kong. In so doing, policy implementation in Hong Kong has tracked similar developments in England.

### **Educational policy and schools in England**

It can be argued that planning in schools in England has evolved through at least three different forms in the last three decades. Each of these forms may be regarded as strategic although each has a different emphasis.

- Planning at LEA Level. Before 1988, planning was largely the province of local education authorities (LEAs). It consisted of staffing and resource management, allocating pupils to schools, seeking to match available places to projected pupil numbers, and, latterly, in-service provision.
- School Development Planning. The Education Reform Act (DES 1988) linked new patterns of accountability to the school development plan. The responsibility for ensuring that the National Curriculum was taught and tested and for the deployment of resources rested with governing bodies on which parents and representatives of the local community were in a majority. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) were required to make a judgement about the management of the schools through the quality of the school development (OfSTED 1992).
- School Improvement Planning. The emphasis on strategic planning in schools continued under the New Labour Government after May

1997. This policy was firmly located within the context of school improvement articulated through a centrally determined set of targets. The interpretation and use made of strategic planning by New Labour was different from that of the out-going Conservative administration. Improving pupil and teacher performance were both central to this policy agenda and head teachers were responsible for policy implementation: 'Specific targets that inform the strategic planning in individual schools are set in conjunction with LEAs but must move towards those set nationally'.

(Bell 2002a: 411)

As this target-driven approach to educational planning has been pursued, a significant change has occurred both in the nature of development planning itself and in the relationship between the state and schools. It is no longer sufficient for staff in schools to set their own targets and to be accountable for achieving them. School targets must now be derived from national achievement targets for similar schools and incorporated into the School Improvement Plan (DfEE 1998c; DfEE 1998d). This plan must focus on strategies for bringing about curriculum change that will lead to improvements in pupil performance in line with national targets determined by policy makers at the centre (DfES 2001a). This approach to planning is similar to that advocated in Australia and elsewhere: 'The principal must be able to develop and implement a cyclical process of goal-setting, need identification, priority setting, policy making, planning, budgeting, implementing and evaluating' (Caldwell 1992: 16–17).

### **The essential features of planning in schools**

Strategic planning as conceptualized in the previous section is essentially forward-looking, based on environmental scanning; proactive in the sense that the school will recognize opportunities and take advantage of them; creative so that present practice can be improved upon; and holistic by dealing with all the school's operations, not just teaching and staffing (Fidler 1996). The process is also outward looking, positioning the school, college or university in relation to the external environment, particularly its competitors (Lumby 2002). Such strategic plans will be based on evidence from: 'The external environment (both now and future predictions); the internal strengths of the organisation; the prevailing organisation culture; the expectations of stakeholders and likely future resources' (Fidler 2002: 616).

These plans may focus on different planning horizons or time scales including the very long term (what will life be like in the future); long-term desirable developments (10 years); medium-term (five year) plans and short-term (three year) institutional development plans (Fidler 2002). Strategic planning is: 'a list of actions so ordered as to attain over a particular time

period, certain desired objectives derived from a careful analysis of the internal and external factors likely to affect the organisation' (Puffitt et al. 1992: 5).

Strategic planning has become closely associated in management terms with the rational expectations of those who wish to direct and shape an organization towards specific ends. It is a top-down process that develops from analysis through the identification of objectives or targets and actions to achieve them. It is predicated on being able to predict the environment and on the ability to exercise sufficient control over the organization and its environment to ensure that planned outcomes can be achieved by the deployment and redeployment of available resources. Its essential purpose is to assess the environment in which the organizations operate, forecast the future for the organization and then to deploy resources in order to meet the predicted situation (Whipp 1998). Van der Heijden and Eden (1998) term this the linear rational approach to strategic planning which separates thinking from action and proceeds by analysing the evidence, choosing the best course of action and implementing it which approximates to school development and school improvement planning as it is required of English primary schools. Such a plan:

follows a logical sequence; takes into account the external and internal environments and the stated aims of the school; priorities, targets and success criteria are set within these aims; action plans make targets operational; and subsequent reviews lead to annual up-dating and rolling forward plans ... for the next few years.

(Wallace and McMahon 1994: 25)

This chapter explores how far such a linear rational approach to school improvement planning can be identified in primary schools in Hong Kong and England, using seven key questions:

- What do heads understand by strategic planning?
- To what extent do values and vision shape the planning process?
- Over what time period do heads believe it is feasible to plan?
- How far do audits of the internal strengths and weaknesses of the school play a part in formulating strategic plans?
- How far do factors in the external environment play a part in formulating strategic plans?
- What is the relationship between strategic planning and the organizational structure and culture of the schools in this study?
- What barriers to strategic planning do heads identify?

### **Strategic planning in primary schools**

The answers to the questions posed above are provided from data gathered from a series of interviews with primary school headteachers in England and primary principals in Hong Kong (Bell and Chan 2004). The schools for which these heads are responsible are not intended to be a random sample of all primary schools in those countries. They form an opportunity sample based on schools that have taken part in previous studies. However, while each school is in some way distinctive, taken together they share many characteristics that are typical of most primary schools in their respective countries. In England, School E1 is a junior school in a small town that has just emerged from special measures. The head [EH1] has now been in post three years. This is her second headship. School E2 is a junior school in another town in the same area. It has also emerged from special measures. The head at this school [EH2] was appointed from within the school three years ago and this is his first headship. School E3 is a community primary school in a large town hit by the closure of its major industry. The head [EH3] has been in post 22 years. School E4 is also a community primary school and is in a newly created village. The head of this school [EH4] was appointed two-and-a-half years ago, nine months before the school opened. It is her second headship. In Hong Kong, school H1 is the afternoon session of a bi-sessional school. The headteacher [P1] has been in post 22 years. School H2 is the morning session of a bi-sessional school in a public housing estate. The headteacher [P2] has been in post since 1989 and this is his second headship. School H3, on a public housing estate, has recently moved from being bi-sessional to whole day. The headteacher [P3] has been in post eight years and this is her second headship.

#### *What do heads understand by strategic planning?*

The heads in this study saw planning as a set of complex operational procedures. Many of them use graphic metaphors to identify and cope with the complexities of the strategic planning processes. The head of School E1 saw it as:

being on a dance floor. You know you have been involved with various partners but the perception from the balcony might be entirely different so you know that the key factor is being in both places at the same time or moving between the two ... It is incredibly complex.

(EH1)

The head of School E4 also recognized the complexities involved in strategic planning:

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We have to get used to the idea of not being able to have a set strategy, of it not being a linear process in effect and being able to try to work out when and how you jump even before the ideas are past their sell by date.

(EH4)

In Hong Kong, one headteacher found that he had to deal with immediate problems before even considering longer-term planning:

I realized soon that the school was a mess, the corridors and the staircases; even the classrooms were so dirty. ... However, I told myself that even if it was a 'decayed apple'; I have to live with it. I would first concentrate on problem shooting so as to pave the way for further development. If you can't fix the problems that you are facing, how can you talk about future development?

(P1)

Similarly, P2 found himself having to make difficult decisions about priorities:

I needed to be more patient, more tolerant and more receptive because I did not have a strong team of teaching staff. I knew that I needed to work on people first, because, if a school is a place for learners, it should accommodate pupils, teachers, and also parents.

(P2)

The headteacher of School H3 felt herself being exposed to tensions from five different perspectives, cultural, political, technical, human resources and educational:

Culturally, the existing teachers were very much worried about the change from half-day schooling to whole-day schooling, ... Politically, the teachers were very disappointed by the SMC's decision to ask them to secure their post by re-submitting their applications to the 'new school'. Technically, nearly 80 per cent of the existing staff were computer illiterate. Human resources-wise, middle management had become a vacuum as a result of the merger and the retirement of the eight senior teachers. Educationally, the culture of professional development was not there.

(P3)

In order to cope with these difficulties she had to re-shape her entire approach to planning in her school. In School E2, in a response to equally difficult circumstances, the head compared his planning process to steering

his boat down a river: 'It's the river and rocks and banks and stuff. The skill is actually in knowing what's coming and navigating a course' (EH2).

In School E3, the head also saw planning in nautical terms:

We are on deck but from time to time the leader has to climb the rigging and just keep a view on what's happening whether its outside the school, nationally, whether its about politics ... then you are back down in the engine room because this sailing boat has got an engine and it's just helping to keep the wheels oiled.

(EH3)

This is similar to what Mintzberg (1995) terms seeing through, looking ahead, behind, above and below, beside and beyond.

Strategic planning in these schools is difficult and demanding. The heads used a variety of metaphors to try to understand it and cope with its demands. They did not necessarily subscribe to the linear-rational models of strategic planning identified in Figure 6.1. The procedures are more complex. There is no doubt that, for all of them, their process was informed by a commitment to a strongly held set of personal and professional values and beliefs about their own role and about the nature of their educational enterprise (Bell 2004b).

*To what extent do values and vision shape the planning process?*

Heads paid significant attention to the place of values in shaping both their approach to strategic planning and the content of the plans themselves (Chan 2002). Some headteachers stated these quite explicitly:

Education is about people ... Individuals are the key building blocks in this school. We care and value every individual who comes together to make a team ... Helping every individual to develop their potential is a never ending job in this school.

(P1)

Developing individual potential was also identified as important by the head of School H3: 'We aim to build a learning organization that emphasizes on self-managing and self-learning. The main purpose of strategic planning is to enable all our students to be self-respecting, self-managing, self-discipline, self-care, and self-learning' (P3).

A third placed a similar emphasis on developing the whole child:

The main purposes of strategic planning is to build on the strengths of this school to develop and to enhance the effectiveness of 'management and organization', 'teaching and learning', 'support for students and school ethos', and 'students' achievement'. We aim to provide whole

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person development that embraces the six virtues of moral, intellectual, kinaesthetic, societal, aesthetic, and spiritual, for our pupils with due emphasis on our core value of 'Not to be served but to serve'.

(P2)

Here is an example of culturally distinct values shaping the planning in this school. In other schools the espoused values emerged as a consequence of debates and discussion:

How did we arrive at those values? After discussion and debate about what the school should be about, what is important and it was a whole school approach, all staff were party to that ... We send questionnaires to parents. Our parent governors talked to people ... We asked the children.

(EH2)

The values that informed the planning in School E4 were also the product of consultation and debate, but this time the whole staff, all children, all parents and governors and representatives of the local community were involved. As a result the head could say: 'We knew where we were when we set up the school ... We had a vision and an idea of what parents wanted from us ... We had our key values' (EH4).

The core values in other schools were arrived at in somewhat different ways. One head, for example, was aware that she had a vision based on core values but it was essentially her vision rather than a shared one:

I have a very strong vision for my school and maybe it's not communicated to all staff as well as it should be. My deputy knows what it is. My senior management, particularly one senior manager who has worked with me in two schools know exactly what I am after. I have been developing my vision and making the vision not mine but everybody's vision for the school ... The vision is now going out to children. We have asked the parents their views on it.

(EH1)

This experience is shared by many heads who have to reconcile their own strongly held professional values with the need to enable a variety of stakeholders to help to shape the values of a school and the vision that is derived from those values. This gives rise to the other major dilemma that faces many primary school heads: 'We are all different you cannot offer all things to all people ... so everything we do is in terms of valuing people' (EH3).

This reveals a paradox encountered by most of the headteachers in this study; how to reconcile the competing interests of different stakeholders in the school. Their commitment to educational and personal values provides

one way forward while their capacity to exercise their authority to influence both the nature of the debates within their schools and the outcomes of those debates provides another possible solution.

*Over what time period do heads believe it is feasible to plan?*

It was clear that for most of these heads, strategic planning in primary schools was significantly different from most of the approaches identified in the literature reviewed above. In particular, few of the heads planned over what Fidler (2002) described as the long or medium term, that is over three to five years. School H1 was an exception to this: 'In view of the future development of this school ... I think it is time for us to have a longer term planning strategy which can guide the development of this school for the next ten years' (P1).

More typically, however, heads saw the planning horizon in much shorter terms. As the headteacher of School E2 put it:

We started off very grandly, thinking about getting to grips with what the school development plan needed to be. We tended to make it too detailed. We tried to do a five-year plan but couldn't get to five years. It just became impossible. We are trying for a two-year one now.

(EH2)

In School H3 the head adopted a slightly more flexible approach: 'I shall start with a one-year plan, followed by a three-year plan that serves to cope with the new ... educational initiatives'. (P3)

In School E1:

We have three sets of planning. We have long, medium and short. The long-term plan is the curriculum map which is an overview of all the year's work and it's a really good one.

(EH1)

The curriculum map referred to here is intended to eliminate the overlap between curriculum content that previously occurred as children moved through the school and to provide a basis for children's continuity and progression through the national curriculum. It provided a basis for planning work on a termly and weekly basis.

In School E4, which at the time of interview was in its second year, the head planned over the short term: 'The very first plan was about nurturing. What did we want to grow? How we went about it? Who did we want to involve? The second year plan was layered on the first' (EH4).

In some ways this is a special case because the school is new, but the time period described is similar to that in other schools. This is hardly long term in the sense that it is normally used in the literature and it is certainly

not what Davies and Ellison (1999) term futures thinking. Nevertheless, it is based on a real attempt to give systematic consideration to the future and it has much in common with the planning horizons adopted by the other heads. Most regarded a year as the longest period of time over which planning was feasible or desirable.

*How far do audits of the internal strengths and weaknesses of schools shape strategic plans?*

Almost all the heads in this study relied heavily on internal audits to help to identify and justify planning priorities and to facilitate the implementation of those plans. In School E1 the planning process was informed by a review of teaching methods and materials:

We reviewed what we were doing, looked at good practice, all the things you would do to make decisions ... We knew we had to adapt because our standards were low ... Very shortly teachers were saying we can't operate like that. We started very quickly to adapt the materials we had and add the dimensions that we needed to it.

(EH1)

In England, OfSTED inspections could play a similar role. For example, following the OfSTED inspection in School E1 the head recognized that action had to be taken so she implemented a process of:

Looking at the children. Looking at where they come from and where they are meant to be going. We found they were standing still ... but its not like that any more ... The idea is that all children who are potential level 5s get there and that our border level 4s become level 4s. Those who are not level 4 get a good grounding to continue their education ... This helps with our planning.

(EH1)

In Hong Kong, school inspection is very infrequent and, therefore, plays a less significant part in developing the internal audit process. None of the Hong Kong schools in this study had ever been inspected by the Quality Assurance Inspection process. Heads here tend to rely on their own resources for this: 'I knew that the school would undergo what Cheung and Cheng called the three strategic stages: defrost, change and enforcement. The environmental analysis has actually accelerated the defrosting' (P3).

The environmental analysis here included a self-analysis of the principal and a questionnaire for the staff in order to produce a thorough internal audit of the school's present position and future development. Heads in both the Hong Kong and English primary schools conducted similar internal audits that shaped both the short- and longer-term plans for their schools.

*How far do factors in the external environment play a part in shaping strategic plans?*

The educational reforms that have been introduced in Hong Kong, particularly the School Management Initiative with its emphasis on curriculum development and school-based management, have caused at least some headteachers to use external initiatives to drive internal improvement (Chan 2002). The head of School H2, for example, used two approaches, the Purpose, Process and Product model and the Walking by Two-Leg approach in conjunction with university colleagues. In so doing, he illustrates the extent to which heads are subject to the tensions generated by the need for change and the requirement for stability:

What the '3P' reminds us is to begin any action with the end in mind. It can be either used in planning and curriculum development, or even in daily routine work. Whenever we discuss issues in respect of strategic direction, teaching and learning, staff development or resources management, we will critically reflect on whether the process and the expected outcome are in line with the original intention or purpose, and vice versa. The 'dual strategy' serves to strike a balance between maintaining the basic competency and aiming at the development of creativity and other higher order thinking skills among our students, if it is used in curriculum planning and development. Our dual strategy is to emphasise the core competencies through traditional method on one hand, and developing the creativity through dissolving the stereotype or traditional thinking on the other.

(P2)

As was seen above, each English school should have a set of specific targets derived from national priorities and benchmarks and agreed with the LEA. When asked how far externally set targets influenced the school's planning process, the head of School E1 remarked that the targets set in conjunction with the LEA inspector were realistic and largely matched the results of the school's own analysis. Not all heads took such a sanguine view of external targets. The head of School E3 dismissed them as having no value, especially for a school in which a significant proportion of the children have profound learning difficulties. He recognized that there was a danger that such targets: 'Can become rigid and ... seen as an opportunity to narrow that range of attainment that these youngsters are performing at in a uniform system of target setting' (EH3).

