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School self-evaluation and its impact on teachers' work in England

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Abstract: This study, based on in-depth interview data from a sample of schools in the midlands of England, offers an analysis of UK teachers' perceptions and understandings of school self evaluation at a point when national accountability procedures have required that all schools complete and constantly update a web-based self evaluation schedule, which is then used as the basis for high stakes external inspection. School systems and cultures of self evaluation were found to be diverse, complex and school-specific. Three broad cultural categories are proposed as a heuristic to illuminate: issues of compliance and resistance, teacher motivation and behaviours, understandings of professionalism and leadership, school ethos, job satisfaction, and the use and interpretation of school level data in relation to school self evaluation.

School self-evaluation and its impact on teachers' work in England

The national context: forging new relationships through school self evaluation

In 2004, the British government announced that there was to be 'a new relationship' between its own agencies and schools, and that this new relationship would be based on the principle of improving performance through school self-evaluation. Launching the new relationship, the Minister for School Standards explained

Both self evaluation and outside evaluation are vital to the new relationship. Our interest is in promoting quality outcomes, not policing in detail every activity that might contribute to how those are achieved. The new relationship will encourage schools to reflect honestly on how they can serve their students better - self evaluation at its best - and, which brings an expert professional eye from outside the school - inspection and challenge at its best.

(Miliband, 2004)

These principles were spelled out more fully in a publication produced by the Department for Education and Skills [DfES] and Ofsted, the national inspection agency, later that year:

One of the principles of the NRwS [new relationship with schools] is that schools should have a single, integrated development plan...based on an objective assessment of the needs of the school... It is all too easy to identify a weakness and include that area for development without diagnosing exactly what needs to be done and why. An intelligent self-evaluation will identify the precise issue that needs tackling and what to do about it.

(DfES, 2004:5)

This heralded the birth of the SEF, a neologism now common in schools throughout England: a mandatory self evaluation form 'focused tightly on the core systems' of the school (DfES, 2004:11) which would establish the terms of the relationship between the internal (teacher) and external (inspector) evaluators during school inspections. In the same year, changes to the inspection system were announced, including doubling the number of inspections: short, two day, inspections would occur on a three year cycle and the school would be given only 2-5 days' notice of the inspectors' arrival. The Chief Inspector characterised the revised system as 'exchanging a searchlight for a laser... We want to check whether a school's central nervous system is working well, not map out its genomes' (Bell, cited in Thrupp, 2004).

The new laser inspection regime certainly had a galvanising effect on school leaders' nervous systems, and a great deal of energy and effort was expended on creating each school's Self Evaluation Form [SEF] in preparation for the revised inspections. SEFs have three characteristics which affected schools in new ways. Firstly, SEFs are web-based documents and therefore amenable to constant updating and change. The document is, by its very nature, provisional: it can never be finished, and it can always be tinkered with; the text of the SEF is settled only for the brief period of the inspection. This provisionality is underlined in the official guidance which describes school self-evaluation as a 'continuous process that is complemented from time to time by external inspection' (Ofsted, 2005). The SEF is therefore, apart from anything else, a continuous source of administrative work. Secondly, and linked to this point, the SEF has a higher profile than any single document has previously carried in inspection processes. Getting it right is therefore a high stakes matter. Thirdly, the SEF is not only used as the basis for external evaluation of the school as a whole; it is also explicitly used to make judgements about the work of the school managers and leaders who are responsible for collating it.

The quality and use made of school self-evaluation are a good indication of the calibre of management. Evidence of how effectively schools undertake self-evaluation and the use they make of it helps inspectors to evaluate the quality of management in the school and the capacity of the school to improve. (Ofsted, 2005:9)

This has created a climate in English schools in which self evaluation is a highly charged process, a centrally regulated set of activities very closely bound in with normalising judgement. In addition, sophisticated new data analysis tools have been developed for schools to use with the SEF in order to arrive at judgements about their performance relative to national, local and equivalent 'benchmarked' schools (Ofsted website, accessed 23.2.07).

Immediately prior to these developments, in the late 1990s, the National Union of Teachers [NUT], the largest UK professional association for teachers, had commissioned work on school self evaluation. This work arose from a less centralised, more radical tradition and it constituted, in part, an attempt to make a theoretical and political intervention in the processes of school inspection, which were widely criticised and mistrusted by teachers and other education professionals (for example, Ball, 1997; Jeffrey and Woods, 1996 and 1998; Johnson, 1999; Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998). John MacBeath, who conducted the study on behalf of the NUT, laid considerable emphasis on creating a healthier system of self evaluation in which the role for Ofsted was 'to make itself as redundant as possible' (MacBeath, 1999:1).

It is an index of a nation's educational health when its school communities have a high level of intelligence and know how to use the tools of self evaluation and self improvement. In healthy systems there is a sharing and networking of good practice within and among schools ...It is an unhealthy system which relies on the constant routine attentions of an external body to police its schools... (MacBeath, 1999: 1)

This work influenced and, arguably, was co-opted into the revamped national model of school inspection in which school self evaluation has a central role,

though there is little sign in the three year 'laser' inspection model of Ofsted seeking to improve educational health by making itself redundant. The model of school evaluation has therefore shifted from one which Alvik (1996) categorises as 'parallel', (in which two systems run side by side, each with their own criteria and protocols), to a 'sequential' model, in which external inspections use the school's own evaluation as the focus for judging its quality assurance system (Davies and Rudd, 2001; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2005).

The study

In this national context, we sought to investigate the impact of the policy drive to develop new relationships with schools and the aspirations for a healthier, open system of evaluation. The study, commissioned by a Local Education Authority and conducted in the academic year 2005-2006, was designed to investigate self evaluation processes and cultures at the level of the school and individual teachers. We wanted to understand how schools were responding to the new requirements and how the requirements were affecting teachers' views of their work and professionalism.

The research took the form of in-depth semi-structured interviews with teachers in eight secondary (11-16 or 18) schools in the midlands of England. The sample of schools was determined by consideration of performance and value added data, inspection reports and geographical location, to be broadly representative of state funded secondary schools in England. In each of the eight schools, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the member of staff with direct responsibility for self evaluation and quality assurance, and the Curriculum Leaders for English, mathematics and science. These subject areas were selected because of their significance to UK schools in high stakes assessment and public reporting of examination results. The interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to over an hour. Because Curriculum Leaders in one school resisted the

headteacher's decision that the school should be involved with the study, we conducted 28 interviews in all. The analysis of the transcribed interviews was done jointly to elicit the categories, themes and issues from which we have developed our argument.

