

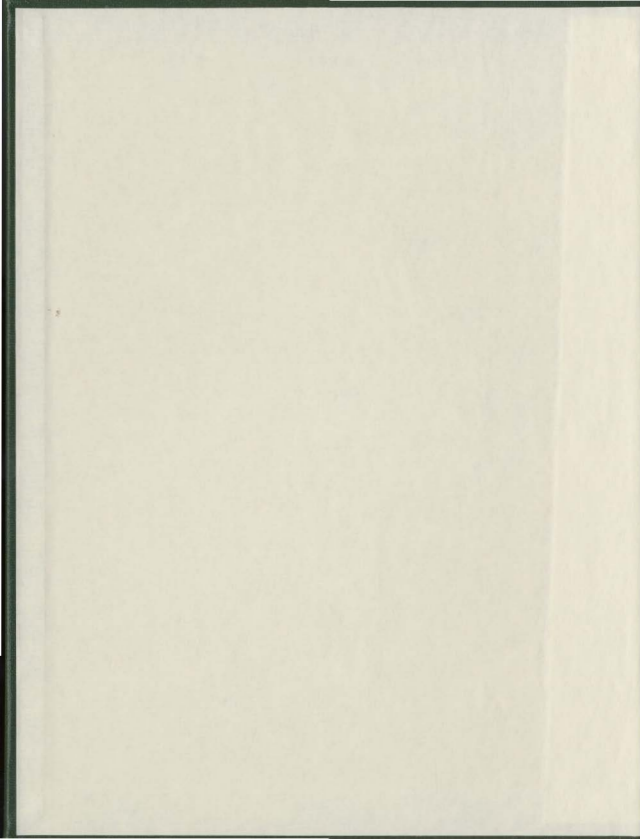
A REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE NATIONAL LITERARY AND NUMERACY  
STRATEGIES IN ENGLAND'S SCHOOLS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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A Reflective Analysis of the Implementation  
of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in England's  
Schools

By  
Katina E. Pollock

An Internship Report  
Submitted to the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This report focuses on large-scale, standards-based educational reform through a reflective analysis of the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLNS) in England's schools. The framework employed during this inquiry was adopted from the external evaluation of the NLNS conducted by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Data collection occurred over a ten-week research internship which consisted of school visitations, interviews with individuals from various aspects of the English educational system, and document analysis. Data analysis was conducted from an Atlantic Canada teacher perspective where reflections were compared to the teaching experience found in both Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

In conclusion, teachers are the deliverers of educational reform. The English Government must not only acknowledge the unique teacher needs generated from standards-based educational reform but provide professional development and support.

In addition, England's educational reform allows the Atlantic provinces a prime opportunity to learn and gather knowledge to assist with making better, well-informed decisions related to their own future educational directions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To the Harlow Cabot Crew:

Janice, Louise, Anna, Jennifer, Maria, Crystal, Colleen, Andrea, and Mark, whose teaching internship experience offered a unique perspective into the English educational system.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE INTERNSHIP**

#### **Purpose of the Internship**

The purpose of this internship was to observe the role educational leadership had at the government and school levels, in implementing large-scale educational reform. Specifically, I looked at the role of educational leaders in England including politicians, coordinators, administrators, and teachers, involved with implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLNS).

#### **Rationale for Choice of Internship**

Globally, there has been increased public concern over the state of national educational systems (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 1997). Many of these concerns, arising out of the increasing changes in our society, have transpired into statewide efforts of educational change (Dale, 1997; Pannu, 1996). As a result, administrators, caught in the wave of these reform initiatives, are faced with new challenges; specifically, how to successfully implement reform that contributes to deep, sustainable change (Leithwood, 1999).

In an attempt to bring its educational system in line with public expectations, England has launched an ambitious initiative known as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. This state legislated reform is of particular interest because the reform processes includes both the macro (country) level and micro (school and classroom) level of education in England (Earl L., Fullan, M., Leithwood, K., Watson, N., 2000).

Notably, the educational system and the reform intentions in England and Atlantic Canada have many similarities. In Atlantic Canada, the four provinces have collaboratively developed outcomes and objectives similar to the English strategies and have also begun provincial wide testing as a tool for increasing accountability and assessing the condition of the educational system.

Unfortunately, the English government's NLNS implementation has fueled the atmosphere of an educational crisis. This crisis attitude can be witnessed in Tony Blair's public speech where he emphasizes, "Education, education, education" (as cited in Earl et al., 2000, p. 10.) Currently, however, this highly politicized reform process has been provided with financial and other necessary supports to help promote success. Divergently, in Atlantic Canada, there is a movement to reform education, but the situation has not reached a crisis status nor have the provinces, to this point, provided the commitment financially or through other support networks to achieve the kind of educational reform desired. Understanding and reflecting on how the English schools are experiencing the implementation of their large-scale initiative can help identify and/or develop best practices for the continuing large-scale educational reform in Atlantic Canada.

I believe it is important for the reader to understand how my interest in this topic developed, and why I chose England to be the location of study. My interest in educational reform developed over a five year teaching assignment in Digby, Nova Scotia (NS). In this particular teaching assignment, I naively thought that as a classroom teacher I was somehow sheltered from the decisions made higher up in the hierarchical

structure of government and school board. I would just go to my classroom and use the best methods of teaching and learning, consistently assess what I was doing and try to meet my student's needs. I soon learned however, that my educational world would be consistently bombarded (or intruded upon) by decisions outside the classroom to which I had no voice and no power. Such challenges were generated from school board amalgamation, province-wide legislated inclusion, transition from a junior high philosophy to a middle school philosophy, closure, relocation and eventually planning of new school facilities, systemic racism and human rights issues, internal and external school board reviews, implementation of the new mathematics program, union unrest, not to mention the routine challenges that all teachers face. The actual teaching aspect of education was manageable but I felt ill equipped to manage the consistent influx of mandated demands thrown my way. In addition, any grassroots initiatives that I implemented with colleagues were consistently met with barriers.

The desire to make a difference in students' lives is held very close to my heart and stems from my belief that teaching is a vocation. This value system, derived from my upbringing and my parent's belief system, is based on serving your community and attempting to be a part of solutions, not problems. These beliefs initially led me to consider that I could better serve my community of learners from an administrative position. I therefore left my teaching position to attend an educational leadership master's program to gain some theoretical and practical experience toward this regard, one component being this internship.

The specific location of my internship, England, was also influenced by a number of variables, one being the opportunity to learn more about cultural differences. Being educated in the denominational education system in Newfoundland (NF), I was aware of the impact religious diversity could have on schooling. My father, of Irish descent, also provided a window into the struggles that plague Northern Ireland. My teaching career in Digby introduced me to the impact racial and ethnic diversity can have within the school community. Each new cultural experience has increased my awareness of differences that exist in communities and provided me with new insights and strategies of how to better meet the needs of my students. England presented yet another cultural experience and an opportunity to expand my repertoire of knowledge, awareness, and strategies.

As both my parents are of British decent, and I hold a British passport, I had increased access to the English culture and schooling system. Ironically, my father's extended family, many of whom reside in the United Kingdom, also have associations to the English educational system as head teachers, teachers, and teaching assistants. This again provided a unique window of opportunity for studying in England.

The solidifying variable that influenced my decision to study in England came after reading the *Watching & Learning* (2000) report. This document brought together all of the intentions and goals I had for my internship experience for a number of reasons. First, the overall issue of educational reform within the document spoke to the questions I had struggled with in my professional career. There was a relationship between what was written about change implementation and what I had experienced or questioned. Second, the specific topic of interest: the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, was of



interest to me since I teach math and have had students who had poor literacy skills. With the new mathematics initiatives being implemented in Atlantic Canada, I again felt a strong association to the topic. Third, the document provided a framework that helped guide me through my reflective journey of observations. And finally, the location of the evaluation, England, provided me the opportunity to use the connections I had to the United Kingdom personally, and through Memorial University's Harlow Campus, to assist me in carrying out the internship.

Lastly, I would like to mention that the conclusions, themes, insights, and questions formulated from this internship experience are delivered throughout the remainder of the report in the first person. The decision to present my findings in such a manner has been influenced by the fact that one of the purposes of an internship was "to provide a graduate student with a breadth and depth of experience in a practical setting and to provide opportunities for ...the development of personal and professional competencies" (Faculty of Education, 2000, paragraph 1). I feel writing in the first person best portrays the 'personalness' of this internship and my personal development as a teacher.

### **Organization of the Report**

This report is organized into four chapters. This first chapter has introduced the reader to the purpose of the report and continues on to explain the basis of inquiry.

It should be noted that while the internship objectives are listed later in this chapter, neither the objectives and protocol questions will be commented on as separate

entities but rather included at all points relevant within the discussion of the implementation process as a whole (i.e. the macro and micro levels in Chapters 3 and 4).

As this report is to be a reflective analysis of an educational reform, Chapter 2 focuses on the methodology for recording, interpreting and observing the implementation. Because the observation and reflection within this internship experience parallels qualitative research methodology, reflections, themes and questions will be threaded throughout the following chapters, as will the relationships of observations to theory.

In accordance with the framework used in the report, *Watching & Learning* (as introduced in the subsection, *Observation Protocol Development*), Chapter 3 focuses on the NLNS from the macro-lens perspective while Chapter 4 is dedicated to the micro-lens of NLNS implementation as used by Earl et al. (2000).

I will now proceed in the remainder of this chapter to describe the basis of my inquiry of the NLNS implementation by stating the objectives set prior to the field experience, the setting encountered upon arrival, method of self evaluation, and my supervisor in England. This is followed by a description of the NLNS initiative, NLNS teacher's perspective, and the framework for teaching the NLNS.

### **Objectives of the Internship**

The internship protocols were developed through reading and reflecting on the findings presented in the *Watching & Learning*, document and were to:

1. Explore and evaluate all aspects of the NLNS initiative as experienced in an English school.
2. Investigate the progress made at initiating the NLNS program.
3. Increase my knowledge of the various implementation techniques employed at the different levels of education (school level, LEA, and national government).
4. Investigate how different agencies (i.e. Local Area Authority (LEA), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), the Qualification and Curriculum Authority, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the Basic Skills Agency, the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE), and OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education) etc. have been employed in assisting with the NLNS program.
5. Study policies created to assist with the implementation of the NLNS program.
6. Apply what is learned to a possible framework for large-scale reform in Atlantic Canada.
7. Compare the English system to what is labeled in Canada as the K - 12 system.
8. Better assist my own secondary education teaching, observe the secondary schooling system and teaching practices in England.
9. Investigate how the intent of inclusionary practices are presented in the resource material.
10. View documentation and promotional material to gain an understanding of the communication methods used to deploy such vast amounts of information to large numbers of proponents.

11. Compare the ideal expectations of the NLNS program to the grass-roots realities.
12. Observe the impact the NLNS program is having on other curriculum areas.
13. Observe the actual implementation of the Literacy Hour and daily math lessons.
14. View teaching practices to discover how educators are balancing the inflexibility of standards with the needs of the individual student.
15. Observe how the head teacher's role has evolved in relation to the NLNS.
16. Reflect on the relationship between school culture and the success of implementation.

Due to external constraints such as time factors, all of the objectives of the internship were met but to varying degrees, as will be noted in the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4.

### **Internship Setting**

The site, Harlow Campus Trust, Memorial University, was utilized as the primary research base. Along with its location, this campus provided a number of unique opportunities since a student teacher internship program is based out of the Harlow facility. While participating in my own internship, I was accompanied by nine other Memorial students who were completing their teaching internship in various Harlow schools and most of whom were involved with some aspect of the NLNS. These student teacher interns provided me with an additional, unique viewpoint of the NLNS.

Because of the established teacher internship program and the rapport the Campus Coordinator, Karen Cracknell, had with the local educators - schools in the Harlow area were more forthcoming than other districts in allowing me access. The actual school site

visits for the Harlow area consisted of: Katherine's Primary School, Hare Street Primary School, Stewards Secondary School, Passmores Secondary School, Burnt Mill Secondary School, and Harlow Field Special School.

An attempt was also made to visit schools in Wiltshire County but access was limited, therefore I only visited The John Bentley School (Secondary) in Calne.

While some of the initial intended visitations to other education-related organizations were altered, opportunities arose to counterbalance the experience. Below is a list of visitations other than schools.

- Mr. Peter Dudley, Principal Advisor for Advisory and Inspection Services. Essex County Council, Learning Services. May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Mr. Alan Barclay, Head of Planning and Pupil Services, Essex County Council. May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Mr. David Naylor, Inspection and Graduate Teacher Program, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2001.
- Launching of the Key Stage Three NLNS. Curriculum Development Center, Harlow, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001.
- Mr. Keith Lloyd, OFSTED, Director of Inspection, Primary and Nursery, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Burnt Mill Governors Meeting, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Ms. Kathryn Poole, participant in teacher training. Observed pre-taped sessions of classroom teaching used for assessment of teaching. Birmingham, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

- Key Stage Three Numeracy Training, Curriculum Development Center, Harlow, June 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Ms. Fran Johnson, Advisory and Inspection Service, Essex County Council, Learning Services, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Dr. Jack Whitehead, Lecturer, University of Bath, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2001.
- Dr. Susan Hart, Lecturer, Cambridge University, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2001.
- Ms. Nancy Watson, Educational Researcher, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

#### **Method of Self Evaluation**

As a constructivist activity, a check list of observation protocols were created, revised during the internship experience and fine tuned for assisting in the report write-up (Glesne, 1999; Scott and Usher 1996). Documentation related to the NLNS was collected and analyzed as a reference and check for self-reflection (Glesne, 1999). Lastly, a daily log of observations was maintained. This log was intended for factual information with as little interpretation as possible, but also became my reflection journal housed the interpretations of daily experiences (Glesne, 1999; Wink, 1997).

