

Teacher teamwork - supportive cultures and coercive policies?

Franziska Vogt
Lancaster University

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Exeter, England, 12-14 September 2002.

Abstract

Within school improvement strategies, teachers' teamwork is seen as crucial: policy changes seek to promote a new understanding of teachers working together in developing their school as an organisation, in processes of quality management such as peer observation, as well as teamwork in forms such as joint planning. New managerial approaches are calling for a culture change towards teamwork; recent reforms in education in many European countries are based on a new managerial ideology. This paper draws on research on the enactment of new managerial policies in primary schools in England and Switzerland, with a particular focus on teachers' teamwork. The research involved ethnographic fieldwork in a smaller and larger primary school in each country, as well as the analysis of relevant education policy. The findings from the four case studies allow contextualising new managerial policies in primary schools, revealing their inherent systemic contradictions and tensions in relation to teamwork. Educational reform in both countries resulted in teachers finding themselves negotiating contradictory pressures, ranging from experiences of culture changes towards more teamwork and an organisational culture supportive for school development, to increased competitiveness through policies of teacher performance management, and limited scope for individual professional approaches in teaching due to requirements such as joint planning within the school. Differences between England and Switzerland are examined in relation to differences in the emphasis of reform as well as traditions of teachers' professionalism and accountability.

Introduction

Teamwork can be defined as a group of people interacting and co-operating in a work-related action. It involves hands-on working together, as well as processes of organisational planning, decision-making and development. In the case of teachers, the core activity of teaching is largely done in isolation from other teachers; however, teacher teamwork has received increasing attention by researchers and policy-makers as a way of school improvement. It is, however, not evident from research literature exactly *what* comprises teachers' teamwork: teachers' teamwork could range from collegial interactions as researched by Zahorik, to the concept of collaborative cultures to a narrow definition of teamwork as related to teaching and the work in the classroom. In this paper I will examine practices of teacher teamwork, which are related to teaching in an immediate way, such as planning together. I wish to emphasise however, that this kind of teamwork should not be seen as the only relevant way of teachers working together and that teachers working together in running and developing the school as

well as more informal aspects of an organisational culture conducive to teamwork are highly relevant.

Much research into teachers' teamwork is based on an instrumental view of teachers working together. Such teamwork includes sharing material, giving advice, preparing lessons jointly or even team teaching - activities instrumental to teaching pupils, aimed at improving teacher effectiveness. A fundamental question of teacher teamwork underpins the issues discussed: how does teamwork contribute to the work of teaching and to school improvement - how does it work?

I suggest distinguishing two different conceptualisations of teacher teamwork. Although many researchers on teamwork use both strands of argument within their work, the two conceptualisations define the link between teamwork and school improvement in a different way. The first strand conceptualises teamwork as instrumental for teaching quality. Some state a positive correlation - good schools also have more teacher teamwork. Others define the condition and types of teamwork which are seen as improving teaching, for example stating that it needs to be related to teaching, should include reflectiveness or encourages experimentation. A second strand of argument conceptualises teamwork as contributing to school improvement because teamwork builds up a positive organisational culture, which then forms the basis of school improvement understood as a process of organisational development. 'Culture' is often used to conceptualise the way teamwork works, so for example:

The context called for here, is one that embodies a particular culture of teaching, a particular set of working relationships amongst teachers and their colleagues which bind them together in a supportive, inquiring community, committed to common goals and continuous improvement.

Many researchers promoting teacher teamwork also guard against the assumption that teamwork *automatically* leads to school improvement. There is also some scepticism as to what extent the set-up of teaching is conducive to teamwork: "Teachers are now being pressed, invited and cajoled into ventures in 'collaboration', but the organization of their daily work often gives them scant reason for doing so".

Teamwork is also integral to new managerialism and became a focus of management training and literature in the 1980's and 1990's. Teamwork is recognised as key to tackling a number of different management issues: teamwork has connotations of "mutual support, conviviality, comradeship ... linked with our affiliation motive", which can positively affect job satisfaction and employee retention; teamwork substitutes hierarchic management with social control and peer pressure, which is part of the culture change envisaged within new managerial ideology; finally, teamwork can lead to better decision making and problem solving because of sharing of skills.

Recent policy changes in education in England and Switzerland are underpinned by concerns for a new understanding of teachers' work and teamwork. In England, joint-planning and curriculum co-ordination was encouraged with the introduction of the National Curriculum and through inspections; in-service teacher training includes regular school based training. In Switzerland, school based in-service teacher training has also been introduced and teamwork has been heavily promoted. New managerialism can, however, give a paradoxical message about teamwork, as with the introduction of *individual* performance related pay schemes or the emphasis on managerial leadership, which strengthens hierarchies and direct control.

This paper is based on findings from my research project 'Contextualising new managerialism in primary schools in England and Switzerland: teachers' perceptions and experiences of policy change, organisational culture and teamwork'. The research design is a multi case study, involving four state primary schools. In both countries, a school with around hundred pupils and a school with 250 to 300 pupils have been selected. The schools are referred to as **EI** for English large, **Es** for English small, **SI** for Swiss large and **Ss** for Swiss small. All names have been changed to pseudonyms.

An ethnographic research strategy has been employed in order to capture the micro level of policy change in teachers' daily practices and to explore how organisational culture of a particular school and the traditions of an education system and its professional culture amongst teachers affect the enactment of new managerial policies . Within the ethnographic research strategy methods employed include observation, semi-structured interviews (tape-recorded and transcribed as well as note taking and written up as fieldnotes) and the analysis of documents of the schools (i. e. staff meeting minutes, staff handbook) and policy documents. Observation included activities of teachers working together in staff meetings, planning meetings, and school based professional development as well as teamwork and socialising during breaks, after school and at social events.

