

Professional Development and Awareness

Edited excerpt from Hunter, R. & Scherier, E. A. (1988). Chapter 9 Professional Development and Awareness in The Organic Curriculum. pages 154-169 London, England: Falmer Press.

Within the school there are many groups who come within the sphere of influence of the headteacher or principal. These include cleaning staff, school meals staff, clerical and administrative staff as well as the teaching staff. While they all play an important part in the development of the school, this chapter focuses on the teaching staff, as it is they who have by far the greatest influence on the development of the organic curriculum and indeed are directly charged with implementing it in the school.

The notion of staff development could be taken to imply some weaknesses or lack of expertise in the staff. To start from such a deficit model would not reflect the nature of what staff development is about. All the teachers are highly qualified professional people. They have undergone three or four years of initial teacher training and most of them have at least a first degree. They all have strengths to offer. They also have individual needs which require support. However the school itself has certain needs and requirements. Goals have to be attained, curriculum areas need reviewing and administrative and

organizational tasks have to be efficiently completed to support those educational goals.

A central issue in staff development is that of balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of the school. To maximize learning, these must be in harmony because an emphasis on one or the other will benefit parts of the school at the expense of the whole. While staff development relates to an individual teacher's personal and professional development, it also relates to the development of the staff as a group and through this the development of the school.

However a key role is that of the headteacher. In the development of the school the head has made a major contribution to the establishment of existing parameters with regard to pedagogy and curriculum content over a period of time. It should be noted that part of the role has been defined both explicitly and implicitly to include the development of a 'school approach', a common ideology, an educational philosophy. Working on staff development is an important element in developing an internal consistency within the teaching staff of the school and thus fulfilling part of the head's defined role. Within the United Kingdom's education system the role of the school leader is expected to embrace the notion of teaching along with administration. Although timetabled to teach for only a part of the week, the head is still perceived by the staff to be a teacher. Indeed this is part of the head's own role image. As

such many of the suggestions and contributions the head makes are given value and legitimized by the staff. Yet staff development is not solely the prerogative of the head. Individual teachers will make their own contribution to this general development in the areas where they have particular strengths. With this in mind, we can examine the various strands which such staff development contains.

Group Development

In most schools dealing with children between the ages of seven and twelve, the organization of the teachers and children means that one teacher spends between 95 and 100 per cent of the teaching time working with a single class of children. The opportunity to converse with colleagues about educational issues, practices and problems and events is limited to coffee breaks and lunch breaks. In a school with an open plan design, such teacher-to-teacher interaction during sessions is more common and enables specific problems to be raised or even solved as they arise. The content of such interaction is often concerned with organization of materials, or the appropriate use of space and may involve the discussion of children's work and attitudes. It is usually brief and immediate and while such interaction helps to generate and maintain mutual support it only enhances the work of the school in a

limited way. In a more traditional building such interaction is even more difficult to maintain.

Discussion

It is important that formal opportunities for developing shared ideas and shared goals are built into the system. The purpose of such opportunities will vary, sometimes taking an administrative role as a forum for information, at other times making decisions on certain aspects of the school's work. Similarly, certain classroom styles and strategies can be shared and the strengths of individual teachers can be used to support colleagues in the school. The regularity of staff meetings or discussions is important. They should become a part of the ongoing process of school development. Their frequency depends on particular needs and circumstances.

In one new school these were originally held weekly, at lunchtimes, and lasted approximately an hour. As the school developed and staff became more established such meetings were a little less frequent, about two out of every three weeks. From time to time a longer meeting after school was thought to be more appropriate and, with the agreement of the staff, this was arranged.

Other schools develop their own pattern. It is important that teachers' time is recognized as being of value. If too many meetings are held which are

perceived by the staff to have little relevance, they may distance themselves from the proceedings. To avoid this not only is there a need for a clear programme and purpose but staff need to be involved in setting up the programme. While the head suggests and decides many of the topics to be examined, the staff are regularly asked to put forward ideas for discussion or development. Teachers with responsibility for a particular curriculum area across the school are both expected and expect to chair a session or series of meetings and suggest possible activities. Any aim or purpose in having a meeting should be made explicit so that the staff can judge whether anything has been achieved. The following sections illustrate some of the variety of format and content which is possible.