#### **On-Site Supervisor**

The on-site supervisor was Mrs. Karen Cracknell, Harlow Campus Supervisor. Mrs. Cracknell has been successful in establishing a positive working relationship between Harlow Campus Trust, MUN and the local public education system in the

surrounding Harlow area. This positive working relationship allowed me increased access to schools and with individuals associated with other educational programs.

### **Description of The National Literacy And Numeracy Strategies**

Before the actual internship experience, I was confident that I understood the NLNS but it became quickly apparent that my initial NLNS description was too narrow. I had essentially considered the *Framework for Teaching* documents to be the NLNS in its entirety. I soon realized from my observations and readings that the framework documents were only one aspect of the overall NLNS implementation process. This realization led me to develop the additional protocol question: What is the NLNS?

The importance of education to the English government is exemplified by Tony Blair's emphasis on "education, education and education" (as cited in Earl et al. 2000, p. 10) and the following quote from the *Schools: Building on Success* document:

Education is a recognized priority, not just for Government, but also for society as a whole. It is seen not only as key to developing equality of opportunity, but also to enabling the nation to prepare for the emergence of the new economy and its increased demands for skills and human capital. (p. 8)

It became easily apparent that education was highly political and the NLNS initiative was not just about curriculum, teaching methods, or mere standards, but instead an ambitious venture to successfully participate in an economically viable, global society. As such, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies program encompasses a state wide educational reform initiative developed by the Government of England in response to the public demand for accountability and the need to equip students with skills enabling them to be lifelong learners within a global society. In an additional, unique, political move,

the English government also announced that the NLNS would have two measurable progress targets. Specifically, these were:

- By 2002, 80% of 11 year-olds will reach the targeted level on the national literacy tests. (Office for Standards in Education, 2000a, p. 1)
- By 2002, 75% of 11 year-olds will achieve at least level 4 on the national numeracy tests. (Office for Standards in Education, 2000b, p. 2)

Beyond these targets, the NLNS has been usefully summarized by Earl et al., (2000) as “initiatives designed to drive large-scale school improvement by creating a national context for reform and focusing attention and resources on a common goal - improving the literacy and numeracy of pupils, especially the disadvantaged, in English schools” (p. 10). Further, Fullan (2000) highlights nine key implementation components that the English government is applying for the overall implementation of the NLNS. These nine components in essence summarize all the facets of the NLNS and provide a broad understanding of the NLNS. These components, slightly modified are as follows:

1. Establishment of a National Literacy Office and a National Numeracy Office, with 12 regional offices.
2. Establishment of over 600 Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators at the school district level with half the cost carried by the national government. The rest funded by the LEA's
3. Implementation of focused teaching practices explicitly linked to increases in students' performance as stated in the framework documents.



4. Establishment of a daily Literacy Hour and mathematics lesson based on recommended teaching practices as stated within the framework documents.
5. Development of high quality curriculum materials, resource documents, and videos, depicting "good" practices associated with teaching and learning.
6. Implementation of wide-scale training and capacity-building programs to support professional development and strategy implementation.
7. Allocation of significant new funds to the programs. For instance, the National Literacy Strategy received 60 million pounds Sterling (equivalent to over \$88 million in mid-2000) for 1998-1999 and 67 million Pounds Sterling (over \$99 million) for 1999-2000. The National Numeracy Strategy received similar funding.
8. Strengthening the pressure and support infrastructure between teachers and the government by:
  - Continuously improving the overall strategy through the Standards and Effectiveness Unit.
  - Performing regular rigorous inspections of school literacy and mathematics programs.
  - Establishing in 1997, a Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to oversee the National Curriculum and the National Assessment for Pupils.
  - Creating a Teacher Training Agency, responsible for accrediting and overseeing initial teacher training, professional development, and headship certification.

9. Commissioning an external evaluation of the implementation strategy over a 4-year period (1998-2002) from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

#### **NLNS: Teacher's Perspective**

In terms of how the government's components were received at the grassroots level, teachers perceived the NLNS as the *Framework for Teaching* documentation, which now guided both the curriculum and teaching methodology in the classroom. There was, however, confusion as to whether the NLNS frameworks were the curriculum guide and strategies presented together, or whether the strategies to achieve the curriculum outcomes were found in the curriculum guide. Mr. Keith Lloyd of OFSTED Inspections made the clarification, stating that if a teacher were to follow the numeracy strategy then all of the curriculum outcomes would be covered. However, if a teacher were to follow the literacy strategy as it existed at the time, not all the literacy outcomes would be covered. His reasoning was that the literacy strategy was the pioneering strategy, created with the intention of revision as the initiative was in its infancy and breaking new ground. The numeracy strategy followed the literacy strategy and Mr. Lloyd felt that what was learned through the creation of the Nation Literacy Strategy (NLS) was applied to the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) making it a more precise and concise document.

I believe that, as teachers, we filter information in a fashion which translates into how the reform initiatives will affect the classroom and how as teachers, we are going to function within the new parameters. It is this perspective that I believe resulted in England's teachers perceiving the NLNS as predominantly the *Framework for Teaching*.

As a result, I believe it is important to provide a description of the frameworks documentation.

### **Framework for Teaching**

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was delivered to teachers through the document, *Framework for Teaching*. This resource presents detailed guidelines for not only the objectives to be covered during the literacy hour, but also methodologies for the delivery of the program. For example, the Literacy Hour is a 60-minute period dedicated specifically to literacy teaching time for pupils. During this time, students are taught reading and writing skills through what is known as three organizational strands: word level, sentence level, and text level. The structure of the literacy hour is as follows

- 1.) First 15 minutes – Key Stage One (KS1) and Key Stage Two (KS2) shared text work(a balance of reading and writing)
- 2.) Second 15 minutes - KS1 Focused word work; KS2 A balance over the term of focused word work or sentence work
- 3.) Next 20 minutes - KS1 Independent reading, writing, or word work, while teacher works with at least two ability groups each day on guided text work (reading or writing); KS2 Independent reading, writing, or word work, while teacher works with at least two ability groups each day on guided text work (reading or writing)
- 4.) Last 10 minutes - KS1 and KS2 Reviewing, reflecting, consolidating teaching points, and presenting work covered in the lesson. (DfEE, 1997, p. 9)

“Although the times are approximate and there is some scope to vary them to meet pupils’ needs, the generic parts of the Literacy Hour should be treated as essential elements and covered on a daily basis” (DfEE, 1997, p. 12).

The National Numeracy Strategy, launched in 1998 and implemented in 1999, is meant to complement the National Literacy Strategy. Three-part daily math lessons ranging from 45 minutes to an hour begin

with oral work and mental calculation using whole-class teaching. The main part of the lesson can be used for teaching new topics or consolidating previous work, making clear what will be learned and how long it will take. Finally, the plenary, last 10 minutes of the lesson allotted for an overview of the lesson's objectives, plays an important role, allowing teachers to draw together what has been learned. (DfEE, 1997, p. 14)

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Because Memorial University's student internships are meant to provide an opportunity for "practical experiences that serve to highlight the theoretical and pedagogical aspects under study" ...[and] "the development of a creative and reflective perspective given the stated goals of the internship" (Faculty of Education, 2000, paragraph 1) my inquiry consisted of a number of approaches to enhance my practical experience as a researcher.

While this internship does not follow a strictly traditional ethnographic research approach, I have borrowed many of the qualitative characteristics to assist in my action research and reflections. As researcher and learner, I approached the internship as a participant-observer. As an observer I attended classes, staff meetings, staff room interactions, governor meetings, and student teacher training. As a participant, I attended training sessions for the Key Stage Three Numeracy Strategy, and discussions providing professional support for student teachers from Harlow Campus. Informal discussions also occurred with teachers, head teachers, teaching assistants, governors, students, student teachers, district co-ordinators, students, LEA representatives and OFSTED inspectors. Field notes were generated while in the observer-participant role.

With the beginning of the internship consisting of first becoming initiated into the English culture and school system, the observation protocols were closely followed during informal discussions. As data developed, focus shifted from the specific protocols to organization and analysis. After each session, notes were made on what was said and

what comments stood out. These were first recorded in a fieldbook and later inputted into data files with reflections and questions. It was this compilation that began to drive the questioning over time and how I would approach my next observation sessions.

A conscious effort was made to spend time in staffrooms as I believe the school atmosphere is exemplified here. The staffroom also provided a wonderful place to collect documents. The wealth of information gathered from tables and posterboards was very important.

Document analysis became an integral part of the internship experience as I tried to understand the implementation of the NLNS, its impact, and how it related to my own experiences. Two categories of documentation developed. One category consisted of documentation generated from the local district and school level, and the other category consisted of documents from the national government's Department for Education and Economy (DfEE). Analyses of these documents were related to the observations and field notes to reinforce insights, themes, acknowledgements, and questions.

In an attempt to achieve a balance between theory and practice, I proceeded to research, read and reflect on literature which focused on large-scale change and educational reform (for example, Fullan 1993; 1999; 2000; 2001) and applied what I read to what I was witnessing in the English educational system and what I new to be developing in Atlantic Canada.

Because my internship experience was approached from a reflective analysis perspective, the insights gained were specifically based on the knowledge constructs created by my own life experiences both personally and professionally. By nature of my

personal background and relationship to the subject of study, this is a personal, reflective comparison of the educational system in Atlantic Canada, where I have lived and worked, and the English system, which I have studied and observed. Comparisons with the educational system in Atlantic Canada are restricted to my personal reflections, and no attempt was made to conduct a formal comparative study. Making sense of the English experience led me to engage in constant comparison with what I have known in my own teaching career in Nova Scotia. These comparisons are interwoven throughout the report.

### **Observation Protocol Development**

The *Watching & Learning* report is the first of three reports produced from the external evaluation of the NLNS implementation, conducted by Earl, Fullan, Leithwood, and Watson, from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The proposed three-year evaluation is based on two lenses of inquiry derived from research conducted by Fullan (2000) and Leithwood, Jantiz, and Mascall (2000). In the first lens, Earl et al. (2000) identifies a series of policy levers at the macro level to be evaluated, which are based on the content of other large-scale reforms that have had some level of implementation success. These specific policy levers are as follows:

- Vision and goals for the education of pupils
- Standards for judging the performance of pupils and others
- Curriculum frameworks and other instrumental resources to assist in meeting the standards
- Teaching and learning effectiveness

- Coherent, integrated policies to support the initiative
- Accountability and incentives linked to performance
- Sufficient funding and workable governance structures (Earl et al. 2000)

The second lens of inquiry was created through the research of Leithwood, Jantiz and Mascall (2000) and focuses on the dynamics of large-scale reform at the micro level (school level). This aspect is concerned with the ‘frontline’ implementation: learning and teaching in the classroom. In particular, this lens looks broadly at how educator’s motivation, capacity, and situation influence the success of best practices for optimizing teaching and learning. It is within these two lenses and their individual components that I constructed observation protocols to guide my collection and reflective analysis as listed below. The following section outlines my protocols presented in question format.

### **Macro-Level Inquiry: Policy Levers**

#### **Vision and Goals**

1. Has the government’s vision of the NLNS been adopted by the proponents involved (LEAs, schools, and teachers)?
2. Does the public understand the vision and goals set? Is there public support for the NLNS?

#### **Standards**

3. Is there any indication that the NLNS program is on track with meeting its 2002 target?
4. What are the specific targets set by the LEA for each of the local schools that I will visit? Is there an attempt to meet these targets? If so, how?



5. How do organizations balance the inflexibility of standards with the needs of the individual students?

### **Curriculum**

6. Are students becoming critical thinkers and problem solvers? Are they thinking in higher order processes and application, or merely increasing knowledge of facts?
7. What impact is the emphasis on literacy and numeracy having on other curriculum areas?
8. Are the material developed for the NLNS inclusive?
9. What are the resources and supports? Are they adequate?

### **Teaching and Learning**

10. Are teachers become increasingly influential in accomplishing deeper change in practice, with greater impact on pupil performance?
11. Has there been improvement in numeracy? If so, are the changes in numeracy being sustained?
12. Have there been improvements in literacy? If so, are the changes in literacy being sustained?
13. Have there been changes in teaching styles? If so, are the changes in teaching style being sustained?
14. Does the delivery of the curriculum meet the needs of all learning styles?
15. What does the teacher re-training look like?

16. Some teachers and Head teachers are worried that the delivery of curriculum will become largely whole class teaching. Does this seem to be the trend?
17. Are alternative teaching methods being employed and if yes, then what are they and their main objective?
18. Has training for year 5 and 6 teachers occurred?

#### **Policy**

19. Has there been consistency and coherence in the policy between the local schools and the national level? If yes, is it being maintained? How?
20. Who has participated in the decision-making thus far? How?
21. How are the policies and mandates of other national agencies structured to assist with the implementation and maintenance of the NLNS?
22. What policies are in place to address the many social issues related to education such as poverty, racism, violence, etc.?

#### **Accountability**

23. Are the accountability mechanisms connected to the decision making processes?
24. As adaptations are made to individual student expectations, how are these modifications documented?
25. Who is involved in the decision making of individualized student learning?
26. How has the OFSTED inspections contributed to the NLNS implementation?
27. What are the positive and negative aspects of this type of inspection?
28. What are the issues around performance data?

29. Have policies and procedures been done to overcome the problems that arise with using a single performance indicator?
30. Has anything been put in place to train those responsible for reading the standardization test results? Is there still a concern in this area?
31. How has government taken into account the differences in schools, which stem out of social and cultural issues such as poverty, race, immigration, etc.?

#### **Sufficient Funding and Workable Governance Structures**

32. From the perception of teachers, and LEAs, has adequate funding been provided during the implementation process?
33. Are the procedures for obtaining funding for NLNS related projects a barrier to progress?
34. Has the requirement of LEAs to raise a portion of the funding presented a problem in areas of low socioeconomic growth?
35. How well does the complex infrastructure of agencies really work?
36. Has the Department of Education and Employment considered the long-term governance structures and roles of various other agencies such as the SEU, the NLNS center, LEAs, etc.,

#### **Micro-Level Inquiry: Local Challenges**

##### **Motivation**

37. Is there consistence between teachers goals and those of the NLNS?
38. Is there a perceived gap between the NLNS concerns and teachers concerns related to literacy and numeracy?