The reaction of heads to another possibly significant set of external influences on their school's strategic planning, namely government policy documents, was equally mixed. In School E1 the head used Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES 2003) to shape what happens in the school:

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I sent away for enough copies for all my staff and governors ... My literacy co-ordinator went on a course last week. She was the only one [on the course] to have been given it to read and discuss ... I am afraid I don't agree with everything in it and nor does my deputy because it's only if you can get the money that all those things in that book work.

(EH1)

Where they were influential, these government documents were almost as influential as parents on the planning process. Headteachers in both England and Hong Kong were very conscious of the importance of involving parents. For instance, P2 was very proud of having almost 40 parents who act as helpers in his school every day.

In School E1 the parents were consulted about the content of the strategic plan while in School E4 the parents were involved in drawing up the plan from its inception. Largely, however, consultation with parents was restricted to asking for comment on decisions already made. Few heads made any systematic attempt to identify parental opinion more widely or in a rigorous way. One head reported that he closely monitored parental satisfaction: 'All teachers are required to tell me of any concerns or any changes including new babies. I monitor complaints and issues parents bring to me' (EH3).

He seems to be encouraging his staff to work within a customer-provider relationship rather than one of partnership. This head is trying to keep informed about the potential demand for places in his school and the customer-satisfaction of parents but no more than that. Scanning the external environment is not a significant part of the strategic planning process for most heads although they do make use of government policy documents. Earlier studies of the extent to which headteachers monitored the parental aspect of their school's external environment found headteachers taking a similar stance. Even the most outward looking heads did not to establish rigorous and systematic procedures for scanning their environment or collecting information about their market place (Bell 1999b; James and Phillips 1995).

*What is the relationship between strategic planning and the organizational structure and culture of schools?*

The values on which strategic planning was based in each of these schools may not always have been articulated clearly and shared widely, but there is no doubt that all the heads in this study wanted to involve their entire staff in the planning process and to empower them to deliver the agreed outcomes both through utilizing the expertise of the staff and facilitating their further professional development. All three schools in Hong Kong focused on school-based curriculum development (SBCD) in subjects and topic work within a cross-curricular framework. Collaborative cultures were established and enhanced by co-operative teaching, peer lesson observation,

action research and creating lesson preparation time for teachers in each year level.

In School H1, in-service days are held once a month to discuss the SBCD, seminars are conducted about new issues in curriculum development and pedagogy and intensive training provided for middle management focused on the knowledge and skills of the Subject Panel and enabling them to work collaboratively with teachers to formulate the strategic intent for their subject areas. As a result, senior staff and subject co-ordinators have become powerful allies of the headteachers and form part of a set of corporate alliances in negotiating over school policies (Chan 2002). This, however, is usually based on the headteacher's own perception of the school's culture. As the head of School H3 puts it: 'My vision is to build a self-managing and self-learning culture that incorporated a cyclical process of environmental analysis, planning, action and progress assessment' (P3).

This focus on dispersed leadership finds expression in the way in which all the heads talked about the culture of the school, differentiating in quite specific ways from the school's management structure. This was particularly true in the English schools emerging from special measures:

I am not a teaching head ... mainly because I had so many issues throughout the school ... We have a senior management team and that is made up from year leaders and ... my SENCO.

(EH1)

This head then commented that her deputy had worked with all subject leaders: 'Empowering them to understand their areas and to take responsibility ... teachers are now working together and not working in an isolated way' (EH1).

Obviously, this shift from isolation and an inability to take responsibility to collaboration and empowerment is an important cultural change both for this head and for the school and those who work in it. This head also noted the importance of school culture: 'It's about providing a safe environment ... I see myself providing support for the people that I employ to do a job ... It's about creating the right atmosphere' (EH1).

This emphasis on atmosphere and the role of the head in creating an appropriate atmosphere in which strategic planning could be attempted in a collaborative way was an important theme for both the English and Hong Kong heads in this study. They were at pains to differentiate between management structures and the cultural aspects of their school's organization. Typical of their comments was that made by the head of E3:

Management to me is about having systems in place ... You can have the greatest systems in the world, a beautifully managed school where nothing happens ... What I try to do in my school is to create an

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atmosphere and ethos where people are valued, where there are high expectations.

(EH3)

One head noted the difficulties encountered in trying to create a collaborative culture in a new school where staff have been recruited from a range of different contexts:

They are used to being in a school where somebody else has done the policy and you ... follow it. This idea that we have to share our ideas and share our thinking and make a commitment ... has been quite challenging for people.

(EH4)

Nevertheless, this head had a clear view of the culture that she wanted to establish in the school. She wanted it to be based on learning communities:

Learning communities in the classroom, learning communities among teachers, learning communities in the broadest sense ... based on reflectiveness, resourcefulness, repositioning, accepting challenge, looking at opportunities, problem solving, creativity. Exactly what I want for the children as well.

(EH4)

The Hong Kong heads had similar aspirations but move forward in somewhat different ways. They used opportunities for professional development with their teachers to facilitate such cultural changes. This was possible because the teaching loads of Hong Kong primary school teachers are significantly lighter than those of teachers in English primary schools. In both the English and the Hong Kong schools, although the value of structures was acknowledged, the organizational cultures of these schools were seen as particularly important in enabling the planning process.

*What barriers to strategic planning do heads identify?*

The difficulties encountered by most of the heads in both countries clustered into three main areas, namely resources, staffing and their inability to predict the future. Several heads commented on the impact that budget uncertainties had on their capacity to plan over a period longer than a year. Typical of their comments was this: 'If I had a budget over a longer period we could plan more strategically. Not knowing what resources you have got makes planning difficult' (EH1).

It is not just the knowledge about future funding that is of concern. The level of funding is also a problem: 'Primary education is not funded as well as secondary ... if I had secondary funding I could create a different school' (P3).

In England, EH3 echoed this view and, like many of his colleagues, tried to overcome their budgetary problems by bidding for external funding. This is becoming increasingly important but it brings its own difficulties. The uncertainty of the process makes strategic planning difficult (E2) and an unsuccessful bid can mean: 'We were going to do things all in one go; instead we are going to have to do it in little bits ... The time scale has changed' (EH1).

If anything, staffing issues cause even more difficulties for heads than budgets. One head described his staffing issues over a year as: 'a roller coaster ride ... I cannot get a Year 6 teacher ... I am also short of a literacy co-ordinator' (EH2).

The same head noted that sometimes staff changes can be positive but they often create difficulties for strategic planning. This view was echoed in the views of the head of School E3 who remarked that he had lost 13 staff over the past few years, many of whom had left on maternity leave and not returned:

We have to be continually moving on and evolving and dealing with staffing difficulties ... Who is going to know what circumstances arise ... what you do will depend on who is going to come in and this affects your major decisions

(EH3)

In Hong Kong, similar difficulties of finding suitable staff emerged: 'Most of the existing teachers did not have a degree ... most of them were approaching their retirement age' (P2).

The difficulties of predicting an uncertain future play a major part in shaping the approaches of these heads to strategic planning: 'Because circumstances change in schools ... you can have a view about what might be happening next June but the nonsense is in expecting it to happen' (EH3).

Some heads perceived their schools to be subject to significant and uncontrollable external forces:

Even now we cannot predict what external forces are going to be pulling you in this way or that. We can't say we are definitely going there or doing that. This does not help us to be strategic.

(EH2)

The head of School H2 made a similar point: 'We felt frustrated that whenever the government implemented a new initiative, they tended to throw away all the old stuff so as to convince others that the new initiative is good' (P2).

This leads many heads to adopt a flexible, perhaps incremental approach to the planning processes in their schools:

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In terms of how you can predict the future and the areas that are going to be of interest, I don't think you can ... As a result the greatest strength we have developed is the flexibility to deal with different situations.

(EH3)

Small wonder, therefore, that one head described her attempts at strategic planning as: 'Being on the edge of chaos' (EH4).

The world of the primary school is complex and, in many ways, uncertain. Predicting the future, responding to changes emanating from the external environment and coping with internal changes is extremely difficult. Such relatively small organizations do not have the capacity to respond easily to changing circumstances.

### **Conclusion**

There are some interesting similarities between the socio-political environments from which educational policy is derived in Hong Kong and England. In both countries, major changes in the political context took place in 1997 bringing a new government to power in England and introducing a new form of government to Hong Kong. These changes produced a shift in the dominant discourse that shaped educational policy. In Hong Kong there was a move away from the former colonial-based forms of legitimation towards a discourse that was more appropriate to Hong Kong's new status as a Special Administrative Region, including the introduction of Chinese as a medium of instruction so that schools could prepare students to play a greater role in the wider Chinese society. In England, the discourse of the market economy became subservient to a discourse based on linking education more closely to producing a skilled labour force, while, at the same time, fostering a concept of good citizenship. Thus, in their different forms, the themes of economic utility and citizenship provide a context and set the strategic direction of education policy in both countries. The organizational principles of these policies are based, in different ways, on accountability, which provides much of the text for policy implementation. In England, school inspection and the publication of results within the context of authority devolved to schools. In Hong Kong, autonomy has also increased at school level but here accountability operates more directly through the mechanisms of parental and community pressure. It is at the school level, however, where the impact of education policies can most clearly be seen. It is here that the operational practices are applied and, in some ways, mediated by heads as they seek to reconcile the competing demands of policy and practice.

Heads in this study recognized both the dominant discourses that set the context for the education policies that they were to implement and understood the strategic direction of such policies. Many of them, however, either rejected all or some of the organizing principals and concomitant organizational practices or sought to re-define them in the light of their

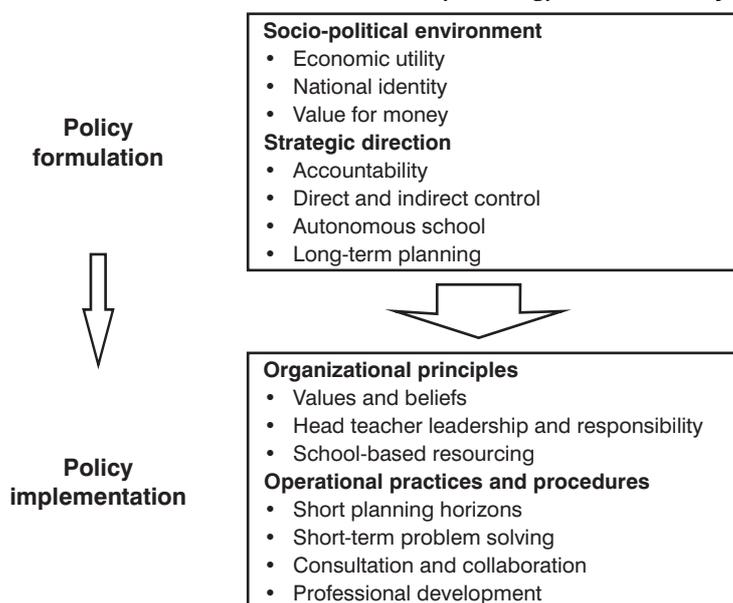


Figure 6.1 Policy into practice: strategic planning

consequences for particular schools. This is reflected in Figure 6.1 where there is a clear disjunction between the strategic direction and operational practices and procedures adopted by most of the heads in this study. This disjunction can be explained by the extent to which heads re-interpret policy in the light of their own values beliefs and understandings. These heads deploy a range of complex metaphors in order to understand the nature of planning and to cope with the demands that it places upon them and their staff. They only plan strategically, however, insofar as they seek to establish relatively limited but coherent and agreed plans for their schools. They often act as 'subversives' rather than passive implementers of policy (Day et al. 2000). They want to ensure that: 'Everybody is singing from the same hymn sheet' (EH1).

As Lumby (2002) argues, strategic planning is, at least in part, a bureaucratic process, especially when it is required by national policy as it is in both England and Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, as one of the heads notes, primary schools are not bureaucracies, they tend to be loosely coupled systems. The degree of autonomy enjoyed by the staff of these primary schools, the complexity of both the teaching and learning technology and the relative unpredictability of the external environment: 'renders problematic any simple translation of intention or instruction into planned outcomes ... It is particularly hard to relate specific management activity to improvements in teaching and learning' (Lumby 2002: 95).

Thus, although the strategic direction and organizational principals of policy are recognized, the operational practices and procedures are mediated by heads in the light of their own perception of the socio-political environment. Perhaps for this reason heads tend to minimize the importance of the structure of their schools, and place greater emphasis on their collegial and collaborative cultures. Perhaps this tendency was stronger in the larger schools in Hong Kong where staff were expected to take part in professional development as part of their working day, rather than in twilight hours as in England. Such findings are not limited to the primary school context.

Cowham (1994) identified a move from a politico-bureaucratic organizational structure to a culture based on collegiality in a large further education college in England as it struggled to meet the Further Education Funding Council's planning requirements and Weeks (1994) sees a similar trend in secondary schools while noting that headteachers and their senior management teams must ensure that: 'The culture of the school [is] able to accommodate ... change ... and be ... committed to the idea of encouraging initiative and embracing failure' (Weeks 1994: 262).

Espoused values play an important function in determining the content and nature of the plans produced in these primary schools. They reflect the dominant values espoused by the schools and the philosophy that shapes their approaches to teaching, learning and professional relationships (Hopkins et al. 1996). As Hargreaves (1995) suggests, cultures have a reality-defining function that enables staff in schools to make sense of their actions and their situation. In this study, heads and their staff deliberately re-shaped their cultures by facilitating planning based on a recognition of the importance of developing collaborative procedures in which people are valued for what they can contribute and in which ideas can be shared, innovations tried out and where blame is not apportioned. The focus is on coping with short-term or immediate problems but the process is informed by strongly held values:

You don't do it because somebody else has told you to or has said that it is a good idea. You have to do it because you believe in a school ... It is all about honesty and integrity.

(EH4)

These values tend to provide both a foundation on which planning can be based and a rationale for decisions that are made and priorities that are identified. This depends on establishing and sustaining a culture of inquiry, a commitment to collaboration and to continued professional development (Southworth 1998). In these schools, therefore, while the need to establish a strategic direction is accepted, the organizational principles and operational practices are re-defined to reflect the contexts of the schools themselves. This certainly applies to the planning horizons adopted.

If, as Fidler (2002) suggests, strategic planning is a long-term process that might involve planning horizons of five years or even longer, then the plans

that are formulated by the heads in these primary schools are not strategic. The time scale over which heads in this study plan is very short term and even here their approach tends to be based on a degree of flexibility. Thus, the organizational principles and operational practices are mediated by context. The plans themselves are based on a series of internal audits, both self-initiated and driven by external processes. These focus on both pupil and teacher performance. There is, however, no evidence of the careful analysis of external factors that Puffitt et al. (1992) argue should form the basis of such strategic plans. The wider policy context of education and beyond is of marginal influence, especially in England. In both Hong Kong and England, heads tend to adopt a reactive and responsive stance rather than a proactive, anticipatory one to matters that emanate from both the national and local environment. Even some elements of the internal environment, budgets and staffing for example, are treated in this way over relatively short periods of time. The organizational principles emanating from the socio-political environment are, therefore, either being rejected or mediated in these schools.

To the extent that these planning processes are based on an attempt to identify priorities that will be achieved over time and that resources are mobilized to achieve those priorities, the planning process can be considered to be strategic. With one exception, planning in most of these primary schools tends to consist of rather small and marginal changes made and evaluated over a very limited planning horizon. The plans in these schools do contain specific school development and improvement objectives, relate to agreed targets and focus on children's learning. Strategic planning in these schools, however, is not target driven in the sense that targets are interpreted rigidly, exclude the interests and skills of teachers and learners and prevent a true educational experience from taking place (Bottery 1992).

So short is the time span and so marginal many of the changes that are achieved by planning in these schools that the model of school improvement planning adopted approximates more closely to what Van der Heijden and Eden (1998) call the evolutionary/incremental approach than it does to the more structured, longer-term, linear-rational mode of strategic planning that is envisaged in the expectations of the DfES and the Education Commission. Evolutionary/incremental planning is based on the view that the large number of variables with which schools have to cope make it too complex to identify and implement a specific set of actions and it is more effective to make and evaluate a number of small changes over a shorter period of time. This contrasts with the linear rational approach which assumes that schools have the capacity to achieve organizational goals through a rational process that begins with analysis and proceeds in a linear way to implementation over a three- to five-year time span. This policy text implies that planning and implementation are orderly and sequential and that schools can be shaped and controlled in order to avoid the unintended consequences of change while realizing strategic objectives. It also assumes a measure of control over

both the internal and external environment to which primary schools cannot aspire. The inability of heads in these schools to control or even predict their available resources with any degree of certainty of a period of more than a year has almost inevitably created a situation in which their planning is short term and highly flexible. To that extent, planning in these primary schools is not strategic but incremental.