Often staff meetings are led by the headteacher. It is an opportunity for the head to put forward views regarding the way in which the school should develop. However every endeavour must be made to bring the staff into the discussion. An obvious format for such meetings is for a brief opening statement to be made, and then the topic is open to discussion and comment. The structure of the discussion needs to be given some consideration if the number of teachers who are to make a contribution is to be maximized. Sometimes a full group discussion is appropriate, at other times discussion in smaller groups with feedback to the main group can be more profitable. Sometimes the

aim is to reach a decision, for example on a mathematics scheme or alternative organizational structure. At another time it is to share ideas and to go away and reflect on the points made, teachers absorbing them in different ways into their own teaching. Yet at other times the purpose is to practice and develop specific skills or strategies such as teaching handwriting or using specific mathematical structural apparatus.

A particular example of a topic for discussion in one school was the expectations staff should have of children with regard to the way they address adults and each other. It broadened quite quickly to include the way children conduct themselves about the school, and the influence of the home compared with the school on general behaviour, attitudes, manners and dialect which children exhibit. The outcome was not a dramatic change in policy or in any one teacher's attitude to the issues discussed. What the discussion did was to allow for a restatement of the head's position and the policy which the school has tried to follow over several years. It also allowed for the different approaches which staff had within that policy to be re-examined, restated and compared one with another. The most significant outcome was that it caused some teachers to reflect on and slightly modify their practices. It also reinforced the idea of individual professionals working within agreed goals and practices.

Not all discussions follow that pattern. On another occasion the teacher responsible for language development throughout the school prepared a series of meetings which were designed to review the reading policy which existed and to examine one or two specific suggestions which might be incorporated into the practices of all of the staff. A few days prior to each meeting the head and language coordinator met and discussed the proposed presentation of materials and ideas. Various papers were prepared and on some occasions staff were asked to try particular teaching strategies prior to the next meeting and to report back. In addition information on certain aspects of reading was given out for the staff to take away and use. The first two meetings asked why children should read and how we might encourage children to read. The third meeting focused on recent research into the arguments for and against listening to children read. After this there was a session which specifically looked at assessing the appropriateness of the book a child is reading and strategies for developing a good attitude toward reading. The next session was based on feedback from the whole of the staff and their suggestions provided the points which were to be discussed further. The final session concentrated on book-related activities and class management necessary to incorporate such activities into the general work of the school.

Obviously there were many aspects of reading not examined, but the six sessions did focus teachers' thinking and allow for significant personal and professional development. The common experiences and shared information suggested ideas and practices for staff to discuss informally over the next few weeks and months. They also provided a focus for discussion between the person with responsibility for language across the school and other teachers, positively enhancing their view of her role in the school. Most importantly it provided an opportunity for the language coordinator to develop her skills in managing and presenting such material to her colleagues, allowing her to take responsibility at a different level from that of a class teacher. While each session stood alone, the series was a strong contribution to staff awareness and practices.

Children's Work

A different approach to discussion is the use of children's work as a focus for thinking. Teachers brought samples of work relating to a particular curriculum area to a staff meeting, for example, two pieces of art work, and commented on why they thought they were 'good' and what they thought the child gained from doing the work. This concentrated the staff thinking on to two central elements which underpin the school's philosophy. Firstly, there was the acknowledgement that teachers do make

judgments about children's work and, as that is so, they should be aware of the criteria they use in such situations. Secondly, that while a finished artefact may be pleasing to look at, it made the teachers more aware of the thinking that went into the making of the finished artefact and the benefits that accrued to the child in the process.

On another occasion when examples of children's poetry were used they centred on the way in which children at the younger end of the school produce work of a different sort from that of the older children. The teacher leading the session was also able to raise questions of appropriate starting points for such work, ways of teaching poetry and the nature of poetry.

Other possibilities include sharing different styles of writing, science investigations, and mathematics. In each case practical ideas are pooled and used by individual teachers at some future time in their classroom teaching. More importantly, central issues about what the school asks children to do and how it goes about it are raised. Assumptions are challenged and reasons explored as to the value and importance of each of the activities being used.