- 39. How do teachers feel about the intended retraining initiatives presented by the government?
- 40. Are teachers comfortable with the new demands being made on them?
- 41. How will teacher motivation be sustained?
- 42. Do teachers feel supported? Do they feel this initiative will be supported over time?
- 43. There is a strong call for incentives providing support for developing leadership skills of head teachers. Has this occurred and How?
- 44. What specifically are the incentives for participation in the reform? Financial or non-financial?

#### **Capacity**

- 45. Do teachers feel overwhelmed by what they experience as a series of unconnected new initiatives?
- 46. How are the proponents of NLNS focusing their effort towards capacity development?
- 47. How is the government accommodating training all teachers?
- 48. How effective was the 'cascading' method of skill training?
- 49. Acknowledging that professionally prepared packs of materials were distributed to all teachers, has this resource been utilized or has the practice been to place on shelf and collect dust?
- 50. To what extent has training, coaching, modeling, and assistance with problem solving occurred?

51. Are LEAs actually promoting school clusters as networks to information and progress?

**Situation: Teacher support**

52. Is the support infrastructure actually supportive of teachers in the delivery of the NLNS? Why or why not?
53. Has there been an attempt to align teacher training to the demands of the NLNS?
54. How do the teachers and heads feel about the program?

**Situation: OFSTED inspections**

55. How does the constant awareness of OFSTED inspections effect the NLNS initiative? Do the inspections hinder progression and discourage risk taking or does it provide guidelines and guidance in implementing the NLNS?
56. Is there any evidence that the OFSTED inspections are taking advantage of the flexibility and autonomy being offered by the standards?
57. Have mandates/structures changed for the OFSTED to promote continuation of the NLNS initiative?

**Situation: DfEE**

58. What has the DfEE considered to be the long-term governance structures and ultimate roles of the SEU, NLNS centres, and LEA's?
59. What is the avenue to give voice? What are the filters?
60. What struggles can be detected between the central and local control in relation to the NLNS implementation?

**Situation: LEAs**

61. Is there any evidence that the LEA's are taking advantage of the flexibility and autonomy being offered by the standards?
62. To what extent do people in LEA's and schools have the skills necessary to interpret and use data for wise decision-making?
63. Have mandates/structures changed for LEAs to promote continuation of the NLNS initiative?

**Situation: Leadership**

64. Has the NLNS engaged with other national indicatives to build leadership for high-capacity schools?
65. As they move from awareness to implementation stage, how will learning cultures develop? Is it happening?
66. What is the relationship between school culture and the success of implementation?
67. Is there a pattern for the leadership practices employed?
68. Have teachers become disillusioned with the leadership practices related to the NLNS?

Please note, in the time allotted for the internship experience, protocol questions 32, 35, 61, 63, 64, and 65 were not able to be sufficiently addressed.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESS OF THE NLNS THROUGH POLICY**  
**LEVERS FOR LARGE-SCALE REFORM: THE MACRO-LEVEL**

As described in Chapter One, in the *Watching & Learning* report, Earl et al., (2000) presents seven successful components to large-scale reform, which are incorporated into that report's framework of OISE/TU's external review of the NLNS initiative. While the protocols for this internship were created and categorized using these seven components as well, my protocol will not be answered individually and simultaneously but rather have been used to guide my reflection on the NLNS project, gained through the internship experience. I have taken this approach because this was an internship based on reflection and since it was only a ten week period, my visit to England allowed me to mostly focus on the micro level activities. That said, a fair amount of data was gathered on the macro level and the following sub-section describes my findings and analysis as organized under the seven macro-level policy levers. This is followed by a more in-depth analysis of the micro-level standing in chapter 4.

In addition, I would like to note that the framework from the *Watching & Learning* report suggests two lenses: the macro and micro levels. In my experience, I believe that these, to an extent, are not separate entities but are rather quite interconnected in the reform process. This is also reflected in my reporting.

### **Visions and Goals**

Reform efforts should be guided consistently by a vision of the outcomes aspired to for students, one that goes beyond subject-specific content. A vision that includes, as well an image of the organization capable of accomplishing those outcomes will add considerable clarity to the reform effort. Such a vision is an important resource for assisting districts and schools to establish and maintain coherent efforts. (Leithwood, 1999, p. 46)

As a policy lever at the macro level, I believe the English government was clear about the intention of the educational reform. The DfEE's document, *Schools: Building on Success* (2001) dedicates an entire section on the vision under the chapter title,

Transforming Education, which states,

We want a world class education service: one with standards, which match the best anywhere in the world. We want them achieved not at some indeterminate future date but as soon as possible within the decade that has just begun. (p.8)

This document also outlines what the government now has in mind for the secondary school system,

We want a secondary school system in which:

- Every pupil is good at all the basics, and striving for excellence in the areas of their greatest strength.
- Every school is good at all the basics, and excellent at much more.
- Every school has a distinct mission, ethos, and character and the autonomy to manage its own affairs provided it demonstrates success. (DfEE, 2001, p.6)

In reviewing the most recent NLNS initiative at Key Stage Three, the introduction is very clear as to what has happened historically and what schools are expected to do.

The National Numeracy Strategy was established in 1998 with an ambitious target: that 75% of 11-year-olds achieve at least level 4 in the National Curriculum tests by the year 2002. The Framework for Teaching Mathematics from Reception to Year 6, a key element of the Numeracy Strategy, has helped teachers to set appropriately high expectations for their pupils and ensure progression through the primary years. Primary pupils are already close to achieving the 2002 target.



As part of the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 schools are expected to:

- set targets for 14-year-olds in English, mathematics and science;
- provide catch-up classes for all Year 7 pupils who did not previously achieve level 4 in English and mathematics;
- participate in the training programmes and follow them through at school level;
- use the English and mathematics frameworks, or be able to justify not doing so by reference to what they are doing.(DfEE, 2001)

The impression I received as an outside observer was that the English government was very serious about its commitment to improving education, specifically literacy and numeracy levels. This is backed by the following statement from, *Schools: Building on Success*.

The reforms since 1997 have been driven from central Government. This was necessary in order to generate a new sense of urgency, to create a new culture focused firmly on standards and to demonstrate that step-change in pupil performance was not only possible but could be achieved rapidly. (p. 91)

I also think overall, that the English Government has been successful in conveying the goal of education and the purpose of the NLNS as evidenced by political speeches, financial commitment, extensive media campaign, providing resources such as parent websites, introductory booklets and documentation for pupils beginning school, and training programs for teachers.

During my teaching experience, I felt that there had been no real marketing of a conceptualized educational reform plan by either political party in Nova Scotia in this way. Public focus on education has not centered around reform in Nova Scotia as such but rather on quiet discontent and public outcry toward the depletion of financial support. In addition, there appeared to be contradictions within the Nova Scotia Department of Education. For example, the provincial government had initiated a grant program focused

on implementing best practices in the classroom within a middle school philosophy. With the middle school concept, many teachers were team teaching and responsible for more than one subject. At the same time the provincial government was considering revamping the licensing structure for teachers whereby teachers could only be licensed in the discipline of expertise. This resulted in a contradiction to the middle school teaming concept. For instance, English teachers were teaching social studies. Under the new certification guidelines, the teacher of English would not be allowed to teach social studies. Effective marketing of school reform by the Nova Scotia Government is not possible without clear goals and practices.

The following sub-sections: educational competitiveness and initiative mania, comment on the successfulness of specific NLNS goals

### **Educational Competitiveness**

In a number of documents I found a consistent theme that the English government wishes to provide an educational program where students are able to successfully compete on a global scale. For example, “we want a world class education service: one with standards which match the best anywhere in the world” (DfEE, 2001, p. 8). It is well documented that schools are influenced by culture (Fullan, 2001) and I ask, is it realistic to compare educational systems out of context of the culture in which they exist? Different countries value education differently, resulting in time, money and effort being delegated in varied fashions. Is it realistic for the English Government to compare its educational system to that of Japan? Can the cultural variable of the Japanese educational

system and that of the English system be somehow controlled or negated? For instance in some Asian countries, teachers' actual contact time with students is much less than what it is in England or North America, the reason being that there is a larger amount of time within the school day allotted for teacher development. As well, teacher development is very engrained into the job description, which also occurs on a regular basis, rather than being inservice or inset days which are sporadic and take away from the contact time of students. Further research is needed to investigate these concepts.

### **Initiative Mania**

It appears that government officials took great strides to anticipate the necessary supports that would be needed to achieve such a large-scale reform. There were however, a number of concerns expressed by many educators. For instance, the government has now begun to accelerate the number of initiatives associated with education. As I conducted my document analysis I began to realize how many programs the English government has implemented, especially since 1997. These are some of the programs and services mentioned in the DFEE document, *Schools: Building on Success*: NLNS, National Curriculum, OFSTED, Sure Start, Early Excellence Centers, National Healthy Standards, Excellence in Cities, Youth Cohort Study, PEEP, Family Literacy and Numeracy, Adult and Community Learning Fund, Neighborhood Nursery, Home Start, National Childcare Strategy, Early Learning Goals, Special Education Needs, Education Action Zones, Music Standards Fund, Creative Partnerships, Museums and Galleries Programme, Culture Online, Modern Foreign Languages, Early Language Learning, City

Academy programme, Centre for Gifted and Talented Youth, Excellence Clusters, Fresh Start, Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), New Deal for Schools, City Learning Centres, etc..(DfEE, 2001)

While some researchers believe that in order to affect systemic change, modifications must take place on a number of fronts (Hall, 1997), I think there is a point where too many programs can be implemented at one time. Will the actual goal of the educational reform, and more specifically the focus on literacy and numeracy, be lost among all of these new initiatives? How is it physically and strategically possible for the National government to coordinate all of these new programs under one vision? Fullan (1993) warns that eventually, the education system is going to be on implementation overload. As one English teacher put it, educators are looking for a moratorium on reform initiatives as they feel swamped with the relentless new demands made upon them.

I also wonder if all these new programs and projects are 'make work' projects from a strategic, political aspect as the reforms have created hundreds of new jobs. Are all of them really that effective? It is almost parallel to the dieting fads, there are a million initiatives based on the same outcome but most, if not all, do not work.

Another concern arose from reading the document, *Schools: Building on Success*, which presents facts and figures that demonstrate the financial commitments to these new programs is phenomenal. While the goals and aims may be clear as to what the government is targeting, at present, I ask: how long will the financial support be available to maintain and continue the programs, once they are up and running?

More discussion related to vision and goals will be addressed in Chapter Five as I discuss the issue of vision and leadership as it pertains to the micro-level of education.

### **Standards**

“Standards provide recognized targets for the improvement process. They can be used to clarify, integrate and raise expectations and are most useful when they become part and parcel of school improvement plans”(Earl et al., 2000, p.12). The English government has gone to great lengths to create sound standards for pupil, teachers, school administration, and LEA’s. The following quotation describes this commitment:

The central task in the next five years is to bring about ... transformation with higher standards and greater equality of opportunity. We want to enable all schools to develop three key characteristics of successful secondary schools: effective leadership; a resolute focus on raising standards throughout the school; and a strong ethos. (DfEE, 2001 p. 44)

While there is a place for standards in education, I also think it is necessary to acknowledge that there can be drawbacks to using standards for judging performance and that standards should be used with some sense of caution. In order to make standards and targets useful, there has to be some method of comparing performances, both present and past. In reference to the NLNS, the mode of comparison comes from the use of standardized tests, in particular the SATs (national tests previously known as Standard Assessment Tasks). Fortunately, I was studying the educational system when the SATs were being administered and therefore had exposure to the testing in most of the schools I visited. Katherine’s Primary School provided me with the initial opportunity to see how the SATs were administered in the primary setting. Because the tests were occurring at the primary level, the testing actually took days to complete. There were constant

interruptions to classes and changes in the daily structure of the school days. The curriculum of some subjects was not covered because half of the class was missing since not everyone wrote the test at the same time. Also, teachers were tied up with monitoring the tests. Students with behavior problems were a particular challenge during the SATs since all students are required to complete the test and those students who were disruptive made writing for others difficult and in most cases these students were removed. Still, disruptive student had to be tracked down and forced to write, which in most cases was a painful experience for the student and the monitor.

Seven key issues resulted from the standards: trusting the results, stringency of the standards and the 'Dip', logistical problems, teaching to the test, teacher standards, headteacher issue, and headship groupthink.

#### **Trusting the Results**

While the national government is self-promoting the success of the NLNS and the progress of the educational reform, many educators are cautious of the outcomes that have been conveyed. For instance, in *The National Numeracy strategy: The First Year* document, I have concerns about the evidence base. The HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) had used a sample of 300 schools to compile results in studying the impact of the NNS in schools. Can this be an accurate sample since 170 were inspected in the autumn term and the remaining 130 were inspected in the winter and summer terms? From my experience in schools, it is important to consider that different school sessions can provide differing results because of the season. In England, there is a cultural trend for many students to be

absent for extended periods of time in the summer session, for example, as they go on vacations with their families. In the summer session, the year 10 students are also away from the school site, doing work terms for up to two weeks. These absences cause change in the school atmosphere and the teaching environment, as well as in the scheduling of the SATs.

Also in the HMI study, only two classes were observed: one from each year group. How valid are the observations, considering that the impact of the class context cannot be grasped by observing only two lessons? As any substitute teacher, supply teacher, teacher in training or teacher applying for a post will confirm, evaluating teaching outside its context is definitely not a true reflection of the overall picture of what is really happening in an educational environment. Regular teachers will also attest to how randomly planned class visitations are often met with enhanced lessons to represent whatever the inspection group are looking for in the lesson.

As there was only one interview with the head of each school in the HMI evaluation, I also ask: Can these interviews be considered an accurate reflection as to what is really happening in schools?