It is possible that headteachers could develop a form of planning based on a longer-term time horizon. The evidence here, however, is that they do not do so either out of choice or because the perceived barriers to such planning are too great to be surmounted or to be worth attempting to overcome. Instead, school structures and, more particularly, their cultures are re-shaped to facilitate this form of evolutionary incremental planning. What emerges here is a flexible and collaborative planning process that is more suited to primary school context than is the linear-rational strategic planning which is implied in the text of much educational policy. In implementing the plans the heads and their staff do seek to reconcile the need to achieve agreed objectives with available resources but the planning procedure seems to be less of a process of matching resource capabilities to priorities than a matter of shaping priorities to identify what can and should be achieved within available or uncertain resource parameters. American high school principals report a similar lack of capacity and resources:

- They ought to do long-range thinking but frequently they had to make short-range, even instantaneous decisions.
- They ought to be innovators; but they were maintaining the status quo.
- They ought to be champions of ideas; in reality they were masters of the concrete, paying attention to detail

(after Leiberman and Miller 1999: 40)

To some extent, the picture of planning that emerges here is one of:

Coping with turbulence through a direct, intuitive understanding of what is happening in an effort to guide the work of the school. A turbulent environment cannot be tamed by rational analysis alone ... Yet it does not follow that the school's response must be left to a random distribution of lone individuals acting opportunistically ... Strategic intention relies on ... vision ... to give it unity and coherence.

(adapted from Boisot 1995: 36, quoted in Caldwell and Spinks 1998)

Much of what the headteachers in this study do is very short term and often does not rest on a strategic direction or even a strategic intent. Instead, these heads tend to see planning as either interim problem solving or a basis from which to cope with the unexpected, unpredicted and unpredictable. In the case of both Hong Kong and England, such an emphasis was evident from

the start of their tenure of office as headteachers. They focus on the internal school environment and demonstrate a relatively low understanding of or concern with wider external issues. They believe that they have almost no capacity to control or influence that environment. These heads do recognize, however, that strategic plans go awry if the future turns out differently from the way that planners expect. Indeed, heads recognize that many of the problems associated with strategic planning in their schools: 'are not differences in goals or even personalities, but differences in assumptions ... about probable futures' (Hampden-Turner 2003: 119).

The heads in the schools represented here, therefore, do not, on the whole, believe that careful planning gives them control over the future, their schools and the people within them or over the environment in which their schools operate. At best, therefore, planning in these schools consists of: 'Incremental adjustments to environmental states that cannot be discerned or anticipated through a prior analysis of data' (Boisot 1995: 34).

The complexity of the issues facing these schools is reflected in the nature of the barriers to strategic planning identified by the headteachers. These barriers appear to be a product of the size of the schools, the nature of their resourcing and the perceptions held by the headteachers of the external environment. The environment is seen as unpredictable and uncertain in a number of ways, not least of which are the changes in educational policy that seem to occur with singular regularity. This is regarded by some heads as a direct result of the discourses in the socio-political environment that continually produces changes in the text of education policy. The consequences of this and of the organizational principles are not always recognized by policy makers. For example, in England the schools are resourced over a very limited time period, typically one year only. Their budgets are small and most schools do not have the resource flexibility to build a contingency fund sufficient to be confident of funding plans in a second year. Consequently, heads are reluctant to commit their schools to strategic plans that span a longer period. This is partly because staffing losses or changes in such relatively small organizations can have a significant impact on the school's capacity to develop in specific areas. In Hong Kong, schools are relatively well staffed but other resources are often not available. Teachers are not always well trained and may not even have suitable qualifications for the posts that they hold. These factors combine to make long-term planning extremely difficult. Therefore, on the evidence of the data collected from these schools it is apparent that primary headteachers and school principals and their staff are not attempting to espouse a model of planning that even approximates to long-term strategic planning. Instead, they are re-defining the nature of planning to meet the needs of their own circumstances. This re-definition is an example of the importance of values and the extent to which power is used to translate values into operational practices. It also illustrates the contested nature of planning both at school level and between the school and the state, a theme that is examined further in Chapter 7.

## 7 Reconciling equity and economy

### A case-study of Educational Action Zones in England

#### Introduction

In the UK, the election of the New Labour government in 1997 marked a significant point in the shaping of English educational policy (Bell 1999a). It must be remembered that educational policy has always differed between the nations that make up the UK, and these divergences have become more significant following the introduction of devolution to Scotland and Wales. The Education Action Zone (EAZ) policy discussed in this chapter relates solely to England. However, key principles of the EAZ approach are to be found far wider than England (see Giddens 2001) with themes relating to the formation of new partnerships being evident in very diverse cultural contexts (Cheng 1999, Ng 1999, Bell 2002b). New Labour's commitment to a 'third way' was intended to mark an explicit departure from free market Conservatism and traditional Labourist statism (Giddens 1998, Latham 2001). Much of the language of the preceding Conservative administration was retained as New Labour developed its discourse of standards, markets, choice and competition. However, New Labour enthusiasm for raising academic standards through the promotion of markets and choice in schools was tempered by its traditional commitment to social justice and the use of educational policy to pursue egalitarian objectives. Influential third way thinkers argued that mainstream social democratic policies, such as comprehensive schooling, had failed to tackle the problems of educational underachievement amongst students from disadvantaged backgrounds, hence old problems required new solutions (Barber 1993). The challenge for New Labour therefore was to harness policies traditionally associated with inequality (markets, choice and privatization) and to demonstrate that these could be used to reduce, not increase, social injustice. There was also an explicit aim to link policies designed to tackle social exclusion with economic modernization and the need to develop human capital (DfEE 1997).

Following its election the centrepiece of the government's attack on underachievement and social exclusion in areas of social disadvantage was to establish a series of Education Action Zones (EAZs) – 25 in the first instance in 1998/99, followed by a further 47 in 2000. EAZs were presented as the

flagship of New Labour education policy (DfEE 1997), designed to raise achievement and tackle social exclusion through additional resourcing and focused interventions in areas of social disadvantage. In this sense EAZs echoed previous, but abandoned, initiatives, such as Educational Priority Areas (EPAs) that were similarly intended to tackle problems of poor educational performance in areas of social deprivation (Lodge and Blackstone 1982). EAZs were established initially for three years, and in most cases this period was extended to five years. After this time EAZs formally ended, with many metamorphosing into related policy initiatives aimed at tackling urban underachievement. These successor projects shared many similarities with EAZs, but also had significant differences and in this respect identifying the EAZ legacy becomes an important aspect of policy analysis.

This chapter seeks to explore the EAZ initiative as a case-study in policy analysis. Its interest lies in part in its self-contained nature. EAZs were introduced shortly after the government took office with much publicity and high expectations. However, by early into the government's second term of office this centrepiece policy no longer existed. At first sight, therefore, this appears to be a rare policy beast – a story with a clear beginning and end. However, appearances can be deceptive and this chapter aims to locate the EAZ initiative within a longer-term policy trajectory that sees surface issues (such as policy labels) as largely ephemeral, but which sees the need to focus on the underlying issues within policy as much more important. This chapter also seeks to explore the connections between the sites of policy development. To what extent did the flagship policy heralded in 1997 develop in the way intended by its architects, or to what extent were those responsible for its construction able to build the policy to their own specifications? This chapter draws largely on empirical material from a number of sources. Primarily this is research undertaken in a large single case-study EAZ, but this is also supplemented by a number of published studies based on research and evaluations of other Zones.

### **Education action zones – identifying the socio-political environment**

When New Labour came to power in 1997 the full implications of the previous government's commitment to the marketization of public services were becoming increasingly apparent. Within the education service the introduction of a quasi-market, and the effective emasculation of the Local Education Authority (LEA) safety net, was exposing many schools to the vagaries of parental choice and market forces. Intense media interest focused on schools, such as The Ridings in Halifax, that appeared to be imploding under the pressure of a fragmented and hierarchical local market (Murch 1997, Crouch 2001). It is only possible to speculate on how many schools elsewhere would have collapsed under similar pressures had this *laissez faire* policy continued without reform. As it happened, the 1997 election did mark

an important policy change in this key area. Although New Labour remained committed to parental choice, and it appeared ambivalent at best about the role of LEAs, it nevertheless identified LEAs as having an important role in supporting schools facing challenging contexts (DfEE 1997). However, a feature of New Labour's claim to radicalism was that the centrepiece of its attack on educational underachievement in disadvantaged communities was to take the form of local bodies established effectively *outside* the traditional LEA framework.

EAZs were established in areas of social disadvantage with the express aim of raising levels of student attainment in these areas, and combating the high levels of social exclusion. However, the socio-political discourse within which EAZ policy developed is complex and it is important to identify a number of policy themes, not all of which sit comfortably together. The strategic direction of the policy was driven by a desire to tackle specific problems in areas of social disadvantage, and involved a redistribution of resources to these areas to achieve this. Some element of distributive justice was clearly central to the EAZ project (see Chapter 4); indeed Dickson and Power (2001) have argued that EAZs represented one of only a few explicitly redistributive New Labour educational policies. However, the underlying approach to social justice was conceived in a number of specific ways. For example, tackling social exclusion involved tackling young people's exclusion from the labour market – widely regarded as one of the key organizational principles of EAZs. However, in an economy with low unemployment this was not presented as an economic problem (lack of appropriate jobs), but as an individual's problem (lack of appropriate skills or, more significantly, attitudes). One of the strategic directions of policy that emerged, therefore, was to increase the 'relevance' of the curriculum through a vocationalization of the curriculum. This not only showed a clear link between the social justice agenda and the development of human capital, but also the way in which problems of social (in)justice were capable of being conceived and legitimated in terms of 'social problems'. Hence the response to social exclusion, with all its associated social problems, was to be largely addressed through improving 'employability'. Social and economic objectives were not presented as a polarization between either/or options, but as two sides of the same coin. Tensions between first order values based on economic and social imperatives were reconciled as complementary rather than contradictory.

### **Developing the strategic direction of policy**

Although the objectives of Zone policy were largely the traditional concerns of the social democratic left, the intended radicalism of EAZs was to lie not so much in their objectives, as in the processes by which these objectives were to be achieved. Hence as the strategic direction of policy emerged from within the socio-political environment the novel nature of EAZs became more apparent. Dickson and Power (2001) have identified a number of



Figure 7.1 Policy into practice: the EAZ experience

characteristics of EAZs that distinguish them as quintessential examples of 'third way' thinking – a commitment to multi-agency working, a blurring of the public-private divide and a desire to engage local people in more participative forms of educational decision-making (Dickson *et al.* 2001). To this list might be added a fourth, namely a commitment to use EAZs as laboratories for the promotion of greater service diversity, particularly in terms of curricular provision. Figure 7.1 illustrates how a strategic direction emerged from the 'third way' discourses that shaped EAZ policy and that subsequently developed organizational principles and practices that are discussed later in this chapter.

A number of specific features of EAZs were intended to support these new ways of working. For example, EAZs not only needed to enlist the support of the business community to raise funds, but were also expected to ensure that representatives of local business occupied key positions on the body established to exercise strategic and operational control over Zones – the Action Forum. Each Action Forum included a range of stakeholder representatives, with an initial expectation that the governing bodies of Zone schools would cede some of their powers to the superordinate body. LEAs were to be represented on the Action Forum, but their presence was certainly not intended to dominate, quite the opposite. This was in keeping with New Labour's commitment to avoid traditional statist solutions, and instead to look towards new forms of governance.

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It was anticipated that EAZs would contribute to the promotion of diversity within the state system in two important respects. First, schools within the Zones were afforded the opportunity of flexing elements of the national curriculum, effectively allowing some students to opt-out (or be opted-out) from the curriculum that elsewhere was a statutory requirement. Here the intention was the promotion of a more vocationally orientated curriculum for those students apparently disengaged from schooling. Secondly, Zones were given powers to vary teachers' national pay and conditions, for example allowing them to vary the requirement that 'directed time' (the time a teacher can be directed in their activities by the headteacher) must not exceed 1265 hours over 195 days in any one year. This requirement was seen as an obstacle to generating the sort of flexible working required to deliver key Zone initiatives (after-school activities and summer schools for example).

EAZs were therefore central to New Labour education policy. Not only were they intended to spearhead the attack on underachievement in areas of social disadvantage, but they were also intended to act as a role-model in the distinctive third way thinking that would ensure that New Labour was seen as a modernizing, radical and reforming administration. EAZs were intended to put the 'new' into New Labour, and in so doing demonstrate that the government could tackle 'Old Labour' concerns in novel and innovative ways. However, by March 2000, despite their flagship status, it was clear that political interest in these EAZs was waning. The Minister for School Standards berated Zones for a lack of progress in raising attainment (Mansell 2000), whilst Inspectors indicated that Zones had failed to be sufficiently innovative (Mansell and Thornton 2001). At this point the flagship began to show signs of sinking, and as indicated, within five years of their inception EAZs no longer existed with their original name, or in the form originally envisaged. Does this mean that EAZs must be viewed as a policy failure – another frustrated attempt to lever up educational standards in communities where educational achievement has been hugely constrained by social disadvantage? Or is it possible to identify a more positive legacy in which the impact of the Zones continues to shape the development of public policy in this area?

### **Developing eaz policy – from formulation to implementation**

From the outset EAZs experienced difficulties as the broad conception of policy presented in policy texts began to be implemented at a local level. Within governing party circles the strategic direction of policy was becoming clearer but the multiple interpretations of policy texts provided early evidence of policy refraction. Moreover, as these ideas appeared to become more diffuse, and as the policy moved towards local implementation, this lack of clarity emerged in the form of several policy tensions, subsequently identified

by the government's own inspectorate as obstacles to policy implementation. It was noted that Zones:

... got off to a slow start and showed limited progress initially, generally because they had plans that were too ambitious, too diffuse, or insufficiently focused on the difficulties faced by schools in their area.  
(OfSTED 2003: 14)

The issues raised by this observation point to a number of policy tensions, and these were often evidenced in the case-study EAZ. For example, a clear tension existed within the organizational principles and the text of the policy, between, for example, the role of the EAZs in raising 'standards' in the form of public examination results and the commitment to promoting social inclusion. Schools indicated they were under considerable pressure to improve pupil attainment in national tests but that resources allocated for this purpose might be at the expense of initiatives designed to encourage social inclusion. The need to deliver results highlighted a further tension – that between short-term success and long-term gain. Schools, and the EAZ itself, were under considerable pressure to deliver results quickly, and to demonstrate progress against measurable targets. Political imperatives demanded that investment would secure a demonstrable, and quick, return. Yet teachers interviewed in the case-study Zone argued they were seeking to reverse the effects of decades of industrial decline and deprivation. Expectations of rapid improvements were considered unrealistic and unreasonable. Moreover, they were counter-productive as they sometimes deflected resources from the longer-term projects that interview respondents argued often had the best chance of achieving sustained improvement.

This latter point highlights a further tension between national and local policy agendas. This tension in part derived from the government's desire to articulate its policy messages to a range of different audiences. Hence the presentation of EAZ policy to the media often highlighted its most novel, and hence headline grabbing, aspirations – curriculum restructuring, private sector involvement and radical changes to the school day were all trailed. However, schools were less interested in a novelty agenda they often saw as irrelevant, but were more focused on the operational practices required to progress the initiatives to which they were committed, but which they had lacked the resources to deliver. Within the case-study Zone this manifested itself in a sense of disconnection between the Zone and schools – the initial objectives of the Zone to demonstrate impact through 'Big Ideas' did not fit with schools' priorities, and what headteachers and teachers identified as the necessary action to make progress in difficult circumstances. These problems were compounded by the creation of organizational structures in the Zone that appeared to exclude teachers from a dialogue about the development of policy (Price Waterhouse Coopers undated) – a policy outcome perceived by some to be deliberate (Jones and Bird 2000). Theakston *et al.* (2001) argue

that that government rhetoric pitched at the public through the media served only to raise teacher anxieties, which in turn impacted negatively on how the Zones developed. As such, it highlights the need to see the development of a policy as the development of a plurality of policies (see Chapter 2) in which ostensibly the same policy may be repackaged for different audiences and purposes. It also explains why the development of policy presented in Figure 7.1 appears to lack coherence.

These policy tensions resulted in considerable resistance to the EAZ policy at both national and local level in some quarters. Ball (1987) identifies three circumstances when change is likely to be resisted: when it threatens vested interests relating to working conditions; when it undermines professional status and self-perception; and when it presages changes in working practices on ideological grounds. EAZs could be said to provoke resistance on all of these counts. For example, in the case-study, Zone fears that the school day would be lengthened, and holidays shortened, challenged teachers' vested interests as they saw a potential worsening of conditions of service. Teachers' professional status and self-perception was undermined by the view expressed by some teachers in the case-study Zone that being part of an EAZ would label their school as 'failing'. Finally, significant ideological interests were challenged. Trade unions and political organizations, in particular, articulated a number of concerns relating to the increased role of the private sector, and a concern that 'restructuring the curriculum' would result in a more vocationalized curriculum in working-class communities, hence creating an academic/vocational divide based on social class lines (STA, 1998). This congruence of oppositional interests often created a difficult environment in which EAZs might develop as local decisions about whether or not to seek Zone status were subject to negotiations between coalitions of interest groups (Bachrach and Lawler 1980).