I will first discuss the different understandings of teamwork in education policy in Switzerland and England. Secondly, the practice of joint planning in the large English sample school is analysed in more detail. Third, the practices of optional joint planning in Switzerland are described and forth, alternatives and limits of teamwork as joint planning are highlighted.

Teamwork in education policy in Switzerland and England

Teamwork is clearly the buzzword of current new managerial reform in education in Switzerland. In contrast, education reforms in England place less emphasis on teamwork in relation to schools. The differences in conceptualising teacher teamwork within new managerial reforms in Switzerland and England are explored.

High emphasis on teamwork in Swiss new managerial reform

Teamwork is high on the agenda for educational reform in the Canton of Luzern:

Thesis 2: teamwork and school climate. The teachers of a school are a team and meet the task of education together. The parents are involved in the work and the governing body provides support. All carry a part of the responsibility within this community of teaching and learning and consequently, some of the load is taken off the individuals ... The team of teachers, the pupils, the headteacher as well as parents and governing bodies take on jointly the responsibility for their school. The team of teachers sets the pedagogical vision and focus. It also makes agreements on school organisation (distribution of posts, additional duties etc) ... The teachers open up their classroom and support each other ... School development happens essentially in the school teams .

Teamwork is understood first of all as the teamwork amongst teachers of a school, who form 'the team'. The team of teachers is conceptualised as powerful in making decisions about the school - decisions, which in England would be entirely in the realm of headteachers. Teamwork of teachers is embedded in a discourse of school development, emphasising the need to break up teacher isolation.

Within the launching of new managerial reforms in the in the Canton of Luzern one of the policy documents was devoted to teamwork . The aim of this publication was to encourage teachers to engage in teamwork, to reflect on the aims and objectives of teamwork and to become aware of the resistance surrounding teamwork . The policy document discusses aspects of successful teamwork taken from social psychology and communication theory. It emphasises the need for a "continuous process, a shared and accepted task, defined leadership, sensible ways of dealing with resistance and an external expert view" . Many positive effects are attributed to teamwork:

A supportive team culture at work: maintains health, motivation and performance, allows stress reduction ... provides a professional network, brings ideas and synergies, builds trust, increases school effectiveness, helps schools to become more innovative and lively, creates free space within and strengths towards the outside, achieves higher satisfaction and better climate of pupils .

Teamwork for school effectiveness

The new managerial reforms in Switzerland are embedded in a discourse of school development and effectiveness, which underlines the importance not only of the individual teachers' teaching but the whole school culture:

Recent educational research shows that pupils' learning achievement and well-being is not only influenced by the teaching behaviour of the individual teacher, but also by the quality of school management and school culture .

There are many examples of research explaining 'good schools' with 'good teamwork' as a contributing factor to school success; amongst recent Swiss and German publications . The work of Dalin has been widely read in Switzerland.

The Canton of Luzern sought a scientific evaluation of the reforms; one of the output criteria was pupils' satisfaction. The researchers from the University of Zürich presented preliminary findings in 2001, arguing that pupils of well managed schools, where teachers work together, are found to be more happy with their school . The emphasis on school culture in the evaluation is mirrored in a general difference between German speaking and English speaking concepts of school development. English speaking research tends to focus more on pupils' learning and test performance as the measurement of success of school development, whereas the German speaking approach evaluates the improvement of the structure and culture of the school as organisation .

Systemic view of organisational development

The reform in the Canton of Luzern is embedded in a systemic understanding of organisations and organisational development, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

The project was understood not as a purely technical-structural process, but as a cultural-mental development, which would only have a chance to succeed politically and pedagogically with substantial communication work. Finally we wanted to learn from our experiences with projects as well as from insights of management theory and organisational development .

Living systems - whether persons or organisations - can regulate themselves: they are capable of feeding back information and energies in such ways that they survive. Without such feedback processes the self-organisation of school ... would not be possible. It is no coincidence that with the strengthening of the capacities of schools to be self-steering, the concept of feedback culture also becomes more important. With the partial autonomy of schools their need for feedback increases .

Such arguments are derived from a wide body of literature, applying systems theory, including autopoiesis of 'living systems' to organisations and to schools . Another strand of the emphasis on organisational development takes a more psychological look at group processes, communication and conflict solving . Such discourse is often employed in the policy documents of the reform in the Canton of Luzern:

Feedback culture (trust) ... the basis is open communication, a culture of trust, which builds up closeness and makes distances predictable. Talking is important, keeping talking. Conflicts are also part of it: They are resolved fairly and methods for conflict resolution are part of training. At the school, well being and trust are pre-conditions for teaching and learning ... Feedback is an important tool to stay in touch with each other, whether closely or distantly. In other social professions, feedback is ... part of professionalism: supervision, intervision, peer observation or coaching are in some sense feedback processes. School culture has to draw on feedback culture .

Teamwork as sharing 'best practice' to 'raise standards' in England

Teamwork is less prominent in English education reform. Teamwork amongst teachers is mostly linked to sharing best practice. Enhancing professional development is framed as an approach to raise educational standards:

Successful schools are always outward facing and committed to sharing best practice and seeking innovative thinking wherever they can find it. This vital process of networking and sharing knowledge is at the heart of teachers' professionalism because it involves both learning from what works and contributing to the pool of professional knowledge. We will continue to emphasise the value that can come from teachers learning from each other - through observing lessons, feedback, coaching and mentoring .