Another thing which increased the anxiety of teaching staff was that parts of the SATs tests had not reflected the National Literacy Curriculum to its fullest. They believe that SATs needed to have some revisions made to them. In the meantime, if a school had followed the literacy program exactly there would be areas on the SATs which the students would not do well. For instance, at Katherine's Primary School, the scores were

low for the extended writing section since the literacy hour did not address extended writing in its framework. Therefore the school decided to modify the literacy hour in an attempt to teach and practice extended writing. Keeping this in mind, as the SATs are revamped to reflect the National Curriculum Outcomes, there has been an increase in the overall national scores. Is the increase caused by students performance or is it from the revised SATs design?

Placing the NLNS in perspective, it is important to realize that the NLNS is only a small fraction of the overall reform effort. My question is: Can one truly assess the success of the NLNS outcomes alone, since the government has now begun implementing the Early Excellence Centers which are basically Literacy preschool programs with a standardized National Curriculum. Local programs are once again inspected by the OFSTED for these standards.

#### **Stringency of the Standards and the 'Dip'**

I am also concerned about the government's expectation for the increased rate of student attainment under the National Curriculum Outcomes. This expectancy is very prescribed and is based on consistent averages. For example, students are expected to improve their achievement approximately 1.2 levels every two years (DfEE, 2001). My question is: does this reflect true learning? I do not think that learning occurs in a constant, sequential pattern but rather in spurts of exponential growth followed by periods of minimal growth. The times of minimal growth are the times when the learner is synthesizing new material and relating it to old information. Periods of growth are at



the “eureka” moments when the new data mixed with and conceptualized with old data formulates a new learning concept. How does this type of non-consistent, sequential growth affect target attainment for individual students or entire grades such as those going through puberty and finally teachers and their constant pressure to perform and produce achieving students?

There also appears to be a discrepancy in the interpretation of the targets between the primary and secondary schools. This was voiced in the training for the Key Stage Three Numeracy training session I attended. One of the head teachers of a primary school also voiced this concern. The *Schools: Building on Success* document states,

For many years transition from primary to secondary school has been inadequate. Far too many 11 year olds have lost momentum in the last few weeks of primary and over the summer holiday before they start secondary school. All too often when they start secondary the result has been that by the end of the first year secondary school many pupils have made little progress and lost motivation and as many as 30 per cent actually lower standards than in the last year of primary school. (p.40)

This loss in momentum is known as the ‘dip’. But could there not be another explanation for this dip in progression? For example, nowhere in this document is there any focus on the fact that children are going through puberty. Anyone who has studied adolescent behavior and characteristics in the aspect of learning and development could also argue that these students are not only entering secondary school but are also beginning to see the world through adult thought processes and this can and will have an effect on learning and performance. Using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, is it not possible that those students who are exhibiting ‘the dip’ do so because the transition between primary and

secondary school, and the transition into adulthood through puberty, result in some students digressing to a different level of need? Some of these students do not easily adjust, neither to their new surroundings nor the changes accompanied with puberty, and are more concerned about where they fit into the unspoken informal social system, new culture and climate than their actual school work responsibilities. As 'the dip' will show, most of these students do eventually begin to demonstrate progress in achieving set targets.

Secondly, could there not be a discrepancy between the expectations or evaluation techniques found in primary school and secondary school? Perhaps the expectations are actually higher at secondary schools and the students entering are overwhelmed by the demands made upon them. They therefore become less motivated and perform less until they 'figure out' the system.

As a middle school teacher, I agree that a dip in performance is often witnessed with the transition between elementary school to high school. I think if there were more time to allow further, in-depth investigation into this phenomena, one would find that this dip in performance is not unique to the English educational system but rather a global issue that all educational systems have when students change school levels.

### **Logistical Problems**

As stated, the SATs tests took almost a week to administer and disrupted classes. Class disruption resulting from the SATs was a consistent theme throughout the different

schools and levels I visited. Some students could not finish the exam and needed extensions, others only finished part of the exam because of sickness, vacation, and/or behavior and had to be tracked down to complete the test on another day. In Key Stage One, the SATs tests were corrected by the teachers, therefore time had to be found during the regular school day for teachers to do the correcting. In addition to the disruption to the regular school day, high levels of stress were generated from these SATs tests as the staff knew the results from these tests indicated the performance of the school, which influences funding, and the direction of the school as school improvement plans use the SAT scores to decide which areas of the curriculum need more focus.

#### **Teaching to the Test**

While standards are meant to provide targets for mastering skills, and be tied to emphasizing best practices in teaching and learning, there was definitely a move within many schools to teach to the test. In one school where a fellow teacher intern from Memorial University was assigned, one of the teachers had covered all of the curriculum requirements before the SATs in April and did not have any curriculum requirements to complete for the rest of the summer session (which continued until the end of July). Perhaps the timing of the SATs should be revisited? I also witnessed a math lesson where the teacher made it perfectly clear that the lesson was meant to prepare the students for test writing and in particular the SATs.

In addition to the SATs there is also annual testing as outlined below:

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has established an annual testing programme to provide data on pupils' attainment and progress in English

in Years 3, 4 and 5. These data, collected and analyzed by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER), augment those already available through the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. (OFSTED, 2000a. p. 1)

These tests are conducted in Year 4, 5, and 6 and are not compulsory. Many schools still do them to use as additional data for determining targets and justifying programmes. My thought is that while the government is trying to have students develop their own individual talents, students are being tested to death, which will result in streamlining and not necessarily the development of individuality.

As a person whose public education included public examinations from grade 10 to 12, and comprehensive 3-hour year-end exams from grade 7 to 9, I have had experience in writing and studying for content driven examinations. As students, we were told that the Department of Education felt that public examinations in Newfoundland was one way to improve student performance in math and English (since there was always a reminder that the levels of achievement were below average). As a junior high school student, I was told that exams from grade 7 to 9 were in place to prepare me for the public exams that everyone was to write in the higher grades. Vivid memories of spending six weeks practicing for the public exams does not conjure up pleasant memories but rather feelings of boredom and, I am sure for those students who were struggling, plenty of anxiety. The irony of it all is that when attending university, I felt no more prepared than students from other provinces who were not required to take public exams. What I learned from public exams was how to negotiate time for completion of exam in addition to weighing the amount of content and detail depending on the value of the question, and how to fine tune the short term memory! This leads me to believe that

this type of public testing teaches one to be a better test taker but it is not the testing that improves performance or skill but the quality of the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom.

### Teacher Standards

Teacher education still has the honour of being simultaneously the worst problem and the best solution in education. This can be tied in with the fact that all educational reform rests on the shoulders of teachers who are the primary deliverers of any new initiative. (Fullan, 1993, p. 105)

The question is whether teachers are equipped or qualified to deliver what is expected, such as becoming specialists in particular curriculum areas, new and formalized assessments strategies and teaching methodologies which were not necessarily a part of teachers' initial training. It is apparent through a number of different avenues, that the English government is very aware that teachers are the key to success in educational reform. For instance, it is documented in *The National Numeracy Strategy: The First Year*, report:

Some schools in the sample had had their progress interrupted for reasons largely out of their control: the illness of key personnel or unfilled vacancies; for example. A response to issues such as these was often the imposition of excessive loads on a small number of staff. For example, in one small school in the sample the deputy headteacher with class teaching responsibility is also the acting headteacher, and is co-ordinator for mathematics, English, physical education and music. (OFSTED, 2000b, p. 22.)

Toward teacher preparation, the government created standards for existing teachers in the school environment, which are evaluated by heads of departments and through OFSTED inspections. The government has also gone as far as using OFSTED inspections in

teacher training institutions. In this regard, teacher-training programs were given a set of standards which they had to achieve or be closed down. From what I observed, the teachers who are remaining in this profession are indeed gaining the confidence that is needed to be successful in the reform through the training.

I was also impressed with the government's attempt to incorporate more practical teacher training through the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) program (DFEE, Teachernet, 2001). In this program, the teacher interns are trained predominantly at the school level with some academic work included. Qualified staff members are to mentor the NQT participants, plus these participants also do not have a full teaching load. The unfortunate thing is that if a school has a large turnover of teachers and the incoming teachers are NQTs, then what ultimately happens is that the regular teachers have more responsibility because of mentoring. Also, because the NQTs are not able to take on a full teaching load, more pressure is placed on full-time staff to cover the teaching load that is remaining.

From my observations of the Memorial student interns, these students were well versed in the most current and best practices. Some veteran teachers in the English school system were impressed with the wealth of knowledge these interns had with regard to teaching styles. This actually led to certain levels of frustration for some of the interns, especially when it came to discipline styles, as the interns were not allowed to practice what they had been taught. Sometimes, their cooperating teachers did not understand the theory behind a certain methodology. I was, however, concerned as there seemed to be no mention of how to deal with educational change for these student interns. As for my own

training in Nova Scotia, there were assumptions that changes would be a part of the educational environment but no real strategies were provided as to how to cope with such forces. I feel with educational reform becoming a growing area of research as well as a very real part of the teaching profession that these interns should have had some knowledge of change theory, organization theory, or even leadership theory.

### **Headteacher Issue**

The government has also gone to great lengths to provide specific head teacher training, such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), Leadership Programme for Serving Head Teachers (LPSH), Headship Induction Programme, and Headlamp: The Leadership and Management Programme for New Head Teachers (DfEE, 2000-2001). The discussion I had with the head teacher of Hare Street Primary School was very enlightening as he has only been in the headship position for the past six months. This meant that I had someone who could provide me with information about the leadership training of head teachers. This teacher was one of the first set of teachers to participate in the new NPQH program. Needless to say it sounds as if this program has some things to be worked out as in any new program. For example, when questioning him about leadership theory and change theory, he said that, surprisingly, most of this program was made up of management courses and based on business principles and practices. He was somewhat familiar with leadership theory and all of the issues that center around it, such as vision statement but was less informed about change agency. There was acknowledgement about the issue of the elaborate

hierarchical situation of the educational system but it was obvious that he had not dealt with organizational theory which again was somewhat disheartening. How can the English government expect headteachers to be the leaders in educational reform when there is no conscious discussion or training around the topic?

### **Headship Groupthink**

Upon inquiring how one would secure a headship position, I was informed that the process is quite detailed. Along with an application form, candidates have to do research on a topic of interest related to education and present the material to a panel which includes governors, teachers, department heads, and in some cases parents. The candidates also have to complete a personality inventory and interview. The personality evaluation was of interest to me since it was explained that schools would use this evaluation tool to determine if the candidate had the personality and values that coincided with the ethos of the school. This set off a few bells as I think it may be good practice to find a head teacher who will complement the school environment but it is my understanding that these assessments are standard for all schools but not all schools are the same. Different schools will require head teachers with very different personalities, values and leadership techniques. Also one type of general personality may be required for the educational reform at this moment in time but I am sure a different type of personality will be required at a different stage of educational reform. Would this standard type of conformity not also lead to a tendency toward groupthink (Janis, 1996)? Is it not important for there to be a number of different types of heads as each will



approach problems differently and provide a wide range of solutions? Would headship conformity not stunt the growth in problem solving by having too many like minds? Fullan (1999) states that conflict and diversity are our friends. How do the hiring practices for head teachers fit into this belief? I would think that they work to prevent diversity and limit conflict, while there must be a fine balance. I also think that if education is going to be consistently changing and doing so at a very fast pace, the teacher-in-training must be given the opportunity to contemplate the idea of conflict and diversity being friends. It is a mindset that will provide many teachers and head teachers with another survival technique for on-going change.

As a participant in the Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium Program (NSEL), I attended a number of sessions aimed at addressing the practical aspect of issues prevalent in educational administrative roles. I believe that the Nova Scotia Government recognizes that traditional delivery of public education, in the very near future, will drastically change and the change agents will be the administrators in their leadership role.

### **Curriculum**

In the guidelines for successful, performance-based reform, Leithwood et al., (1999) make two important points concerning curriculum. These are as follows:

- (1.) The curriculum to be implemented should be described in exceptionally clear and concrete language. This is not meant to diminish the necessity and value of dealing with relevant conceptual and philosophical matters in curriculum frameworks and related materials. It does mean, however, that the actual practices

emerging from such considerations need to be outlined very clearly, and with plenty of illustrations if they are to be widely and uniformly understood.

(2.) The curriculum, and forms of instruction appropriate for implementing the curriculum, should receive equal emphasis in frameworks, guidelines and related materials designed to describe the new classroom practices advocated by the reform. (p. 46)

My reflective analysis of the NLNS frameworks in relation to curriculum is presented in the following six subsections: Organization and Delivery of the National Literacy Strategy, Organization and Delivery of the National Numeracy Strategy, Further Insights into the NLNS, Grouping by Ability or Setting, Multiculturalism, and Gender.

### **Organization and Delivery of the National Literacy Strategy**

Many teachers initially expressed difficulty with implementing the national curriculum for literacy because of the constant stream of changes that kept being implemented. This may have resulted from the fact that the national government developed the literacy curriculum with little teacher consultation, which resulted in a number of modifications to occur when both the curriculum and National Literacy Strategy were implemented.

With the emphasis on specific discipline curriculum, such as literacy and numeracy, elementary school teachers were forced to be specialists in a particular subject which had not before been the practice. Many teachers expressed that they initially found this role change to be stressful.

When the National Literacy Strategy with the literacy hour was initially implemented, the format of the strategy and the literacy hour were to be strictly followed.

Some educators believe that this emphasis of little deviation was intentional on the government's part as an attempt to create not only consistency throughout the country but also to emphasize the seriousness of the government's commitment for educational reform. It would appear that as the literacy hour became a mainstay in the school structure, the government reduced the pressure to rigidly follow the literacy hour and strategies. It soon became apparent that this generic model of a literacy hour with the curriculum and strategies was not going to meet the needs of all students or school populations. Educators had to make modifications to better assist in meeting the needs of specific student populations. For instance, as mentioned earlier, there were issues with how extended writing was not a part of the NLS, yet students were assessed on this skill in the SATs. As indicated in the document, *The National Literacy Strategy: the Second Year*. "Teachers began to feel sufficiently confident to modify the literacy hour itself, and they began to provide additional time for the teaching of writing" (OFSTED, 2000a, p.9).