This latter point highlights the importance of local context. This is further illustrated by an analysis of this case-study Zone. The case-study Zone was centred in a Midlands town that had grown around the development of the steel industry, but which 20 years later was still experiencing the social fallout of rapid de-industrialization in the 1980s. By any measure of social deprivation this was an impoverished community and teachers in the five secondary schools and 21 feeder primary schools in the town faced a range of complex social problems. The research presented in this chapter is based on interviews with a range of staff conducted in all the EAZ secondary schools and seven of the primary schools. A specific feature of this locality was the highly fragmented and hierarchical nature of secondary education in the town. The town featured virtually every school type that had emerged over the previous years following government policies to create 'diversity' and tackle 'failing schools'. The town's school profile was dominated by a City Technology College, a type of school that had been established after the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act (DES 1988). These schools function independently of the Local Education Authority, receiving direct

grant funding from central government plus private sector support. Some of the other schools in the area had embraced the autonomy agenda of the 1980s and had sought one of the various categories of 'specialist' status that these reforms provided. Favourable funding, and a favourable image, had resulted in favourable market conditions for all these schools whose status as 'over-subscribed' allowed them to use an element of student selection to reinforce their privileged market position. At the other end of the spectrum, two secondary schools faced substantial problems with empty places and a disproportionate number of students with special educational needs. The consequence of this was a sharply polarized local market in which, for example, a school identified as amongst the best performing state schools in the country was located no more than 2 kilometres from a school identified as amongst the worst performing state schools in the country. The result was a significant 'Balkanization' of schools (Hargreaves 1995), with intense competition, and little co-operation, between secondary schools in the town ('The secondary heads hadn't talked to each other for years' was how one primary headteacher described the situation). This scenario not only generated huge inequalities in apparent performance between secondary schools, but made it difficult for local primary schools to manage efficient transition arrangements to secondary school.

### **Policy implementation – from organizational principles to operational practice**

At the same time as government ministers appeared to be losing interest in the EAZ experiment, there was a change of leadership in the case-study Zone and a new Director was appointed. The change of Zone direction that followed this appointment, coinciding with a shifting emphasis in national policy, proved to be significant. As policy makers appeared to lower their expectations of Zones' capacity to innovate, the focus in the case-study Zone shifted towards new priorities. The Zone itself re-organized, placing schools (represented primarily, but not exclusively through their headteachers) at the centre of its own policy-making processes. A Headteachers' Planning Group was established and from this six project groups were formed, based on priorities agreed across all the participating schools. The immediate outcome of this was to increase significantly teacher engagement with the Zone and its processes of policy development. The focus of these groups reflected largely mainstream priorities such as literacy and numeracy and illustrates the extent to which national policy discourses had become internalized by those working in schools. However, this also ensured there was now an alignment between Zone priorities and school priorities, and as a consequence attitudes towards the Zone began to shift. Research conducted in the case-study Zone following this re-organization found that teachers spoke much more positively about the impact of the EAZ.

Zone resources were focused on the secondary school sector as this was identified as the area of greatest need. Initially there was some evidence that resources within the Zone had been distributed between schools inequitably. Individual schools had sought to maximize their share of EAZ resources and some schools were apparently more effective at this than others. The result was often that resources went where they were needed least. As a more collaborative structure was created not only did it result in increased transparency regarding resource allocation, but it also developed an understanding between schools about the basis of that allocation. Whilst resource decisions were now largely taken by the Headteachers' Planning Group, these still very much reflected national targets and priorities. Within the secondary sector there was little dissent for the pursuit of these objectives. Secondary schools are well used to trying to maximize examination performance, especially within the context of a now well-established league table culture and the shift in the Zone's style seemed to 'fit' with what these schools were already trying to do. However, at primary level there was evidence of a greater dissonance between Zone initiatives, the 'standards agenda' and the individual priorities of teachers. One project designed to provide 'bridging materials' to help students make the transition between primary and secondary school, and to be commenced in the period immediately after students had completed their national tests (SATs) was received thus:

Rightly or wrongly students and teachers feel that after SATs they want to do all the things that have been put on hold whilst preparing for the SATs – the fieldwork, the topic work etc. After SATs there is a feeling of relief and when these [bridging materials] came in my first reaction was 'hang on'. This is when we do lots of things, like geographical work, which goes by the board in Year 6. It's alright saying the curriculum should be 'broad and balanced', but life ain't like that in Year 6 – not if you want the results. Why can't we do some fun Maths? Let them enjoy their time. Do we really want to be constantly 'challenging'? Everyone has been busting a gut up to SATs.

(Teacher – primary school)

Despite the clear focus within the secondary schools on raising student achievement in national examinations, it is important to note that during the period of the research student performance at aged 16+ did not rise appreciably. This again echoes wider EAZ evaluation data that suggests that academic attainment, especially in the secondary sector, showed limited improvement in the Zones (OfSTED 2003). Perhaps the key issue was the significant difference between individual schools highlighted earlier and the difficulty in closing the performance gap between the highest and lowest performing school. The higher performing schools in the town seemed able to consolidate or improve their performance, whilst those schools

with the lowest results either failed to improve, or indeed declined further, despite receiving additional resources through the EAZ. This suggests that Zone support was insufficient to overcome some of the wider structural disadvantages these schools faced in the local market. In particular, it points to the additional difficulties experienced in raising standards of academic performance in schools where intakes are skewed towards high levels of both special educational needs and poverty (Edwards and Tomlinson 2002).

Whilst it was possible to identify a clear focus for those initiatives clustered around raising 'standards', it was more difficult to establish a similar attitude and approach towards the promotion of social inclusion. Schools seemed to have internalized the discourse relating to 'standards' much more clearly. Despite widespread disagreements about the efficacy of national testing the presentation of test and league table data is clear. There is no such clarity about the concept of social inclusion (Lunt and Norwich 1999). This may simply reflect the fact that social inclusion is a more slippery concept, more difficult to conceptualize and, consequently, to operationalize. It may also reflect the priority of social justice issues relative to standards objectives, with the latter accorded more status and a higher priority than the former. As a consequence, social inclusion was often conceived of in very narrow terms – reducing truancy rates, or the numbers of pupils excluded from school. This was understandable given the pressure on Zones to demonstrate impact by achieving progress against measurable targets. In this sense social inclusion objectives were no less driven by performance targets than those based on academic attainment (see Figure 7.1). In both cases, educational aspirations were presented as, or indeed reduced to, the meeting of externally generated performance targets. However, within some schools the inclusion agenda was viewed more widely. Whilst resources were often focused on high-profile issues, for example small groups of students at high risk of permanent exclusion, there was evidence that many teachers viewed any initiative as inclusive if it engaged all students, and especially those often marginalized within the school system. These differences in operational practices generated tensions within schools as teachers sought to reconcile the desire to be inclusive with the target of raising examination performance. Progress on these issues, and the improvement in teachers' attitudes towards the EAZ, followed the Zone's re-organization so that its policy agenda was driven by those working in schools, rather than the Zone's Action Forum. Broadly, influence on the policy process had been inverted at a local level – flowing from schools upwards, rather than from the Forum downwards.

In terms of the innovative elements of EAZ policy as originally conceived, it was much more difficult to demonstrate progress. Specifically, in those areas that defined the EAZ initiative as leading edge New Labour policy, there appeared little evidence of significant achievement. For example, a key organizing principle of EAZ policy was to develop a multi-agency approach to tackling social problems. Many headteachers were able to describe a range of contacts they already had with local agencies and service providers in

the town. Where there were specific circumstances, for example relating to special needs provision, schools appeared to have well established links with a wide range of agencies. However, it was difficult to identify any significant initiative where either existing links had been expanded, or new links had been forged, as a direct consequence of Zone activity – ‘from where I’m sitting the Zone hasn’t done anything in that area’ was the comment of one deputy headteacher. However, respondents were keen not to apportion blame. There was simply a recognition that ‘joined up working’ required a substantial investment of resources across a number of public service agencies that were already operating at full capacity, and therefore under considerable pressure. In the absence of adequate resourcing, and in the context of high stakes accountability, schools made the strategic choice to focus on those areas of their activity that had the most impact. EAZ membership brought additional funding, but not sufficient to make a significant breakthrough in the area of multi-agency working. As a consequence, there was little evidence of multi-agency working at the operational level (although there was more evidence of this at a strategic level, for example through the active involvement of the local council on the Zone’s Action Forum and Executive Board).

A similar pattern of progress emerged in relation to other key EAZ themes such as increasing the role of the private sector, the development of new forms of school governance and the use of new flexibilities in terms of both the curriculum and terms and conditions of employment. Some of the schools within the Zone already had significant contacts with local businesses and used these creatively to support the curriculum. At a strategic level there was business involvement in the Zone through representation on the Action Forum (chaired by a representative of the local business community). However, it had not been possible to find large-scale business finance to support the Zone, nor was it possible to identify at a school level any significant initiatives that increased business involvement in the curriculum. There was no enthusiasm in the Zone’s schools to use their EAZ status to vary national curriculum arrangements. This difficulty in promoting private sector involvement in EAZs was not unique to the case-study Zone. Indeed, this pattern appeared to be the rule rather than exception (Hallgarten and Watling 2001; Carter 2002), and perhaps suggests that those who foresaw EAZs as the harbingers of a Gradgrind curriculum for the working class and the portent of a new role for the private sector were unduly pessimistic (STA 1998). It is the case that increasing vocationalism and privatization (DfES 2004) are very much features of the current educational scene in England, but in both cases this appears to be almost despite, rather than because of, the contribution of EAZs. In a similar way, the government appears determined to challenge the concept of national pay and conditions for teachers; however, it has had to look to alternative ways of achieving this after EAZs showed no enthusiasm to use the powers they had to vary terms and conditions.

The apparent lack of progress in the case-study EAZ on many of these high profile issues was not peculiar to this Zone. As already indicated, many of the difficulties faced by this Zone were reflected in the experience of other EAZs (OfSTED 2003; PriceWaterhouse Coopers undated; Carter 2002). It is almost certainly the case that this failure to demonstrate results on these 'flagship' issues is what in part contributed to a governmental loss of confidence and interest in the EAZ policy at a national level. However, what was clear from research in the case-study Zone was that from the perspective of those at the point of delivery this was not a policy failure. Quite the reverse, those working in schools demonstrated high levels of support and commitment for the policy – unusually so given attitudes to externally imposed policies. Support for the Zone appeared to stem from the way in which it contributed to school improvement, not simply in terms of helping teachers and others achieve better results (for which there was limited evidence), but in the way that it built the capacity to support further improvement (Hopkins *et al.* 1996). How this was achieved in the case-study Zone requires further analysis.

### **Analysing the policy consequences**

It was undoubtedly the case that a key determinant of the shift in attitudes towards the EAZ resulted from the change of key personnel in the Zone, from its re-organization and from the way in which Zone priorities were re-established. Initially there was some hostility towards what was perceived as a top-down and often irrelevant agenda. In its early stages the pressure to be seen to generate radical and innovative approaches was strongly evident in the Zone. The result was a disengagement between the Zone organization and its member schools. Quite simply there was a break in the policy chain between schools and the Action Forum, the Zone's central strategic body. This may have been indicative of a more substantial break in the link between schools and the national policy agenda. Several headteachers reported that Zone priorities were out of kilter with their own, and Zone strategies were not relevant to what schools were trying to achieve. The collective experience of teachers, who in many of the town's schools were doing spectacular things in very difficult circumstances, appeared to be at best under-valued, and at worst ignored.

Following re-organization of the Zone, this situation changed significantly. Headteachers became central to its policy-making process. At this point, not unnaturally, there emerged an alignment between Zone priorities and strategies and the priorities and strategies of those working in schools. Interviewees indicated this provided a powerful lever to support improvement. It appeared that schools often had clear strategies to raise attainment, and to tackle difficult social issues, but had lacked the resources to deliver these. The re-organized Zone was able not only to provide the resources to make things happen, but also to facilitate collaborative working between schools

which offered the possibility of generating additional benefits. The re-organized structure was also successful in distributing this leadership role beyond headteachers and engaging others in shaping Zone policy. Many interviewees spoke positively about how they were involved in shaping key Zone decisions or how Zone-supported professional development had allowed them to take on a more significant role within their institutions (Harris 2003). It was also important to recognize that this participation extended beyond teachers and included those working with teachers. The Zone therefore appeared to create a space in which fundamental questions could be asked:

The Zone has provided time out for groups of classroom assistants, teachers or co-ordinators, or whatever, where they've had to ask themselves very specific questions, which they may not want, or even have time to ask, or may not even have thought was an appropriate question normally. So you may take a group of Classroom Assistants out and say 'What are you trying to do?' – something as simple as that; and because they see themselves as implementers of somebody else's planning they never ask themselves that. So that impacts on how they support or teach children. Those kind of scenarios have been really powerful, and they've addressed a lot of issues about co-operation and the dissemination of good practice.

(Headteacher – primary school)

However, this type of involvement was not without a workload cost and an emerging issue from the research was how schools sought to balance the desire to participate in the Zone with the lack of available time. Generally, there appeared to be high levels of goodwill because teachers could largely exercise their own professional judgement about how and when to participate in Zone projects. This notion of professional control was crucial to many of the Zones' achievements. However, it was not achieved unproblematically as illustrated by the following interview evidence:

The ideas are all good ... but we need to pace them better. Sometimes the Zone feels as though it's 'over there' – people go to a meeting and do something then suddenly some new initiative appears in school. Better channels of communication need to be developed with classroom teachers and these need to be two-way.

(Union representative – secondary school)

This perhaps suggests that issues of ideological opposition (Ball 1987) had largely dissipated as those involved in the Zone were able to shape its activities to be more in line with their own convictions. However, workload issues remained a problem, even when substantive concerns about local variation to pay and conditions were removed.

One key way in which teachers and others working in schools were engaged in the Zone was through the patterns of collaborative working that emerged, and which appeared to be the key factor in determining the EAZ's impact. Time and time again, interviewees identified increased collaboration as the primary benefit of the Zone, and the key issue that had driven improvement initiatives. To appreciate why this was valued so much it is important to reflect on the local market conditions that had emerged within the Zone following the 1988 Act reforms, the result of which was to fracture secondary schooling into a highly competitive market. Differences compounded by inequitable funding regimes and hugely complex admissions procedures had resulted in a system that some described as comprehensive in name only.

A recurring theme from the interviews was how the re-organized EAZ was promoting genuine collaborative cultures *within* schools, *between* schools and *across phases*, that is between primary and secondary education (Stevenson, 2004). The catalyst for this may well have been bringing the headteachers together through the Headteachers' Planning Group in the re-organized Zone. This was not without its difficulties initially, but over time increased collaboration resulted – '*we've not just been nodding at co-operation, but there has been some really rigorous discussion*' commented one headteacher.

Teachers cited a wide range of benefits from developing collaborative structures that involved them in working with colleagues from other establishments – planning was reduced as work was shared, teachers learnt from good practice elsewhere, problems were shared and common solutions developed, teachers were enthused by what they saw working elsewhere and finally there was a greater understanding of the problems faced in different schools. The benefits of this collaboration are perhaps best expressed in teachers' own words in response to the interviewer's invitation to identify the main benefits of the Zone:

Collaboration. Collaboration between the schools. It's funny, I came from another local authority where they had these structures. The Heads worked together and the subject leaders worked together. I came here and there was none of that. It was like a desert. I thought 'where's my support here?'. At least we've got that now, but it needs developing.

(Deputy headteacher – secondary school)

In the meeting of minds that is the Key Stage 4 group we have from there developed other groups – Maths, Science and English – and they have meetings, and that means, for example, that our Science department talks to the Science departments in other schools in the town, which they didn't do before. They did twenty years ago as it happens, but they haven't done for a number of years – they are now. That is a significant benefit for the school in the longer term. Teachers face the same sort of

problems across the town .... If someone else is doing something well it has to be a good thing if we can learn from that.