We have moved a long way from a system in which each school was left to fend for itself, to one in which networks of schools open to all, constantly learn from each other. Many of the programmes we have already developed, such as Beacon and specialist schools and Excellence in Cities, enable schools to share best practice and learn from each other .

The above statements identify teamwork amongst schools and teachers as the strategy to share best practice. Teamwork is however embedded in a system of competitiveness, where 'good' schools teach 'bad' schools how to succeed, schools with Beacon school status are positioned to teach others.

Joint planning as a coercive school policy

Although English new managerial reform did not emphasise teacher teamwork to the same extent as the Swiss reform, joint planning as one form of teacher teamwork is supported in policy documents and through inspection practices:

Innovative schools have already reorganised their timetable so that groups of teachers with a shared professional interest can plan and prepare together .

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) inspections have encouraged the implementation of joint planning schemes . At the large English school, an OFSTED report criticising the school for the lack of joint planning led to the implementation of the current system:

The teachers do not yet work well together as a team in Key Stage 2 and there is too little joint planning and assessment work apart from in the reception class (field document inspection report, El, 1997)

Planning meetings

I observed several phase group planning meetings at the large English school. The meetings are facilitated by a member of the senior management team, who also teaches a class in that Key Stage. Planning meetings are timetabled weekly as part of 'directed time', which means that the headteacher established phase group planning meetings as compulsory. The following excerpt gives an indication of joint planning in one of the phase groups:

Everybody has a copy of the objectives and a form for schemes of work. Bethan (deputy headteacher) asks whether she should take the notes, the others agree ... Kyra on several occasions makes a contribution, but her points are not taken on ... Bethan proposes to take an Oscar Wilde text, Kyra proposes another one, Bethan wants to stick to hers and says: you take what you want from Oscar Wilde and then they write a story with a moral. Megan wants them to write a story with an environmental moral, as she is discussing the rainforest now, but because Bethan likes to take the other Oscar Wilde story, she would need a moral with love. Although that seems not to fit as well, she keeps it on. Megan suggests comparing a fictional text with a historic text, Kyra proposes a historic text, again, and Bethan picks another one from the book ... While they are planning, Bethan refers to in-words, saying that children have to investigate the words, so they should put down "investigate" as much as they could, because that is seen as important. Towards the end she emphasises and says: please, no tasks on the sheets, but aims and objectives, otherwise I will get them back (from whom? the headteacher?) (fieldnotes, El, Jan00).

Bethan's remark at the end of the above excerpt is an example of the importance given to plans and schemes of work and the exact use of the forms and the right terminology. Bethan, the deputy headteacher, is shaping the planning in the year group to a great extent: as she likes a certain passage, she insists on taking that passage. Two of the three year groups at the school are run in such a way that suggestions from senior management members are more likely to be implemented than those of other teachers. In Kathryn's group, other teachers are more active in making suggestions. Kyra took part in that group as well and unlike the pattern identified above, her suggestions are accepted:

The meeting starts at about 14.20, the teachers bring their classes in the hall, put the video on ... they are sitting at the back and prepare their planning ... Kyra makes a suggestion to make shadow puppets in Art and Design and Technology, which are taken on ... In the middle of the meeting, Kathryn stretches and asks about how people are going to be for tomorrow (advisors' visit), at what they will be observed and is critical about many things. It seems to be a chance to exchange feelings, to have a moan (fieldnotes, El, May00).

A comparison of the two planning meetings reveals how senior management members position themselves differently within the power structure of the school. Bethan positions herself in an in-between position through the remark about the right terminology so that 'she does not get them back'. Being the deputy headteacher and largely shaping the planning, she does not take on any of Kyra's suggestions but places herself in a position of authority and power; on the other hand, she refers to the power located in the hierarchy above her, as they need to be convinced by the right use of the forms and terminology. Kathryn positions herself as equally subjected to problems her colleagues face, such as being visited by the advisors. In her group, decisions about teaching are reached in a consensus of all the teachers, all teachers in the group are taking an active role. The different approaches to teamwork within the two joint planning groups show the importance of the power relationships within the school.

Teachers' responses to the policy of joint planning

Opinions about joint planning vary from the very positive through to the very negative. Teachers' responses to the policy of joint planning give some indication of teachers' agency in enacting and interpreting new managerial policies at school level. Although teachers are actively shaping the enactment of policies, there are limits to their agency in the interpretation of policies. Four responses to the policy of joint planning at that large English school can be identified: endorsement, self-regulation, rebellion and disengagement.

Showing their endorsement of the policy, some teachers emphasise the gains of joint planning in coping with the workload of planning:

After the meeting (joint planning meeting Key Stage 1), Val and Ann (phase group leader) are saying to me that teamwork has definitely increased Ann: the workload is huge and you can only manage by exchanging materials. We dish the tasks out, everybody is looking for material and instead of copying it only for yourself, you give it to your colleagues as well, so in the morning, things lie on your chair (fieldnotes, El, June00).

In contrast to this positive view of the efficiency of joint planning, there are also critical voices:

Mary thinks that teamwork has been affected by the changes ... The work is now much more planned and one can not do things differently or spend more time on something, or develop things in a particular way. These planning meetings are led by a member of the senior management and it becomes clear that teachers could not do different things ... as they don't say, 'if you want to bend the topic a little bit in that direction that is fine' (fieldnotes, El, Jan00).