While the government has allowed variation and flexibility to the literacy hour it is still very concerned with the degree and type of modification as demonstrated in the following quote from *The National Literacy Strategy: The Second Year*:

There are potential dangers in modifications to the literacy hour. For example, a significant minority of schools did not include a clearly defined element of word or sentence level work in their modified literacy hours. Some teachers, while providing more time for the teaching of writing, emphasized the aspects with which they were more confident, such as the use of connectives, at the expense of the full range of writing objectives from the framework (OFSTED, 2000a, p. 9).

There is also concern that teachers are now "spending too much of time on pupils practicing writing rather than being taught how to improve it" (p. 9).

### **Organization and Delivery of the NLNS in Numeracy**

The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy appears to have run smoothly as few modifications were needed for the curriculum or the organization of the three-part maths lesson. There is a sense that the gains in numeracy were more than what has been expected and the progress has been more than that of the literacy target. In the numeracy sessions, there was an emphasis on mental math and some rote memory activities with the multiplication tables.

The oral and mental starters soon became established as the most effective part of the daily mathematics lesson. As was outlined in the interim report, teachers quickly recognized the value of pupils developing an accurate and rapid recall of number facts and of tier being able to apply this to solve problems. Pupils, too, appreciated their growing confidence and skill in handling numbers and enjoyed the 'quick-fire' question and answer sessions. (OFSTED, 2000b, p 10)

After watching a newly qualified teacher (NQT) conduct her lesson, I have concerns with the fast paced question and answer method that seems to be one of the practices promoted. If the oral and mental starter is also supposed to be a time for students "to explain the methods, and strategies they use to reach an answer, to consider the efficiency of various methods and to apply their knowledge of number facts to 'real-life' problems" (OFSTED, 2000b, p. 9), then can fast paced quick recall do all of this? As a classroom teacher I question the use of fast paced questioning and answering because I have found that not all children have the same memory recall patterns which allow for fast recall. While repeated practice will make retrieving of facts occur faster, what about allowing time for the real synthesis of knowledge to form? Students who find themselves slower in recall than the rest of the class may choose to not even attempt to answer the questions

and begin to shut down. The unfortunate thing is that it is probably these very students who cannot afford to become unmotivated.

The numeracy lesson is meant to be divided into three parts. From the pilot project it seems that the students now have a math vocabulary that is well developed which is one of the things that needed to be addressed. It also seems that students who come from the lower grades know what to expect in the numeracy lesson therefore, there is less disruption as students understand the format of the lesson. There is also a belief that culturally, teachers have never been strong in maths and therefore there is a real insecurity in providing the maths curriculum. Teachers need to build their confidence in this area and the reform initiatives are helping to address this. To some extent I also believe this to be the case in Atlantic Canada in that many elementary teachers do not feel comfortable teaching the Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation (APEF) math curriculum. For instance, when I attended a local APEF math inservice for elementary teachers, what I sensed was that the elementary teachers were very anxious about this new math and did not feel comfortable with the curriculum and worried about their success with teaching the material. This parallels what was witnessed with the implementation of the Numeracy Strategy.

#### **Further Insights into the NLNS**

As outlined in the document, *The National Numeracy Strategy: The Second Year*:

A plenary provides the opportunity for the teacher to review the objectives of the main teaching activity, reinforce and extend earlier work, summarize key ideas,

assess what pupils have learned during the lesson. Correct any common misconceptions or errors, and look ahead to the next lesson and set homework. (OFSTED, 2000b, p. 14)

Both the plenary in the numeracy and literacy were viewed as insufficient by the OFSTED inspectors I met. While there was written concern in both reviews of the Literacy Strategy and the Numeracy Strategy, and promises made by literacy and numeracy consultants during training sessions to work on this aspect of the lesson, I did not witness any specific time allotted during the training to focus on the plenary. This led me to believe that in the next assessment of the NLNS there will be slight improvements with the plenary but not enough to be considered satisfactory.

Another positive aspect of the strategies is that the curriculum is laid out for each individual grade level which helps prevent over teaching across grades. I believe this is what is needed with the APEF curriculum guides as I find there is unnecessary, repetitive teaching occurring at the grades 7 & 8 level in math.

I also found it interesting that *The National Numeracy Strategy: The first Year*, document states that the best teaching occurs at years six and reception (known as primary or kindergarten in North America) (OFSTED, 2000b, p. 2). Is this because the teachers in these positions are aware that these grades are key grades causing them to be more conscientious of their responsibilities? Or, is it because the students in both situations know the grades are special in different ways and learn more, since they are self-motivated? Or is it the perception of the people doing the assessment of teaching that these are key grades and they personally are hoping that there is a marked

improvement which influences how they preview the assessment? These questions intrigue me because of the situation I found myself in when teaching grade 8 math in Nova Scotia. I felt great pressure to make sure that students had mastered the skills needed to be successful in grade 9 maths. Even though several of the outcomes were to be covered in previous grades, many of the students had not achieved these skills, leaving them in a position of being keenly aware that if they did not master the skills before the end of grade 8, the students would not experience success in grade 9 math.

### **Grouping by Ability or Setting**

When the literacy hour was originally implemented, there was the expectation that students would be placed in small groups for mini lessons. Each group would be participating in a different lesson depending on ability. In my observations, the students were being placed in groups but often times the focus of these mini lessons were the same for each group. Time has shown that it is next to impossible for the teacher to implement three to four different mini-lessons during a twenty-minute session.

Students were grouped according to ability into homogenous groups, the downside of this being, students know how the grouping is done and why. In most of the primary schools, the groups stay the same per subject for the entire term. There are no opportunities for heterogeneous grouping in a cooperative learning sense. The groups are, however, different depending on the subject because students, as stated before, are grouped by ability and individual students have different skill ability depending on the subject in question. At the beginning of each new term, student groups are rearranged

based on their scores and progression. Students have the opportunity to either move to a higher or lower academic group. The document, *The National Numeracy Strategy: The First Year* states that “there had been an increase in setting for mathematics over the year: over quarter of schools visited now group at least some of their pupils in sets with similar levels of attainment.” (OFSTED, 2000b, p. 18). I found this policy interesting because homogenous grouping would be considered socially unacceptable in Canada, to some extent. The public would consider it to be an infringement on their rights, based on *The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms Act* (1985). That said, some type of setting does unofficially occur in Canada but it would not be described in a written policy but rather occur in an unwritten practice of a particular school or district. Woodhead, writing in *The Daily Telegraph* (2001) argues for grouping by ability:

If groups are organized by ability; it is then easier for the teacher to match the instruction to what each child knows and can do.

The argument against ability grouping is that children in lower groups will be demoralized. This will happen only if the teacher allows it.

It is a good idea to organize the class sometimes so that more able children can work with less able. Each child can benefit. (*Grouping by Ability*, The Daily Telegraph insert, 2001, p. 18)

The unfortunate thing about this ideal is that from my observations and from consultation with English teachers and the teacher interns at Harlow, mixed ability groups do not ever occur at most of the primary schools. Some of the teacher interns even found that heterogeneous grouping was frowned upon.

Woodhead (2001) states from his past experience on grouping by ability that, “there was little evidence that anyone had been “labelled” and made to feel inadequate” (p. 18) However, since my internship in England, I take a different spin on this issue. I



observed that it is still a common practice for teachers to demoralize their students in front of other students and call them names like, "stupid". If this is so engrained and accepted in the English culture, how can a teacher or researcher say there is no labeling? This is labeling by ability and it is threaded throughout the system but because it is systemic it is taken for granted. Students may learn to accept that they are poor in math and will have little success in the subject of question. As Fullan (1999) writes, "to achieve moral purpose is to forge interaction and even mutual interest across groups. Yet the problem is there are great tendencies to keep people different than ourselves at a distance" (p. 2). I also think this reflects the grouping patterns of the English culture. People who grow up with this structure will in most cases practice it in their own lives both professionally and personally and, if so, how will the English culture change the mindset of the society to allow the interaction of different groups? This brings us to the issue of multiculturalism.

### **Multiculturalism**

One of the major flaws I see with the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is that there is little to no discussion about how to manage multiculturalism in the framework. When I asked about this during the launching of the *Key Stage Three Strategies*, the coordinators delivering the session stated that multiculturalism was mentioned on pg. 14 of the manual and that they too had concerns about this 'over-sight'. The fact that it is "contained" only on p.14 of the manual shows that the curriculum is not particularly inclusive. The promotion video however demonstrated the token representations of

gender and race. When looking at race only Blacks were represented and only one individual in each category (teacher and student) was Black. The published evaluations of the NLNS progress also made little attempt to distinguish whether ethnic groups or minorities were benefiting from the NLNS initiative.

Anyone who teaches a minority group is aware that such groups have specific educational needs which often center around literacy. Because of the population dynamic in certain areas of England, one would expect there to be a multicultural aspect to the NLNS initiative. For instance, I question the following statement,

Marion Richardson Primary School in Tower Hamlets shows what can be achieved. Some 400 of the 489 pupils in the school have English as a second language, and there are high proportions with Special Educational needs and receiving free school meals. OFSTED recently described the school as demonstrating 'superb' racial harmony. All pupils have benefited from successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies: the schools key Stage 2 results were amongst the best in the country. The school has strong support from parents and governors. (DfEE, 2001, p. 33)

First, it has been my experience that most difficulties that center around racism in schools occur at the secondary level; therefore the fact that this is a primary school already reduces the probability of racial incidences. Secondly, it is schools that have populations where the racial groups are a minority compared to other groups such as whites that experience racist problems. That is why some racial and ethnic minorities are pushing for separate schooling systems. Have you heard of a predominantly Black or all Black school having racial problems within the school? We cannot deny the fact that many Black educators in North America felt a sense of loss when school segregation was disbanded because they felt that Black students being educated in their own culture by

their own people had a number of advantages which would be lost with desegregation. Also, it was not clear if this is a school composed of a mixture of visible minorities or a school that has just a large population from the same ethnic background. If the latter case were true then it would stand that there possibly would be less racial issues.

While Atlantic Canada still has much work to do in creating a multicultural educational system, we are much further ahead of the English system. However, there are variations. In Atlantic Canada, Newfoundland has just dismantled the denominational educational system. In Nova Scotia however, it would not be acceptable to repeat the Lord's Prayer or celebrate any Christian holidays. In England it is compulsory for all students to have religious studies all through their public schooling. All schools are required to have an assembly daily which is to be centered around Christian worship. I found this made me uncomfortable and perhaps some students with differing faiths feel the same way. The differences between Atlantic Canada and England may result from the fact that our society is composed of a diverse group of people, while in England there are only pockets of diversity in larger centers such as London and Birmingham. However, through government statements, it seems England believes

By approaching reform this way we can ensure that it has a deep and lasting impact on pupil achievement and on the key goal of equality of opportunity and the development of the full potential of every young person. (DfEE, 2001, p. 3)

It can also be argued that we really are not in a position to determine how deep change occurs and how to manifest it. From this perspective it is dangerous to make such statements. The issue of equality is interesting as there is still no inclusion of

multicultural curriculum nor an inviting culture which accepts diversity. How can it be stated that equality of opportunity will occur, when it appears the system is established on the middle class, white, English speaking, Christian values?

Some of the interns here at Harlow even experienced the cruelty of the lack of tolerance and acceptance from students making fun of them being Canadian and the difference in accent. This group of training teachers are a part of the dominant ruling group as they are middle class, white, Christian and "English" speaking. Imagine what it must be like for those who have drastic differences such as Blacks or Muslims.

### Gender

While there is little mention about race or ethnicity in the government generated documents, there is a consistent message on the difference between gender in performance and evaluation. This repeatedly reminds me of how drenched the English culture is in male hegemony.

The issue of the comparatively poor attainment of boys in writing has been widely recognized in recent years. Although there is also a gender gap in reading, it is much more marked in writing. In the other two core subjects, science and mathematics, boys and girls perform similarly; if anything boys do better than girls in mental arithmetic. (OFSTED, 2000a, p. 18)

Even though girls are doing not so well in the mental maths, there is never mention of trying to get girls up to speed with their mental maths in the numeracy report. Yet, the concern over boys' performance is found in a number of documents. "Boys do less well than girls in all aspects of English at both key stages, particularly in writing" (OFSTED, 2000a, p. 2). I sometimes wonder if this has to do with culture. I wonder if anyone has

looked at the problem in this light. Is it possible that it is not socially “in” or ‘cool’ for boys to read at home or to practice reading outside of school? And hasn’t there been a historic pattern of girls doing better in the reading and writing than boys? This is an area of research outside the scope of my internship, but it raises interesting questions.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The NLNS and the curriculum guides gave teachers a framework to work from and within. The reform required teachers and department heads to develop daily lesson plans, medium-term goals or plans, and long-term goals as part of the school improvement plan. More specifically, teachers were not only required to turn in their schemes of lesson plans weekly, but were also required to create a program for each term (medium goals) plus a yearly plan (long term plan). My school visits often included discussions around the different range of goals for the school. Within the system, the head teacher is responsible for looking at all weekly lesson plans for all teaching staff. While this in theory may seem like one method of assessment and creating accountability, logistically a head teacher, with more than sixty-five teaching staff, cannot possibly look at the weekly lesson plans on a regular basis. Some head teachers state that these lesson plans are filed as a paper trail and used for OFSTED inspections or for individual teacher assessment or when there is a classroom issue concerning the delivery of curriculum. Teachers stated that lesson plans passed in before the week are not always reflective of what will happen in the classroom for that particular week. Therefore some schools require that teachers have a general weekly lesson plan

developed ahead of time and at the end of the week a version of what actually happened. As a classroom teacher, if no one is going to come and follow up on the lesson plans that I have created for the week, it could and would be easily possible to submit a set of plans which are appropriate for the curriculum and the required outcomes but then teach something that is not at all reflective of what was submitted on paper. This deviation of the expected lessons may be influenced by variables such as unexpected special events which take away from class time, seasonal flu epidemics resulting in large student absenteeism, incidents at school which require attention during class time, or a re-evaluation of the background knowledge of students demands that the lessons be revamped. In summary, having sound lesson plans submitted in advance or later cannot guarantee that quality teaching and learning is occurring in the classroom.