(Leadership group member – secondary school)

These teachers' voices help to explain the link between increased collaboration and the drive to achieve the Zone's objectives. There was little research evidence to suggest that the collaboration was contrived (Hargreaves 1995), or that people felt coerced into a form of co-operation they did not wish to participate in. On the contrary, in many ways interviewees presented this sort of collaboration as a type of liberation from the years of professional isolation that flowed from inter-school rivalry in the town. Again, the emphasis on collaboration within and between schools is not unique to the case-study Zone, but is also highlighted elsewhere (OfSTED 2003). It is important to note therefore that although EAZs may have made little progress in developing the type of partnerships originally envisaged by policy makers, for example in the form of multi-agency working or public-private partnerships, they clearly made significant progress in developing partnerships between schools. Some have argued that this unintended consequence of the EAZ initiative may yet be its most enduring legacy:

School staff rejoiced in opportunities to do things which they themselves had identified as their priorities. Local people addressed local agendas, owned and clung to them despite centralising tendencies. Few other structures have been as effective at making autonomous schools work together, including across phases.

(Wilkins 2002: 9)

Whilst evidence from the case-study Zone accords with many of the points identified by Wilkins (2002), it is also important to sound a loud note of caution. Collaboration between Zone schools was visible on an unprecedented scale when compared to the situation that prevailed before the Zone's re-organization. However, the evidence also suggested that the terms on which such collaboration took place were highly circumscribed. Where 'win-win' initiatives were identified, in which all schools stood to gain from each others' participation, it was possible to identify considerable and productive collaborative activity. However, this was still collaboration between competitors and the impact of competition was never far from the surface. For example, one secondary school in the research project refused to reveal strategies it had for recruiting primary pupils at the age of transfer, for fear of losing 'competitive advantage'. Certainly teachers and students interviewed were acutely aware of the hierarchy of schools within the town, and the competition between them – 'It's competition "Big Time"' was how one teacher characterized it. The chief consequence of this competition appeared to be the skewed intakes between schools, measured not only in

terms of academic attainment, but also in terms of pupils with special needs, including behavioural difficulties.

The problem of skewed intakes was seen as a major obstacle to progress in those schools faced with the most challenging contexts. Moreover, the view was expressed by some interviewees in both primary and secondary schools that this inequality was not simply a product of parental choices, but subtle selection procedures operated by some secondary schools during the admissions phase. What followed was a virtuous circle of improvement for those dominant in the market and a constant battle against the odds for the rest. Gorard *et al.* (2002) have argued there is no widespread evidence of schools in these circumstances facing a 'spiral of decline'. Research in this study could not prove a spiral of decline, but it does suggest it as a strong possibility. Certainly the imbalanced intake appeared to make it appreciably more difficult for these schools to demonstrate significant progress. It almost certainly explains why these schools found it so difficult to raise pupil attainment in examination results (a point acknowledged by the Audit Commission/OfSTED report (2003) investigating the impact of school place planning on academic standards and social inclusion). In these schools teachers valued highly the increased collaboration with their neighbours, but the type of collaboration they craved was more substantial. What they sought was agreed changes in Admissions Policies that would allow for a more balanced student intake across the town's secondary schools. This was identified as a key factor in facilitating improvement in those schools facing the most challenging circumstances. It was also considered an unrealistic objective. At this point the aspirations of social justice seemed unable to overcome the more powerful pressures of a high stakes standards agenda driven by competition and market forces (Stevenson 2003b).

## **Conclusion**

Education Action Zones consummately illustrate the complexity of the policy development process. EAZs were intended to be the flagship education policy of a radical and reforming government that had indicated that education was its number one policy priority (DfEE 1997). However, within five years EAZs had come, and gone. Although there is some limited evidence that schools in EAZs may have improved more rapidly than others there is only very limited evidence to demonstrate a link between Zones and improved academic performance (OfSTED 2003). Problems of underachievement in these areas are long-term problems, that require long-term solutions and significant, focused, investment – a point made prominently by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (Bell, D. 2003). Moreover, EAZs cannot claim to have acted as a role model for radical 'third way' thinking in policy development. Many of the policy's most radical elements came to nought and the New Labour government has had to look elsewhere to promote its agenda of diversity and privatization. However, whilst the radical private partnerships that were

envisaged did not materialize, it is the case that many EAZs had considerable success in creating professional cultures of collaboration (Hargreaves 1994). Indeed, in some contexts EAZs may have provided the mechanism by which the teaching profession began to rebuild the partnerships between schools that years of market competition had dismantled.

Staff, teachers and support staff, were working together within and between schools. They were not simply learning from each other, but drawing on each others' experience to provide solutions to common problems. This was not a case of the 'good school' showing the 'failing school' how to do it – but all schools working together and learning from each other. This appeared to provide a powerful model of staff development that not only increased professional self-confidence, but had the potential to impact on morale and, in turn, staff retention (a crucial issue in this locality). It would appear too that this experience from within EAZs of staff and schools working together has found favour in official policy. Despite the demise of EAZs, it is possible to discern a clear shift in subsequent policy discourses, with an increasing emphasis being placed on ensuring that schools work together and pool their knowledge and expertise. There is now a raft of important policy initiatives (Glatter 2003) that depend on, and encourage, schools to work together – 'The education service must adapt and change to meet our goals, working in collaboration, not competition' (Labour Party 2003: 9). This represents a highly significant shift in public policy and points to what may yet be the long-term, and positive, legacy of EAZs.

However, herein lies the contradiction at the heart of New Labour policy. EAZs that have worked well, such as the one in this case-study, have illustrated the power of collaboration, not only *within* schools, but crucially, *between* schools. Zones have helped to create the conditions in which longer-term school improvement becomes possible. EAZs are not the only examples of how schools have benefited from increased collaboration, but they have provided a powerful model that has clearly influenced subsequent policy. Despite their demise, this lesson may yet prove to be their most enduring legacy, and their most important long-term contribution to tackling underachievement in socially disadvantaged areas. However, the equally clear lesson from the case-study Zone was the difficulties of effective collaboration co-existing within a wider context of continuing competition. In such a competitive market, collaboration could only go so far. Competitive practices that favoured some schools and disadvantaged others were strongly entrenched – with no incentive on the part of those most advantaged to change. As a consequence, some schools faced enormous challenges and this almost certainly impacted on their capacity to deliver significant and sustainable improvements. Given the concentration of students in these schools from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, these are precisely the students that the EAZ project was intended to support. Raising their academic performance would have made a major contribution towards the government's objective of raising attainment in Zone areas. However, despite the Zone's best efforts,

poverty and structural inequalities between schools appear to have provided almost insurmountable obstacles. Evidence from this research suggests that if the positive lessons from the EAZs are to have an impact on raising attainment and promoting social inclusion then they must be combined with a much more realistic long-term perspective; must be part of a wider and more ambitious anti-poverty programme, and must be prepared to challenge the educational market that ensures the most disadvantaged schools face the least favourable conditions for improvement.

## 8 Citizenship and social justice

### Developing education policy in multi-ethnic schools

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter the focus was on a single national policy initiative, and how this developed as it was implemented at a local level. Whilst there was clearly significant flexibility in the policy, which was reflected in the way it was developed, the EAZ initiative remained a distinctive and discrete policy project. In this chapter the focus shifts to policy in its more amorphous and less tangible form – policy as the promotion of values. The concern here is how policy is developed at an institutional level in pursuit of equity objectives. In this instance the specific focus is on equity in the context of cultural and ethnic diversity. The material draws on a research project conducted on behalf the National College for School Leadership that investigated the contribution of school leaders to the development of successful multi-ethnic schools in a number of Local Education Authorities in England (Dimmock *et al.* 2005). The central concern is with the development of policy at an institutional level and how policy is shaped not only by national discourses and the values and priorities of key people in the institution, but also by the specific local context of the institution. Policy at this level represents a complex mix of influences in which the institutional priorities of school leaders are not only shaped by national policy debates and initiatives, but crucially by the influence of local community factors and the role of the wider market within which the schools function.

The chapter begins by exploring a specific period, and within that a specific incident, in England in the mid-1980s. At this time the publication of a major report (Swann 1985) decisively shaped the discourse relating to education in a multi-ethnic society. Individual institutions were faced with developing organizational procedures and practices within the context of the socio-political environment at the time. However, as the example illustrates, tracing the links between the socio-political environment and institutional policies is seldom clear cut. Tensions and contradictions at the socio-political level are reflected at the institutional level, and institutional policies as texts may bear little relation to the intentions of the texts' authors. Confusion, uncertainty and conflict at a national level in turn have implications for the

development of policy at a local level. The main interest in this chapter is on the present and a concern with the development of policy at the level of the individual school. The study draws on recent research to explore the ways school leaders committed to principles of racial and ethnic equality are able to work within the wider national discourse. This is an area of increasing interest to school leaders around the world, but to date has been the focus of limited research (Reyes *et al.* 1999). The evidence illustrates how those working in multi-ethnic schools are able to exploit the opportunities provided by national discourses and to develop policies at an institutional level that take national policy agendas into new territories. However, the evidence also illustrated how policy at an institutional level was shaped by the institution's specific local context and that in some cases this could exert significant negative pressure on schools' capacities to promote an equality agenda. Specifically, the impact of the local market and role of parental preferences could generate a tension in which the promotion of a commitment to race and ethnicity equality might be penalized in terms of parental choice and pupil numbers (Gewirtz *et al.* 1995). Such situations created ethical dilemmas for school leaders in which the ability to operationalize egalitarian values could be compromised by the need to pursue strategies geared to success in the market.

### **Schooling in a multi-ethnic society: linking the socio-political environment and organizational practice**

In the 1985 the government in the UK published, with grudging enthusiasm (Tomlinson 2001), a major report into the education of children in a multi-ethnic society, under the title *Education For All* (Swann, 1985). This report traced its own origins to concerns expressed in the late 1960s by members of the West Indian community about the relatively poor performance of children from West Indian backgrounds in UK schools (Stone 1985; Carter 1986). The report confirmed the relative under-performance of West Indian origin school students and, most significantly, identified racism within the educational system as having a 'pervasive influence on institutional policies and practices .... [and] which can be seen as the major obstacle to the realisation of the kind of society we have envisaged here' (Swann 1985 :8). Significantly, it recognized that 'institutional racism' was 'just as much a cause for concern' as the prejudiced attitudes of individuals (Swann 1985: 29). It defined institutional racism in the following terms:

We see institutional racism as describing the way in which a range of long established systems, practices and procedures, both within education and the wider society which were originally conceived and devised to meet the needs and aspirations of a relatively homogenous society, can now be seen not only to fail to take account of the multi-racial nature of Britain today but may also ignore or even actively work against the interests of

ethnic minority communities. The kind of practices about which we are concerned include many which, whilst clearly originally well-intentioned and in no way racist in intent, can now be seen to be racist in effect, in depriving members of ethnic minority groups of equality of access to the full range of opportunities which the majority community can take for granted or denying their right to have a say in the future of the society of which they are an integral part.

(Swann 1985: 29)

The corollary of Swann's analysis was to present a raft of recommendations which might broadly be described as providing a basis for a multi-cultural and anti-racist education, the central argument of which related to the need for these principles to underpin the education of *all* children, not just those from minority ethnic backgrounds, or those in multi-ethnic schools. Swann explicitly rejected providing a policy blue print, but argued that schools needed to develop their own organizational practices and procedures that were informed by multi-cultural and anti-racist principles.

In the year after Swann's publication, on Wednesday 17 September 1986, a 13-year-old Bangladeshi boy was killed in the playground of the school in Manchester where he was a pupil. Ahmed Ullah had been murdered by a fellow student. The background to the incident clearly indicates that Ahmed was the victim of a racially motivated attack. Ahmed Ullah's murder was an event that immediately exposed the fault lines in UK race relations, which often appeared to be at their sharpest in the education system. Ahmed was a pupil at Burnage High School (BHS), located on the south side of Manchester. Manchester is a typical industrial city in the north of England. Its importance to the world cotton trade attracted significant immigration into the textile industry and as a consequence the city was, and is, characterized by considerable ethnic diversity. However, by the mid-1980s Manchester was suffering the consequences of substantial de-industrialization – problems compounded by unsympathetic national economic policies designed to facilitate economic capital's rapid restructuring (Green 1989). The local context therefore was of a community in flux, coming to terms with both cultural diversity and economic change, the latter often experienced as significant and painful dislocation. As a consequence, BHS faced considerable challenges in the form of the complex social problems generated by economic decline.

One of BHS's responses to reflecting its local communities' needs, and the problems they faced, was to introduce specific policies promoting multi-cultural and anti-racist education in much the way envisaged by the Swann Report. However, as Ahmed's murder testified, such policies were clearly ineffective. Following Ahmed's death an inquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester schools was established, chaired by Ian Macdonald QC. The report that followed (Macdonald *et al.* 1989) provides a comprehensive background to a tragic event – it continues to offer a fascinating account

of the complexities of policy development in a single institution, the power of micro-politics (Hoyle 1982) and the serious consequences of errors and misjudgements in the policy process. Sadly it serves as a reminder of the inadequacy of seeing policy purely as *product*. Policy analysis must shed light on the *process* of policy development if it is to illuminate the realities of practice.

At BHS there was clearly ‘a policy’, but what was apparent was the almost total disconnection between the policy as a text, the policy as it was experienced by students and staff at BHS and the consequences of that policy. Although the Macdonald report provides a number of explanations for this, at its centre was the considerable tensions amongst the staff regarding the policy, its aims and its implementation. This was about a clash of values, as a consequence of which policy development was buffeted between conflicting sub-groups within the institution. Powerful coalitions formed within the school that challenged and undermined the policy text. At times, policy development appeared to be a conflict between those with authority, but little influence, pitted against sections of the staff with little authority, but substantial influence (Bachrach and Lawler 1980). A range of responses were discernible in this clash of values – to embrace diversity, accept it reluctantly, deny its existence or reject it? However, in many ways these simply provided a mirror to tensions and contradictions within national state policy with a continuum of responses offering a choice between assimilationism and integrationism (Parekh 1991).

Since Swann, these tensions within state policy have formed a continuous backdrop against which schools have had to develop their institutional responses to meeting the needs of their student populations. However, the socio-political environment is never static, but is continually shifting in response to local, national and international factors that shape policy. More recently, in the UK for example, debate has been decisively influenced by another racist murder, of student Stephen Lawrence, in 1997 and the subsequent publication of the Macpherson Report (1999). The issues raised by this incident were not specifically about the role of educational institutions, however, the report’s identification of institutional racism as an important contributory factor in the failure to secure justice for Stephen echoed the conclusions of Swann 14 years earlier, and have had an important influence in shaping policy across all public services. One obvious manifestation of this has been the amending of the Race Relations Act (RRA) 1976 (now the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000) which now places a duty on public sector institutions to positively promote race equality. Here it is possible to see the interplay of a number of factors – government policy objectives (for example relating to social inclusion), high-profile national events, influential reports and national legislation – all shaping the socio-political discourse. How though have these shifts in debate, and in public policy, played out in schools? The experience at Burnage High School in 1986 highlights the need to develop a better understanding of policy development at an institutional

level, and to assess how discourses framed at a national level influence and shape the experiences of individuals studying and working in schools and colleges. This is the focus of the following section.

### **Leadership and policy development in multi-ethnic schools**

Those working in schools operate within the context of the shifting discourses and policy contexts identified above. As argued in previous chapters they are both the recipients, and developers, of policy. However, these distinctions are not neat and tidy and it is vital to see both elements as part of a single process in which those working in schools must simultaneously make sense of external policy agendas, respond to factors specific to their own context and develop and pursue their own agendas. At any one time there are likely to be tensions within institutions, between institutions and between institutions and the demands of the external environment. School leaders are at the interface of these tensions – accountable within, and without, the institution and often the link between external and internal policy agendas. The research that informs this chapter is based on a research project in five case-study secondary schools identified as being successful in meeting the needs of their multi-ethnic communities. The research sought to establish what leadership behaviours were a feature of these schools and the specific contribution of the headteacher to the school's success. How was policy developed within the school and how was internal policy development shaped by the external agenda and local context? Table 8.1 is a summary of some of the key characteristics of the case-study schools.

Participating schools were recommended by their Local Education Authorities on the basis that they were considered effective multi-ethnic schools that had significant success in meeting the needs of their school community. Academic success was important, but was just one issue considered in identifying the sample.