In asking teachers to share work with colleagues in this way it is important to recognize that some individuals may feel vulnerable. The purpose of such sharing is to build on what is positive. Although teachers select which particular items to share, they

may still be concerned about the reaction of their colleagues. Any negative reactions can set people back a long way. It is important to assess whether the time is right for a particular school to work in this way as it requires sensitivity and awareness from everyone involved.

Walkabout

Within the busy teaching day it is not always possible to stand back from one's own class and look at what is going on in the school as a whole. In 'closed' classrooms it is very difficult to know what is going on in other rooms, even if they are only next door. Even in more open buildings, assumptions are made that all teachers are aware of the practices of colleagues. This is not necessarily the case.

One way of seeing more of the school is to hold a staff meeting in a different classroom on each occasion. Another useful group staff activity is to walk around the school looking at the various classrooms. Each class teacher may spend a short time telling colleagues how the work on view in the classroom had come about, what was thought to have worked well and not worked quite as well, and how the teacher saw the work being developed further. Sometimes such a walkabout will be focused on particular aspects of the school's work, a particular curriculum area, the use of displays or the use of books. This sharing of experience helps in easing informal discussion over the next few months by

making staff more sensitive to the particular problems, priorities and practices of their colleagues.

The comments made concerning sensitivity and vulnerability when sharing work are multiplied tenfold when teachers share their classrooms with each other. There is a need to choose the time carefully. It is not an easy option and needs developing through a variety of shared activities. If it is approached in a way which causes teachers to feel threatened the opportunity for development will be minimal.

An extension of sharing classrooms out-of-session is for colleagues to see each other working during school time. If the impetus for such developments comes from the teachers, the results will be very positive with a growing awareness of the strengths each teachers can share with colleagues.

Visiting Other Schools

It is important to extend horizons by visiting other schools. A normal arrangement is for teachers to focus on a particular aspect of school activity, for example, the approach to environmental work, mathematics or art. Then arrangements are made for pairs of teachers to visit schools with a reputation for good practice in the chosen area. For organizational reasons these may extend over a week or two. Each teacher may be expected to return to school having fulfilled two simple tasks. Firstly the teacher notes at least three

specific items which are of value in his or her own teaching. These remain confidential to the teacher and are for personal use unless the teacher should choose to share them with particular colleagues. Secondly the teacher may be expected to identify three or four points which are pertinent to the specific issue being examined and which may be useful for the whole school to consider. These points may support or contradict present policy and practice.

The results of such visits are extensive. On returning to school, each pair of teachers, in talking about their experiences, engages other staff in informal discussions. The staff meetings following a series of visits have a new impetus as the teachers explore the relevance of the visits to current school practice. Although there is a specific focus for the visits, there are many wider, incidental benefits when teachers compare and contrast the nature of the school they have visited to that of their own. Finally, there is a boost to morale through the general opportunity to visit another school in school time.

Workshops

A further aspect of staff activities is participation in practical workshops. These either relate to a specific aspect of a curriculum area or focus on particular materials, their organization and application. The role of the general class teacher means, almost by definition, that any one teacher will have areas of

experience which are less developed than others. While individual support from colleagues with specific responsibilities for curriculum areas is valuable in providing materials and ideas, it is also possible to call on each other to provide practical sessions which allow teachers to have first-hand experience of the handling of specific materials and ideas. If the necessary expertise is not present within the staff then colleagues from other schools or local authority advisers may make an appropriate contribution. Such sessions may include clay work, the use of threads and fabrics, mathematical activities, conducting science investigations, participating in improvised drama, practicing handwriting, and indeed may extend to any other aspect of school activity.

The level at which individual teachers meet such activities is related to their previous personal involvement with specific materials. One teacher may be an expert potter, another may have never touched clay. A third may be adept at movement or drama while a fourth may have never been involved with the performance arts. Each person has a different level of experience and competence for a given discipline. Nevertheless the sharing of a particular activity as a group makes such sessions very useful in staff development.