As a part of classroom organization and best practices, the strategies required aims and objectives be written on the board for students to see. From this, there is a clear direction of what is to be learned during a certain period of time and it is always reviewed. There is also a sense that the standardized curriculum and NLNS make the daily running of classes consistent between classes and grades. Many of the student interns from Harlow commented that this was a positive thing, as pupils knew what to expect and what the procedures were during the classes.

One of the very specific emphases of the NLNS is the idea of how best to organize a lesson. This can be seen with the format for the literacy hour and the three-part numeracy lesson. For instance, both the literacy hour and the numeracy lesson have

a plenary at the end. The purpose of the plenary and the importance of it is soon made clear within the reviews of the NLNS where detailed descriptions are provided for educators and the public. The plenary was also a point of focus as many of the OFSTED inspections indicate that this was the weakest part of many lessons evaluated in literacy and numeracy.

I thought it was interesting to hear the teacher interns discuss the issue of teaching styles. It would appear from the general conversations that many of the 'new' teaching styles that these interns took for granted are not the mainstay in English schools. The interns themselves found this to be a unique cultural experience. A more elaborate discussion of this observation will be presented in the next chapter.

The practice of having regular classroom teacher absent from the classroom has created disruptions in learning and contributed to the perceived increase in behavioral problems. Further discussion of this problem will be addressed in the next chapter.

### **Teaching Assistants (TA)**

When the NLNS was implemented it was recognized that there was going to be a need for increased support. Therefore the government increased funding and the number of TAs. The school is also responsible for professional development of its TAs. TAs appear to be treated as a part of the teaching staff, much more than what is in Nova Scotia. In England the TAs attend all of the school's professional development (PD) sessions and are paid for the training, plus they have their own certificate programs and separate professional development programs.

### **Resources**

Many teachers voiced their concern that the resources needed to carry out the curriculum were not available. The interesting part of this belief is that from my viewpoint, the schools in England were very well equipped as compared to Atlantic Canada. The perception from the English was that Canadians have the ideal educational system and many felt embarrassed to let me see their resources. The irony of it all was that I was the embarrassed one, because their perception was so wrong. Schools in the Atlantic Provinces as compared to the schools in this supposedly socio-economically-deprived area, were blatantly under staffed and under resourced. I think it comes down to the cultural differences and expectations. I feel proud that I have been able to teach with the limited resources provided to me. I would love to take some of these teachers and place them into my teaching environment to get their reaction to my situation. I guess you do not really appreciate what you have until you are in a situation where it is no longer available.

### **Policies**

“Policy coherence is always difficult to achieve. Significant attempts have been made with NLNS to ensure consistency within the Strategies, as well as coherence and integration with other agencies and policies” (Earl et al., 2000, p. 15). The following sections outline two primary NLNS policy issues: centralization vs decentralization, and partnerships.



### Centralization vs. Decentralization

How can education exist with less influence from the state politics? It is acknowledged that schooling is the responsibility of the state but this also causes problems. There is a sense that the political parties realize that real educational reform will take a long time to accomplish and the results will not appear during one political office time period. Many of the changes implemented are meant to show results within the political time frame of a governing party. Many teachers believe that education would not be victim to so many drastic philosophical shifts if it were somehow detached from the immediate political arena. The report, *Schools: Building on Success*, talks about giving successful schools more control or autonomy. What I see is one aspect of the struggle for the delicate balance between centralization and decentralization. I agree with Fullan (1993) who writes,

The centre and local units *need each other*. You can't get anywhere by swinging from one dominance to another. What is required is a different two-way relationship of pressure, support and continuous negotiation. It amounts to simultaneous top-down bottom-up influence. (p. 38)

Is the education reform in England made up of a combination of both top-down and bottom-up ideas and pedagogy? I have seen the top-down approach implemented. As indicated from the quote below, the national government also makes it clear that it has taken this top-down approach on purpose.

The reforms since 1997 have been driven from central Government. This was necessary in order to generate a new sense of urgency, to create a new culture focused firmly on standards and to demonstrate that step-change in pupil performance was not only possible but could be achieved rapidly. (DfEE, 2001, p. 91)

The Government is centralizing education through standards initiatives such as the NLNS, National Curriculum, OFSTED Inspections, and teacher training programs while decentralizing by providing more financial autonomy to the schools and LEAs. This increased autonomy is represented by boards of governors which have increased responsibilities and high accountability and finance departments which manage the schools own finances and decision making of the daily running of the schools from staff hiring to the contracting of cleaning staff. Upon attending a governor meeting for the Burnt Mill School, I quickly realized the roles and responsibilities of a governor position encompass the entire school experience. For instance, governors have responsibilities centered around child protection, special education, inclusion, health and safety issues, implementation of the Human Rights Act, etc. Because the governance is such an important part of the educational system, there is training held year round on educational issues and the running of a governing body. In addition, members can actually complete a certification in Educational Studies in Governance where specifically, "you need to attend an induction course and the five introductory Courses enable you to gain the Certificate of Educational Studies (Governors) (Cert. Ed.)."(Governor Development, April 2001-March 2002, p. 21). Members can also receive an Advanced Certificate in School Governance (BTEC) where you are required to keep a "portfolio to show the work of your governing body." (Essex County Council, April 2001-March 2002, p. 21)

Fullan (1993) suggests there is perceived control associated with the top part of educational hierarchies. It would appear that the English government believes that it has control of the reform process, but this perceived control is limited since teachers have

power as masses and can determine the educational reform's fate. This whole reform initiative can fall because of teachers and their role in this process is very important, yet I do not know if either the government or the teachers themselves realize this fact. I am sure the government is beginning to sense the importance of teachers especially with the shortage of educators and the problems that are associated with this dilemma. The teacher shortage will be addressed in further detail in the following chapter.

In order for there to be some type of bottom-up movement which will complement or work with the top-down initiatives, I believe that there should be some type of ownership felt for the NLNS by the teachers. Because the NLNS initiative has been very much controlled by the national government and little consultation by the teaching population has occurred, I question how ownership will happen. I did know that there were growing concerns about literacy and possibly numeracy from the grassroots level before the NLNS initiative took place. This only became clear to me when I visited Dr. Susan Hart of Cambridge University and read some of the action research conducted by teachers in the area. For instance, there is a partnership between the University of Cambridge and a group of primary teachers known as TULIPS: Teachers Understanding Literacy Improvement in Primary School, whose project is, "to examine and reflect on [teachers] literacy values and practices in the context of the introduction of the NLS. The central concern of the project is the improvement of literacy opportunities for children in primary school" (Hanke, 2000 p. 288). It was only in this arena that I had the opportunity to really discover academically some voices of teachers. It would appear that even though the government may attempt to communicate with the public through group forums, and

target groups, and teachers through the cascading effect with co-ordinators, the independent voice of teachers can really only be discovered through academic writing. This I find to be limiting, as many teachers do not have the time to commit to another demanding, rigorous task.

### Partnerships

It is important to understand the difficulty in creating deep change in educational systems. Fullan (1993) states:

We are facing a societal problem with two parts: schools that are ineffective as learning organizations, and agencies and institutions outside the school (families, social agencies, business organizations, higher education institutions, governments) that are also ineffective (see Goodlad, 1992). This is less laying blame everywhere than it is a recognition of the enormity of the problem – it is literally not solvable – and a realization that alliances and partnerships beyond the school are vital if we are to have any chance of making substantial progress. (p. 46)

As one of its strategic approaches the government states: “We will encourage partnerships between the education service and all those who have an interest in its success” (DfEE, 2001, p. 17). This statement is qualified with the following paragraph:

We will encourage those within the education service to learn from each other and to work with and learn from those outside it - parents, communities, the cultural sector and business. The growth of learning opportunities at home and in the community, spurred on by dramatic technological change, increases the need for educators to work with all kinds of partners. In this way the education service can not only learn from experience of change and progress elsewhere, it can also become a valued possession of society as a whole: a public service, which is absolutely central to the creation of a successful economy and society in the future. (p. 17)

The document *Schools: Building on Success* is meant to be about the schooling of children, yet there is quite a large focus on assisting families with programs such as

Family Literacy and Numeracy and the Adult and Community Learning Fund (DfEE, 2001 p. 20). Part of the second chapter in this document is devoted to children before school year age and their families. There is also a strong written pledge to combining services:

We want to retain the best which each profession offers, but provide more integrated services which are built around children's needs rather than professional structures. All the evidence shows that joined-up services deliver both better outcomes for children and better value for the public purse. (DfEE, 2001, p. 18)

While the national government has made these pledges publicly and has begun a number of initiatives which support the child in a more holistic context, discussions with people from the LEA indicate that they are aware of these intended partnerships but they admit that little has been done and this would be an area needing improvement.

In reference to Atlantic Canada, most educators believe that education at present requires considering the child in a holistic manner and attempting to meet individual needs. I believe that is why many junior high schools have attempted to implement the middle school philosophy. Partnerships with community groups and other government agencies have been recognized as a necessity and again attempts have been made to develop a successful partnership model. Unfortunately, the Atlantic provincial governments have also been faced with the challenge of deficit cutting which has placed greater pressure on these partnerships.

### **Accountability**

The performance data generated in England's standards-based approach to reform essentially becomes the mechanism for reporting which schools are performing well. Performance data influence parent's decisions to send their child to a particular school, allocation of funds, support, and resources, and school improvement plans. School success is demonstrated using league tables where results are published in newspapers and are also available on the World Wide Web. In addition to the league tables, which rank schools based on performance, there is also the value-added section of the school evaluations, which is meant to address the climate and culture of the schools. The values-added section would describe awards which the school may have received for improvement, student morale, achievements outside the academic domain, and possibly clubs or groups associated with the schools such as a student fun drama group. OFSTED reports are also available to the public. When the original league tables were published under the Honorable Chris Woodhead's direction, the focus was on what was commonly referred to as 'naming and shaming' (Earl et al., 2000). Naming schools which were not improving student performance and shaming the teaching staff and school and LEAs for the lack of performance was seen as the outcome. This naming and shaming accountability process has lessened somewhat in the past few years.

The OFSTED inspections have a large impact on determining the school's future. My conclusion is that it is wise to use caution when reading these OFSTED reports as I perceived that they are open to a large degree of subjectivity and vagueness. For

instance, the following excerpt is the OFSTED inspection of the Dance discipline from the Burnt Mill Expressive Arts OFSTED Report.

The teaching of dance is very good. Teachers have high expectations of both the effort and behavior of pupils. Very good relationships, very good subject knowledge and good evaluation of pupils' work ensure that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress. Teachers make use of information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the pupils' needs. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, but there are instances where teaching has some shortcomings. In a very small number of lessons, for example, insufficient challenge and pace constrain progress.

There is no notion of where "good" fits into an improvement gradient here. While the inspector may be some one who is qualified to conduct these assessments, I still feel that the individual's personal values influence the assessment.

While most schooling is public, these educational organizations are encouraged to compete for students, programs, teaching staff, and LEA funding. While all students are presented with the opportunity to be educated, not all students have equal educational opportunity. Chris Woodhead and John Clare (2001) reflect this belief with the following statement from their guide, *The best for your children: The Definitive Parent's Guide to Education*.

The first thing to say is that many parents, particularly in rural areas, will not have a choice, and many more, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas, will not have a meaningful one. (The Daily Telegraph, p. 16)

This statement may be admitting the reality of education but I do not think it should be taken as a cultural practice that cannot be altered. How can schools better themselves when they are not given fair representation?

I also find it disturbing that Woodhead and Clare advise parents to read and interpret the assessment results for schools without any regard to improving the schools:

If a school is not teaching pupils to read and write properly, it is not worth bothering with. Your child will do best among others who learn to read and write well, whether because of the homes they come from or the teaching they receive. (p. 16)

The intent is that parents withdraw students from low achieving schools and send them to high achieving ones. However, if parents of high achievers at one school all leave for another then there is serious trouble. Average students have nothing to strive for, and the parental support that generally comes with high achievers would be lost, therefore, the links to the community, lost. Struggling schools need an infusion of students, families, and parents who can positively contribute to the educational organization. This promotion of shopping around for the school that best suits them and their children can be detrimental for a whole community of learners. Is the Government in fact promoting an inclusive society or a class system? It also appears to go against Fullan's view of the need for students to feel attached to their school.

I would hypothesize that the greater the emphasis on academic achievement through high stakes accountability, the greater the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. The main reason for this is that poor performing students do not need more pressure, they need greater attachment to the school and motivation to want to learn. Pressure by itself in this situation actually demotivates poor performing students." (Fullan,1999, p. 19)

I think awareness of the impact of school selection by parents and students is very important for the educational reform in England especially with the naming and blaming that has gone on in the past. The intention of the NLNS is to directly focus on



those students who are indeed the low performers and the way of measuring accountability is through the testing. I think Fullan's previous statement brings awareness that there must be a balance reached between competitiveness and the unfairness that can arise with achievement tests, school performance, and school selection. If one is not careful the purpose of the initiatives will end up contributing to the problem rather than aiding it.

### **Funding and Workable Governance Structures**

The OISE/UT research team were asked to undertake an inquiry into the costing and cost-effectiveness of the Strategies. I feel this is the aspect of my inquiry that I concentrated on the least because I did not have the necessary resources to thoroughly investigate it. As a visiting observer of the educational system, and from my experience teaching in Canada, I feel the English government has made a large financial commitment and has concentrated a large amount of resources to the NLNS. At the same time, I discovered that many of the teaching staff believe they do not have adequate resources. I think this difference in opinion is, as stated earlier in the chapter, partly due to cultural differences. When in the math classrooms in England, I think I have abundant resources compared to what I have experienced in my own teaching in Atlantic Canada. I believe that is not the quantity of resources that improves students performance, but the quality of the teaching that occurs, regardless of the resources available.