Mary has developed a mode of self-regulation: she has taken the hint that adapting a topic is not approved and restrains herself from making her own suggestions.

Some teachers take a rebellious stance, making suggestions of their own or do not follow the plans closely. Kathleen thinks that she will have to adapt the lessons for her class:

Kathleen finds it very difficult with Ann (phase group leader), because she and Ann have such different approaches. The way she works is so completely different, she would start with some art activity and that would give her the ideas ... Kathleen maintains that that is the way she and also Mary and others, were trained to work and that is how she works (fieldnotes, El, May00).

Kathleen seeks to maintain her professional autonomy - referring to her training and experience on which her approach is based. While policy change has led to more teamwork, teachers also lost some of their professional autonomy. Kathleen faces a lot of pressure from the headteacher to adhere to joint planning as the headteacher arranged for her to have an additional planning meeting with the phase group leader. The headteacher introduced the additional planning times as a means to either bring her in line or to have evidence of having supported her sufficiently before she starts a disciplinary procedure against her.

Most teachers at the school responded with disengagement. The policy of joint planning at the school resulted in some teachers reducing their engagement and input in the planning:

Kathryn: I am a team leader and I find it difficult that some people, not everyone, seem to expect that you will do certain things for them ... They ... expect that you give it to them on a plate. I know that they are doing that in Key Stage 1, they get it served on a plate ... it is a case of at first not liking it too much maybe (the prescriptive approach of some team leaders), but then (she leans back, enacting the laid back attitude) they say 'give it to me then, I am not doing anything' (fieldnotes, E1, June00).

Whereas joint planning can help to cope with the workload, it has an impact on teachers' professional autonomy. Teachers are less autonomous in pursuing teaching activities they find important and the enforcement of joint planning led by a member of the senior management team makes it difficult for teachers to introduce their own views. Joint planning at the large English school is a highly coercive policy, leaving little room for individual interpretations of teaching. Some teachers endorse the practice, others react with rebellion or self-regulation, whilst the majority respond with disengagement. The example indicates the difficulties of using teamwork as a means for school development; in this case, joint planning has resulted in reduced commitment and de-professionalisation at the level of teachers' work.

At the large English school, the team atmosphere is negative despite teachers practising regular teamwork in joint planning and sharing materials. This finding challenges the assumption that good teamwork in planning fosters good team culture. Joint planning is seen as a way to overcome teacher isolation and privatism. Such an argument fails to take the power relationships into account and possibly misinterprets teachers' resistance to joint planning: teachers distancing themselves from the policy are not necessarily seeking to protect privatism, but have a different view of the teaching process.

Joint planning is an enactment of new managerial policies, driven by forces of external accountability, such as central government, OFSTED inspections and the National Curriculum, which are perceived as supporting standardised teaching across year groups. The policy is implemented through the introduction of systems of accountability such as the planning sheets, which the headteacher collects and controls. Joint planning could be seen as "something like incorporation". The policy of joint planning is in this case not the result of a process of organisational development but rather has been introduced top down, by the headteacher responding to wider policy changes. The power of policy changes has led to a coercive teamwork in this school which illustrates elements of what Hargreaves termed "contrived collegiality". Joint planning is a highly coercive strategy, as it is endorsed by the system, with general legislation (directed time) and practices of inspection (OFSTED report), demanded and controlled by persons in positions of power (headteacher and senior management), builds on defined technology (planning sheets) and is sponsored by an ideology (working together is good).

Joint planning as an option of individual style and preference

Turning to Swiss schools differences between the Swiss and English interpretations of teamwork and of professional autonomy become apparent. Some teachers at the large Swiss school engage in joint planning, which depends largely on their initiative. It is also quite common that teachers are planning together with colleagues working at other schools.

Joint planning as an option

Teachers in Switzerland emphasise the importance of the relationship with colleagues as a basis of planning together. In their view, a similar approach to teaching, good communication or even friendship contributes to good teamwork:

Therese: What I found in the seven years [at the school] now, it matters a lot, at least to me, who the other person is ... Up until now it was more a superficial teamwork, based on minimal consultation ... In the first two years, I exchanged work sheets with one colleague; we just put work sheets in each other's pigeonholes ... [later] I noticed that it did not work on the interpersonal level ... There was maybe a kind of competition between us, or it was as if communication did not work ... And now, this year ... I got a new colleague, who came new to the school ... we have planned the whole year together ... and we have a similar understanding of teamwork, it is not very intensive in terms of time, but it works on the human level. We share similar values, how to interact with the pupils, what to demand of the pupils, just, similar educational principles ... we work together for year 5 and he works with an external colleague, from his former school, preparing year 4 together (interview transcript, trans. FV, SI).

Joint planning is more intensive where teachers choose to work together and can be reduced to superficial exchanges where that shared understanding is lacking. Swiss teachers might plan with colleagues at the school or with colleagues teaching somewhere else and they choose with whom they would like to work. The possibilities of a variety of degrees of teamwork allow the teachers to negotiate their working relationships without openly stating differences.

Swiss teachers also plan jointly with colleagues from other schools, based on their personal networks. Stefan began planning with colleagues working at other schools, but intends to work together more within the school:

Stefan: In terms of teamwork, I started with colleagues I knew from teacher training college who work at different schools, but it has now developed here a bit and next year there will be more teamwork here ... there are experienced people here and it is of course great when you have somebody at your school with whom you can work together (interview transcript, trans. FV, SI).