Primarily, then, the study offers an analysis of experienced teachers' perceptions and understandings of school self evaluation. To some extent the accounts of processes within a particular school can be triangulated with one another. Generally, though, the study does not set out to provide an empirically verifiable account of events; rather, the aim is to understand teachers' attitudes, personal experiences and different perspectives at a time of considerable change in schools, both in terms of practice and in terms of theoretical models. Nevertheless, the school culture in which these attitudes and practices are formed and instantiated is of central concern to our analysis. Data about school context are therefore used to situate the teachers' accounts.¹

School cultures and the general approach to self evaluation

Three broad categories emerged from the data we gathered on the schools' cultures and general approaches to self evaluation. We have labelled these categories:

- (i) Collaborative
- (ii) Centralised
- (iii) Resisting

These categories are offered as heuristics to identify features of different whole school approaches and pull out some of the consequences for, and positionings

¹ Specifically, the study takes account of the Index of Multiple Deprivation derived from the UK Census (2001); authorised and unauthorised pupil absence rates; percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals; percentages of 16-74 year olds without educational qualifications in the school's Super Output Area; value added scores for pupils' academic progress between 11-16, related to local and national averages; percentages of pupils attaining 5 or more A-C grades at GSCE (examined at 16, a national performance indicator). We also take account of school size and type, geographical location and the individual teacher's length of service in teaching and in the school, and his/her positioning within a department/faculty.

of, teachers. Clearly, they cannot be taken as in any way fixed. We do, however, want to argue that they are relevant to other educational institutions and that they throw up issues about the best ways to support and develop self evaluation work in schools.

(i) Collaborative cultures

The emphasis in these schools was on professional judgement and learning together. The schools drew attention to the different sources of data which were available to them; they accepted that these data could be interrogated in different ways and from different perspectives. Their approaches relied on faculty level analysis of the different datasets and the involvement of curriculum leaders [CLs] in managing this analysis and owning the interpretation. The language was of working together.

...the practical application and the quite precise, almost forensic, examination was taking us into new areas so there would be heads of faculty who really needed some training to be introduced to Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 progress tracking and measurements of rates of progress. It's getting more and more complicated... We were, I think, clearly being shown that this was important and that **our people needed to know that that data was often being used by people coming in from the outside**, whether it be the LEA or HMI, and they had to be up to speed with it and they had to be able to tell the story...[SL, emphasis added throughout]

you've got to have everybody in the department on board because I can't do it on my own. I can't manage the people unless they are providing me with the things which I can monitor them with. I think everybody in the department has appreciated where we are going with this. The faculty meetings have been very positive [CL]

School leaders² [SLs] aimed to strengthen the school by building shared knowledge and analyses through classroom observation, discussion and interpretation of data. They saw the senior leadership team [SLT] as playing an

² We have adopted the terminology for these posts currently prevalent in UK schools.

important role in nurturing the commitment and engagement of curriculum leaders:

our emphasis in this territory [the creation of departmental cultures] **is on support and commitment rather than requiring compliance.** The compliance part is statutory and we know that is going to get done. That's not where the work is. It's actually getting behind the subject leaders. [SL]

Curriculum leaders generally, though not always, shared the SLT's aims. They felt supported through formalised systems, usually operated with a degree of informality, aimed at building their confidence and their skill in data analysis and interpretation. The systems were generally experienced as dialogic; hierarchies were perceived as being about differences of roles rather than the enforcement of authority. Both curriculum leaders and SLT articulated the need to work on the human level, one to one, acknowledging emotional difficulties when negative judgements might be made.

But I've also been aware of how onerous the forensic part of the self evaluation process is for heads of faculty – emotionally, I think, because it does begin to raise questions about areas of performance of members of their staff. [SL]

They were keen to mitigate the impact of any negative judgements by identifying strategies for moving forward together.

people are quite frightened of being criticised but really it's not about criticism it's more about moving forward and I think we are all starting to realise that now and that is giving them confidence. [CL]

This was particularly pertinent for the school in this category that was in 'special measures' (i.e. designated as failing to provide a satisfactory education during its Ofsted inspection). Whilst acknowledging the difficulties and pressures of their situation, there was a sense in all of the interviews in this school of the importance of working collaboratively and of taking a whole school approach, centred on faculty level involvement:

one of the first things that we did was to create a stronger line of communication between subject and senior leadership team [SL]

We use faculty meetings to monitor marking; assessment. In this particular faculty meeting, which is looking at Year 9 marking, everybody will bring a sample of three Year 9 books with them and we will pass them round and look at good practice. Again it's sharing on a more formal level what previously would have been shared informally [CL]

I have found the experience quite a positive one actually. More so than I thought it would be because you are key member of staff in a school that's in special measures and you feel under pressure. [CL]

(ii) Centralised cultures

The emphasis in these schools was on a systematised, hierarchical, rational approach. The self evaluation model was understood as having two strands: the softer, developmental work at departmental level and the SLT overview, which was informed by agreed datasets so that clear judgements could be reached about school progress. Since the judgements to some extent determined the development work, the SLT monitoring activities in effect had priority over faculty level development.

So we felt that we wanted to run two strands parallel to each other: one which was more developmental for departments and subject staff where they could evaluate teaching and learning in the classroom but look at it from a development point of view of taking the member of staff forward. But we wanted a second strand where **we were looking at what was really happening generally** and so we first began with the SLT visiting classrooms simply to evaluate teaching and learning. And this evidence was then collated [SL]

Both schools in this category had created their own tailor-made system of monitoring and observation, designed to complement the processes documented

in the Ofsted inspection framework. For these school leaders, preparation for Ofsted inspections, coupled with a desire to be recognised as an 'outstanding' school within the Ofsted categorisation, were important drivers in establishing the school-wide system of monitoring.