The direct value in participating in these workshops can be seen at several levels, with regard to the professional and the pragmatic aspects of the

teacher providing such practical activities in the classroom. The teacher becomes aware of certain organizational possibilities or sees how the work in the classroom with, for example, clay can be developed further than on previous occasions. New starting points for work may emerge, or solutions to teaching specific skills and techniques may be clarified. The actual handling of materials and the physical involvement reinforce the learning far more strongly than just talking.

Even more important is the enhanced sensitivity of the staff to the influence of the use of materials on children's personal development. This is particularly clear in the arts where the aesthetic and affective aspects of children's growth are so important. By working with their bodies, painting modelling, and using other materials teachers become more aware of the value of such work to the development of the individual. This experience not only enhances the personal skill of the teachers but allows them to experience some of the emotional and intellectual challenges, the problems and possibilities which arise when children are asked to tackle such work. They come to appreciate the continuous interaction between the person handling the materials and the materials themselves, each reacting to, and developing from, the other.

The benefits of such sessions are not only evident through the discussion generated at the time.

The shared experiences create a point of reference for future formal and informal debate and discourse.

Major Initiatives

So far the discussion of group activities has centred on the development of individual teachers alongside particular strands of school activity which are already in progress but require some re-examination.

Sometimes there is a need to make major curriculum or organizational initiatives. The way in which such initiatives are introduced, developed and reinforced is in itself interesting, but with reference to staff development it is sufficient to make three points.

Primarily, an innovation offers teachers with areas of responsibility an opportunity to extend their range of influence and to develop their skills of communicating with colleagues. They also see their actions directly changing practice in the school. In this context the head has to be seen as being in total support of the curriculum coordinators. Secondly, as the items are major departures from existing practice and not simply developments of old practice, it encourages a fresher level of discussion since nearly all of the staff feel that they are at a similar point in their development. Thirdly, and most obviously, since the ideas and practices are new, all of the staff increase their awareness of the content and pedagogy relating to the areas under discussion.

Innovation is relatively easy to implement but the maintenance and development of an innovation require continuing effort over a period of time. If such major initiatives are to take root, it is necessary for the teacher with responsibility for a particular curriculum area and the head or appropriate senior colleague to liaise very closely at every stage in identifying the area for development, in setting the scene and preparing the way in implementing the innovation, and in developing this implementation over the next few years. It is not only in the interest of the school and the headteacher, but also of the curriculum coordinator, that the initiative should be successful.

From the Group to the Individual

Staff meetings and group activities act as a focus for re-examining practices in the school as a whole. However, as schools develop over several years and as children develop at different rates, so do teachers. Some staff take on ideas quickly, experiment, take initiatives and involve themselves in broader issues by attending courses, or attempt to influence certain aspects of the school's work. Other teachers are more deliberate or less inclined to change practices which they have adhered to for several, or even many, years. All teachers have their own particular areas of expertise and interest. Members of staff bring different professional perspectives, different personal

backgrounds and specific sets of hopes and aspirations for themselves and their children. Therefore it is important that opportunities for discussion and development are made available at an individual level as well as at a group level. In the smaller school, a key person in this development will be the headteacher. However in many instances it may be a colleague who fulfils this role of support and encouragement.

The headteacher's role is, of necessity, partly administrative, but it is mainly one of a headteacher, a colleague with some experience and expertise who not only offers support but is invited by the staff to support them in their work in the classroom. While the head may often take the lead it is important that initiatives come from teachers regarding possible areas of interest and development. The teacher's perspective is as valid as the head's. Sometimes the head or other colleague is a listener, someone on whom the teacher can test and try out ideas. At other times the head works alongside a particular teacher, sees the issues at first hand, and provides a different perspective. This means offering support and encouragement as well as suggesting alternative approaches. While this immediate support is of some help to the teacher, the shared experience provides material for further discussion and analysis of content and style.

Specific Children

Discussion with individual teachers may focus on particular children in their classes. This may lead to the development of specific programmes of work or a detailed analysis of individual behaviour patterns. As each child presents a unique set of experiences and attitudes, relationships and behaviour patterns, it would not be practical to describe every situation but an example may demonstrate some underlying ideas.