Policy makers promoting teamwork emphasise teamwork within the same school. Teamwork across schools, based on personal contacts is not mentioned in the policy documents. In England, a reduction of other networking activities between schools has been noted as the result of educational reforms in schools, because of the induced climate of competition between schools in a quasi-market system . Teachers, however, appreciate the opportunities to exchange ideas with teachers from other schools, which was found in the Swiss fieldwork as well as in research in England and the United States .

The option of regular and close joint planning practices amongst teachers from different schools is an indication of a different understanding of teachers' roles in relation to the whole school: the teaching of the curriculum traditionally follows the Cantonal guidelines and is seen as the sole responsibility of the individual class teacher; schools are not in competition with each other, but part of an overall structure of public service state education. The reforms include initiatives to change this tradition, but have not changed the culture yet, as will be shown below.

Phase group meetings at the large Swiss school

The new Education Act of the Canton of Luzern states that teachers should also be guided by agreements within the schools, such as the mission statement and service level agreement as well as the Cantonal Curriculum . The policy change has not resulted in a culture change yet and as there is less pressure of standardisation as compared to England, schools have not introduced coercive joint planning policies as found at the large English school.

There are attempts to move towards phase group planning at the large Swiss school. In the planning of team meetings, time is allocated for teachers working together on teaching matters. "Time for teachers to meet and reflect during the school day is essential to creating strong professional communities" . Also Little states how the opportunity to work together on matters close to the classroom is crucial: "bureaucratic conditions such as schedules, staff assignments and access to resources may or may not be conducive to shared work among teachers" . The headteacher at the large Swiss school introduced five phase group meetings per year as part of directed time:

Christoph: Phase groups involve organisational teamwork like organising a trip for all classes, or joint planning. I said to myself, if I find it important, then I need to give institutional (= directed) time for that ... more happens in between the meetings, depending on needs. I don't know about the joint planning in detail (fieldnotes, Sl, Nov99).

The headteacher does not monitor the teamwork of phase groups. The teachers are free to choose what they want to do together:

Markus: Within the phase group, we can initiate projects, if we want to ... If we do something, it's fine and otherwise, it doesn't matter either ... There isn't that much time, we don't have many phase group meetings, only very few. Sometimes I think it would be nice if we did more, concrete things, for the schools, for teaching, but it also requires time ... We wanted to do a project together now, after the holidays, but we cancelled it, because we realised that we don't have the energy ... we might do something next year (interview transcript, trans. FV, Sl).

At the large Swiss school, the teachers decided at a team development day that they wished to co-ordinate some curriculum areas within the school. Curriculum co-ordination matters within their school, because pupils might be reshuffled in different classes throughout their time at the school:

Therese: What we've got are agreements on the topics, which we laid down some years ago. Guidelines, as to what will be taught in which year. And one is expected to more or less follow these guidelines ... At our school, there is the problem of mixed year groups and you never know, classes might be mixed again (interview transcript, trans. FV, Sl).

Because at the large Swiss, as well as the large English school, each year group consists of one and a half classes and children might be mixed up differently throughout the school, the schools seek to ensure that some thematic consistency is kept. Both headteachers take a very different approach, operating in a different policy context. Responding to policy pressure and OFSTED demands, the headteacher at the large English school used the possibility of directed time to introduce a policy of joint planning and the way joint planning is implemented and controlled makes it a coercive policy. In contrast, the headteacher at the large Swiss school suggested to the team to use some of the staff meeting slots for work in phase groups, but the teachers are still in control as a group to determine how intensely they plan together and coordinate the curriculum. There is no direct pressure from the Canton to introduce joint planning.

Alternatives and limits to joint planning

Although policy change promotes teamwork in both countries, it is nevertheless questionable whether joint planning is in fact improving team culture and whether teaching is conducive to teamwork in the form of joint planning.

Sharing ideas as part of the organisational culture

The small Swiss school provides a contrast to the joint planning scheme at the large English school as well as the institutionalised slot of teamtime at the large Swiss school. Teachers work together for teaching in a non-organised, spontaneous manner:

Gregor, Nadja and Nina discuss one of Gregor's pupils, because he is meeting the parents today ... Nadja asks for more details about the child, expresses her view based on other cases and a longer counselling evolves. Gregor ... shows the pupil's work booklet (fieldnotes, Ss, March00).

Such interactions took place in the staffroom, during breaks over lunch and after school, made possible by the culture of the school of spending time together socially in the staffroom. Teachers ask each other for advice, ideas and help. These exchanges seem to have two functions: help with problems surrounding teaching and the building up of social cohesion. The following excerpt illustrates this double function of sharing teaching ideas:

Nina: what could I do in PE (Physical Education), I need some ideas for PE ... Nadja makes suggestions ... the conversation is not easy going, as Nina reacts to all ideas that she had just done that ... Nina says at the end: is it due to spring tiredness that I feel so tired? (fieldnotes, Ss, March00).

The above communication has two appeals: on the factual level, Nina asks for ideas for her lesson; on an emotional level, she is not really as interested in the ideas, but wants to share her feelings of tiredness. These informal conversations of sharing teaching ideas fulfil a crucial role in schools, less because of the need of advice and ideas, but more so as a way of interacting, disclosing and supporting each other, negotiating closeness and distance, establishing trust amongst the teachers involved, to create a supportive organisational culture.