They [Ofsted] kept coming back ...and telling us that they agreed with our judgements about that lesson. It was very clearly focused on what the senior staff know about their staff and their performance. So unless you have a very good system in place you leave yourself open to question. [SL]

I think we are getting pretty good but we are by no means outstanding according to Ofsted, but I hope we are moving towards that [SL]

And what we've said to all departmental areas is that to be an outstanding school we have got to get substantial numbers of students above the upper quartile. And that is something we have worked hard on and I am very pleased with the way that heads of department have taken this on board. Every area is now seeing the value of this sort of analysis and it will help to shape future targets. [SL]

There was a sense amongst SLT interviewees that staff were not open with them and a consequent emphasis on finding out 'what was really happening generally' (SL, op cit):

But **the problem that I find with some faculties is that they try to hide their weaknesses** and our job is to explain to them that they are more likely to improve if they open up and show their weaknesses. So that is very much a key part of this [SL]

Unannounced we would arrive in a classroom and in fact the first survey we did was of teaching and learning styles. And **we would arrive in the classroom and we would record what we were seeing. Not commenting on quality or anything like that.** It was simply a survey. [SL]

Activities designed by school leaders to judge teaching were sometimes interpreted by other staff as judging teachers. Curriculum leaders felt pressurised, and some felt isolated by the model. These interviewees described feeling like a buffer between the department and the SLT.

in the latest round of [SLT]observations that have just happened in school I've just received the feedback for them so I've yet to make appointments with those staff to talk them through. So the member of staff has had a meeting with the observer and has had that initial feedback but it's now my job to take those and to go through it with them. [CL]

it is quite a sensitive issue and you have to handle it very delicately. If you are in a monitoring role then you are changing from being a supportive, collaborative colleague into one who is being judgemental and I think a lot of people are uneasy with that. [CL]

Curriculum leaders worried about the impact of the system and saw the senior staff as operating as external agents:

And, if I am being truthful, then I think that **some of the ways in which the monitoring processes have been carried out externally haven't been as tactful as they could be and it's caused big problems** – and I do mean big problems. So there are big downsides. I think it can be a great motivator but it can also be a demotivator. People will feel that however hard they are trying it is still not good enough. I think maybe the balance isn't quite right yet. [CL]

I sometimes get a little bit saddened because the things that I enjoy doing – the extra curricular activities of maybe running a [subject] club and doing display work – that has gone by the wayside because of all these new pressures. [CL]

The school leaders were aware of these concerns, and were worried by them, but felt that the logic of the external environment supported the system they had devised:

...one or two staff felt very threatened and upset by the process [SLT monitoring visits]. So **we questioned the value of a process that actually does that to staff**. It did come into the discussion as to whether or not we should leave the judgement off. Whether we should still go in, but maybe not come out with that sort of value judgement. But through those discussions **we still felt that we needed that information to justify our own self evaluation**. When we are asked to justify what we believe is going on in the classroom then we've got a strong evidence base to back that up. [SL]

There is a danger when one introduces a system which seems quite hard and regimental that you lose some of that feeling within an institution. But whilst I think the school has changed I don't think that has been lost. I think it is so important that we, as a whole school, share common values and attitudes: values in the way that we treat each other and how we regard each other. [SL]

Is the target setting culture helpful, do you think?

Yes, I think so. I think staff would have a different view but I think their agenda is perhaps different to the one we have to have. [SL]

(iii) Resisting cultures

In these schools the prime motivations for engaging in school self evaluation related to external threats and pressures, specifically from Ofsted or the Local Education Authority [LEA].

We were originally told [by the LEA] **that we must use it** [the local self evaluation toolkit]. And we were told very prescriptively how we must use it. That has been an issue because I am not convinced that the structure of it is ideal [SL]

I think the self evaluation - the school hasn't been greatly involved in it... And [the LEA representative] **really pushed us into getting that self evaluation work done** and we, as a leadership team, looked at it but the school as a whole didn't look at it very much. [SL]

Self evaluation was understood as a series of activities and events:

We work on the basis that annually we have a period of review that spans three weeks. In the last academic year it actually happened in the summer term and we focused on a particular year group... And we then have a meeting with the subject leader and the SLT link to review those standards. [SL]

School leaders accepted that adoption of a coherent and consistent policy had been rather patchy or half-hearted. There were plans to develop an overall strategy, but these were still evolving at SLT level.

That's one of the things we decided after the first year: the leadership team weren't being very consistent so, therefore, **we weren't being consistent** with the people that we line manage. So now what we are doing is asking the same questions which we sort out in our meetings. [SL]

I suppose that is the weakness that we have: tying it all together is proving to be difficult and that's partly because we have a three year school development plan. We know where we are going long term but within that we've also got the Ofsted action plan as well. And then the department improvement plans dovetail into that as well. So **it's complex and as yet it is not quite right.** [SL]

with the revisions of SEF **we are looking towards** integrating school self evaluation and school improvement planning. Logically the issues that are generated through a quality assurance programme ought to feed into the school improvement plan directly. So the improvement I would envisage would be much more bottom up than it has been in previous years. [SL]

To the curriculum leaders, the policy seemed fragmented or gestural, and professionally undermining:

The thing that is frustrating with this place is that **you never sort of get to grips with one thing and then try and do it well**; you've always got to start something else. [CL]

In my department we've done two major reviews in which I can dip into lesson observations; formal discussions after that; interviews with students; trawled through students' books. And once that is formalised you tend to use that time that's dedicated for it – for example in the last two years we've done it in June – and it's now become the June snapshot whereas before we did it throughout the year so it wasn't just snapshots. But because I've got to document it all then it would appear that I am just doing the snapshot in June. [CL]

With this in mind, some of the curriculum leaders responded cynically to the requirement to engage in self evaluation activities:

I know what **the party line** is – that we can address any weak areas that can be sorted out before Ofsted come here. I understand that. [CL]

I don't think a lot of my colleagues have seen it [self evaluation] as anything other than **a hurdle we have got to jump over**. Nobody's been keen and eager to find me to find out what they can do to make their lessons better [CL]

There was a strong undercurrent of professional disappointment:

As teachers we are now simply teaching for the tests. Especially in a school like this where our exam results aren't necessarily very good we concentrate on making sure that we try and hit the targets because if we don't improve things then people from outside will come in and say it's not good enough and they'll close us or put us in special measures. **Realistically you've got to try and meet those targets because that's what they are measuring you by** and I don't think that sits comfortably with our staff but **we do it because it's the reality** [CL]

This was matched by low expectations of staff professionalism amongst some school leaders:

there still is resistance to that [monitoring planning]. There has been a lot of controversy and **we've decided that we are going to stick with the learning outcomes until we are sure that everybody knows what a learning outcome is**.

But we have had some resistance to that both from faculty heads and from individual teachers as well. [SL, emphasis added]

In this school culture, some school leaders conceptualised resistance to self evaluation as a form of inertia

There is a grudging acceptance [of self evaluation procedures]. I say grudging because of the workload implications. There is a lot of bureaucracy involved in administering the system but colleagues can see the benefits and the necessity in terms of their effectiveness... **I think it is changing rather than changed. We have overcome a lot of inertia. We have overcome a lot of mistrust in terms of value of the whole exercise.** [SL]

This analysis appeared to engender a degree of inertia in terms of the leadership offered:

Formal lesson observations were not done very often in this school except for performance management. It was something that was considered quite difficult at times with staff so we had very few lesson observations... People just don't like going into other people's lessons - it's as simple as that. Formal observation was not part of the culture. [SL]

Curriculum leaders articulated their concerns in a variety of ways, from finding fault with the SLT, to passive resistance:

I think as far as the management point of view I would be expect them to be doing far more to address poor behaviour in the school to enable quality teaching to take place which I feel, in large parts of my lessons, isn't happening [CL]

I've gone completely blank on the self evaluation process at the moment. I'd have to have a look at the SEF. I was completely au fait with it just before Ofsted but I'm afraid I put it out of my mind. [CL]

Others highlighted workload issues, changes in ethos and ambivalences about the tensions they felt between the required systems and their own values in teaching:

Tell me about how data is used in this school.