In this volume it has been argued that it is not sufficient to see 'policy' purely in terms of texts, or statements, or pronouncements, but that policy is a much more complex process by which resources of power are mobilized in order to operationalize values. In all the case-study schools headteachers frequently articulated their leadership role in terms of their values – values were rarely implicit, but were often explicit. There was a clear recognition that leadership was about the operationalization of values – highlighting the intimate link between leadership, strategy and policy. This intangible way of articulating policy and its link to values was expressed in the following terms:

When I arrived it was an ethos of control and I wanted to turn it into an ethos of respect and equality of opportunity. I think whatever systems and structures you have the key way that you do that is by leading by example, and making it clear that you are what you preach. You put into

*Table 8.1* Case-study schools – details and background

<i>School</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Ethnic profile</i>	<i>Background information</i>
S1	Northern industrial city	93% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) – very largely a single ethnic group.	A mixed local area, but where school choices are heavily influenced by ethnic issues resulting in skewed ethnic profiles in schools.
S2	Midlands town	24% BME – heterogeneous BME profile with significant East European element	Poor placement in academic league tables. The school has surplus places and is the subject of a re-organization.
S3	Large Midlands city	85% BME – heterogeneous BME profile	Popular school in largely established local community.
S4	Midlands city	55% BME – heterogeneous BME profile, established local population	Popular, over-subscribed school.
S5	Outer London District	75% BME – heterogeneous BME, significant proportion of recent immigrants.	Well-regarded local school. Over-subscribed. Changing ethnic profile based on recent arrival of new ethnic groups.

action ways of working which are based on your fundamental principles of human beings – that is why I am a head, and that is what I have tried to do while I've been here.

(S3 Headteacher)

In this instance the limitations of policy fiat as a means of securing change, so graphically illustrated at Burnage High School, is recognized. Here policy is shaped by the actions of individuals, which in turn is driven by the values of those seeking change. How policy becomes operational is hence a much more complex process than the production of a policy statement.

Within the context of multi-ethnic schools, values that were associated with social justice had a high profile. Values most frequently cited related to equity, fairness, respect and tolerance. However, the precise way in which these values were interpreted, articulated and implemented could differ significantly. There was, for example, a common commitment to the principle, strongly associated with the comprehensive schools movement, of valuing all students equally and in the case-study schools it was difficult to challenge the sincerity or the passion with which those views were held. A feature of the headteachers in these schools was that their commitment was not rhetoric or lip service, but a deeply held conviction that they were able to convey to colleagues, students and the wider community. However, valuing

all students equally in a context of cultural diversity, often compounded by economic and social disadvantage, rarely equated with 'equal treatment'. Principles of both distributive justice and cultural justice clearly came into play (see Chapter 4). For example resource decisions that allocated resources in favour of particular disadvantaged groups could be controversial. Whilst not always contentious, such decisions sometimes met with resistance from staff and/or parents. Similarly, different views were expressed about the extent to which cultural diversity might be explicitly recognized. A feature of the case-study schools was the way in which the variety of ethnic cultures represented in the school was highlighted and celebrated. Valuing diversity by recognizing it, and celebrating it, was a common feature of many of the schools in the projects. However, whilst some schools confidently highlighted their diversity, others were less confident, arguing that differential treatment generated division. In one school, located in an area that had witnessed significant inter-ethnic tensions, the headteacher maintained a strong policy of equal treatment for individuals, whilst recognising the need to respond to the specific needs of collective groups:

It's absolutely essential to keep sight of the individual, because even within minority ethnic groups there is huge diversity. You cannot lump groups together. As a school we've learned you've got to treat people as individuals. There are sensitivities about how you put in place strategies for groups, when actually you are concerned about individuals.

(S2 Headteacher)

In this instance policy options are clearly shaped by the local context and leaders are faced with the challenge of reconciling individual values positions with the prevailing local circumstances – a dilemma illustrated in more detail later in this chapter.

The strong and explicit values base expressed by leaders in the case schools could be seen as the central element of their leadership. These values then informed institutional policy in several key areas – these are identified in Figure 8.1. In each of these key areas institutional policies reflected the school's commitment to the promotion of cultural diversity. In some cases policies might be explicit (for example, those relating to racism and racist incidents), but more common was the intangible and almost unspoken way in which policies were formed and operationalized.

### **Policy implementation – from organizational principles to operational practice**

#### *Creating inclusive cultures*

Booth *et al.* (2000: 9) identify the need to create 'a secure, accepting, collaborating, stimulating community in which everyone is valued, as the

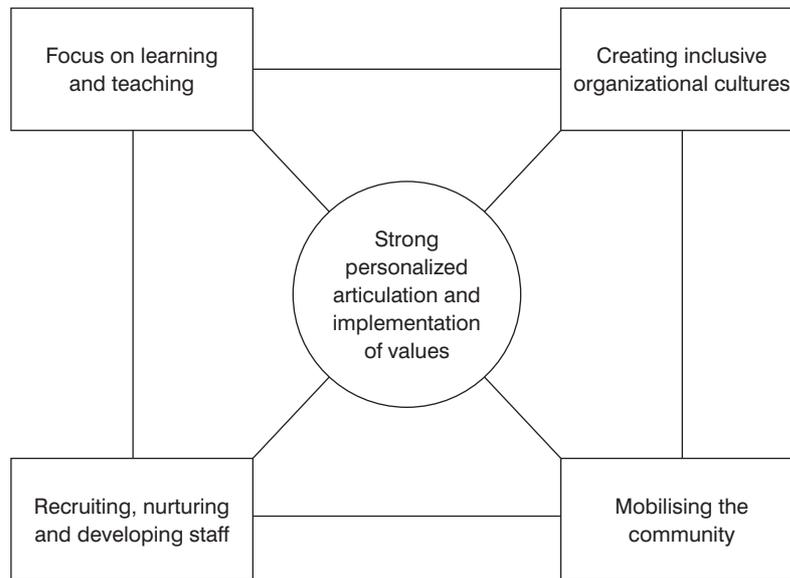


Figure 8.1 Leadership in multi-ethnic schools (After Dimmock *et al.* 2005: 7. Copyright NCSL. Reproduced from *Leading the Multi-Ethnic School* by kind permission of NCSL.)

foundation for the highest achievements of all students'. School leaders in the case-study schools placed strong emphasis on the creation of such cultures and clearly prioritized these over systems and structures. Within the context of an ethnically diverse school the creation of an inclusive culture is more challenging. Arguably, inclusion is less problematic the more homogenous the population. Within a multi-ethnic school, diverse approaches are required to secure equitable outcomes and differential responses for different ethnic groups may be required to demonstrate that all are valued equally. School leaders in the case-study schools were committed to ensuring that all aspects of school life reflected the ethnic diversity of the school's local community and particular attention was paid to ensuring that collective bodies encouraged the representation and participation of all ethnic groups within the school. This points to the importance, and the confluence, of associational, distributive and cultural forms of social justice, manifest in a strong commitment to ensure the full participation of members of all communities in policy development in the school, and a willingness to devote additional resources where needed to achieve this.

The emphasis on associational justice was illustrated by the high level of student engagement in the life of the school, often exemplified by the active role played by students in Student Councils. However, inclusion was often about much more than this. For example, in one school a teacher training day for the staff was devoted to issues of raising academic achievement amongst ethnic groups identified through monitoring as 'underachieving'

(the commitment of these resources itself illustrating how policy priorities need to be supported by appropriate resource allocations). Students from a range of ethnic backgrounds represented in the school were then involved in both planning and delivering the in-service training. Where this was the case students enthused that their contribution was both sought and valued.

A feature of inclusive cultures is the often intangible way that policy is operationalized. However, one key area of policy identified by student interviews as very explicit was in relation to racism and the handling of racist incidents. The experience of Burnage High School exposed the problems that arise when policies may be explicit, but when those working in the institution have no confidence in their application (Macdonald *et al.* 1989). In the case-study schools, student interviewees reported a high degree of confidence in the operation of anti-racist policies. Racism was not tolerated, and if it was reported, students were confident that appropriate action would be taken – ‘Everybody knows the policy and everybody knows what will happen to them if they are involved in anything racist – there is hardly any racism here’ (S5, student). There was no evidence of complacency about racism – either within the schools, or their immediate environs. However, there was a confidence that the schools took racism seriously and took appropriate action in response.

#### *Nurturing and developing staff*

A high priority for all the headteachers in the case-study schools was to recruit and develop the staff body. Whilst there was a clear focus on teaching staff, this was by no means exclusive, and there was a clear commitment to the development of inclusive staff cultures that valued everyone within the organization. Indeed, in many cases, hierarchies were deliberately challenged by the inclusion of non-teaching staff in policy forming processes that had previously been the preserve of teaching staff alone. Headteacher commitment to promoting their schools as successful multi-ethnic institutions was in part achieved by ensuring that new appointments were committed to the school’s mission of racial equality. In this sense school leaders sometimes deliberately sought to shift the culture within the institution through the use of new appointments, hence creating the potential for new alliances and making it easier to secure organizational objectives. In some cases staff commitment to working in a multi-ethnic environment was assessed within formal recruitment and selection policies that ensured specific interview questions focused on ethnicity issues, whilst in other cases policy objectives were secured much more informally, described in the following terms by one headteacher – ‘we’re absolutely up front about what sort of school we are and what we stand for – if you don’t like it, you won’t want to come here. But everyone knows what they are coming to’ (S4, Headteacher). Conversely, one headteacher described how they had exploited a redundancy situation

to remove staff he had identified as resistant to the school's aspirations as a multi-ethnic institution.

The research also showed a strong commitment to the recruitment and development of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. In all the case-study schools staff from minority ethnic backgrounds were under-represented, a disparity that worsened at managerial and leadership level. In many cases school leaders went to considerable efforts to both appoint and develop such staff. They worked within the law on equal opportunities, but were prepared to push at its boundaries in order to support individuals whose career progress had received few advantages, and many disadvantages. In one case a headteacher actively challenged the Home Office that was seeking to deport a member of the school's staff. The school had a significant number of Albanian/Kosovan refugees and the individual in question was the only person on the staff who could speak to these students in their first language (and in some cases their only language). Significantly, students involved in the research project indicated they valued an ethnically diverse staff, not simply because of the role models provided, but principally because this signalled the school's commitment to ethnic diversity.

### *Mobilising the community*

A strong feature of the case-study schools was to not see the educational process as being confined to the school boundaries, or the restrictions of the school day. Strong links with the school's wider community, not just the parent body, was clearly a high policy priority for all the schools and was effectively seen as essential. Community links were not a nicety that could be developed if resources were available. Rather such links were perceived as central, and were resourced accordingly. Working *beyond* the school was seen as pre-requisite if the students were to achieve *within* the school. This support for students, and the willingness to work inside and outside the school, derived from the personal values and convictions of the school leader and other staff:

I think the staff realise we're an extended school. School is such a limited part of students' life. I could never take the view ... and there are Heads in the town I know, and there are Heads who have been here who take the view .... that once the child leaves the boundary of the school they're not their responsibility. I can never subscribe to that. I cannot take that attitude.

(S2, Headteacher)

In the case-study schools, it was possible to identify a number of different ways in which links from within and beyond the school were developed. For example, in the case-study schools, staff had a detailed knowledge of individual students and their personal circumstances outside the school.

Understanding what is happening, or has happened, in the lives of individual children, was seen as crucial to promoting achievement within school. This extended to strong links with parents. However, developing such links was often difficult as a number of barriers might exist to such contact (language issues, local working patterns, lack of safe transport options). In the case-study schools, in different ways, considerable efforts were undertaken to overcome these difficulties. An obvious example is the high level of outreach work in which school staff visited parents in places, and at times, that minimized the problems identified above. Finally, links with community groups were frequently prioritized, with substantial resources, often in terms of the personal time of individuals, invested in developing such links. Arguably, a feature of many minority ethnic groups in the UK is that they retain a more collectivist culture with a strong network of local organizations and self-help groups. These groups were seen as a powerful resource in terms of articulating community concerns and aspirations and working with such groups was a common strategy adopted by school leaders. In turn, those community representatives who were interviewed spoke warmly of the steps taken by school leaders to engage with their communities beyond the school gates. Communities felt valued and included where such steps were taken.

#### *Focusing on teaching and learning*

The improvement of classroom practice was understandably a common priority in the case-study schools. However, within the context of a multi-ethnic school this sometimes took quite distinctive approaches. For example, there was a clear recognition of the need for curriculum provision to reflect cultural diversity, and in some cases to draw on the cultural experience of students. In all case schools examples were provided of how some curriculum subjects reflected and valued cultural diversity, and how the curriculum was used to tackle racism and develop an active citizenship. Often these examples were to be found in similar curriculum areas – religious education, art and drama for example. In some further examples it was clear that subjects such as English or Humanities might be used to explore relevant issues, but in subjects such as Maths and the natural sciences cultural diversity was rarely on the map. The research pointed to a number of reasons why this might be the case. The emphasis on student achievement in national tests appeared to generate a functional and utilitarian approach to the curriculum amongst staff and students alike, particularly amongst older students (Beresford 2003). Published league tables of performance data, high stakes inspection arrangements and a euro-centric national curriculum seemed to conspire to create a situation in which not only was the focus almost exclusively on test performance, but developing a curriculum that exploited opportunities for inter-cultural learning was seen as something that would detract from, not improve, student performance.

Such evidence perhaps points once again to the difficulty of whole school policy penetrating classrooms, and the more pervasive influence of external control mechanisms such as inspections and published league tables. Many of the case-study schools were vibrant examples of their multi-cultural communities, at a whole school level. Cultural diversity was acknowledged and celebrated. Within the classroom, this rarely reflected the reality. Staff reported that external pressures often reduced professional self-confidence and the willingness to take risks, whilst expectations were lowered by the functional nature of the curriculum and its associated testing regime. One teacher interviewed, of South Asian heritage, commented that students from minority ethnic backgrounds '*expect to leave their culture outside the door when they enter the classroom*'. Whilst they may want lessons to reflect their ethnic identity, they did not expect that they actually would. This evidence clearly supports Gillborn's (2002) assertion that 'permeation' – the inclusion of multi-cultural content across the curriculum – has failed to be effective. Many individual teachers, schools and whole curricular areas have remained unaltered behind a façade of supposed permeation (Gillborn 2002: 60).

Although there was limited evidence that students' classroom experience reflected cultural diversity there was considerable evidence of how students' classroom performance was monitored by ethnicity. This was in part due to the requirements of the updated Race Relations Act, however school practice often exceeded basic legislative requirements. In one school there was evidence of highly sophisticated monitoring by ethnicity that sought to monitor achievement in relation to the linguistic background of students. In this school the headteacher invested considerable resourcing, supported by personal commitment, to monitoring student performance and to identify appropriate strategies for intervention. Where patterns of underachievement were identified the school was prepared to follow through with specific strategies focused on particular ethnic groups. In this case the school provided examples of specific initiatives it had developed to support Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean students in response to data generated by their own monitoring by ethnicity. However, the fact that curriculum monitoring by ethnicity appeared to be more sophisticated than the provision of curriculum content arguably points to the relative importance of an external agenda driven by accountability and performativity concerns, rather than a broader concern to develop a genuinely multi-cultural curriculum.

The outline presented here of how leaders at an institutional level developed their own policy agendas within the context of their multi-ethnic schools demonstrates the complexity of the policy process. Figure 8.2 presents the model developed throughout this volume related to the formulation and implementation of policy relating to issues of race and ethnicity.

The model here highlights the very significant tensions at all levels of the process. For example, within the socio-political environment there are tensions between the promotion of an equality agenda based on diversity and one that seeks to create a sense of social cohesion through the promotion

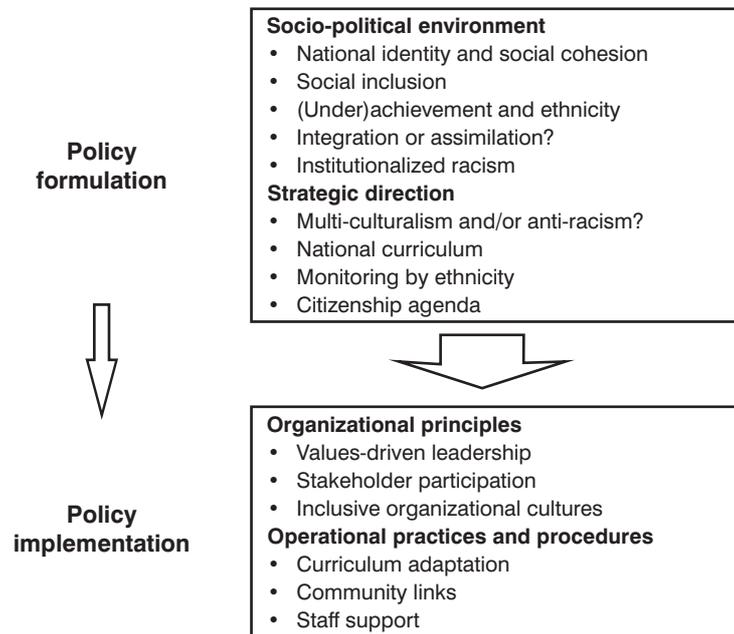


Figure 8.2 Policy into practice: leading multi-ethnic schools

of traditional notions of national identity. As strategic direction develops, tensions emerge between the promotion of a National (or nationalist?) Curriculum (mac an Ghaill 1993) and a more flexible curriculum that is capable of reflecting the full range of cultures that may be present within a school. As the example of Burnage High School illustrated, confusion and contradiction at state level will inevitably be mirrored and reflected at institutional level as organizational principles and operational practices and procedures are developed. This raises important questions therefore about the extent to which leaders at an institutional level can work within, or against, the grain of state policy – to what extent is there a space for ‘values-driven leadership’?