The culture of sharing as described above would be placed on the lower end of Little's 'provisional continuum of collegial relations', whereby exchanges such as the above one are seen as 'story telling' and 'aid and assistance', offering little to improve teaching:

I am sceptical that brief stories told *of* (not in) classrooms could advance teachers' understanding and practice of teaching ... Perhaps the single most pervasive expectation among teachers is that colleagues will give one another help and advice when asked. Nonetheless, teachers carefully preserve the boundary between offering advice when asked and interfering in unwarranted ways in another teacher's work .

I don't agree with Little's negative view of 'aid and advice'. Comparing the exchanges such as the one above at the small Swiss school with the exchanges at planning meetings as observed at the large English school, the institutionalised way of teamwork leads to teachers preserving boundaries. The absence of coercion and managerial monitoring allows the teachers at the small Swiss school to discuss their uncertainty.

Teaching and planning as ultimately individual activity

Joint planning is viewed differently by the teachers, while some see it as supportive, others deplore the decrease of professional autonomy and while some see it as a way of sharing the workload others question the efficiency of joint planning:

Gregor: Personally, I don't find it important to meet and to prepare topics together. I have a very individual way of working and it is more efficient, when I prepare on my own ... At the teacher training college, it was praised so much to find a teacher with whom to plan all the maths and another teacher where science and humanities was planned in exactly the same way. I tried that but the only remaining joint planning for me is preparing science and humanities with a colleague and the rest ... I do on my own ... I doubt whether it is really good for the children, when I know exactly, on Friday, we will do that work sheet ... I really appreciate it here, the balance, as I always know what topics Nadja and Nina are working on ... but we do not plan together ... we talk a lot about school together (interview transcript, trans. FV, Ss).

At the small English school, teachers thought of introducing a general scheme of planning. However, they then found that it is not possible, as everybody has different styles of planning. Katie, deputy headteacher, emphasises how it is important to make individual ways of planning acceptable:

Katie: People plan in different ways, don't they? ... We decided in the end that it's very hard to restrict people to one particular planning format. There are certain things you have to put into plans such as ... what are the learning outcomes, how you are going to assess it, that kind of thing ... but the way they want to organise that, if its just a case of photocopying and highlighting or you know writing quick notes [is left to them], as long as it works for them and it works for the children ... Co-ordinators can recommend a format ...
Chloe recommended a numeracy plan to us. Now I was really struggling with numeracy at the beginning and I was getting in quite a state about it, it wasn't working for me and I didn't seem to know what I was doing with all the children. In the end I adapted a literacy plan into a numeracy plan ... and that works best for me. Now other people prefer to do it another way. But as long as the teaching is effective and the learning is good then I think you should be allowed to have some flexibility (interview transcript, Es).

These two statements express doubt as to what extent teaching is a task to be accomplished jointly, as each teacher feels that ultimately they are responsible for teaching a class on their own. Gregor feels more effective when planning on his own as he can adapt more flexibly to the class and Katie expresses how she needs to figure it out for herself. She cannot take the

numeracy plans suggested by Chloe, but constructs teaching and learning in numeracy using the models she has a clear understanding of, as she is herself the literacy co-ordinator. Joint planning can have the negative consequence of rendering teaching a technical act, in taking somebody else's lesson plans and administering them. This is in stark contrast to the concepts of constructivist learning and the autonomous way of working of reflective practitioners, often flexibly deciding within the moment of action . Technicization and standardisation of teaching pose a risk for effectiveness:

To press the point, to plan collaboratively in far greater detail or in anticipation of explicit and deliverable outcomes is to trespass against some of the most sacrosanct norms of professional autonomy in classroom instruction as it now stands and, at the same time, is to reduce the degree of freedom required for the multitude of context sensitive, continuously evolving, interactive responses that many teachers call on in order to run stimulating, instructionally effective classrooms .

Conclusion

Teamwork is emphasised extensively in policy change in Switzerland, based on concepts that teamwork increases school effectiveness and is embedded in a framework of systemic organisational development. In contrast, teamwork in England is promoted as 'sharing best practice', whereby teachers from successful schools teach others.

Teamwork as joint planning is suggested by inspectors and advisors. In the extreme, teamwork as joint planning entails fulfilling policy requirements, completing prescribed planning sheets and following other teachers' schemes of work. Such joint planning can be efficient, but it can also lead to disengagement and de-professionalisation. Teachers want both: the sharing of ideas and materials, but also the autonomy to decide on their approach in the classroom. Teachers' joint planning can be beneficial, depending on the context of policy and power relations. Coercive implementation of joint planning within an overall new managerial policy and maintained by management of a school leads to standardisation and threatens professional autonomy. I have suggested that the standardisation of teaching is incompatible with constructivist concepts of effective teaching such as reflective practice or adaptive teaching.

With regards to teamwork as joint planning, an interesting paradox was made visible through the comparison of Switzerland and England: although the Swiss reform emphasises teamwork very strongly, it is in one of the English schools, where the most extensive teamwork is found in the form of joint planning. The contradiction can be explained by taking into account the power relationships in the education system which are based on structures and hierarchies. Teamwork can be pushed through in an all encompassing way in an English school because of the powerful demands of policy makers in central government through league tables, a national curriculum, literacy and numeracy hours and inspection, and because of the powerful position of the English headteacher. Such powers do not exist nor are they assumed by either Cantonal government or headteachers in Swiss schools and are not part of the structure of the education system even after the new managerial reform.