It's very useful and very destructive at the same time. [CL]

the way I feel we are judged is not by what I feel we need to develop but by the results that are produced at the end of the GCSEs and the SATs. So if the results are not up to the standards of national figures then we are deemed to be under performing. [CL]

There are pockets of resistance in the school amongst some teachers who feel that there are too many new initiatives coming in. There are a lot of depressed people... [CL]

School self evaluation as a broker of new and healthy relationships?

(i) Relationships with Ofsted

From the schools' and teachers' perspectives, school self evaluation was associated with external inspection: almost all of the interviewees referred to Ofsted. In the 'collaborative' school group, there was a sense of equipping 'our people' with what they needed to know when faced with 'people coming in from the outside' (SL, op cit). This self-protective note was stronger in the school that was in special measures:

because Ofsted criticised us over our consistency then we know that if they come into this school and **just find one weakness they'll get us** [SL]

But even in this situation, there was a sense in which being equipped with the knowledge was seen as powerful:

It's been the hardest one for people to learn and get used to having spent so many years doing it in a very gentle kind of way. This has a much harder edge to it. It really does direct you to the things that the men in grey suits are looking at... I think that learning that process has been quite tough for our subject leaders but actually all of them have responded very well to it because what I think it is doing is it is taking away the anxiety [SL]

And, in some senses, the process was seen as fair:

The expectations of us have increased in that time because of Ofsted and because of targets and the interest in teaching and learning. But I think the focus on teaching and learning is absolutely right [CL]

The positive attitude that characterised the interviewees from this school seemed to be related both to the corporate approach to their situation and to their focus on teaching and learning, rather than on Ofsted as an agency. This contrasted with the more negative attitudes expressed by the 'resisting' schools, though glimmers of similar opinions do emerge:

If you could take the stigma away from it [self evaluation and quality assurance work] then I think it could be really useful. I think people associate quality assurance with Ofsted and people associate Ofsted with stress. I mean Ofsted is not a supportive body whatsoever in my opinion. But there is also quite a deal of paperwork involved in it and the paperwork is just an added burden. [CL]

An interesting contrast can be drawn between two of the school leaders' attitudes, one from the 'collaborative' and one from the 'centralised' categories. The SL from the former group expressed concern about the value of classroom observation if it is reduced exclusively to fit the Ofsted model:

My anxiety there is that the only kind of observation that gets done is hierarchical, quantitative, Ofsted driven. [SL]

The second SL's knowledge of the sub-divisions of the Ofsted observation schedule led him to be concerned about the sophistications of selecting the type of lesson you would be observed teaching. Although he accepted that a lesson consolidating knowledge rather than introducing new ideas might be entirely educationally valid, he surmised that certain types of lesson were more suitable

to be observed than others, and he was concerned to help other teachers understand this point.

what we probably saw over this first round was the need for staff to take on board the focus on learning rather than the focus on teaching and their own performance. Because why we were coming to judgements that were only 'satisfactory' was that, by the time the thirty minute observation was up, very little new learning had taken place because of the nature in which the lesson had been structured. [SL]

(ii) Leadership and performance

The schools categorised as having a 'centralised' self evaluation culture were high attaining, with good value added scores, rising achievement at GCSE level and low absence rates. Leadership, as we have seen, was strongly driven from the centre:

The targets that we've set as a school have gradually increased each year. We have raised the bar a little bit each year. [SL]

Longer serving curriculum leaders felt caught in the middle. They accepted the processes, but not enthusiastically.

initially it feeds back to me and then I feed back to line managers and then back to the head. And **I'm quite angry about it** if people aren't happy. The only way it is going to be solved is if people who are actually on the leadership team know about it. Because if the process is going to have any benefit, then it has got to be constructive from everybody's point of view. If some people see it as **just another hammer to beat you with** then it won't be of any use. [CL]

I don't query the process because people pretty much accept the observations. Someone had an observation which was classified as unsatisfactory and they've accepted it. Then they've had another one which was classified as outstanding. And **that's the way it goes**. [CL]

In their interviews, very little was said about the actual process of interpreting the self evaluation data – comments tended to focus on the systems themselves and the recording of data.

We've got an admin person who is responsible for the data and someone else who is responsible for collecting the test scores and who will monitor the progression through the years. That's set up. And then three of us will take on the Year responsibility. It's been a bit tricky this year. [CL]

Senior leaders in both schools were keen to develop curriculum leaders' roles:

we are also mindful of the fact that we want middle managers to get more involved in that type of monitoring rather than just the developmental monitoring that they have been doing. And we agreed with heads of department last night that they will carry out the Year 8 [internal monitoring exercise].

The aspiration of school leaders was to co-opt the curriculum leaders into taking on roles more closely aligned with the senior roles they themselves held. This was not an aspiration that most of the curriculum leaders seemed to share.

Performance indicators suggested that two of the schools in the 'resisting' category were experiencing difficulties. They had very low value added scores, low and declining GCSE results and high absence rates. The third, voluntary aided, school was doing well in value added terms, though GCSE results had dipped somewhat. In all three schools the senior leaders were acting in response to concerns about Ofsted inspections:

I think it served us well last year because we had an Ofsted a year last December [SL]

We put forward our ideas to the Ofsted team that came in a couple of weeks ago but it is very, very hard. And we are in the position where we have just been given a notice to improve so we've got until next summer to get our targets.[SL]

But they also expressed a desire to involve curriculum leaders and to work towards cultural change

I think we are definitely more aware of where we are in terms of strengths. And I think that's not just senior leaders being aware but also subject leaders. And it's refining our knowledge as well so we can actually look at the specifics that we need to work on as opposed to general improvements. [SL]

I think that in the way that we introduced it and because every middle leader has had an input in terms of what we want to get out of this I don't think that anything is being resisted. [SL]

In all of these schools the systems felt new and the relationships between the senior and the middle leadership roles seemed to be in transition. In the lowest attaining school there were difficulties in establishing systems:

There is nothing formal on that [work scrutiny]. We haven't really done that yet. We did some of it and that has become my responsibility for this year but hitherto we haven't done it formally for the whole school.