On one occasion, the recurrence of behaviour problems with a twelve year-old boy led to a three-way case conference involving teacher, headteacher and educational psychologist. This was quickly followed by a further meeting which included the child's parents and the child. The outcome was a simple but specific behavioural programme, and, as it turned out, there was a marked improvement in the boy's behaviour over the next two months which was maintained until the boy left the school some eight months later.

The significance for staff development was on several levels. Firstly, and obviously, the teacher was involved from the beginning in discussion with the head and outside agencies. Secondly, the teacher was faced with a challenge in attempting a new idea which was to apply to that particular child in her classroom. The feedback was positive and this enhanced the teacher's standing with the child and class, but it also influenced the teacher's view of the educational

psychologist. Finally, the head's role had been one of mediator, trying to move the teacher towards the idea of outside advice, the child towards an improved self-image and the psychologist to an awareness of the delicacy of the classroom situation compared with the clinical situation.

Curriculum Issues

Sometimes the cooperation between head and individual teacher is centred on curriculum matters. Help in providing materials, analyzing classroom organization, and reviewing curriculum content will take place on many occasions, during and after teaching sessions. Sometimes the issues will be small-scale and dealt with in a few minutes. At other times larger issues demand a more complex programme of support.

An example of specific curriculum work between the head and a teacher occurred in the field of movement. A teacher who was fairly new to a school and who had an interest in movement work was concerned about the content and style of her teaching as it was not an area in which she felt confident or had had much experience. It seemed important that practical support was provided alongside any theoretical discussion. It was agreed that each week the head would come into the class and for several sessions take the children for movement. This was to avoid the teacher being immediately put in a sensitive and potentially

vulnerable position. During the sessions and afterwards, the head and teacher discussed the content, the various approaches and the balance of activities. The head explained why he was trying certain ideas, where there had been a digression and why he had chosen certain alternatives rather than others. Alongside this the teacher was provided with various articles and readings which not only offered practical ideas but also gave a theoretical basis for the nature of the work being undertaken. Gradually the emphasis was changed. The teacher began to take more of the lessons and the discussions centred more on raising her critical awareness of her own work. This was the first step. It is important that the head return to that teacher and re-inforce the ideas which have been planted and encourage their further germination and growth. The planting of an idea is not difficult; the continuing nurturing and development are if the plant is to blossom.

It is not only the head who can operate in this role as it is often other teachers who have strengths to offer. The head's task is to create a climate where colleagues who feel they can benefit from mutual activity know they will receive a sympathetic response to their proposals. On occasions teachers may be freed from their teaching commitment to work alongside colleagues in specific curriculum areas such as drama, art, and mathematics. Here they use their expertise to help extend the work of colleagues. This

relates particularly to curriculum coordinators who can negotiate with colleagues to identify fruitful areas for such work. This mutual activity is much more likely to succeed when suggested by the teachers involved than when imposed.

It is important to recognize that any benefits are two-way with the more experienced teacher or headteacher learning as much and growing as much as the class teacher who originally wanted the support. The growth is through the sharing and solution of issues of mutual interest, not the provision of simplistic answers.

Forecasts, Plans and Records

Within different schools the expectation varies with regard to forecasts, plans and record-keeping which have to be submitted to senior colleagues. Whatever that expectation is, it should provide a further opportunity for the professional development of the teachers involved.

While some schools do not ask teachers to submit a written forecast or plan of the following term's work, any proposed visits or major centres of interest are discussed with the head. Here is another opportunity for suggesting possibilities and sharing ideas. For example, if a teacher is planning a visit to a Norman castle, she may feel confident in most areas of the curriculum. The head will discuss the general areas to be explored and may suggest support materials or new avenues for exploration. The teacher

may not be sure of how to develop the scientific aspects of the work. At this point reference may be made to the colleague with responsibility for science. Similarly, teachers who are confident and competent in scientific aspects of a topic or study may call upon the person with responsibility for other areas of the curriculum where they would appreciate some advice.

In many schools teachers are asked to provide a written summary of the work they have been doing with their children. Sometimes this is a weekly or fortnightly record. In other schools it is required each half term. The timing is something which each school has to decide but there are certain principles which need to be recognized if such records are to have value for the teacher who writes them. Primarily, it is essential that the teacher has clear indications that it is of value to the reader. The head must respond to any requests for advice or points of concern made by the teacher in the record. Perhaps even more significantly, the head must acknowledge the quality of work outlined in the record and make positive responses to the teacher's endeavours.