The findings of this research discussed here have implication for how teachers' work is understood and how school improvement is framed. From the evidence of this research, I tend to think that such an interaction is less stable than many proponents of teachers' teamwork and school improvement suggest . As this research has not tackled issues of learning outcomes at all I cannot draw any conclusion as to the effects of teacher teamwork on school

improvement. The amount and intensity of teacher teamwork was not directly linked to a positive organisational culture in any of the four case study schools. The most intense form of teamwork could only be implemented by coercion, and this led to resistance and withdrawal and ultimately had a negative effect on teachers' professional effectiveness.

Having looked at joint planning and other teaching related teamwork, this research is limited in so far as it did not research how such practices inform teaching in the classroom by individual teachers. It would be necessary to follow the processes of joint planning, shared material and lesson plans to the actual teaching taking place in the different classrooms. This could provide further insights into the nature of teaching and teamwork in teaching, and would allow clarification of the assumptions of the usefulness and limitations of joint planning expressed in attitudes by the teachers in this research.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to the teachers participating in the research and to Professor Rosemary Deem for her comments on drafts for this paper. This research project was supported through the Overseas Research Student Award Scheme and a scholarship from the Swiss National Science Foundation. Participation at this conference was made possible through a BERA bursary.

Contact details

Franziska Vogt, Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YW

From October 2002: Forschungsstelle der Pädagogischen Hochschule St. Gallen, Notkerstrasse 27, CH-9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland

E-mail: franziskavogt@swissinfo.org

Bibliography

Ball, S. J. (1997). Good School/Bad School: paradox and fabrication. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18(3), 317-336.

Baumgartner, I. (1995). *OE-Prozesse: die Prinzipien systemischer Organisationsentwicklung: ein Handbuch für Beratende, Gestaltende, Betroffene, Neugierige und OE-Entdeckende*. Bern: Paul Haupt.

Born, M., & Eiselin, S. (1996). *Teams - Chancen und Gefahren. Grundlagen. Anwendung am Beispiel von Lean Management*. Bern: Hans Huber.

Buchanan, D. (2000). An eager and enduring embrace: the ongoing rediscovery of teamworking as a management idea. In S. Proctor & F. Mueller (Eds.), *Teamworking* (pp. 25-42). Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Bucher, B. (1999, 18.-22/10/1999). 'Schulen mit Profil'. *Volksschulentwicklung im Kanton Luzern*. Paper presented at the OECE-CERI Regionalseminar, Rheinfelden.

Dalin, P. (1993). *Changing the school culture*. London: Cassell.

- Day, C. (2001, 21-25/09/2001). *The Challenge to be the Best: Research and the Teacher*. Paper presented at the 10th Biennial Conference of The International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching, Faro, Portugal.
- Deem, R., & Brehony, K. J. (2000). Educational policy-making and analysis: diverse viewpoints. In B. Moon, S. Brown, & M. Ben-Peretz (Eds.), *Routledge International Companion to Education*. London: Routledge.
- DfEE. (2001). *Schools - building on success* (Green Paper). London: Department for Education and Employment.
- DfES. (2002). *Schools - achieving success* (White paper). London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Dick, A. (2000). Einführung: Wirksamkeit und Qualität. In U. P. Trier (Ed.), *Bildungswirksamkeit zwischen Forschung und Politik* (pp. 169-177). Chur: Rüegger.
- Dimmer, T., & Metiuk, J. (1998). The Use and Impact of OFSTED in a Primary School. In P. Earley (Ed.), *School Improvement after Inspection? School and LEA responses* (pp. 51-61). London: Paul Chapman.
- Dubs, R. (1996). *Schule, Schulentwicklung und New Public Management*. St. Gallen: Institut für Wirtschaftspädagogik.
- Eichhorn, H., Staffelbach, F., & Zaugg, F. (1995). *Schulen unterwegs*. Aarau: Sauerländer.
- Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing Professional Knowledge and Competence*. London: Falmer.
- Fatzer, G. (Ed.). (1993). *Supervision und Beratung: ein Handbuch*. Köln: Edition Humanistische Psychologie.
- Fend, H. (1994). Was ist eine gute Schule? In K.-J. Tillmann (Ed.), *Was ist eine gute Schule* (pp. 14-25). Hamburg: Bergmann + Helbig.
- Fend, H. (1998). *Qualität im Bildungswesen. Schulforschung zu Systembedingungen, Schulprofilen und Lehrerleistung*. Weinheim: Juventa.
- Flynn, N. (1994). Control, commitment and contracts. In J. Clarke, A. Cochrane, & E. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Managing Social Policy* (pp. 210-225). London: Sage.
- Flynn, N. (1997). *Public Sector management*. London: Prentice Hall Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1992). *What's worth fighting for in your school? Working together for improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Gassmann, F. (1997, 20/02/97). Schulen mit Profil. Das visionäre Projekt im Kanton Luzern. *LCH-Aktuell*, 1-5.
- Gummer, B. (1995). Go team go! The growing importance of teamwork in organizational life. *Administration in Social Work*, 19(4), 85-100.