Do you look at teacher planning?

That's a very contentious one. No, we didn't look at teacher planning. There was a union issue there. [SL]

And in both the lower attaining schools the systems clearly had not bedded in:

We have scheduled one meeting per half term for this year. We were supposed to have one last week but with various things going on it didn't happen. We've got an inset day this Friday so it might happen then [CL]

Well we keep having insets on this quality assurance so I'm not quite sure what I'm supposed to be doing next... In the light of the findings from the first round of quality assurance a [subject] consultant is coming in and giving us a twilight inset about planning a challenging lesson [CL]

Do you think this process is working consistently across the school?

I would suspect that it is not and one of the reasons for that is that it is still fairly new and not everybody has been trained in the way that I have. Personally I worry about somebody who is not one hundred per cent convinced that they know how to do it then feeding back to someone else in how to do it.[CL]

And in the voluntary aided school, the bureaucratic task of writing an annual self evaluation report was the focus of concern. The curriculum leader also questioned the report's usefulness.

One of the issues is time... The time that it takes to write the report! It is a very big work load.... Time is certainly an issue. The fact that staff see it in a threatening sort of way is also an issue. Another issue is what happens in terms of your communication with the people that you provide the report to – your line manager and the school in general – and then how they then interact with your reporting and you to support you in doing what you want to do. [CL]

Three main issues emerged with relation to the interpretation of data: the suggestion that it is incomprehensible to most teachers; the suggestion that once it is analysed, its implications are still not necessarily clear, and the suggestion that it tells you nothing as a teacher that you do not already know. These contradictory viewpoints emerged regularly in the interviews from teachers in the 'resisting' schools.

Certainly we've got loads of data and we've got a system that is really good. But what we found was that although we had the data **people didn't understand it** and weren't using it. [SL]

I do know that training has been put into school to support staff in doing that although I think I would argue that that **training has been really in how to do the analysis rather than how to read something into the data** that you've got that becomes meaningful in the class. [CL]

I think there is a workload issue there. There has been a big change of emphasis on what heads of department do. This whole ethos of checking each other out; pushing statistics and setting targets. And the statistics can highlight certain areas but all I've really got is paper evidence to back up **what the teacher knows already**. [CL]

In these schools, the leadership roles were changing and the relationships between senior and middle leaders had not been clearly defined. To a greater or lesser extent (depending on the school) the self evaluation work was experienced as a series of activities or events, each of which was accepted or rejected, adopted or sidelined independently by the curriculum leaders. The curriculum leaders had this power within a balkanised set-up. Generally, however, regardless of their levels of good will or negativity, the curriculum leaders did not seem to see themselves as collaborators in creating the framework for their school's self evaluation activities. This, in turn, isolated the school leaders, who had to shoulder responsibility for whole school development without the support of systems which would allow them to evaluate on the basis of solid information. Yet there were glimmers of interest in the potential of working differently:

we are much more accountable now. It is much more resource led and league tables etc. It does focus the mind; it does give you targets and **I suppose the days of lessons which tend to meander are over.** I think it's a much faster paced job and lessons are faster paced and much more pupil orientated. It's not the teacher at the start of the lesson setting them off; telling them what to do; they get on with it. It's now a much more interactive role. So, in that sense, it has been a big improvement. [CL]

I think to be fair to the school the idea of quality assurance doesn't always promote positive relations within the faculty. But having said that, it does need to be done but it needs to be less threatening. **In the longer term you could possibly get more from it.** [CL]

In terms of school performance, the 'collaborative' category was mixed: it included a high achieving school with the best value added data in the sample and the school with the most improved examination results. Performance at GCSE level in the other two schools was just about maintained year on year. Value added figures for two of the schools dipped below the local average. The fact that

one of the schools was in special measures obviously heightened awareness of inspection requirements, some of which were seen as arbitrary:

I hope I haven't given you the impression that people are over happy at having to **jump through these hoops**. I think they see it as **a necessary evil** and for some staff it's been quite tough to take. [SL]

Nevertheless, the school leader's commitment was to a purposeful, sustainable model of self evaluation, which moved beyond the immediate impositions of Ofsted.

one of the very first things that we did post Ofsted was to set up a much stronger set of links in terms of feeding information through from subject level through to senior leadership level. I suppose at the heart of the criticism of us was that as a senior leadership team we didn't know our school well enough... [SL]

This model had a clear role for curriculum leaders and it convinced them: they understood the deeper rationale for it; they were learning new skills and developing new perspectives on their work. They spoke about their work positively and with commitment.

The emphasis on making time to talk through the data was a notable feature of schools in the collaborative category. It was mentioned by both middle and senior leaders.

So it's about making **proper time for these discussions** that is important. Looking at it to review progress made. And the lesson observation has become part of that as well and **the actual formality of lesson observations has probably helped** in that respect because it has made us address particular problems rather than just skirt round them which I think we did in the past. [CL]

The role of the middle management review... is **to invite subject leaders to find out from their colleagues the stories** that led to this particular dip in the figures or in the exam results or whatever. And the starting point for the [member of the SLT] in doing that is the predicted data. So what subject leaders are doing is **acting as editors and interpreters of their colleagues' storytelling** in relation to actual families and children. [SL]

The school leader quoted above had a particularly clearly articulated view of middle leadership and the SLT's responsibility to support and develop curriculum leaders' power:

The subject leaders are the engine room; they have the biggest job and they are in the position to reach in both directions. [SL]

He was also a strong advocate of the importance of interpreting data in ways that re-engaged teachers with the pupils:

This year we did something that I think most colleagues are in agreement with as being a powerful way of looking at it: we drew up a list of nineteen students who, had they done a tiny bit better, would have transformed our league table position. So 19 kids out of the Year 11 cohort, and we did case studies on those kids and asked: what was it? So **we are trying hard to re-humanise the data and to make the stories powerful in relation to those youngsters.** [SL]

This approach, a combination of individual professional judgement and theorising, with evidence drawn from different data sources, was exemplified in interviews with curriculum leaders:

from day one this [the departmental self evaluation folder] was introduced to me as a head of department as something that I should do. And I can't bear to part with any of it now. So I do find it useful because when I need to solve a problem I can usually find something in here that will help me. Quite often I've done things and I've forgotten that I've done them until I look in here. [CL]

I could probably have sat down at the end of the summer term and sussed a lot of this out but it's just reinforced when things come through in terms of exam data. So, again, it's made us sit down and discuss it as a department and get our heads round stuff...I don't think it tells me anything I didn't already know but I think it does give me concrete evidence. Before it used to be a gut feeling or you knew something wasn't quite right or was good or whatever but with this you've actually got tangible evidence that you can use and that's the thing there. It's there in black and white. [CL]

It was extended to the departmental culture more generally:

I think I know them [my own targets for development] but I find staff within my department, bless them, need to keep coming back. Again, I don't know whether that's because, as a head of department, you are perhaps a bit more focused. You know you've got to get your head round stuff. You've got to retain it. But they do come back and say: 'I've left me folder at home. Tell me again?' [CL]

A notable feature of the interviews with teachers in this group of schools was their interest in interrogating and synthesising the data and using it to help them solve problems. Both relatively 'new' and relatively 'old' teachers are actively engaged in this professional culture.