The report, *The National Numeracy Strategy: The First Report* discusses the use of leading mathematics teachers (LMT). These are teachers identified around the country

who have their classrooms open for educators to come and watch a model lesson. I discovered that in the Essex County, these teachers are not evenly distributed but were in fact found in one specific part, making accessibility drastically reduced. This is a concern since the report noted that "In a few LEAs, the demand from schools has been so great that some teachers have had to wait several weeks before being able to visit a school with an appropriate match of year"(DfEE, 2000b, p.16).

When the NLNS was implemented, the government pledged extensive funds and training programs for teachers that were present in the educational system. While the financial commitment and the training programs are extensive, the delivery of the training has become an issue for many schools for two reasons. Firstly, many schools had to wait for very long periods of time before professional development was available to them. For instance, with the NLNS being implemented into Key Stage Three this September, 2001, there are two, possibly three people, responsible for servicing 79 schools for the month of October. This is not logistically possible. These timing issues are problems which the Nova Scotia government also struggles with in implementing new programs and often times there is no assessment process in place to gauge whether the training is effective in changing the practices in the classroom. Secondly, there is also a concern with the school training and the actual visits that are to be made to the schools. In some instances as well, there is too much time which passes between the training and the outside assessment of the training success.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE LOCAL LENS

The second lens of the framework adopted from the document *Watching & Learning*, focuses on studying the NLNS implementation process from a local perspective through the motivation, capacity, and situation of teachers.

#### **Motivation**

Motivation in this context can be considered to be the desire, will and/or commitment teachers have to participate in and achieve the intended goals of the current educational reform. The following section analyzes the motivation of teachers through the indicators: goals, capacity beliefs, and content beliefs.

#### **Goals**

In many ways, I found the micro-level consideration of teacher motivation to be highly related to the macro-level policy levers. That is to say, the way the government implements the programs affects the buy-in of teachers and the public to the program, therefore influencing the motivation of teachers. For instance, educational reform in England, in particular the NLNS initiative, was driven by the public's growing concern over the quality of state education. This fact made me keenly interested in observing and discussing how well the political party's goal and vision had been transpired into the school's vision and then into individual teacher beliefs and values. How does a government lead in this instance? How would leadership theories apply to organizations such as national governments participating in a top-down initiative?

It is important to understand that for any educational reform to create lasting, deep and meaningful change, teachers undoubtedly hold the key to the fragile delivery of the proposed vision. As Fullan (1993) writes in *Change Forces*, "The skills and habits of everyday teachers are central to the future of learning societies"(p. 103). If real educational reform is to succeed, then there has to be a realization that teachers have to become change agents driven by a moral purpose (Fullan, 1993), and this cannot be accomplished by trying to sell teachers a vision wrapped in professional marketing propaganda. There has to be some type of leadership practice, which speaks to the mental models (Senge, 1992) of frontline teachers. Demonstrated leadership must have a vision described as "the ability to imagine different and better conditions and the ways to achieve them" (DuBrin, 1998) or as "a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization" (Nanus, cited in Leithwood 1999, p. 56).

A significant barrier to gaining teacher support in this way exists however. Huberman (1988) as cited in Leithwood et al., (1999) "reminds us that most veteran teachers experience pressure to implement a large handful of these substantial innovations over the course of their careers. But the experience leaves few teachers with much enthusiasm for yet another round of change" (p. 39). One teacher from Steward's Secondary School commented that it could be depressing to think that one has been teaching long enough to see the cyclical pattern of "new" initiatives relabeled and retried only to be abandoned later.

I believe the NLNS implementation is at a turning point. The government made a conscious choice to implement the NLNS from a top-down approach in order for there to

be a sense of urgency and strong commitment, and also to have a high degree of control in the beginning stages. But the beginning stages have passed and the spin off of the top-down approach is the teacher shortage. In my opinion, to continue partnerships with existing teachers and create an environment desirable for new teachers, the government must now alter its approach and provide some type of forum and opportunity for teachers to question and challenge their beliefs related to the reform. Meta-cognitive analysis cannot be forced nor can it be mandated, but with an inviting and encouraging setting, teachers will be provided with the support needed to take a very personal journey. This forum for discovery cannot occur with prescribed training sessions and rigid assessment methods alone. I believe that transformational leadership provides one avenue for value seeking and moral confirmation. How or whether the National Government intended to do this is not quite clear to me. As Fullan (1993) states, "moral purpose needs a moral engine, and that engine is individual, skilled change" (p. 40). Skilled change also comes from teachers being educated in and contemplating the application of change theory, organizational theory, and leadership theory. I made a point of focusing in on these theories during all of my conversations only to find that other than university academics, few educators at all levels understood any of the theory behind change, organizations, or leadership. When asked if there had been any mention of these theories or concepts during teacher training or professional development the answer was generally negative. I was surprised to find that there was little focus on the theory behind the process. I would have thought that at least there would have been a discussion of one of these concepts during a university education course, especially since the National Government was so

serious about revamping the educational system of England, including the teacher training programs.

### **Capacity Beliefs**

Capacity beliefs are described as “the extent to which teachers feel that they have, or can acquire, the knowledge and skills necessary to implement NLNS” (Earl et al. 2000, p. 23). I believe this is an interesting aspect to consider when looking at the implementation of the NLNS. Rosenholtz, 1989 (as cited in Leithwood et al., 1999) claims,

Teacher’s beliefs about their own professional capacities are often eroded by taken-for-granted conditions of their work. These conditions include infrequent opportunities for teachers to receive feedback from credible colleagues about the quality of their practices as a consequence of isolated school cultures and ineffective supervisory practices. (p. 10)

I believe historically, the capacity beliefs of teachers in England have also been greatly influenced by the Thatcherian Era. A repeated theme was prevalent in a number of schools visited which suggested that the Thatcher government destroyed the teaching profession by creating a negative public impression of teachers as a group. This negative image still has some bearing on the profession and I believe may have played a role in the teacher shortage that now exists. While some teachers subscribe to the previous party mandate, and are now beginning to question the Blair government, most are not yet ready to vote for the Conservatives as the old problems are still too fresh in their minds. While the present government has continued some of the programs of the Thatcher government (such as the OFSTED), a new approach toward how to better assist teachers in professional development has occurred. OFSTED, while of the Thatcherian Era appears to be constructively critical. The national government has also attempted to break the

isolation so common to classroom teachers. They have done this by encouraging departments to work together in improving teaching and learning through a peer coaching model with department heads and line managers evaluating actual classroom teaching and offering the ability for teachers to visit colleague's classrooms.

When focusing on motivation, teachers, and the Thatcher government in a conversation with a head teacher, the comment was made that, with the recent push for capitalism, "something was lost", "that there does not, seem to be a moral purpose anymore since young people do not choose their jobs from a moral perspective, or as a vocation."

#### **Context Beliefs**

"The extent to which teachers believe that the reform will be supported over time" (Earl et al., 2000 p. 24). It would appear that most teachers of the English school system believe that the reform effort will continue to be supported, as the national government has made education targets part of their election campaigns and manifestos. For this reason, there is a general consensus that the government cannot afford to have the reform effort not succeed in the public's mind, therefore at the moment there is still great support for the initiative, politically. Whether, the financial support or training will be available to the degree it is right now for the long-term, is another matter. Most educators would agree that it would be only natural for there to be an eventual decrease in spending and support as the educational reform progresses into a stage of maintenance and sustainability. The degree to which support might be withdrawn, however, is debatable.

I suspect that the context beliefs that are possessed by the education profession have, in part, caused large numbers of teachers to leave the profession. The attitude that, "this too shall pass", is no longer plausible and teachers now realize that they have to make a decision to either stay in the profession and work with the new initiatives or choose to leave.

It should also be pointed out that motivation can be developed through both financial and non-financial incentives. It is very apparent that the national government has taken the time to assess how incentives of both types can improve the motivation of teachers. The DfEE magazine, *Teachers*, (March, 2001) devotes a section to teacher professional development focusing on professional development support and opportunities. Two sections of particular interest were:

Improving your professional development... most teachers do a demanding job The demands on teaching are changing all the time, so professional development is the way teachers can remain effective, keep on top of their subject, make the most of what new technology offers and build the skills to enhance their careers.

- A strong professional development culture in a school, frequently makes it a much better place to work, with supportive relationships and enthusiastic, self-confident staff, so school like this find it easier to attract and retain good staff.
- We want children to develop enthusiasm for lifelong learning, since this is increasingly the key to success in adult life. That is more likely if they see their teachers involved in regular learning.

What's in it for me? Six different DfEE funded opportunities:

1. £500 Professional Bursaries
2. Up to £3,000 for a Best Practice Research Scholarship.
3. Two week visits abroad through Teacher's International Professional Development.
4. Up to six weeks on a sabbatical.
5. Early Professional Development for teachers in their second and third years of teaching.
6. Individual learning Accounts giving discounts of up to £200 a year off courses and other learning opportunities. (DfEE, 2001 March, p. 13)



Both of these selections demonstrate how the government has considered both the financial and non-financial incentives for teachers.

The national government has also developed a very elaborate pay and performance management plan, a program that is meant to reward teachers for their performance. While teachers in Atlantic Canada receive pay increases for years of service, additional completion of university courses and/or obtainment of degrees, they do not receive financial rewards for exhibiting best practices related to teaching and learning. English teachers begin a pay spine which increases with years of service but there are additional pay incentives which the government has developed "to broaden the concept of responsibility to include the management of learning as well as the management of resources" (DfEE, 1999, p. 20). Teachers in England can also be rewarded for improving student performance and contributing to the school community. The selection criteria is outlined such that, "successful candidates will need to show a high degree of competence, achievement and commitment resulting in positive pupil outcomes" (DfEE, 1999, p. 11) and in order to do this, "assessment will be made against national standards characterizing experienced and high-performing classroom teachers" (DfEE, 1999, p. 11). The assessment is "backed up by a portfolio of information about the teacher's performance, including classroom observation, analysis of pupils' results over time, and evidence of the teacher's commitment to professional performance" (DfEE, 1999 p. 11).

### Capacity

“Capacity refers to both understanding and skill. Understanding may develop through explanation and reading but skill – the ability to do something – also requires repeated cycles of practice and feedback” (Earl et al., 2000, p. 26). I think the national government has spent a tremendous amount of money and time to provide teachers and the public at large, with the opportunity to understand the need for education reform and how the process will occur. The resource materials for the schools in England were elaborate and detailed compared to Atlantic Canada standards. The central publishing office of the DfEE are efficient in providing materials to teachers free of charge and within five working days. The internship experience did not provide enough time for me to determine the direct use of these resource materials.

The difficulty faced by the English government is that the reform essentially centers around the practices (skill) used by teachers in the classroom. This means that restructuring the system should lead to the target of increased students performance and achievement. Most researchers would agree that there is, at present, no efficient or preferred method of professional development delivery established. However, Earl et al., 1999 describe the key aspects of procedural knowledge as “the basis of skilled practice” (p. 13). The key aspects are:

(a) Developing a knowledge structure to guide one’s mental or physical activity, (b) engaging in that activity guided by the knowledge structure, (c) obtaining feedback about the adequacy of one’s “actions”, and (d) refining the guiding knowledge structure. (p. 13)

It would appear that this mentioned process can be effective in generating procedural knowledge but only when all steps of the process have been sufficiently addressed in order for their to be success. In support of the key aspects described above, the national government has increased the number of inservice days for teachers in each school. There are now fifteen inservice days available for each secondary school to *implement The National Numeracy Strategy at Key Stage Three*. Just because there is increased time for professional development, however, does not mean that the NLNS will become woven into the educational fabric. In some instances I think the government may be trying to change behavior through training programs and assessments instead of appealing to teacher's values through the process of reflection. While the number of inservice days has increased, the professional development of inservicing or insetting does not provide the avenue at this point to reach teachers on an intimate level where they are allowed to reflect and reassess their philosophy and value systems in order to alter their practices in the classroom. Nor does it allow those inserviced teachers to have an impact on the school where they teach as we are dealing with changing a systemic issue which is quite capable of resisting change. As Leithwood et al., (1999) states "several days a year in a professional development workshop simply will not translate into transformed instructional capacity." (p. 49).

Whether fully resulting from professional development factors or not, after observing the nine student interns from the Harlow campus in their schools, it became clear that individual teachers and schools were approaching the implementation of the NLNS in very different manners. One primary school decided to not follow the National

Literacy Strategy but rather to follow the curriculum guide using an alternative approach. Another school was very rigid in following the NLNS documentation, discouraging any deviation from the structure, or creativity in delivery of the curriculum. This observation is consistent with Leithwood et al. (1999) who state, "teachers and administrators, faced with school reform initiatives such as the NLS and NNS, will make sense of these initiatives through the application of their existing knowledge structures" (p. 13). Application of new educational initiatives can be a worthwhile task but there is delicate balance between how far the NLNS should be stringently followed and how far interpretation of the new initiatives should be modified to suit the school environment. If the knowledge constructs of individual teachers and schools are not analyzed and/or clear instructions communicated at all levels, then the existing problems for which the reform was initiated may go unaddressed and the purpose of the NLNS lost if the new initiative is modified ineffectively in individual schools.

Another factor limiting capacity is lack of time. A maths teacher and a coordinator commented that there seemed to be more time talking about what they needed to do and less time doing it. Also contributing to the lack of time is that standards-based educational reform requires a tremendous amount of paperwork as part of the recording of student programs. This translates into a tremendous amount of work on top of the regular stress of classroom teaching and professional development. In addition, the professional development that all teachers have to complete creates additional workload because while these teachers are away from their classrooms, they

must provide lessons for the supply teachers. This leads us into the final aspect of the local lens, situation.