- Haenisch, H. (1994). Gute und schlechte Schulen im Spiegel der empirischen Schulforschung. In K.-J. Tillmann (Ed.), *Was ist eine gute Schule* (pp. 32-46). Hamburg: Bergmann + Helbig.
- Hargreaves, A. (1997). From reform to renewal: a new deal for a new age. In A. Hargreaves & R. Evans (Eds.), *Beyond educational reform* (pp. 105-125). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hargreaves, A., & Dawe, R. (1990). Paths of professional development: contrived collegiality, collaborative culture, and the case of peer coaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 6(3), 227-241.
- Helsby, G., & McHugh, G. (1990). *Teachers' Support and Curriculum Change: An Evaluation of Joint Support Activities*. Lancaster: Institute for Research and Development in Post-compulsory Education.
- Hirschhorn, L. (1994). *Managing in the New Team Environment. Skills, Tools and Methods*. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hoyle, E., & John, P. D. (1998). School teaching. In M. Laffin (Ed.), *Beyond Bureaucracy? the professions in the contemporary public sector* (pp. 146-161). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Huber, M. (1998). Schulinterne Koordination - was trägt sie zur Schulqualität bei? *Bildungsforschung und Bildungspraxis*, 20(1), 135-155.
- Huberman, M. (1993). The Model of the Independent Artisan in Teachers Professional Relations. In J. W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teachers' Work. Individuals, Colleagues and Contexts* (pp. 11-50). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kleinschmidt, G. (1994). Schulautonomie und Schulqualität. *Schweizer Schule*, 81(9), 3-8.
- Lieberman, A., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1992). Networks for Educational Change: Powerful and Problematic. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73(May), 673-677.
- Little, J. W. (1982). Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19(3), 325-340.
- Little, J. W. (1987). Teachers as colleagues. In V. R.-K. e. al. (Ed.), *Educators' Handbook. A Research Perspective* (pp. 491-518). New York: Longman.
- Little, J. W. (1990). The Persistence of Privacy: Autonomy and Initiative in Teachers' Professional Relations. *Teacher College Record*, 91(4), 509-536.
- Luhmann, N. (2000). *Soziale Systeme: Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*. (8th ed.). Frankfurt a. M: Suhrkamp.
- Luzern. (1994). *Schulen mit Profil: Fünf Thesen*. Luzern: Erziehungs- und Kulturdepartement des Kantons Luzern.
- Luzern. (1998a). *Beurteilung der Lehrperson: Ein Modellvorschlag* (Orientierungshilfe 6). Luzern: Erziehungs- und Kulturdepartement des Kantons Luzern.

- Luzern. (1998b). *Zusammenarbeit* (4). Luzern: Erziehungs- und Kulturdepartement des Kantons Luzern, Schulen mit Profil.
- Luzern. (1999). *Gesetz über die Volksschulbildung* (Nr 400a). Luzern: Bildungsdepartement des Kantons Luzern.
- Mahony, P., & Moos, L. (1998). Democracy and school leadership in England and Denmark. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 46(3), 302-317.
- Maturana, H. R., & Varela, F. J. (1980). *Autopoiesis and cognition: the realization of the living*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Orton, J. D., & Weick, K. E. (1990). Loosely Coupled Systems: A Reconceptualization. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(2), 203-223.
- Parker, G. M. (1996). *Team Players and Teamwork. The New Competitive Business Strategy*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Philipp, E. (1994). *Gute Schule verwirklichen: Ein Arbeitsbuch mit Methoden, Übungen und Beispielen der Organisationsentwicklung*. (2nd ed.). Weinheim: Beltz.
- Proctor, S., & Mueller, F. (Eds.). (2000). *Teamworking*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Roeder, P. M. (1994). Lehrerkooperation und Schulqualität. In K.-J. Tillmann (Ed.), *Was ist eine gute Schule* (pp. 63-76). Hamburg: Bergmann + Helbig.
- Rolff, H.-G. (1993). *Wandel durch Selbstorganisation: Theoretische Grundlagen und praktische Hinweise für eine bessere Schule*. Weinheim: Juventa.
- Rüegg, S. (2000). *Weiterbildung und Schulentwicklung. Eine empirische Studie zur Zusammenarbeit von Lehrerinnen und Lehrern*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Schön, D. (Ed.). (1991). *The Reflective Turn. Case Studies in and on Educational Practice*. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals think in Action*. London: Arena.
- Szaday, C., Büeler, X., & Favre, B. (1996). *Schulqualität und Schulentwicklung. Trendbericht Nationales Forschungsprogramm 33*. Bern und Aarau: Programmleitung NFP 33 und Schweizerische Koordinationsstelle für Bildungsforschung (SKBF).
- Vogt, B. (2001a, 18/12/2001). Geführte Schulen sind gute Schulen. *Neue Luzerner Zeitung*.
- Vogt, F. (2001b, 5-9/9/2001). *Accountability in teaching: a comparison of systems and policies in Switzerland and United Kingdom*. Paper presented at the European Conference of Educational Research, Lille.
- Vogt, F. (2001c, 3-4/9/2001). *Researching organisational culture*. Paper presented at the Ethnography in Education Conference, Oxford.

Vogt, F. (2001d). Researching the impact of new public management approaches to policy on primary school teachers' work. In G. Walford (Ed.), *Ethnography and Education Policy* (pp. 137-156). Oxford: JAI/Elsevier Science.

Vogt, F. (forthcoming, 2002). New Managerialism and Primary Teachers' Collegiality and Teamwork, *Leading People and Teams* . London: Paul Chapman.

Wallace, J., & Louden, W. (1994). Collaboration and the growth of teachers' knowledge. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 7(4), 323-334.

Webb, R., & Vulliamy, G. (1996). A Deluge of Directives: conflict between collegiality and managerialism in the post-ERA primary school. *British Educational Research Journal*, 22(4), 441-458.

Zahorik, J. A. (1987). Teachers' Collegial Interaction: An Exploratory Study. *The Elementary School Journal*, 87(4), 385-396.

This document was added to the Education-line database on 16 September 2002

Zuerst veröffentlicht unter <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002159.html>