Obviously I've got no previous knowledge but with the SEF we've aimed to complete section 3 as much as possible. So that's been a bit of a baptism of fire but **it's been interesting** in that **it's giving me the opportunity to really look at the results and crunch the data every way possible** and really look at progress and look at individual units – A Level, for example – and then looking at the impact and trying to find ways to make it better. So for me it's quite interesting to look at it that way. [CL]

I think there is a culture change and the major focus on learning rather than teaching has been the big change in direction in the last five or so years and I think that is going to benefit schools. We are beginning to hit some nails on the head with what's going on... it shouldn't be in terms of school improvement, but it should be in looking at what we've done, and then evaluating what we've done, and then looking at how we should go forward. So there has been a change in focus there. [CL]

(iii) Professional relationships

There was a great deal of discussion about the nature of professionalism amongst the teachers we interviewed. We consider these views in relation to three binary oppositions that cropped up regularly in the teachers' talk: the opposition between new and old professionalisms/teachers; between choosing to act and being required to act, and between formality and informality.

It was common amongst the teachers in the sample to draw a distinction between old and new professionalisms. This distinction was most sharply drawn amongst interviewees in the 'centralised' category of schools. For this group, the alignment between old and new professionalisms was closely related to age:

If I was to look at our teaching force now I would say it was a much more professional staff. We've had over the last few years a large number of **new young staff joining the school and I would say that the way I perceive them is as very professional**. I would have to say that perhaps in the past I wouldn't say that about every colleague. But I think the demands of the job are such these days that if you haven't got that you don't survive. We invest in the staff but we expect an awful lot from them [SL]

One school leader in this group looked forward to a 'new breed' of teacher with a different professional orientation and a willingness to 'take hard decisions':

middle level leadership is developing at the moment but **there is still a generation of people in there who see themselves as managers rather than leaders**. Who see themselves as very firmly as there to support their own teams and will defend them rather than having to take hard decisions and sometimes making themselves unpopular. I think there is a **new breed** of people coming through who will change all that. [SL]

Curriculum leaders were alert to these views. Some felt themselves pulled between the line management responsibilities required by 'new' professionalisms and their 'old' commitment to collegial professionalism. The following extract

illustrates the pressures on the individual teacher who feels obliged to take on the role of mediating external judgements, maintaining collegial ways of working and of consistently working at a standard higher than colleagues in the department, for fear of letting them down.

I'm very fortunate in that I've got a very committed and open minded team that I work with and **my approach to leadership is collegiate** so the more I can involve other people in any process the better. So we do the paired observations; we look at work sampling as a team. So **all that can be done by everybody is done...** If you've had a positive judgement [from an SLT observation] then great because it makes you feel good but if it's not so positive it's like a kick in the teeth and it demoralises staff... **my role tends to be putting it into perspective** and if there are comments that are made - I think generally staff will accept that if something has been judged merely satisfactory then they will agree with that but there will be reasons for that and sometimes those reasons aren't discussed fully I think.

You must feel great pressure yourself on your own observations //

Yes and **I am very aware that the department almost can't be better than I am so whatever judgement is made on me is going to reflect on the rest of the department. And that's a massive pressure.** [CL]

Another, very experienced, curriculum leader felt deprofessionalised to the extent that he thought his lesson observation and feedback in the faculty would be

useless if I go and grade people significantly differently to the Ofsted grading [CL]

In the 'collaborative' group, school leaders also drew distinctions between new and old forms of professionalism, but the analysis was sometimes different:

They [new teachers] are also coming into teaching with significantly greater national levels of intervention in teaching practice. **I would categorise it as thinking like a functionary – I will do what I've been instructed to do rather than I will interpret which I take to be almost the defining criterion for professionalism.** I'm either someone who delivers as instructed or I interpret the outlines of what I've been given. And I do see, working with trainees, more of that.

And also more of the sense of entitlement. I hadn't even heard the word 'entitlement' for teachers until I was twenty years into teaching. Whether that's a lack of professionalism, I doubt. [SL]

The position of curriculum leaders in this kind of school culture appeared to be, in this respect, less stressful than for those in centralised cultures. There was an acceptance that change, where necessary, would be incremental and explained. Also, negative judgements or lack of competence were more readily accepted and worked on.

I think it's a gradual process. I think the younger staff seem more malleable to it than the older staff in the sense that most of the older staff have been used to a particular system which has been in place for a long, long time and changing from that to a more sophisticated system is proving quite difficult for some of them.

So how do you manage that?

Well I think **it's just working on a one to one basis with staff** and trying to show them that there can be benefits from it. **What they don't like is to do things they've been told to do but can't see any reason for.** [CL]

I think it is changing. I think teachers are much more accepting. Especially the youngsters. But I think getting that through to some of the older teachers is a different story...I think the more youngsters that come in who accept it [self evaluation] and just get on with it then it puts pressure on the others. I'm thinking of individuals here that I know struggle with the idea that they are not doing the job properly. I mean whenever I suggest a change the response will be: 'Does that mean I've been doing it wrong all these years then?' [CL]

I did have to make a judgement that a lesson was unsatisfactory recently and I felt uncomfortable discussing that with the teacher but she seemed to just accept it and asked how she could improve it... I'm from a different world almost. NQTs have probably been brought up with it more because that's a feature of their training [CL]

In the 'resisting' schools, older teachers were generally equated with tradition, resistance to change and maintenance of the status quo. They were loosely opposed to a stereotype of new, keen, bright teachers:

We have some very experienced **older members of staff who have a lot to offer but do tend to teach in very traditional ways**. They can be resistant to change and to being observed. And then we have a lot of **younger members of faculty who are keen and with a lot of new ideas**. [CL]

The stereotype tended to operate on a crude level of generality, as an association of ideas rather than a more developed consideration of professionalism.