### **Policy development in the institution – creating a space for ‘values-driven leadership’?**

Gold *et al.*'s (2003) study of ten ‘outstanding’ Principals argued that these Principals placed their values at the centre of their leadership – referred to as ‘values-driven leadership’. In these cases, Principals’ values provided the ‘moral compass’ (Fullan 2003) that allowed them to navigate the murky waters, and in some cases the hazardous swamps, of external policy imperatives. Hence Gold *et al.* (2003), and others (Day *et al.* 2000, Moore *et al.* 2002), have argued that such school leaders were able to retain, and advance, their personal agendas based on principles informed by social

justice, even in the face of a hostile wider environment (discussed further in Chapter 2). In these cases Principals seized on initiatives and external projects that might in any way support them in achieving their personal priorities and objectives. This was certainly a feature of the headteachers in the multi-ethnic schools in this research project. School leaders demonstrated considerable flair in identifying wider policy initiatives that would further their personal agendas in their own schools. In terms of multi-ethnic schools, and the commitment to promoting a form of cultural justice, it was clear that the policies of the Labour government had opened up new opportunities that could be exploited. However, a feature of several of these headteachers was the way in which they were able to make use of sometimes modest national developments, and utilize them to promote radical changes and improvement in practice at an institutional level.

For example, whilst it has been argued that 'social inclusion' has often been a vague and ill-defined concept (see Chapter 7) lacking any real policy coherence, school leaders in the case-study schools were able to use the language of inclusion to promote a particular set of values within their institution that articulated a more radical vision of social justice, often with a particular emphasis on issues of cultural diversity and cultural justice. In these schools, how inclusion was articulated, the language used to describe it, and the specific policies used to operationalize it, were central to the schools' ethos and mission. This allowed specific resource allocation decisions to be made that supported the school's commitment to social inclusion, but which may have been contentious in the extent to which they distributed resources in favour of marginalized or disadvantaged groups within, and indeed beyond, the school. Other opportunities to promote this agenda were provided by incidents and initiatives that school leaders were able to exploit in a similar way.

Publication of the Macpherson Report (1999) following the murder of Stephen Lawrence was used by one headteacher to significantly raise the profile of issues relating to ethnicity in the school, and for the school to look self-critically at the issue of institutional racism. Whilst using the report in this way appeared to be the exception rather than the rule, it illustrates how some school leaders were able to seize on national issues and to use these to shape debates, and ultimately policy, within their own institutions. A similar example is provided by the introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000). Examples were provided as to how this was used as a vehicle to highlight issues relating ethnicity, to question existing practices and to develop new institutional policies. For example, the instance of monitoring by ethnicity referred to previously was developed partly in response to requirements contained in the RRA 2000.

These examples therefore illustrate how school leaders in multi-ethnic schools were able, if they chose, to utilize external policy initiatives to build support for their own objectives, in their own institutions. However, leadership was never about solely seizing opportunities from the positive,

it was also about defending values in the face of less benign pressures. This was most starkly illustrated by the impact of the specific local context of individual schools and the way in which this shaped, and often challenged, the values of those working in the institution. In analysing a school's individual local context it was possible to distinguish between a number of distinct, but interdependent factors relating to the institution's community context, and a similar range of factors relating to the school's market context. This interplay of community and market factors that are unique to each school may be described as the school's micro-context. In the following sections the concept of micro-context is developed and one of the case-study schools is analysed in detail to explore the way in which policy development in an individual school is shaped by its micro-context, and how the ethical dilemmas generated by micro-context can shape and constrain leadership.

### **Multi-ethnic schools and the importance of micro-context**

#### *Micro-context and the community*

The community features of a school's micro-context may be considered to refer to the largely demographic issues that shape local conditions. In identifying appropriate factors it is important to reflect the extent to which these are dynamic and change over time. Community factors may be considered to reflect the following:

#### *Ethnic profile*

An obvious community feature of multi-ethnic schools is the specific ethnic profile in the local community. What ethnic groups are represented in the community and what is the balance between them? Such differences could make a significant difference to the type of policies that could be developed in some schools. For example, in schools S1 and S3 where a significant proportion of the school population were from a specific ethnic group, it was relatively easy for the school to re-organize its school day during the holy month of Ramadan to allow pupils to more easily fulfil their religious obligations. This practice was greatly valued by students and the wider community who saw it as a tangible signal of the school's commitment to its students. However, in S4, the headteacher felt unable to make such changes and believed that to do so would generate resentment from other students. Here the ethnic profile within the community and the school shaped the types of policies leaders felt they could, or could not, pursue.

#### *Socio-economic profile*

A second key feature of a school's community profile was the socio-economic profile of its population. Throughout the research project interview,

respondents frequently described white students in terms of class – ‘white working class’, or ‘middle-class whites’ were common descriptors. However, using class as a descriptor was as uncommon for black and minority ethnic students as it was common for white students. This seemed to understate the complex nature of issues in multi-ethnic schools where issues of ethnicity and class overlap. Many multi-ethnic schools are located in urban areas, and exhibit the classic symptoms of communities experiencing economic disadvantage. School contexts therefore are shaped not solely by their ethnic profile, but also by the socio-economic status of the school and its community and this may have a significant bearing on school leadership and policy (Harris 2002). These issues become particularly important when assessing patterns of academic achievement in schools. It is becoming increasingly clear that it is not possible to explain the significant variations in achievement between different ethnic groups in the UK, without taking into account the influence of social class, and indeed gender.

#### *Social cohesion and stability*

A final feature of the community dimension relates to the extent to which communities can be considered stable and cohesive over time. Economically disadvantaged communities have a tendency to experience more significant population movements within them. Inhabitants are more likely to be transient. A degree of turbulence in the local population, and hence in its schools, can present significant challenges for those leading such schools. In some of the case-study schools the degree of turbulence in recent years had increased substantially as economic and geo-political pressures have driven increased numbers to seek work or refuge and asylum in apparently more prosperous and secure environments. This often presented affected schools with significant issues to deal with as they tried to meet complex, diverse and constantly changing needs.

#### *Micro-context and the market*

The community factors identified above have an importance in shaping the local context of individual schools, and hence the context within which policy at an institutional level is developed. However, these factors provide only part of the picture. As important, if not more important within many contexts, is the inter-play of a number of market-based factors by which parents and pupils are encouraged to act as consumers and make choices between competing schools. As with the community dimension, it is possible to identify a number of interlocking elements that shape the local market context of individual schools:

*Open or closed markets?*

The research suggested that whether or not a local market for schools could be described as open or closed was highly significant. A closed market was one in which there was very limited surplus capacity. In such instances potential students were allocated to their local school and there were very restricted opportunities to choose an alternative. Hence opportunities for parental choice were heavily circumscribed. Movements of pupils across catchment areas, and between schools, was limited. In open markets the reverse was true. Parents were able to exercise choice because there was available capacity, and they often did so. Open markets were therefore characterized by much more movement. Competition, and the corresponding need to 'market' the school, was often much more explicit. Some of the case-study schools functioned in markets where issues of ethnicity decisively shaped parental preferences (Gewirtz *et al.* 1995). In such instances schools could become sharply polarized between ethnic groups despite the best efforts of those working in the schools to avoid this.

*'League table' position*

When market policies were first seriously introduced in England in 1988 they were accompanied by the publishing of examination performance data to allow 'consumers' to make informed choices based on apparently full information. Notwithstanding the efficacy of this policy there can be little doubt that the influence of 'league table' data has proved to be highly significant in shaping individual schools' contexts – a significance that is likely to be more substantial where markets are more open. Superior positioning in the league table, which may be based largely on the influence of community factors identified above, confers a degree of market power. Those schools with market power have more room for policy manoeuvre. Those lacking such power face a more limited range of policy options – compelled to focus on organizational survival. It is often at this point that ethical dilemmas are at their most acute.

*Parental and community perception*

Whilst a school's positioning in the local league table can be highly significant in framing a school's local context, it is clearly not the only consideration parents make when choosing schools. More nebulous, but equally important, is what might be generally referred to as parental and community perception of the school. Whilst inevitably this will be informed by academic performance, it is not the only consideration. More general perceptions of the school are likely to be based on perceptions of its culture, its ethos – in short, what type of school is it? What does it stand for, what are its values and who is it for?

Taken together these community and market factors provide a school's micro-context within which policy at an institutional level is developed. Such contexts are by definition unique to each school, but they are not detached from broader macro-factors. Markets, for example, are the product of macro-policies that encourage or discourage competition between schools. However, the micro-context of each school exerts significant influence on policy development within the institution, at times presenting ethical dilemmas that threaten to compromise educational objectives and values.

### **Values under pressure: how micro-context shapes policy**

This case-study focuses on one of the five schools in the research project, school S2. All the following quotations are from the recently appointed headteacher of S2. It is located near to the centre of a large English town and has had a troubled recent history having been identified as 'failing' by the Inspectorate. During the research project it was undergoing a major re-organization following merger with another local school, also considered to be 'failing'. The school's catchment area reflected a diverse community in which many different ethnic groups were represented. The most significant group was students of Bangladeshi heritage (14 per cent), but more recently there had been a significant movement of Eastern Europeans into the area, many seeking refuge and asylum. This ensured that not only was the school's catchment area ethnically diverse, with a wide range of different ethnic groups within the school, but that the community, at the time of the research project, lacked stability and cohesion. The inward movement of new ethnic groups had created new tensions and significant inter-ethnic rivalries. At one point this has escalated into a major confrontation near to the school, which was then sensationalized by the local media and exploited by far-right political parties. In addition to the above, the school was located in a socio-economically mixed local area with some areas of significant disadvantage.

Working within this context the headteacher had a passionate commitment to education as a means of improving life chances. Specifically there was an explicit commitment to a form of social justice that actively sought to achieve most, for those who had least. In this instance the headteacher articulated explicit egalitarian commitments based in particular on social class and ethnicity. Working in a community where a significant proportion of the population experience economic disadvantage, and the consequences of both localized and systemic racism, this headteacher was driven by the desire to make a difference, and to make most difference to those most disadvantaged. Throughout the school there was evidence of how the values of the headteacher were reflected in both her own personal practice and conduct, and in the policies, systems and procedures of the organization. This commitment was central to the school's reputation as a successful inclusive school in which all pupils are valued and encouraged to achieve. However, despite this success, the re-organization was seen as a last ditch

attempt at survival. Prior to this the school had faced closure. The reasons for this lie in the complex interplay of community and market factors that shaped the school's micro-context.

Given the school's location, it was never likely to achieve the academic success of schools in more affluent parts of the town. In recent years this situation had deteriorated and the school was academically the lowest performing school in the town. However, the problems of improving league table performance could not be tackled by traditional school improvement strategies alone without seriously challenging the underlying values of the institution. Within the local area, over the years there had been significant over-capacity. Parents were able, and did, choose to send their children to schools outside their own catchment area. The largest school in the town had made a deliberate pitch at presenting itself as a model of traditional academic excellence. It adopted the badges of traditionalism (uniform, prize givings) and was intolerant of non-conformists (Gewirtz 2002). It had been quick to exclude those students who were considered not to fit. The consequence was to both draw in aspiring and able children from outside its catchment area, and to disperse those considered difficult to schools elsewhere. The impact on S2 was that it simultaneously found its more able students exiting its catchment, whilst it was being asked to receive increasing numbers of children with behavioural problems from elsewhere:

We co-operate as local heads very well, but actually when it comes to the survival of your school would you rather have my agenda or would you rather have a settled, over-subscribed totally supportive population of white parents. I get rung up by other heads in the town who say 'we're having difficulty with this difficult child, you've got some spare places – would you like them?' If it went to appeal we couldn't say no anyway.  
(S2, Headteacher)

Inevitably, this depressed results further. However, it was also clear that parental preferences were not based purely on academic achievement, but about parental perceptions of the type of school S2 was, and the type of student who went there. Hence parental preferences reflected the racist assumptions of some parents of white children who opted out of S2 because of its ethnic profile (Gewirtz *et al.* 1995). In this instance the more committed the headteacher was to an agenda based on social inclusion, the more likely it was that this wider perception of the school would result in many of the more able, and the more affluent, opting to seek their education in schools elsewhere. Moreover, the imbalanced movement of pupils between catchment areas ensured that the apparently successful school was over-subscribed, whilst S2 had surplus places. The further consequence of this was that when a significant number of refugee and asylum seeker youngsters were placed in the town then the overwhelming majority of these were allocated to S2, where there were places. Over-subscribed schools could wring their

hands and express a willingness to accept these youngsters, but claim that in practical terms this was not possible because of lack of space.

The headteacher at S2 was determined to do the best by the children placed in her school. However, with inadequate resources the creation of additional need was likely to cause problems. In this instance tensions arose because supporting refugee and asylum seeker children could be seen as a deflection from the goal of raising examination results for other students. The problem for the school was that its examination results were seen as poor and the school had faced possible closure as a consequence:

People despair – that is not too hard a word for it. You get someone in your lesson who hardly speaks any English, and you have to meet those needs. You get support, but it is yet another need in an already needy situation. A lot of staff will run with it, but convincing them is a permanent sales job – ‘this is good for the children .... this is what we are here to do’.

(S2, Headteacher)

That is a hard thing to manage when you are being hammered for your exam results and you’re telling staff to get the results, get the value-added, but if you get refugee children then they often come for six weeks then they’re re-located. You put all that effort in, you get to know a child – and then they are moved on.

(S2, Headteacher)

This was not about a lack of commitment to refugee and asylum-seeker children, on the contrary. But what is illustrated is the way in which values are challenged by the tension between a personal commitment to support individual children and the need to satisfy market-driven league table criteria. In this context these were not compatible objectives. Once again, as illustrated in the previous chapter, this case highlights the tensions between the demands of a market-driven system and the imperatives of an institutional agenda based on a commitment to social inclusion. In this instance the school leaders’ strong personal commitment to social justice was being challenged and undermined by the dominance of a standards and accountability agenda that effectively penalized those who prioritized educational and egalitarian values over market priorities:

*Interviewer:* Would you say you have you been penalised for being a good inclusive school?

*Headteacher:* I have no doubt in my mind, having gone down the inclusion route, that affects people’s perceptions of what we are, and we do not get the ‘top end’ [based on academic ability]. I do think that is a

consequence of how the school has chosen to present itself, to welcome everybody.

(S2, Headteacher)

In this case the headteacher's commitment to being an open and inclusive school created an environment which was highly regarded by many in the local community. Students and parents who participated in the research project valued what the school sought to provide – a supportive environment in which all were valued and encouraged to succeed. However, a market mechanism that places a premium on the promotion of self-interest was resulting in a school community skewed along class and ethnic lines. As a result, community divisions were compounded by the local system of schooling, rather than challenged. Furthermore, the commitment to the school's core values potentially threatened its very existence. The ethical dilemma facing the headteacher was how to hold on to educational values that seemed incompatible with institutional survival.

### **Conclusion**

The schools referred to in this chapter illustrate the importance of institutional policy agendas and the extent to which these are shaped by the values and commitment of school leaders. In such cases school leaders are able to shape policy agendas significantly to reflect values based on a commitment to social justice, and explicitly a form of cultural justice based on ethnicity and equality. In some cases there had been resistance within the institution. In other cases staff were sympathetic to the drift of policy, but saw school priorities as being in tension with the institution's ability to survive in a market environment where commitments to ethnic diversity were at odds with market success. In these instances school leaders were constantly negotiating the development of institutional policies, sometimes confronting resistance, at other times constructing alliances in order to circumvent it. In yet other cases they were proselytizing for policies to win the support and commitment of a sympathetic staff concerned about issues of job security and personal livelihoods.

A feature of these school leaders was the extent to which they were able to exploit opportunities provided by external policy agendas, and to seek some alignment between internal and external policies. In the case-study schools, this had become easier following the election of a Labour government. In this instance clear statutory initiatives, such as the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, coupled with a broader commitment to a policy of 'social inclusion' had opened up spaces and opportunities that creative leaders were able to exploit. However, capitalizing on the national policy agenda was never about a simple case of implementation of external initiatives, but about using these to go beyond what was often envisaged in national policy. In these cases school leaders were using national initiatives

to strengthen their own arguments for change within their own institutions, but using this as a base, as a departure point, from which to promote bolder and more radical initiatives.