Whilst some of the records of individual work which must be maintained are not directly relevant to this discussion of staff development, others are. An integral part of the summary of work discussed above will make reference to particular children as well to as specific teaching points or curriculum content. The reflection and appraisal by the teacher of what is

being achieved away from the immediacy of the day-to-day teaching pressures are in themselves important for professional development. They may also be picked up by the head and provide starting points for discussion.

Individual Review

While there will be several times during the year when individual teachers and the head discuss matters in private, there is also the need for more formal meetings between the head and the teacher when a review of the teacher's role in the school can take place. While they have a recognized format, such meetings remain informal in nature, being a discussion of mutual value. The agenda is not generated because of a particular problem or difficulty with the teacher's work.

It is important that together the head and teacher review the work of the class for which the teacher has responsibility. This will cover curriculum content, teaching style, children's behaviour as well as the teacher's general feelings about how the work has developed. Closely related to this are the teacher's feelings about the next school year. For instance, which age of children the teacher would prefer to teach is of particular importance to the head and the teacher.

At this point the discussion often moves on to curriculum areas which the teacher would like to develop. Possibilities for in-service courses will be

considered. Of course the question of attending courses occurs throughout the school year as do other issues, but this specific opportunity to review the situation means that longer-term planning can occur.

Since most of the staff make some extra-curricular contribution, for example to music groups, sports teams, book or chess clubs, this is reviewed. As such contributions are voluntary, the teachers can determine which, if any, they wish to maintain. Teachers sometimes welcome the opportunity to change the nature of the activity or, indeed, to be no longer responsible for it.

The head and teacher will also review the school-wide curriculum area(s) for which the teacher is responsible. They look at any developments which have taken place over the past year including specific initiatives made by the teacher in the relevant areas. In addition the individual teacher specifies particular targets for the forthcoming year. These may be very short practical tasks or long-term school-wide developments. While they are checked with the head, and some negotiations may be necessary, they will substantially be the targets set by the coordinator. The review becomes an opportunity to decide how that teacher's energies may extend and enhance those areas of responsibility in the next year including the practicalities and possibilities of specialist teaching. Finally, there is an opportunity to review the teacher's

hopes and aspirations and the ways in which the school can support any future career plans.

This thorough review of the teacher's contribution to the life of the school demands much ground work and adequate time, a series of meetings often being necessary to cover the areas outlined. The result is of benefit to the teachers in providing acknowledgement of the important contribution they make as well as their importance as people working within the school. It is also of benefit to the school in that medium-term planning is informed by a mutually agreed prospectus.

Informal Influences

Although the preceding comments have focused upon the more formal aspects of staff development there are many informal influences implicit in what has been said, in particular the general relationships which need to be established among the various members of the teaching staff. At all levels within the school, it is important to be sensitive to and aware of colleagues as people with their own perceptions, feelings and priorities. It is important to show an interest in their priorities even if these may not present themselves as being particularly relevant to the educational aspects of the schools development.

As has already been mentioned, the staffroom itself, during morning and afternoon breaks, before and after school, and at lunchtime allows for useful discussion and debate. The opportunity to converse

with colleagues in this way not only provides mutual support but offers refreshment and relaxation.

In the staffroom there is a selection of reference material, recent publications, reports and teacher's manuals which are readily available. They are added to regularly and provide a source of information and ideas as part of the informal influences on staff development.

There are several times during the year when a school function means staff working during the early evening, for example at parents' interviews and musical concerts. These are usually followed by the staff meeting together socially and on such occasions the discussion usually turns to some aspect of school activity or development.

Similarly residential visits with children mean that in the late evening opportunities for social interaction arise. Here again staff development occurs within an informal setting. There are several times when colleagues explore, informally and at length, issues related to the school situation. These and similar opportunities lubricate the educational and professional interaction which is necessary among colleagues.

Induction of New Staff

So far the way in which the staff, and therefore the school, develop has been concerned with an ongoing situation, with people already established within the

school. It is important to look at the way in which new members of staff are introduced to the school.