We are rather negative about what we have done and some people are criticising. Especially the new staff – we've worked really hard with them. Looking at those, the time factor is the biggest thing... I think we still have this rigidity and there are some deeply entrenched attitudes here which are very difficult to break down. [CL]

For some curriculum leaders in schools in each of the categories, the requirement to engage in self evaluation and quality assurance work came into conflict with their own views about teachers' professional autonomy. Curriculum leaders responded to this conflict in different ways. In the 'resisting' group, some teachers either refused to comply, or complied in form but not in spirit:

Up until now it [lesson observation] was just done because it was a formality. Some departments are now using it to inform but I think there are still some departments that are doing it as a formality. There is at least one department here who don't want to do it at all because they don't see the benefit. [CL]

Others found the conflict between the personal and professional unresolvable:

I think a lot of teachers still feel that we are perceived in quite a negative light generally so they feel down about themselves anyway and then if you've got somebody coming in who they don't particularly rate then I think that puts you in a very difficult position as the observer. So I'm not very comfortable with it frankly. **I do it because it's part of my job but I have to say that it has made me question whether I want to carry on with the job**. [CL]

In the 'centralised' group of schools, as has been illustrated above, curriculum leaders voluntarily added to their own workload in order to maintain systems they believed in. These CLs articulated strongly held personal beliefs about teaching and quietly intervened in systems in ways that were not entirely compliant with the whole school self evaluation model.

We keep a folder of all our self evaluation process from beginning to end. It culminates in an overall view of the department in terms of teaching and learning and behaviour management and so on. And that is put together based on observations that are done within the department – and that's not me doing the observations. We actually pair up so the whole department is involved in observing each other

Is that a school policy?

That's the way we decided to do it as a faculty. [CL]

But the only way we are really going to raise standards isn't by monitoring but by the work we do in the classroom. It's by good teaching and learning. And the only way we can do that is to have time to develop quality lessons and showcase them and use good practice to encourage people to try new things and if it doesn't work then just put that down to experience and try something else. [CL]

An interesting example of this professional conflict, and the school's strategies for resolving it, arose in the 'collaborative' group of schools. One CL took a principled stand against the language and implicit assumptions of quality assurance, preferring to place her emphasis on peer learning and team teaching rather than hierarchical judgement:

I observe everybody once in the department in the year but we also set up observation of each other. That's not necessarily quality assurance – well it is in a way because if somebody is doing something interesting then you want to go and watch it. So we do a lot of observations – the union says only three a year but we do more.

...So you try to build a culture of observation of one another

And team teaching.

As a curriculum leader, she adopted the 'old' professional stance regretted by the SL looking forward to a new breed of teacher (seeing herself 'very firmly as there to support [her] own team[s]'). Within the culture of the collaborative school, however, these differences were surfaced as legitimate professional disagreements and the management strategy was to co-opt the CL on to the senior leadership team in an effort to persuade her to take a different view.

it's so that I get the wider picture which I find - **actually the head said that I needed to see the wider picture. And I said that, actually, I didn't. Because I felt that my role as head of department was to bat for my corner** and that meant that sometimes I was unreasonable. So, perhaps, if I had the wider picture perhaps I would become more reasonable. [CL]

Professional modes of interaction, particularly with regard to degrees of formality and informality, were understood differently in the different school categories. Amongst teachers in the 'resisting' group, to be informal was to be supportive and friendly. An informal helpful activity, reconceptualised as formal, could be reclassified as undermining.

I prefer the informality of observing somebody and giving comments afterwards. That's a lot more beneficial sometimes than the pressure of performance management or giving, as part of the quality assurance, observations. They aren't particularly good for morale at all [CL]

Formality was linked in this view with being hostile and ill-intentioned. It was likely to provoke resentment.

We've got a programme [of observations] in place. I tend to do it on an informal basis where I will regularly go around...we really are a very close group and **we are very good friends because I worked with them as one of the troops** before I became head of department so I am able to go into people's classes without them feeling that they are being scrutinised in a hostile manner. They know I am there with the best intentions. I think I am right in saying that **in**

some of the other departments it is a little bit more formal and I think the people resent being observed. [CL]

One of the implications of this view was that when your role required you to be formal, it was very difficult to see yourself as being supportive. This was a serious issue for teachers' sense of job satisfaction and contentment at work.

I don't like the formal approach; I prefer the supportive nature. I've tried to make it supportive but it doesn't always come across as that because if you tell somebody that their lesson was inadequate then it is very difficult, from their view, to be supportive. [CL]

In the 'centralised' schools, formal systems were established and expected. The language from the SL was of line management, scheduled and minuted meetings and critical friendship. The terms of engagement related to monitoring and 'finding out what is really happening':

So personally I line manage PE, Design and Technology the assessment team and post sixteen and that's where I would have a meeting, usually scheduled either weekly or fortnightly, with those team leaders. **And I try to make sure that those are minuted meetings** and it's an opportunity for us to all work together on issues that I might raise but often on issues that the team leaders will raise and **I will try to be the critical friend to support them.** But **we are conscious that the line management role is going to be very important for delving below the surface** to see what is actually happening. **So you are doing a monitoring role,** in a sense, as a line manager through those meetings. [SL]

The protection of collegial departmental cultures, described previously, can be seen as sustaining an informal base from which the CL can operate in this type of school environment. Interestingly, the newest, youngest CL in this group espoused a different kind of professionalism akin to that of the SLT. Her emphasis was more formal: on systems, judgements and delegation within the department.

My initial concern was that **I needed to put some systems in place – whether they were good or bad** – and review them later...

And now I am in the process of thinking about **how I then pull my department together but also judge my department and make them judge each other**. I think that is the real challenge, because I think it is important that we do this even though it is very uncomfortable. Because Ofsted do and that's what they expect...

But **I need to know the level of my teachers...** [CL]

In the 'collaborative' school group, there was evidence of formal systems managed with a degree of informality which supported sociability and discussion within and between departments:

We [heads of faculties directly linked to the school's specialism and their line manager] have regular meetings on a Tuesday lunchtime and we are quite a sociable group as well so we are the type who will go and see other heads of department if we've got anything we need to say.[CL]

I've tried to create a buddy system where teachers are paired up and they will look at sampling and try to do constructive feedback as well so that they can learn from each other. [CL]

I have now set up a more formal way whereby everybody lodges a lesson plan with me at the end of the week. Over the course of the year we check that those lesson plans are appropriate and will cover all the right areas [CL]

In contrast to her colleague quoted above, the newest, youngest curriculum leader in this group characterised herself as an 'apprentice' happy to talk things through with her department and her line manager:

Well my line manager is X and we officially meet every fortnight but we can meet at other times...there is that constant link there. And anything that X and I discuss I always feed back to staff by a memo or in a meeting... **And I don't know whether it's because I am the apprentice, but I feel I am getting quite a lot of guidance and that makes me feel very comfortable.** [CL]