However, just as school leaders in these schools were keen to make use of external policy agendas that supported their personal objectives for their institution, so too they had to respond to external policy initiatives that cut across and undermined these objectives. In Chapter 7 it was seen how external policy agendas that sought to promote equality objectives could be challenged and undermined by initiatives that promoted 'standards' and market-driven accountability. In very similar ways this was illustrated by some of the schools in these case-studies. Accountability mechanisms based on quasi-markets and parental preferences generated two identifiable outcomes – both inconsistent with the rhetoric of central government policy. First was the experience evident in some schools, of parental preferences being driven almost exclusively by ethnic differences. In these instances schools failed to be the multi-ethnic reflections of their local communities but instead became homogenously representative of particular ethnic groups. In such cases the efforts of those working in schools to promote genuinely diverse, multi-ethnically communities was undermined by parental preferences that created ethnically segregated institutions. Secondly was the experience of parents deliberately opting away from a school that may be seen as 'inclusive', particularly in terms of ethnicity. Here leaders' values are put starkly to the test – retain educational principles and risk school closure, or adopt policies and practices which ensure institutional survival but compromise educational values?

## 9 Conclusion

In this book, policy has been presented here as the capacity to operationalize values derived from discourses within the socio-political environment. This highlights the dual nature of policy as both product (a textual statement of values and principles) and process (the power to formulate textual statements into operational practices). It has been demonstrated that policy is a dialectic process in which all those affected by the policy may be involved in shaping its development. The policy process passes through a variety of stages and can take place at a number of different levels. To understand the policy process requires more than an understanding of the priorities of governments or of individual school leaders. It is both a continuous and a contested process in which those with competing values and differential access to power seek to form and shape policy in their own interests. The model that has been developed to illustrate the complexities of the policy process by examining how strategic direction is derived from the wider political agenda and is formulated into organizational principles and operational practices.

It has been argued that the educational policy is extremely complex. This is reflected in Table 9.1 which provides a summary of the discourses that can be identified in the socio-political environment and which shape the strategic directions of the educational policy considered in this volume. These discourses cover a wide range of issues from economic utilitarianism and urban regeneration to social inclusions and integration or assimilation. The text of educational policy frequently reflects a variety of discourses that compete within the socio-political environment, an arena within which, by definition, a range of ideologies are struggling for supremacy. Such discourses will not only reflect differing values perspectives, but also the differential access to power since those with the power resources to mobilize can more readily shape policy debates. These discourses are therefore contested and often generate sets of expectations that cannot all be met and problems that cannot all be resolved, not least because resources are limited and some alternatives are mutually exclusive. Market accountability, public-private partnerships, multi-culturalism and a citizenship agenda are just a few examples considered in this book. Thus, although strategic direction of policy is largely a product of the dominant discourse within the socio-

political environment, it is often subject to different interpretations that, in turn, produce alternative organizational principles which might include competition in the market place, cross school collaboration and values driven leadership and a battery of institutional practices and procedures such as performance management, teach engagement and community participation.

This is a complex set of policy agendas, yet it is argued here that one of the effects of globalization was to create a situation in which national governments increasingly viewed education as an important adjunct to the economic development of the nation state. The result of this has been to elevate economic values to a primordial position in shaping the socio-political discourse within which policy is developed. This is not to adopt the view of world systems theory that emphasizes the dynamics operating at trans-national level while casting the nation state in the role of hapless pawn being sacrificed to the pressures of globalization (Gallagher 2005). It has been emphasized throughout that at state and institutional levels there are significant variations within a similar policy context. Nevertheless, similar discourses emerging from their socio-political environments can be identified in many countries. The discourse based on economics and national competitiveness is perhaps the most powerful of these. These economic rationalist discourses take at least two forms. The first, and perhaps the most dominant, is that based on human capital theory that which directly associates education with economic survival, competitiveness, growth and prosperity. Educational institutions are now, more than ever before, required to produce students with the appropriate skills and capabilities to match national priorities. The second, closely linked with human capital, seeks to maximize output whilst simultaneously controlling the cost of inputs. The consequence of this has been a tendency to shift the resourcing of education provision to the private sector – both to commercial providers and individual consumers. These discourses are often linked to notions of citizenship such that educational institutions are tasked with inculcating their students with those values that enable them to become productive members of the nation state. The challenge in many contexts is to promote a sense of citizenship, and corresponding sense of national identity, in societies which are increasingly fragmented, not least in terms of cultural and ethnic diversity (Crouch *et al.* 2001).

Here, of course, there is a tension between the efficient use of resources and the provision of a fair and equitable education system that offers opportunities for the disadvantaged. In these circumstances the pursuit of economic growth resulting from, for example, liberalized markets may stand at odds with aspirations for a more equitable and just society. Such tensions highlight the conflicts between values that shape education policy and the way in which policy is forged between the pressures of competing values and the differing interest groups that advance them. Where economic values increasingly prevail over social values, education policy debate will take place within increasingly narrow parameters. The resulting discourse

Table 9.1 Policy into Practice – a composite model

Level	Features	Human capital	Social justice and citizenship	Accountability	Strategic planning	Education Action Zones	Multicultural school
Socio-political environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contested discourses</li> <li>Dominant language of legitimation</li> <li>First order values shape policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic functionality</li> <li>Labour market demands</li> <li>Maximizing economic growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitions of citizenship rights</li> <li>Social cohesion and national identity</li> <li>Social justice and fairness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic utility</li> <li>Value for money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic utility</li> <li>National Identity</li> <li>Value for money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards' agenda /underachievement</li> <li>Social inclusion</li> <li>Urban regeneration</li> <li>Economic modernization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National identity and social cohesion</li> <li>Social inclusion</li> <li>(Under) achievement and ethnicity</li> <li>Integration or assimilation</li> <li>Institutionalized racism</li> </ul>
Strategic direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy trends emerge</li> <li>Broad policy established</li> <li>Applied to policy domains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quasi-markets</li> <li>Direct or indirect control</li> <li>Skills and knowledge requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access and entitlement to services</li> <li>Participation in service provision</li> <li>Curriculum construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market accountability</li> <li>Direct and indirect control</li> <li>Autonomous schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountability</li> <li>Direct and indirect control</li> <li>Autonomous school</li> <li>Long-term planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public/private partnerships</li> <li>Multi-agency working</li> <li>Curriculum vocationalization</li> <li>Flexible employment contracts for teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-culturalism and/or anti-racism?</li> <li>National curriculum</li> <li>Monitoring by ethnicity</li> <li>Citizenship agenda</li> </ul>
Organizational principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targets set</li> <li>Success criteria defined</li> <li>Patterns of control established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patterns of accountability</li> <li>Outputs clearly defined</li> <li>Control mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder participation</li> <li>Institutional articulation of citizenship</li> <li>Formal assessment of 'citizenship curriculum'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice and autonomy</li> <li>Individual and institutional performance</li> <li>Targets/outputs clearly defined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values and beliefs</li> <li>Head teacher leadership and responsibility</li> <li>School-based resourcing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional agendas</li> <li>Professional values</li> <li>External targets</li> <li>Cross-school collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values-driven leadership</li> <li>Stakeholder participation</li> </ul>
Operational practices and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizational procedures determined</li> <li>Monitoring mechanisms established</li> <li>Second order values mediate policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcomes drive curriculum and assessment</li> <li>Leadership and management</li> <li>Parents as partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum re-organization</li> <li>Resource allocation</li> <li>Parent and student 'voice'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance measures identified</li> <li>Monitoring mechanisms established</li> <li>Monitoring information published</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-term problem solving</li> <li>Consultation and collaboration</li> <li>Professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development</li> <li>Teacher engagement</li> <li>Community participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum adaptation</li> <li>Community links</li> <li>Staff support</li> </ul>

provides legitimation for operational practices linked to the curriculum assessment of students, performance management of teachers and institutional accountability mechanisms. As Lam (2001) points out:

Conceptually, economic rationalism as the hegemonic cornerstone of educational changes aspires to guarantee the quality of human resources in preparation for the new economic world order. Harbored in the economic rationalistic perspective is a set of principles ... These include efficiency of operation, visible evidence of increased productivity, and an unambiguous system of accountability.

(Lam 2001: 351)

There are, however, other possible discourses that might legitimate an alternative approach to educational provision. Grace (1988) moves some way towards this by drawing on an alternative socio-political discourse leading to a different conceptualization of the educative process:

Might not education be regarded as a public good because one of its fundamental aims is to facilitate the development of the ... artistic, creative and intellectual abilities of all citizens, regardless of their class, race or gender status and regardless of their regional location.

(Grace 1988: 214)

Grace uses the term 'public good' to designate a publically provided service intended to enhance the life of all citizens through the acquisition of moral, intellectual, creative, economic and political competencies. He argues that moral accountability ought to be to the community, not to the market place or to the economics of business:

The responsibilities of educational leadership are to build educational institutions around central values ... values ... of democratic culture.

(Grace 1995: 212)

This rationale for educational provision provides a much more powerful argument for the nurturing of ethical responsibilities and moral values than does a human capital approach (Grace 1994). It actually re-asserts the central role of public education, removed from the market and the motivations of private providers, as a citizenship entitlement (Freedland 2001). The attempt by Grace (1994) to develop an alternative discourse for the legitimation of educational policy re-focuses attention on some important questions. How far does the education offered foster a rationality that sees criticism as an essential part of the educative process? To what extent are people treated as means to an end or an end in themselves? Are people regarded solely as resources to be manipulated or are they developed as resourceful human beings? Is an ethos created within the institution in which personal growth is

promoted and democratic processes prevail that can be replicated in society at large (Bottery 1992)? By considering these questions it becomes possible to conceive of education *for* democracy in which choice and diversity are linked to the aspirations of all, rather than as the means by which inequalities are reinforced (Lauder 1997).

Such an alternative socio-political discourse will need to generate organizational principles that recognize that the world is unpredictable and the only certainty is uncertainty. Such an environment requires an approach to education that is not based on a set of immutable, externally imposed targets or on the development of a set of predetermined skills designed to facilitate entry to the labour market. It has to recognize also, that in coping with the new future, important information may not be available, important alternatives may be ignored and important possible outcomes neglected. At the strategic level, the capacity to retain a distinct separation between means and ends, between outcomes and benefits and to rely on the linear relationship between them is greatly reduced in this new environment.

In schools and colleges, there must be an agreement about basic values and broadly acceptable means, which are not rooted in the traditional hierarchical management model with its rule-bound inflexibilities and emphasis on the separation of functions. These values must inform both the educative process and the leadership of it in such a way that leadership and management move away from the target driven and instrumental and take on a wider ethical dimension. This ethical dimension of educational leadership, as Starratt (2005) points out, might operate at five levels. At its most basic, ethical educational leadership involves acting humanely towards others. Educational leaders should also carry out their responsibilities as citizens and as public servants. The educational dimension of ethical leadership is grounded in the realization that education is more than simply a public service. It is about developing and supporting individuals. As an administrator and manager the ethical educational leader will treat everyone in the school with compassion, engaging them in the ethical exercise of the common, core work of the school. This requires the administrator to orchestrate the resources, structures and processes of the school within negotiated agreements about what the nature of the work is and what is expected from the various members of the school community (Starratt 2005). At what Starratt (2005) calls the ethical enactment of educational leadership:

The leader has to be humane, ... even while appealing to the more altruistic motives of teachers and students ... The leader has to affirm their dignity and rights as autonomous citizens, even while appealing to their higher ... democratic ideals. The leader has to acknowledge the demanding nature of teaching and learning, ... even while appealing to the transformational possibilities of authentic learning ... Finally the educational leader has to acknowledge the ethics of organisational life, the fact that every organisation imposes limits of the freedom ... of

individuals ... and ... to see that ... basic contracts are honoured out of fairness and justice.

(Starratt 2005: 67)

Mechanisms for holding school to account might become less of a process by which schools, colleges and their staff are: 'liable to review and [to] the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in an accountability relationship' (Kogan 1986: 25).

New forms of accountability could be based on responsiveness: 'the willingness of an institution – or, indeed, an individual – to respond on its own or their own initiative, i.e. the capacity to be open to outside impulses and new ideas' (Scott 1989: 17).

Scott suggests that the responsiveness of teachers and educational institutions may be best captured within a web of professional responsibilities that embody codes of practice and sets of values that are all the more influential because they are self-imposed. Thus, accountability would come from the adherence to what Sockett (1980) termed principles of practice rather than from the evaluation of results based on student performance. Here the teacher would be regarded as an autonomous professional, not as a social technician (Carter and Stevenson 2005), within the bureaucratic framework of a school. Scott (1989) also recognizes the centrality of the teacher in this approach to accountability. He claims that professionals know that it is the student who is at the centre of the accountability process:

In discussing ways to improve the responsiveness of institutions and individuals in education it would be wrong to ignore the professional model. It does allow accountability to be exercised outside the immediate context of politics and the market.

(Scott 1989: 20)

This commitment to students and other stakeholders is widely recognized as a central tenet of professional accountability:

Professionals are judged by other professionals: they are accountable to their peers ... Legal and contractual accountabilities exist and can be used in extremes, but they are not what secures proper performance. Commitment to pupils and their parents, to the outcomes of training, to best practice and to ethical standards are more effective here.

(Burgess 1992: 7)

In the climate of the twenty-first century, however, the concept of professional accountability may be criticized by some for its inward, provider-dominated focus in contrast to the consumer stance espoused by governments in many countries. 'The time has long gone when isolated,

unaccountable professionals made curriculum and pedagogical decisions alone, without reference to the outside world ... Teachers in the modern world need to accept accountability' (DfEE 1998a: para. 13).

Nevertheless, professional accountability may be regarded as legitimate if considered alongside that of other forms:

The difficulty here is the extent to which accountability and responsiveness with its implied levels of autonomy are applied in relation to each other. The ideas of 'autonomy' and 'responsibility' [are] conceptually linked with that of 'a profession'. An association of people would not be entitled to the status of a profession if it was not in a position to accept 'responsibility' for its activities. People can be held responsible for their activities only if they are free to decide between alternatives. In other words, 'responsibility' can only be ascribed to those who are free to act 'autonomously'.

(Elliott *et al.* 1979: 8)

The organizational principles that shape the mechanisms for holding educational institutions to account might, therefore, produce different organizational practices. These operational practices within schools must establish work relationships that are more multi-functional and holistic, based on a wider distribution of power within the organization. Co-operation, responsiveness, flexibility and partnership must replace our present inflexible structures. Planning needs to be based on a process of reaching agreement on a series of short-term objectives derived from negotiated and shared common values that take into account the wider aesthetic, ethical and social benefits that education can provide. Such an approach to leadership and management will be predicated on openness and collaboration where flexibility, creativity, imagination and responsiveness can flourish. It will require a new form of leadership that embraces a wide range of cultures and practices (Singapore Teachers' Union 2000). This agenda is not a clarion call to return to an age of unaccountable autonomy, but rather a plea to reconceptualize accountability in terms that recognize the central role of professionalism and partnership.

This language of legitimation locates the capacity to respond rapidly to changing situations with an agreed view of what might be possible based on a series of incremental responses to external change. In order to succeed it requires both a coherent sense of purpose and an enlightened approach to education that recognizes that the world for which we all seek to plan is neither predictable nor controllable. It is from this starting point that planning must evolve. Such planning should be based on a collaborative process of looking for what is right through sharing rather than competing and by accepting the validity of a range of different perspectives. Meanings will be founded on a commonality of experience, not on the defence of differences and constructed through reasoning with others and through narratives rather than analysis. Such processes must provide a foundation on

which flexible yet inclusive policy formulation based on holistic relationships and focusing on integration rather than fragmentation can evolve. These policies will recognize that the sum is greater than the parts and celebrate the imaginative and the experimental not the narrow and restrictive.

The capacity to be flexible and the capability to be creative cannot be taught as an adjunct to literacy and numeracy, compartmentalized as a curriculum subject or measured and assessed. Nor can bureaucratic fiat address the crucial issue of how to teach children to be independent and creative (Lauder *et al.* 1998). The immediate human capital requirements of the economy and the concomitant managerialism, as perceived by politicians and industrialists, should not be the only factors that shape the context and text of policies that determine educational provision in any society. It should be remembered that, as schools and colleges struggle to cope with the needs of a changing, global world, the problems that confront them may be larger than any one group can solve:

finding solutions will require cooperation and collaboration. Collaboration holds the possibility of higher quality decisions. As principals collaborate with teachers, they make use of the knowledge and expertise of those organizational participants most often in touch with the primary constituents of the school ... Collaboration can generate the social capital necessary for excellent schools as both parents and teachers participate in the problem-solving processes ... Collaboration in an atmosphere of trust holds promise for transforming schools into vibrant learning communities.

(Tschannen-Moran 2001: 327–8)

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