Immediately following appointment the new teacher spends some time in discussion with the head. In particular the head reiterates many general points which have already occurred both before and during interviews with regard to the general ethos of the school, and they discuss any anxieties and concerns which are currently on the teacher's mind. More specifically information is given regarding procedures, routines, ordering of stock, as well as information about the particular children whom the teacher will be teaching. They also spend some time discussing teacher expectations and sources of help and support. The teacher receives a full set of curriculum guidelines which are specific to the school. Prior to taking up the appointment at least two further visits will be made to the school by the new teacher. On these occasions the teacher makes further progress in becoming familiar with the building, discussing yet again the points raised earlier, and raising any new queries. At this stage a rapport between the new teacher and established colleagues begins to develop.

The teacher takes on a certain workload immediately on appointment, but if the post includes some curriculum responsibility the timetable for gradually taking over that task will have already been negotiated between the head and the teacher. In the

initial few months the main task is to settle in as a class teacher and establish teaching credibility with colleagues and children. At the same time the teacher is assessing the current situation regarding any specific area of school-wide curriculum responsibility he or she may have. It is only after that assessment that thoughts can turn to changes or new initiatives.

A specific member of staff works with the new teacher to offer advice on school policy and practice. During the first few months the head and deputy head acknowledge the worthwhile contributions already being made to the school by the newcomer. Careful monitoring will attempt to ensure that any problems or difficulties, in whatever area, are recognized and dealt with at an early stage.

If a teacher is entering a first teaching post there will be a need for other, more detailed, support strategies and a different rate of taking responsibility. Before too long, if the usual pattern is followed, the new teacher is no longer that, but an established member of staff with unique strengths and weaknesses making a contribution to the life of the school.

Staff Development and the Process of Change

Staff development is the major, most significant, aspect of the headteacher's role since it is only through the staff that children's development and growth can occur. For a school to be alive to the continuous change within which it exists, the teachers must remain aware and informed. There is a need for

long and short-term goals, for broad aims and initiatives as well as day-to-day management. The main focus of this chapter has been on the long-range perspective. Yet the short-term expedient action, the day-to-day activity, must be informed by the principles upon which the whole school operates. These principles are exemplified through the acknowledgement of staff development, indeed school development, as being about relationships and the recognition of each individual as having something of value to offer.

The general model of management which operates within the school should be one that is organic, changing with the needs of individuals and the needs of the school. Schools are about people and if people are to be helped to grow they need the appropriate setting in which to feel they can make a contribution to the changes that occur.

The main task of the head, and indeed of other members of staff, in helping staff development is one of talking and listening. In this way everyone will become more aware of the individual perspectives and priorities held within the school. In turn, and in time, will come decisions and policies which should contribute to a more efficient learning situation. In schools words are the main materials which we use. They are transient, constantly changing, constantly being refined. They lubricate the relationships among all of the participants in the learning process. They are

used to stimulate ideas, to press awkward questions, to consider fundamental moral, political and educational issues. They should be used to create a setting within which the staff develop themselves.

Within what is a human and personal setting there are still structured positions, postholder or curriculum coordinator, and deputy head as well as the headteacher. These positions confer prestige and status on the holders, particularly if the head is seen to support them in their work with colleagues. They have clear job specifications and each member of staff is aware of the responsibilities of colleagues. If the school is in good organizational health it not only will run smoothly and achieve the tasks it sets itself, but will be strong enough to continually and critically review its performance.

Part of the development arising from that self-evaluation will be the satisfaction of some of the needs of the professional teacher which have been referred to earlier. These include support, praise and encouragement for each other, involvement in the overall planning of school strategies and policies, clear responsibility with the authority to implement new ideas, and the continuous development of professional awareness through extending individual experience and sharing expertise.

The aims of staff development are identical with the aims of child development. They are not based on making good a deficiency. On the contrary,

staff should be excited by the professional setting within which they operate, developing a confidence in their relationships with each other, with outside agencies and with the children. They should, and do, take responsibility for organizing their own professional learning and development. It is the role of the headteacher to act as a catalyst for this to take place through recognition of good practice, encouragement of better practice and expectation of best practice from children and staff alike.