Implications

One of the implications of this study is that school self evaluation does seem to be establishing new relationships **within** schools, although the nature of these emerging relationships is strongly mediated by cultural factors and the ethos of the particular school – which have, themselves, been transformed by the new audit technologies and emergence of the 'evaluative state' (Elliott, 2001:193). The mandated focus on self evaluation has thrown up a new professional challenge for many teachers, and they have responded in a variety of ways. Some schools have enjoyed the intellectual challenge of working to a tightly defined new self evaluation format in a data-rich environment and they have developed a clear sense of purpose and ownership of the interpretative process. In these schools teachers have felt able to work collaboratively to interrogate different data sources, synthesise information and come up with answers to questions they have asked about their school. Other schools have focussed more on the systems for collecting the data than on interpretation of what it means. In some of the schools, output measures have been conflated with educational outcomes (Elliott, 2001). Where no clear distinctions are drawn and the focus seems to be predominantly on systems which 'measure the measurable' (Power, 1997), teachers feel oppressed and professionally compromised, engaged in activity that is more about compliance than educational endeavour.

A further implication of the study relates to the issue of formality/informality within the individual school culture. The institutional – and therefore shared and public - nature of the self evaluation gives greater salience to the degree of formality with which the school's communications systems are able to operate. In schools where formal or semi-formal modalities between staff are interpreted as hostile or hierarchical, it seems to be difficult to manage the monitoring and feedback systems that are part of the current conception of school self

evaluation. On the other hand, very formal modes are experienced as alienating and unsupportive. The teachers in the study felt most comfortable within fairly formal systems operated in an open and dialogic manner.

The findings also suggest that the current focus on school self evaluation has generated a good deal of discussion about the nature of professionalism. The existence of competing and shifting definitions and the 'struggle for the soul of professionalism', now well established in the literature (e.g. Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994, 1997; Hanlon, 1998), was not always acknowledged within the school as a workplace. This resulted in a marked tendency in some schools for differences in professional perspective to be reinterpreted as dispositional or generational. This gave the individual teacher, defined by age or by character, very little room for manoeuvre: contestation of the new systems was interpreted as grumpiness, incompetence or old age rather than legitimate debate about the changing nature of teachers' work. The terms of the debate - about whether teaching is undergoing deskilling and de-professionalisation or re-professionalisation (as represented, for example in the work of Mahony et al (2001) on the one hand and Storey et al (2001; 2007) on the other) - were reduced to staffroom clashes between the dinosaurs and the 'new breed'. In particular, questions of trust, which lie at the heart of the differing definitions of professionalism, were not highlighted as issues within the debate. Instead some teachers experienced the 'leaking away of trust' as an entirely personal aspect of their worklife, and this provoked in them individual responses ranging from resistance to demoralisation and a sense of betrayal (Avis, 2003; Hanlon, 1998; Elliott, 2001). Other schools in the study were able to accommodate and debate a wider range of notions of professionalism and in these schools teachers seemed to find it easier to make their own professional connections to the self evaluation requirements, even if they held dissenting

views. As Avis (quoting Leadbeater) points out, 'for dissent to be expressed requires institutional relations of trust that authorise such dissent' (2001:328). The 'authorising' of dissent related in part to the existence of more formal, dialogic systems within the school which encouraged evaluation of teaching and learning to be articulated around educational values rather than personal styles and preferences (Gleeson and Husbands, 2003). The stifling of debate diminished both the teachers' sense of their own professionalism and their engagement with wider debates about the concept.

Whether school self evaluation has helped to broker new relationships between schools and the state, as the national policy and the Schools Minister envisaged, is another matter. Teachers in all of the schools were sceptical about schools' relationship with Ofsted. They were open about the performative nature of teaching during inspections, the inauthenticities and the 'fabrications' (which Ball defines as a 'perverse form of response / resistance to and accommodation of performativity') involved in the process (Lyotard, 1984; Ball, 1997, 2000, 2003; also, Perryman, 2006 and Webb, 2006). These fabrications work on teachers, as Ball notes, from the outside in and from the inside out (2000). They have a social and interpersonal, as well as an institutional impact: they are 'folded into complex institutional, team, group and communal relations' (Ball, 2000). At the individual level, an attitude of resigned compliance, observed by Farrell and Morris (2004) in relation to performance-related pay, predominated amongst the teachers in the study, although in the most extreme cases, the systems seemed designed to engender what Power (1997) has termed 'pathologies of creative compliance'. Certainly, a great deal of energy was being expended on replicating Ofsted systems within schools and second guessing the gradings the inspectors would make. None of the teachers were experiencing the new relationship between Ofsted and schools as more supportive, collaborative or inclined to take account of their own professional standpoints. This system seems a long way from the

third of Alvik's models of self evaluation: the 'co-operative' (rather than parallel or sequential) model, in which external agencies co-operate with schools to develop a common approach to evaluation.

Another theme which unified the teachers, regardless of their particular school culture, was concern about the intensification of their work. Interviewees spoke of pressures on time, increased emotional burdens and the influence of work on home life. The self evaluation work became an extra burden: the prescribed nature of the self evaluation activities and form generated more administrative work and was accompanied by an increase in the frequency of inspections. Elliott (2001) has described school cultures as 'intolerant of time', often in a state of fending off an impending crisis. In the same vein, Strathern (2000) talks of teachers as 'ever active performers' and Barber (2000) underlines the 'sense of urgency' that arises from 'the belief that every passing day when a child's education is less than optimal is another day lost.' These different but overlapping perspectives on the pace of life and lack of time were reflected in the interviews with the teachers in the study. In departments where staff turnover was particularly high, or recruitment of teachers was a problem, self evaluation and quality assurance procedures were seen as particularly stressful. Curriculum leaders felt they were being held responsible for performance in situations where the basic conditions of their work – an adequate supply of competent teachers – were not in place. More common, though, was the resigned acceptance of the professional responsibility and the overload expressed by one of the curriculum leaders:

It's made it more challenging. Like that example that I quoted about feeling a bit uncomfortable about having to tell somebody that their lesson was unsatisfactory. So it's given it a bit more of an edge, there is no doubt about that. **It just seems that whatever you do there is more to be done and there is more expected of you and it is never enough.** And in terms of time it's had a real impact on my own personal life at home in terms of the amount of time spent on

work. I don't have a problem in doing it because I realise that it has to be done, but it has made quite an impact on me. [CL]

This is clearly not the new relationship between teachers and inspectors that either party had been hoping for.

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