### Situation

Earl et al. (2000) interpret situation to be a workplace where motivation and capacity interact to “influence the extent to which NLNS will be implemented in schools” (p. 27). This relates to whether the educational system in England is seen as an integral part of a successful political agenda. At times, this relationship can be obvious. As pointed out by Earl et al. (2000) “it is not easy to establish a clear distinction between a reform cycle and an election cycle” (p. 29). Further, from a statement taken from the DfEE document, *Schools: Building on Success*, “education service has demonstrated over the last three and a half years that rapid, fundamental reform, which really makes a difference to children and young people, is possible” (DfEE, 2001, p. 14). I question this statement because how can it be claimed with any confidence, that in only three and a half years of implementation, the reform has caused deep change? Other critics ask as well whether this bureaucracy has contributed to one of the most critical factors influencing the potential success of the NLNS: the teacher shortage. Fullan (2001) claims that we do not yet know how long it takes for a state to reform. For instance, “our current conclusion is that you can turn around an elementary school in 3 years, a high school in about 6 years and a school district (depending on size) in about 8 years” (Fullan as cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 17). Therefore, the success of implementing a state wide educational reform in three and half years does not seem probable.

I also think it is very interesting how the English Government uses leverage gained from educational academics to support their cause. In the document, *Schools: Building on Success*, when describing the use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in primary schools, the Department of Education and Employment states,

To achieve them we have progressively put in place what the leading Canadian educator, Michael Fullan, has called among the most ambitious, comprehensive, and aligned national strategies anywhere in the world. Primary teachers, heads, and support staff have responded magnificently. (DfEE, 2001, p. 10)

I wonder if those who wrote this document have looked at Fullan's (1993, 2000, 2001) work closely because he is quoted as saying the above but also stresses that it is never guaranteed that any reform initiatives will produce deep change, and that the study of large-scale reform initiatives is a relatively new area.

I think it is also a bold statement to say that staff have responded magnificently, when based on my conversations with teachers, it seems that many teachers left the system as a result of the reform beginning in 1997. In this way, the NLNS may have been a significant factor in creating the current teacher shortage. Of course, one cannot know the complete fallout of attempting educational reform and I believe that while the national government was very diligent in attempting to foresee any possible negative spin-offs, it did not anticipate the NLNS in any way contributing to the massive teacher shortage that is now plaguing the country.

The greatest cultural shock for me was the complex organization of the educational system both at the local and national levels. At first, trying to understand the hierarchical, bureaucratic structure felt overwhelming and mind-boggling. For instance,

this would be a general description of the hierarchical system of Stewards Secondary School. The bottom level is comprised of regular classroom teachers and tutors for whom teaching or tutoring are their only duties. The next level is the middle management team, who are individuals who hold the management posts, Head of Department or Head of Years. It is important to note that even teachers at these Head's levels and above still have some teaching responsibilities. The next level would be made up of the leadership group, also known as senior managers. These individuals would be Lead Teachers in the school for specific areas such as pupil welfare, marketing, teaching and learning, assessment, key stage three and four, pastoral studies, information and communication technology (ICT) and staff development. Following this level is the Deputy Head Teacher and finally the Head Teacher for the school. Additionally, there is an administration division, which is made up of finance managers. Many of Webber's characteristics of bureaucracy are exemplified here through the hierarchy of offices, the set of rules governing performance such as the National Curriculum and the NLNS, and the technical qualifications for selecting personnel (such as the teacher training programs and head teacher programs that are prevalent in the system). The system can be also usefully analyzed through the structural frame found in Bolman and Deal's (1997) model for reframing organizations. This structural frame emphasizes, "goals, specialized roles and formal relationships" (Bolman and Deal, 1997, p. 13). While this structuralist approach may be appropriate for the initiating of a performance-based educational reform, it may not necessarily be efficient throughout the entire reform effort. For

example, the existent structures may need to be further adjusted or become more flexible if teacher shortages continue or if workloads for all teachers are deemed too great.

### Possible Causes of the Teacher Shortage

#### Quality of Life

One of the themes that have come out for me is that no matter how hard the government tries to standardize curriculum and teaching practices, there will always be variation. I think the policies were created from a structuralist perspective with the expectation that there should be little attention to the affective domain. In reality this is not possible, since at very least, organizational culture and climate will play into the equation. Using a metaphor, if one wants to look at an organization as being a living system (Fullan, 1999), then the educational system in England, can be seen as a massive beast that cannot be dictated completely from the top of a hierarchical pyramid; there are too many variables at play. Schools as organizations and teachers as individual educators struggle with the demand of trying to conform to the rigidity of the initiatives while attempting to meet the needs of their students. If you consider Csikszentmihalyi's (1993) idea of flow, that activities are best completed when they occur naturally and are intrinsically motivating to individuals, the needs of teachers must be met. This relates to the idea that to an extent, in teaching or any career, employees need to have their needs fulfilled and that in this way, schools are there for teachers as well as students (Fullan, 2001).



This brings me to the issue of teacher values, which was also briefly mentioned in Chapter 3. In terms of potential success for the reform, the extent to which the national government's goals and the educator's beliefs are in line, could significantly affect the outcomes of the NLNS. Teachers may fundamentally believe the general goals and values of the national program are vital to the educational reform as a whole but may not develop any connection of these to their own personal value system as a teacher. As Leithwood et al. (2000) observed, in other large scale educational reform efforts, when teachers did not feel their own moral and values coincided with the larger reform initiative, when they were given opportunities to leave, they left. Could this be what happened in England?

Because the national government has prescribed a structuralist framework for the implementation of the NLNS educational reform, my conclusion is that, many teachers seem to find themselves under additional pressure. This increased pressure comes from the repetitive paperwork associated with the accountability systems in place, such as reports, elaborate marking schemes and additional student testing. On top of all of this is the demand for teacher professional development, which requires additional time and effort, potentially affecting teacher's personal time.

In addition, teachers are "meeting-ed" to death. Because of the potentially elaborate hierarchical system as described, teachers are not just teachers. All teachers are asked, expected and in some cases pressured to take on additional responsibilities, such as the management position of being the key person for a particular grade, subject, Key Stage etc. Teachers are paid more for their extra duties but the result is that the higher up one

goes in the pyramid, the more meetings one is expected to attend and the busier life becomes. Interestingly, when members of the LEA were asked why there was a teacher shortage, the response was that whenever the economy in England is thriving, there is always a teacher shortage as teachers are able to find work elsewhere which entails less stress for as much as or even more money. Economic booms give disgruntled and tired teachers a way out, which is not, of course, entirely negative. My reflection to this on the whole, however, is that if that is the cyclical pattern, then should the national government not have foreseen that there was going to be a teacher shortage? Also, if this is a cyclical pattern, then why has the government not taken the time to figure out why this pattern exists and put in place a different organizational structure, which would lessen the practice?

### **Aging Teacher Population**

Another observation made during my internship was that the teaching population in England is an aging population, just as in Atlantic Canada, which brings its own unique dynamic. It is also necessary, then, for the national government to understand that teaching careers occur in cyclical, cohort patterns and the stage that certain groups are in that cycle influences what their responses will be toward new initiatives. While it's a general statement, it may be true that some teachers close to retirement will not be motivated to commit the personal time and effort for yet another new initiative, in which they will participate for only a brief time. I am not sure of the reason, but the national government changed the retirement criteria for teachers at the start of the reform,

resulting in many teachers who were near the time for retirement to having to work longer than they had planned. As a number of veteran teachers commented, this change in the national retirement plan definitely did not do anything to help motivate teachers to participate in the educational reform process in general. Some teachers also mentioned that there was not enough awareness of the teaching profession for high school graduates making career choices and that more effort should be made to promote teaching as a career.

### **Student Discipline**

Another possible reason why there is a teacher shortage could be because there is concern over student discipline. According to some, many teachers are leaving the profession because they say that student discipline is out of control. My observations were that, in some cases, this seems to be correct, since many students seemed rude and disrespectful toward their teachers. This may in part be due to the fact that in my experience, students need consistency to behave well. In some cases through these reforms, instead of students experiencing the same teacher on a consistent basis for a particular subject, they may be subject to a regime of different teachers. These teachers may all be consistent in their approach to the curriculum and the guideline of delivery through the NLNS, yet these teachers differ in their approach to classroom management. At the secondary level, the largest disruption to student learning is staff absence, either due to illness, the lack of Teaching Units, meetings, inset days and other professional expectations. I did not think that student behavior is any worse in England than anywhere

else. It seems to be students' way of reacting to the situation at hand. Students may be fed up by having a different teacher for the same course and even though there may be an attempt to provide consistency through the national curriculum, the NLNS teachers have different personalities, teaching styles, tolerance levels, biases, and knowledge backgrounds. Therefore, how can we expect students to find that there would not be any disruption to the learning process?

### **Teacher Absenteeism**

Low teacher absenteeism is critical in England, as there are fewer teachers and fewer supply teachers. Often times when teachers have a preparation period they are required to cover for teachers or classes that do not have teachers. Teachers seem not to have a choice about this and there is a roster posted each day. Teachers accept this practice, but cover classes for which they have no content knowledge. They do not necessarily like it but there does not seem to be any real outcry in the staff room. It is almost accepted as culture. This class covering is once again more additional stress for the teacher when prep time is lost and especially when covering classes in subjects that are not their area of expertise.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are also experiencing substitute teacher shortages and most of the Atlantic Provinces will be experiencing teacher shortage in upcoming years. The interesting thing about this situation is the role of the union. In Nova Scotia, it would be impossible for teachers to be made to cover classes during their prep time as their contract with the government states they are to have 10% non-contact time. If the

government tried to impose such a rule, teachers would protest and the union would be taking the government to court for breach of contract, or filing a grievance.

### A Change in Approach?

The national government in England has not, in any of its documentation, directly linked the teacher shortage to the attempted educational reform, but it has, however, begun to recognize and the value of teachers in their role to work as change agents and essentially deliver the educational reform.

The success of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies shows what teachers can achieve when they have the right support. It proves too that no matter how coherent our framework for school improvement, no matter how successful our policies to strengthen primary and secondary education, world class standards will elude us unless we can recruit, retain, develop and motivate teachers and school leaders of real quality. (DfEE, 2001 p. 11)

By listening to teachers and heads at the frontlines, the government has recognized that the reform has created additional duties and more bureaucratic processes resulting in increased stress for teachers.

At times, our reforms have created increased workload and administrative burdens. We have begun to address this, by reducing dramatically the need for schools to bid for funds and cutting very sharply the paperwork sent to schools. Last term we achieved a two-thirds cut in the number of documents sent to secondary schools and a 40 per cent cut for primary schools, compared to the same term last year, but this is only a start." (DfEE, 2001 p. 11)

Some critics would argue that the government did not make a conscious effort to reduce the amount of paper, however. The reduction was just a coincidence because many of the initiatives began at the same time and that once the initial influx of material was distributed to the schools, less would come each year. Secondly, others wonder if there

may be fewer documents sent but that the material is doubled up or compacted to look like less but, in actuality, still is the same amount. Thirdly, the government is progressively updating its mode of communication and is using the Internet more. Just because less material in hard copy is going to schools does not mean that teachers and heads have less to read and manage.

To improve the teaching situation for teachers, the government has not only provided financial reward systems for teachers as mentioned in an earlier section, but also has pay incentives for recruitment of new teachers.

We have also now introduced new flexibilities in pay. Schools will have complete discretion for the first time to offer recruitment and retention payments of up to 5,000 pounds a year per teacher to help to tackle recruitment difficulties, particularly in high cost areas. New retention packages, worth up to 15,000 per teacher, will help to retain teachers in particularly challenging jobs by carrying forward allowances for periods of up to three years and paying them as a bonus at the end of the period. (DfEE, 2001 p.69)

Although the programs are in place, it seems that not all schools are informed about them. For example, when I was interviewed for teaching positions in England, I asked about bonuses because there is another additional bonus for teachers of maths. Both schools were unaware of any of these directives about special funding.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The unique situation at Harlow campus with the Memorial Student internship program and the campus' close connection to the public schooling system allowed for an internship experience that not only met, but surpassed my expectations. I experienced exponential growth through professional development and action research.

At first glance, the intricate reform effort and commitment to revamp the educational system by the English government seemed overwhelming. It quickly became very clear that the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy was intended to provide the policy support, guidelines, and financial backing to assist with this performance based educational reform.

While cautious of the present success, and initially skeptical of any future success of England's educational reform as a whole, I have seen, by looking through the lens of an academic approach to change and reform, that the English government has done its homework. There can be no doubt but that the Labor Government is very serious about reforming education and has attempted to apply the available research to its own situation.

Will the goals targeted through the NLNS be successful? Will the change brought about by the reform be sustainable? There is no way to predict. I do know however, that it is imperative for the government to address the teacher shortage. Teachers are the deliverers of educational reform; they are what Fullan calls, change agents. I think the Government of England must now look at the sustainment of their educational change

and begin the reculturing of reform which can quite possibly provide teachers and schools with the values and characteristics necessary to cope with and embrace change.

For confidentiality reasons and organization politics, I was not privy to any of the middle or senior management meetings. I do however, suspect that even though the educational system does appear to be organized from an elaborate hierarchical structure, there is room for collaborative group participation and decision making. To better assist in creating change agents, it would be wise of the English government to assess the efficiency of the present arrangement and perhaps encourage a more humanistic approach such as Helgesen's "web of inclusion" (Bolman and Deal, 1997).

Atlantic Canada is also not immune to the demands of an evolving, global society and it is imperative that the provinces take a proactive approach to the future educational reform, not a reactive stance. The insights and experience gained through this internship demonstrated to me that each educational reform situation is unique and no two change efforts require the same initiatives and supports. However, England's educational reform allows the Atlantic provinces a prime opportunity to learn and gather knowledge to assist with making better, well-informed decisions related to their own future educational directions.



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